

Drew University

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**Wombs as Weapons:  
Pronatalism as an Instrument of Authoritarianism under Trump**

A Thesis in Political Science

by

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## Abstract

The second Trump administration has developed an expansive pronatalist political agenda that intends to coerce women into having children. Federal policies, funding changes, and rhetoric have restricted the reproductive autonomy of pregnancy-capable people. Additionally, pronatalism under the second Trump administration has been implemented alongside antinatalism targeted at LGBTQ+ people and non-white immigrant communities. Rather than supporting reproductive choice, the second Trump administration has reinforced an exclusionary pronatalist culture rooted in patriarchy and white supremacy. This thesis analyzes the methods and goals of Trump's pronatalist movement to determine its central political ideology. An interdisciplinary approach combining theoretical, historical, political, and rhetorical analyses determines that the second Trump administration's pronatalist agenda is most congruent with fascist ideology, and is indicative of a right-wing authoritarian movement in the U.S. government. The Trump administration's pronatalist agenda has been overtly modeled after those of historically fascist regimes, particularly in its use of pronatalism to promote the births of only certain ethnic and religious groups in order to construct a nationalized, homogenous population for an increasingly authoritarian nation. At the time of this publication, only a year and a half into Trump's second term, pronatalism is being actively incorporated into federal actions, making it a dynamic ideological force. This thesis serves as an initial analysis of what is likely to become a much more extensive and complex pronatalist movement as Trump continues his second term.

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## **Introduction**

As global population growth declines, the US has joined other countries in encouraging women to have more children in order to combat the economic and social strain of an aging and decreasing population.<sup>1</sup> This encouragement for more births, which can be deemed *pronatalism*, has been increasingly used by the second Trump administration through its rhetoric and policies. As the self-proclaimed “fertilization president,” Trump has created policy initiatives to expand access to IVF and fertility medications, while also supporting restrictions to abortion care, among many other pronatalist actions.<sup>2</sup> Pronatalism can be expressed through supportive measures, such as proposed tax benefits for new parents. However, pronatalism can also be expressed through coercive measures, such as anti-abortion legislation, legal attacks on contraception, and other choice-restricting mechanisms that have also occurred under the Trump administration.<sup>3</sup> Pronatalism, as a population-shaping mechanism, varies in its supportiveness and coerciveness by regime type. Specifically, the degree to which individual autonomy is retained in making reproductive decisions, and the extent to which a state is willing to sacrifice individual well-being for overall population growth depend on the governing political ideology of a country. Liberal democratic states, such as South Korea and France, tend to implement pronatalist economic policies that provide systemic support for people to have children while maintaining their reproductive autonomy.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, authoritarian states, such as North Korea and historically fascist regimes, implement pronatalist policies that sacrifice reproductive

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *World Population Policies*.

<sup>2</sup> Lovelace Jr. and Brooks, “CDC’s IVF Team Gutted Even as Trump Calls Himself the ‘Fertilization President’”; The White House, “Fact Sheet,” October 16, 2025; The White House, “Fact Sheet,” January 25, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Crays, “The Rise of Pronatalism in the U.S.”

<sup>4</sup> Kreimer, “South Korea’s Plan to Avoid Population Collapse”; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Influence of Family Policies on Fertility in France*.

autonomy and health for higher birthrates, and use pronatalism as a means to militarize their populations (among other authoritarian goals).<sup>5</sup>

Within the US, pronatalism has long been promoted by several politically influential groups, yet it has only recently become a notable priority for the Trump administration. The exact purpose of the Trump administration's pronatalist policies are not entirely clear, owing to the variable purposes of pronatalism across political ideologies. My goal, through this project, is to determine: What governing political ideology does the US government's pronatalist agenda operate within? In order to answer this question, I ascertain the purpose of the US government's pronatalism under the Trump administration.

I find that contemporary US pronatalism exists within a right-wing authoritarian, fascistic ideological framework because of its role as a mechanism within a broader right-wing authoritarian shift in the US government, as well as its similarities to the use of pronatalism by historically fascist regimes. The US pronatalist push has failed to effectively implement supportive economic policies, and instead relies mainly upon measures that restrict bodily autonomy. Additionally, US pronatalism does not seem to be motivated solely by economic security, owing to its coexistence with anti-natalist policies that target non-white populations. Historically, pronatalism that restricts the role of individual reproductive decisions and prioritizes state interests, while being used alongside targeted anti-natalist policies, exists as a mechanism of right-wing authoritarianism meant to develop the ideal population for fascistic rule. In recognizing extensive historical parallels between contemporary US pronatalism and historically fascist pronatalism, it is evident that the Trump administration is utilizing pronatalism as a tool for an increasingly authoritarian regime. Through analyzing the language and policies of contemporary US pronatalism, as well as the Trump administration's related population-shaping

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<sup>5</sup> Hoffmann, "Mothers in the Motherland"; Noland, "North Korea's New Pronatalist Policy."

mechanisms, it is clear that contemporary US pronatalism is motivated by the need to create a homogenized, militarized population.

## **Methodology**

This project relies on an interdisciplinary approach to determine the political ideology to which contemporary US pronatalism belongs. Although my primary research question is most directly related to political science (in its focus on the categorization of political regimes and political mechanisms), it is greatly informed by historical and sociological research. My primary research mainly consists of policy and discourse analysis. In order to understand how historically fascist regimes utilized pronatalism, I analyze pronatalist policies within the context of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in terms of their political purposes and mechanisms. In doing so, I also focus on how reproductive autonomy and the social role of women is addressed through these policies. This approach of policy and discourse analysis is also used in my research of contemporary US pronatalism. I analyze pronatalist policies that have occurred under the Trump administrations, and policies that occurred between the Trump administrations (although with explicit support from the administration). Additionally, I conduct discourse analysis on speeches and remarks that contain pronatalist ideas from President Trump and other high-ranking members of his administration. My research of historically fascist and contemporary US pronatalism are analyzed comparatively, with attention given to shared language, policies, and political goals.

I selected Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as subjects for my historical research on the basis of their historical significance and relevancy to the US right-wing authoritarian shift. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany serve as the most recognizable historical examples of right-wing

authoritarian states that were able to fully achieve fascist regimes. Owing to the large scholarship on both regimes, it was feasible to conduct a thorough analysis of their pronatalist policies. Additionally, contemporary US pronatalism mimics the rhetoric and purposes of these historically fascist regimes more so than other regime types.

In order to understand key actors that influence pronatalism in the US government, I recognize and discuss several prominent pronatalist groups, each with diverging and converging pronatalist beliefs. Although there are many strains of pronatalism in the US, I selected groups with an identifiable influence on US pronatalism in government. I first describe tech pronatalists, a group composed of several wealthy and influential figures within the US-based tech industry. I then describe white, Christian, and male supremacist groups, focusing on the pronatalist intersection between these ideologies. Lastly, I analyze the rhetoric and content of online pronatalists.

My discourse analysis of contemporary US pronatalist rhetoric relies on remarks made by members of the Trump administration in a variety of political settings, including language from rally speeches, interviews, and press conferences. Some of the speech that I analyze occurred between the first and current Trump administrations. However, I include these in my discussion since they also reflect the administration's pronatalist beliefs. I rely on speech as directly as possible by utilizing videos, when available. This enables me to understand instances of pronatalist language in a more complete context and without the addition of secondary analyses. I also utilize news sources, which report on a multitude of the Trump administration's policies. My selection of pronatalist policies is similar to my selection of pronatalist rhetoric, in that I also include pronatalist policies that occurred between the first and current Trump administrations. This choice reflects the lingering influence of the first Trump administration in policy decisions

through the appointment of supportive legislative officials, and acknowledges the support of Trump for pronatalist policies that occurred in the interim between his presidencies. Additionally, I focus on utilizing policies and government-published content, referencing the specific language and intended effects of such documents in order to establish how they contribute to pronatalism.

## Literature Review

I rely on a diverse, interdisciplinary body of scholarly research to inform my primary research. I draw from the works of political theorists, sociologists, and historians to examine the fascism-pronatalism relationship. Pronatalism does not exist as an isolated concept; rather, it exists as a component of a larger ideology or as a mechanism for enacting an ideology. For this reason, literature on pronatalism is often relegated to its discussion within particular political or historical contexts. Entirely theoretical or definitional works on pronatalism are limited, so I utilized sociological works to first explore it outside of a strictly political lens, using the essays collected in *Pronatalism: The Myth of Mom & Apple Pie*, edited by Ellen Peck and Judith Senderowitz.<sup>6</sup> Through several essays collected within *Pronatalism*, I establish a definition of pronatalism that highlights its often coercive nature. Unlike pronatalism, definitional literature on fascism is extensive, with much divergence across different authors (as is common in genres of political theory that seek to define regime types), so my selection of sources reflects authors who explicitly discuss pronatalism or population control within fascism or right-wing authoritarianism, as opposed to liberal or left-wing authoritarian regimes. I draw heavily from Robert O. Paxton's "The Five Stages of Fascism" (1998) as well as Hannah Arendt's *The Origins*

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<sup>6</sup> Peck and Senderowitz, *Pronatalism*.

of *Totalitarianism* (1951).<sup>7</sup> Both authors discuss the role of population size and control, demonstrating the mechanistic use pronatalism has in the development of a fascist state.

In order to understand contemporary US pronatalist groups, I use a combination of news and scholarly articles. In researching more nascent pronatalist groups, such as the tech pronatalists, there is a lack of scholarly research. For this reason, I primarily use news articles and essays from major publications, such as the Guardian and the New York Times. There are, however, some academic publications concerning *technofascism*, of which pronatalism is a component. For speaking more broadly about the authoritarian leanings of tech pronatalists, I reference the works of Miranda J. Brady in “Citizen Mothers and Others: Natalist Discourse and Politics in the U.S. after Trump” and Roberto J. González in “American Technofascism.”<sup>8</sup> Brady describes tech pronatalists within a broader pronatalist context, while González focuses on the influence of tech elites in US authoritarianism in a non-pronatalist context.

My analysis of pronatalist Christian nationalists, white supremacists, and White Christian Nationalists is supported by the works of Samuel L. Perry and collaborative authors (much of his research I utilize is co-authored). His works, “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism,” “Is a ‘Christian America’ a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology,” and “Make One for the Team” each emphasize different pronatalist motivations across converging groups.<sup>9</sup> While “Fill the Earth” serves to analyze the synthesis of white supremacist, patriarchal, and religious pronatalism, the latter two focus on gender and collective political identity, respectively.

Other authors who focus on specific strains of US pronatalism are drawn on to create a

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<sup>7</sup> Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism”; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

<sup>8</sup> Brady, “Citizen Mothers and Others: Natalist Discourse and Politics in the U.S. after Trump”; González, “American Technofascism.”

<sup>9</sup> Perry et al., “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism”; Whitehead and Perry, “Is a ‘Christian America’ a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology”; Perry and Grubbs, “Make One for the Team.”

composite picture of major pronatalist actors. I use the works of several authors to focus on how perceived group-threat generates pronatalist sentiments amongst white supremacists, particularly those whose pronatalist beliefs are informed by the Great Replacement conspiracy. I borrow from “Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism” by Brooklyn Walker and Donald P. Haider-Markel and “Fears of white population decline: the politics of race, gender, reproductive justice, and white supremacy in the US” by Lina-Maria Murillo for this analysis of white supremacist pronatalism.<sup>10</sup> In looking at religiously motivated pronatalism, I use “Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement” by Laura Harrison to understand a major Christian pronatalist group, and to understand how Christian pronatalism exists outside of Christian nationalism.<sup>11</sup>

Tradwives (women who promote pronatalism and traditionalism online) have an existing body of literature that I review in conjunction with content produced by tradwives. In addition to directly analyzing tradwife content, I incorporate “Make Women Great Again: Women, Misogyny and Anti-Capitalism on the Right” by Catherine Tebaldi, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers” by Sophia Sykes and Veronica Hopner, and “The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity” by Devin Proctor.<sup>12</sup> These authors analyze tradwives not only as an influential pronatalist group, but also as an iteration of women being used as palatable figureheads for right-wing ideologies. Although the scope of my research does not encompass all pronatalist groups within the US, I limited my selection based on cultural and political relevancy.

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<sup>10</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, “Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism”; Murillo, “Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US.”

<sup>11</sup> Harrison and Rowley, “Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement.”

<sup>12</sup> Tebaldi, “Make Women Great Again: Women, Misogyny and Anti-Capitalism on the Right”; Sykes and Hopner, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers”; Proctor, “The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity.”

There is an absence of scholarly articles on contemporary pronatalism within the US government, specifically under the Trump administrations. As the Trump administration continuously develops and adapts its pronatalist beliefs, policies, and actions, news articles—rather than scholarly articles—are the most available for the reporting on and analysis of pronatalism within the government. Instances of pronatalist policy and discourse are taken from left-wing news sources, as in my discussion of tech pronatalists. This use of left-wing rather than right-wing news sources reflects a lack of coverage in right-wing media for pronatalist actions that do not focus on the promotion of traditionalist family structures.

Although these sources do not represent the entirety of my research, they form the basis of my analysis of US pronatalist groups. In distinguishing different pronatalist groups, I remain cognizant of how their pronatalist beliefs are influenced by each other. For example, although some Christian pronatalist groups are not always overtly white supremacist or authoritarian, their beliefs are informed by white supremacy, authoritarianism, as well as male supremacy. The implicit incorporation of different hierarchical right-wing ideologies across pronatalist groups Through these authors, I attempt to convey the interrelatedness of these pronatalist groups whose interests converge in politics, as the Trump administration attempts to appease their sometimes conflicting pronatalist interests through political representation.

Although there is emergent work on the authoritarian shift of the Trump administration and, to a lesser extent, its use of pronatalism, there is a lack of work that attempts to conceptualize US pronatalism in terms of its political goals or the regime type by which it operates. By framing contemporary US pronatalism around its historically fascist parallels, I attempt to satisfy this gap in scholarly literature. I also hope to relate fascist pronatalism within

the US government to its other authoritarian mechanisms (i.e. anti-natalism), to point to their broader implications for the political goals of the Trump administration.

## **Overview of Chapters**

This project consists of three chapters. The first two chapters, *The Theoretical and Historical Fascism-Pronatalism Relationship* and *Contemporary Pronatalist Groups in the U.S.*, inform the third chapter, *Pronatalism in Contemporary U.S. Politics*. Chapter one introduces and provides definitions on the main concepts utilized throughout this project. It also frames the analysis of contemporary US pronatalism in terms of its relationship to fascist regime types. The second chapter contextualizes contemporary US pronatalism by describing politically influential pronatalist groups that the Trump administration appeals to through its language and policies. The Trump administration's motivations to appeal to the different pronatalist interests of these groups, which are not all in agreement, illuminate the sometimes contradictory nature of its pronatalist policies. The third chapter describes notable pronatalist actions taken by the US government and analyzes them in terms of their similarities to historically fascist uses of pronatalism, and in regards to how they are influenced by distinctly American pronatalist groups.

In the first chapter, I utilize theoretical explorations and historical examples of pronatalism as a fascist mechanism. Through this chapter, I explain how pronatalism can be used to achieve fascist goals, and how historically fascist regimes (i.e. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany) have used pronatalist policy and rhetoric. I first introduce fascism by referring to the works of political theorists who determine fascistic regime characteristics, mechanisms, and goals. I then describe pronatalism as a mechanism of fascist regimes, where it is used as a means of population control, political socialization, and the enforcement of collectivism. Historical

research is incorporated into the discussion of pronatalism as a fascist mechanism by referencing the works of other academics and through the primary analysis of historically fascist pronatalist policy. By establishing a fascism-pronatalism relationship through theoretical and historical research, I recognize how pronatalism manifests within a specific political ideology. From this, contemporary US pronatalism can be evaluated in terms of its similarities to fascistic pronatalism.

The second chapter describes major pronatalist groups within the US that have an effect on contemporary US pronatalist action in government. I first describe tech pronatalists, owing to their relative ideological isolation from other groups. Unlike other pronatalist groups, tech pronatalists have only recently developed. “Tech pronatalists” emphasize more eugenicist aspects of pronatalism and are motivated in part by perceived existential threats to capitalism and the long-term survival of humanity.<sup>13</sup> The Trump administration has aligned itself with the economic and pronatalist interests of tech pronatalists, including by appointing tech pronatalist figures to positions of political power.<sup>14</sup> Although the political influence of wealthy individuals within the US tech industry predates their pronatalist sentiments, it aligns with their historically conservative culture and association with Republican politics.

In addition to tech pronatalists, I describe several interconnected, more longstanding pronatalist groups in the American pronatalist landscape, whose political influences extend beyond the Trump administration: Christian nationalists, non-nationalistic Christian pronatalists, white supremacists, and White Christian Nationalists. Pronatalism, as a mechanism that can be weaponized to uphold the supremacy of select populations (especially when coupled with anti-natalism), is favored by these intersecting groups that benefit from preexisting social

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<sup>13</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

<sup>14</sup> Del Valle, “Trad Values Meets Tech.”

hierarchies. These groups diverge in which aspects of social hierarchy they center in their ideologies. They also converge and form intersectional pronatalist groups that are motivated by a complexity of factors, such as shared religious belief. I discuss various groups that represent different intersections within this matrix of social hierarchies, who all use pronatalism as a component of their ideologies.

I also discuss pronatalist culture as it exists online in order to recognize how online spaces have developed into successful spaces for the dissemination of right-wing rhetoric. Specifically, I discuss women who are at the forefront of US pronatalism. Tradwives, an online culture of pronatalist influencers, demonstrate how pronatalism, which often manifests as a patriarchal ideology, can be adopted by women. I explain how the “tradwife” internet culture socializes young women into supporting pronatalism, and how the movement reflects an amalgamation of several other pronatalist groups. The language and content of different tradwife influencers also reflects the diversity of contemporary pronatalist rhetoric, with varying degrees of overt white supremacy and political messaging. Through the exploration of these groups’ pronatalist beliefs and motivations, I map influences on the US government’s pronatalist policies.

The third chapter describes how the US government expresses pronatalism through its policies and rhetoric. I analyze the pronatalist speech and policies of Trump administration officials in terms of how it mimics that of historically fascist regimes. Additionally, I recognize the influence of contemporary pronatalist groups on the administration’s pronatalist actions; I identify individuals belonging to the pronatalist groups described in Chapter Two who hold positions within the Trump administrations, as well as how the Trump administrations uses pronatalism to appease the interests of these groups. Additionally, I discuss how the Trump administration opportunistically adopts the language and beliefs of these groups in order to

garner their political support. I also acknowledge how the US government's pronatalist efforts are used in conjunction with anti-natalist efforts, both of which work in conjunction in fascist movements. Through these metrics, I judge how the US government, under the two Trump administrations, have pursued pronatalism as a means to advance fascistic goals and as a component of a larger right-wing authoritarian ideology.

### **Chapter 1: The Theoretical and Historical Fascism-Pronatalism Relationship**

This chapter serves to define fascism and pronatalism as the central concepts of this project's analysis. It also seeks to establish a theoretical and historical relationship between pronatalism and fascism, so that this relationship may be later recognized in contemporary contexts. I synthesize the existing scholarship on pronatalism and specific pronatalist aspects of fascism, and relate them to historical instances of fascist pronatalist initiatives.

Fascism and pronatalism both lack absolute definitions; historically, they exist as adaptable, internally-inconsistent, and dynamic. The definition of fascism, in political science literature, is highly debated. Although pronatalism is conceptually simple, unlike fascism, pronatalist policy and social initiatives take on the characteristics of the movements they inhabit, thus varying the specific motivations, implementations, and severity of pronatalist movements. Rather than attempting to abstract and absolutely define fascism and pronatalism, I instead seek to define them in ways specifically contextualized within existing literature and historical cases (i.e. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy).

Violence is intrinsic to fascism and fascistic goals, making it a harmful political ideology deserving of research that can contribute to its recognition and prevention. Analyzing the theoretical components of fascism can enable the recognition of nascent fascist movements in a

contemporary context, thus preventing, or at least acknowledging, emerging political danger. As mechanisms of fascism become more apparent in the US, the study of the fascism-pronatalism relationship can indicate a dangerous political shift that further endangers marginalized groups.

## **Fascism**

The word *fascism* is derived from the Latin word *fascēs*, which refers to a bundle of sticks surrounding an axe, creating a collectively stronger weapon.<sup>15</sup> From this literal definition, we can infer the collective nature of fascism and how it seeks to unify individuals to achieve a greater capacity for violence or power. Politically, fascism uses collectivist ideologies, such as nationalism, militarism, and populism, to forcefully supersede all individual identities with national identities.<sup>16</sup> Beyond this fundamental understanding, fascism ceases to be a unified, consistent, political ideology. Fascism, like pronatalism, is reflective of the context in which it is used. Since fascism constructs state interests as the only interests of a population, a fascist state consists of a unified whole, rather than a collective of individuals. The specific values of a particular fascist movement— the values it champions, the social groups it demonizes, and other guiding principles— are, as Paxton explains, “not from some universal scripture but from what it considers the most authentic elements of its own community identity.”<sup>17</sup> Put simply, fascism has set goals of achieving an entirely unified populace with a wholly national identity, achieved through violent and otherwise oppressive means.<sup>18</sup> This national identity is constructed to usurp all other identities and values, eliminating any variation in political, moral, religious, or social ideas and behaviors, and any sense of interpersonal connection not based on allegiance to the

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<sup>15</sup> Holocaust Encycl., “Fascism.”

<sup>16</sup> Holocaust Encycl., “Fascism”; Council on Foreign Relations, “What Is Fascism?”[p

<sup>17</sup> Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism,” 3.

<sup>18</sup> Holocaust Encycl., “Fascism.”

regime.<sup>19</sup> However, the specific contents of the absolute national identity vary depending on the cultural context in which it exists. Since fascism is a nationalistic form of authoritarianism, fascism takes on regional characteristics in order to gain legitimacy through the ideals specific to a country or community. This lack of ideological consistency across fascist movements can make fascism a vague and often misapplied classification.<sup>20</sup>

Fascist movements also use values and beliefs opportunistically. A fascist movement uses and abandons philosophies and principles as needed in order to gather support and then distance itself from what is no longer attainable or helpful.<sup>21</sup> Successful fascist movements also construct values that support their interests as supremely right or important, sometimes taking advantage of people's strongly held beliefs and values and appropriating them into fascist ideology.<sup>22</sup> Ideas, especially ones that cater to the interests of a majority of a population, are useful in the development of a fascist regime. In the movement-building phase of fascism, the foundational ideas and goals of a fascist movement can incentivize people to align themselves with a new shared group identity.<sup>23</sup> This sort of coalition-building amongst a mass of people can create political legitimacy and aid in acquiring power, especially when fascist movements spring from faltering democracies.<sup>24</sup>

Fascist ideologies are also often "syncretistic" and mimetic in how they use a population's pre-fascistic beliefs and values.<sup>25</sup> Syncretism, in this context, describes how previously existing ideas are combined in order to develop a new idea that draws from its sources yet results in a unique concept. Under fascism, the state acts as a "synthesis and a unit inclusive

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<sup>19</sup> Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 3–4.

<sup>21</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 4.

<sup>22</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 3.

<sup>23</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 6–7.

<sup>24</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 306.

<sup>25</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 3; Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 6.

of all values.”<sup>26</sup> However, the integrity of the original ideas may be lost or misconstrued as a result of syncretism, especially when used for a political purpose (particularly when populism is present). Mimeticism similarly indicates a loss of authenticity of ideas by describing a fascist regime’s use of preexisting concepts or symbols while removing their context, or pre-fascistic cultural meaning. Under fascism, the nationalization of cultural ideas and symbols is used (appropriated) to garner popular support or to construct identity, even if they cannot logically coincide outside of a fascist context.

Fascist regimes combine different, sometimes contradictory, beliefs and belief systems in order to create a body of facts that serve that regime’s particular goals. Syncretism and mimeticism in fascist regimes can include the obfuscation of historical facts, combination of historical beliefs, and misappropriation of symbols and language.<sup>27</sup> This internal disjunction can even be helpful in cultivating intense support by superficially appealing to multiple strongly-held beliefs within a population. Additionally, fascist movements tend to attribute their beliefs and principles to a higher authority than party politics; they instead rely on ideas “originating in deep natural, social, or even psychological sources beyond the control of the individual and therefore beyond the power of reason.”<sup>28</sup> Appropriated cultural values, when used within a syncretic and mimetic fascist ideology, can deter scrutiny against such inconsistencies by appealing to what a population considers to be culturally true or valuable, such as religious beliefs.

Fascist movements depend on fervent belief in their often inconsistent and unfactual ideology even when their logical inconsistencies cannot be obscured. The scrutinization of a fascist regime’s ideologies and ideological motivations for policies and actions is “treason”; to

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<sup>26</sup> Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 305.

analyze a system so ontologically flawed is to refute it entirely.<sup>29</sup> If a fascist movement's guiding principles are not accepted in their entirety, then it contradicts the absolute support demanded of followers of a fascist movement. The need for mass appeal in fascist movements and regimes often exceeds the need for ideological consistency, which allows for fascist movements to contradict their initially claimed values and make disingenuous promises.

Owing to fascism's ideological inconsistencies across movements as well as within singular movements, it cannot be defined by a single set of beliefs or values; fascism must instead be defined by its mechanisms and goals.<sup>30</sup> Fascism aspires to totalitarianism, seeking to gain total control over all aspects of life for a population of people through political supremacy.<sup>31</sup>

### **Pronatalism**

Pronatalism, unlike an individual desire to have children, is generated by the collective, either cultural or political, making childbearing no longer an individual choice. For this project, I rely on the definition of pronatalism developed by Peck and Senderowitz, who describe pronatalism as “any attitude or policy that is ‘pro-birth,’ that encourages reproduction, that exalts the role of parenthood.”<sup>32</sup> From this definition, I emphasize their inclusion of both “attitude” and “policy,” since regimes promote pronatalism through both social and legislative reform. The concurrent encouragement of pronatalist social values (such as gender traditionalism and religious conservatism) and pronatalist policy work together to generate both support for and compliance in pronatalist policy.

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<sup>29</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism,” 5.

<sup>31</sup> Gentile, “Fascism as Political Religion,” 230.

<sup>32</sup> Peck and Senderowitz, *Pronatalism*, 1.

Encouraging or forcing women to have children is not politically neutral. Rather than existing as an isolated ideology, pronatalism is used as a political tool, often used rhetorically or implemented through policies.<sup>33</sup> Because pronatalism tends to exist within the context of a greater political ideology, it is often used to achieve a larger political purpose; rather than promoting having more children simply for the sake of having more children. Pronatalism is highly adaptable; it adopts the characteristics of the political context in which it exists.

Under fascism, pronatalism is used in an inherently coercive way. Fascist pronatalism attempts to increase birthrates at the expense of the health and autonomy of pregnancy-capable people, and the social and legal equality of women. However, before fully discussing how pronatalism exists within a fascist framework, it is important to recognize how it exists outside of a distinctly coercive ideology.

In a contemporary context, pronatalism can be expressed through progressive policy. Amidst a global trend of slowing population growth, progressive pronatalist policies are emerging as a solution for many countries. In regions with declining birth rates, such as Europe and Eastern Asia, progressive policies are being used to increase fertility rates.<sup>34</sup> In response to declining birth rates, some governments have turned to giving subsidies to parents to offset the cost of having a child to encourage more births. More extensive progressive pronatalist policies also include free childcare, increased parental leave, tax credits, and other financial incentives

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<sup>33</sup> The terminology used in discussing pronatalism is intended to be conscious of the distinction between gender and biological sex, and the relationship that exists between them. When discussing pronatalism in a medical or apolitical context, “pregnancy-capable” is used to recognize how pronatalism can impact all who are capable of pregnancy, not only those who identify as women. Since pronatalism in a fascist context is accompanied by the use of gendered, often misogynistic, rhetoric, the use of “woman” and “women” is used to denote the targets of pronatalist policies and rhetoric. This is meant to be consistent with the vocabulary of fascistic pronatalism, which often supports the erasure of dialogue surrounding gender diversity and biological differences while emphasizing strict gendered roles that serve state interests.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations, *World Population Policies*, 1.

that ease the burden of childrearing.<sup>35</sup> <sup>36</sup> Progressive pronatalism sometimes arises out of economic concern, such as in Japan and South Korea, where population decline threatens economic stagnation and the practical challenges of caring for an aging population.<sup>37</sup> These pronatalist policies, which incorporate progressive economic policies, do not seek to increase birth rates by directly coercing women. In theory, they enable more people to have children by decreasing the economic burden of raising a family and by providing social support.<sup>38</sup> Although family planning policies, including the protection of reproductive healthcare and the promotion of women's equality, can be used to curb population growth, the inclusion of these policies alongside pronatalist policies promotes safe population growth by prioritizing the health of women and children, rather than being focused on meeting population goals.<sup>39</sup> There is an emphasis on policies that improve the balance between family and work life, which allows pregnancy-capable people to have families while maintaining their economic independence and security.<sup>40</sup> Although progressive pronatalist policies are state-serving, in that they often seek to protect a state's economic stability, this is not achieved at the expense of pregnancy-capable people's health or autonomy.

Fascist pronatalism, although it can also utilize welfare policies to promote higher birth rates, primarily seeks to restrict reproductive autonomy.<sup>41</sup> Welfare policies, under a fascist regime, do not coexist alongside policies that protect the legal and social standing of women.

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<sup>35</sup> Hughes, "Are Children The Future?: Longtermism, Epistemic Discounting, and Pronatalism," 1.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, *World Population Policies*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Kumar, "Population Growth Isn't a Progressive Issue. It Should Be."

<sup>38</sup> Hughes, "Are Children The Future?: Longtermism, Epistemic Discounting, and Pronatalism," 8.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations, *World Population Policies*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, *World Population Policies*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ipsen, "The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy"; Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps."

Rather, women are actively targeted through policies that restrict their educational and professional opportunities, so as to reinforce a patriarchal power structure.<sup>42</sup>

Pronatalism exists in a multitude of political contexts, and there can be some overlap across its implementations within different political ideologies. Furthermore, pronatalism can exist more implicitly, such as through the use of cultural norms and economic pressures, rather than only through overt political policies. Due to this ambiguity, it can be difficult to distinguish if pronatalism is more supportive or coercive in a specific context. Although the many forms of contemporary pronatalism should be evaluated in terms of their coerciveness, it is not within the scope of this project to examine non-fascistic pronatalism or pronatalism outside of the US. Rather, it is to analyze pronatalism as it manifests in a fascist ideological framework, which most closely resembles contemporary US pronatalism compared to other ideologies.

Between progressive and fascist pronatalism exist a spectrum of pronatalist policies, with a variety of political and economic motivations. Pronatalism can exist in left-wing and right-wing states, and in progressive and conservative societies. Although pronatalist policies are being utilized by liberal, democratic, and high-income countries, pronatalist policy has also acted as a distinctive tool of non-democratic, oppressive states. Policies meant to control reproduction, including both pronatalist and antinatalist policies, have a history in Maoist China, Stalinist Russia, and present-day North Korea.<sup>43</sup> The pronatalist policies in these authoritarian regimes were in part caused by fears of economic decline and population instability. A large and stable population can provide economic security for a state regardless of its regime type, making pronatalism a beneficial political tool regardless of the specific political ideology it serves.

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<sup>42</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism"; Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps."

<sup>43</sup> Greenhalgh and Winckler, "Chapter 3 The Mao Era: From Soft Birth Control to Hard Birth Planning"; Hoffmann, "Mothers in the Motherland," 35–54; Kreimer, "South Korea's Plan to Avoid Population Collapse."

It is not the argument of this project that pronatalism is an inherently a fascist idea. However, certain aspects of pronatalism do make it an instrument compatible with a fascist political ideology. In order to determine if an iteration of pronatalism is fascist, as opposed to belonging to a different ideological framework, we must determine the degree to which women retain autonomy over their reproductive choices (specifically, to which degree reproduction is coerced by the state), the purpose of wanting more children to be born, and which group(s) of people are specifically encouraged to have more children. Pronatalism can exist as a fascist mechanism if it differs from other forms of pronatalism in these ways. These indicators do not exhaust the facets of fascist pronatalism, but are useful when examining the degree of coerciveness in regimes with pronatalist policies. In order to understand why pronatalism is fascist if it fulfills these parameters, we must understand how it is used as a mechanism of fascist goals.

### **Pronatalism as a Mechanism of Fascist Control**

Total control of a population through a unified national identity is attempted by fascist movements through several different mechanisms. The dissolution of individual identity and autonomy, militarization of a collective body, and violent expulsion of any groups outside the nationalized identity are primary mechanisms for the creation of a fascist state.<sup>44</sup> Encouraging and forcing pronatalism is another primary mechanism of attaining totalitarian control. In this way, pronatalism serves as an instrument of fascism, rather than a guiding belief within fascism. However, promoting pronatalism culturally and constructing it as a national value can strengthen its effectiveness as an instrument. Pronatalism, when expressed through policy, is reinforced

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<sup>44</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

through ideology when it is constructed as a national value. When used as a mechanism or in aid of other mechanisms in a fascist movement or regime, pronatalism helps to establish the necessary material foundations for a fascist state. The following paragraphs describe some of the mechanisms used to create and maintain fascist regimes, using the historical context of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Although these mechanisms are not nearly comprehensive, they include mechanisms that are specifically aided by pronatalism.

A fascist movement and subsequent fascist regime needs mass appeal which it draws from shared values because it must create a united identity and garner popular support in order to gain political power.<sup>45</sup> After political power has been gained by a fascist movement, a large and unified population is needed in order to effectively militarize the fascist state and help the regime to sustain large losses of life.<sup>46</sup> Pronatalism is physically helpful for the creation of masses because, when successful, it produces and sustains a large population that can be used to bolster a fascist regime's political support and military endeavors. Less visibly, pronatalism also contributes to the formation of the "masses" through the dissolution of individuality, reinforced by patriarchal norms. Most significantly, fascist pronatalism also adopts a heavily racialized eugenics motivation, in which reproduction serves to promote racial homogeneity. Cumulatively, fascist pronatalism is highly coercive, racist, and misogynistic.

The purpose of uniting a population under shared interests, however, is not merely to gain a wide political base. Rather, the unification of a population under a fascist ideology seeks to abolish the individual entirely. Fascist ideologies do not allow for any other group or individual identities; once adopted, the fascist ideology attempts totalitarian rule by replacing all other social, political, and religious affiliations and loyalties.<sup>47</sup> Having been stripped of all ties to

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<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 303.

<sup>46</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 305.

<sup>47</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 16–17.

society outside of those formed in association with the fascist regime, the former individual, transformed into a member of “the masses,” ideally becomes extremely dependent on and unwaveringly faithful to the fascist movement.<sup>48</sup> Fascist movements capture the total allegiance of a large population by relying on the politically uninformed and apathetic, exploiting social isolation, and encouraging zealotry. From this devotion springs extremism, and a willingness to accept increasingly radical and violent ideas presented by the movement.<sup>49</sup>

### *Pronatalism, Labor, and Economics*

Since political and social concepts in fascism are initially used to acquire support and create a shared identity, they are almost largely instrumentalist.<sup>50</sup> This extends to pronatalism, which is used to reinforce fascist identity. Pronatalism supports group identity by restricting women’s ability to create an individual identity.<sup>51</sup> In a pronatalist society, women are recognized and commended for their ability to have children, rather than their individual attributes or skills. Childbearing becomes an issue of “social morality”, particularly in politically extreme societies.<sup>52</sup> This reflects fascism’s need for the individual— physically and intellectually— to become a tool of the state, even at the expense of individual well-being. Unlike pursuing education, careers, or individual expression, which all endanger the extreme collectivism and chauvinism of fascist ideology, having children in a fascist state is exclusively state-serving, not an exercise of an individual’s desire for self-betterment or fulfillment. By transforming

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<sup>48</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 302.

<sup>49</sup> Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism,” 6–7.

<sup>50</sup> Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism,” 4.

<sup>51</sup> Meyers, “The Rush to Motherhood,” 764.

<sup>52</sup> Meyers, “The Rush to Motherhood,” 757.

childbearing into women's paramount state-serving duty and eliminating individualism, women become valued solely by their ability to produce children under fascism.

Women pursuing life paths that do not prioritize reproduction is a threat to fascist regimes' attainment of a large population. As women's equality increases, the average age of when women first give birth also increases. This is likely because women are able to pursue advanced education and establish careers prior to having children, which affords them more stability and independence.<sup>53</sup> For many women, having an intensive career also prevents them from having children for risk of income loss, discrimination in the workplace (sometimes resulting in demotion or firing), and a lack of time to put towards childrearing.<sup>54</sup> Discouraging women from the professional sphere, or from non-domestic work, enables pronatalism since it eliminates a possibly purpose-giving commitment other than motherhood, and prevents women prioritizing professional goals over familial goals.<sup>55</sup> The expansion of opportunities for women in this regard is contradictory to pronatalist goals of increasing birth rates. Therefore, it is in the best interest of fascist movements and regimes to restrict or at least discourage women's pursuit of competitive careers, higher education, and other individual— rather than group-serving— life paths. This deterrence and coercion against women's autonomy and independence in fascist ideology is exhibited through policies that increasingly restricted their political, economic, and social rights.

Historically fascist societies limited women's ideological and professional independence in order to restrict their ability to pursue careers and education, effectively coercing many women to pursue domestic lifestyles they would otherwise not have chosen. Laws in 1938 Fascist Italy required women to be phased out of jobs over a three-year period until they made up

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<sup>53</sup> Forati and Bartz, "The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pronatalism," 438.

<sup>54</sup> Forati and Bartz, "The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pronatalism," 439.

<sup>55</sup> Blake, "Coercive Pronatalism and American Population Policy," 35.

only 10% of the workforce, except for jobs traditionally held by women (e.g. telephone operators and typists).<sup>56</sup> In Nazi Germany, the Law for the Promotion of Marriage was created to reduce male unemployment by relegating women to domestic, rather than professional spheres, as well as to promote marriage as the primary institution of childbearing.<sup>57</sup> These policies not only rescinded women's economic opportunities, they also redefined women's contributions to civil society entirely in terms of their reproductive capacity. Childbearing, rather than professional work, became women's ideal form of labor in fascist society.

This exclusively patriarchal and childbearing-centered role for women reflects fascism's use of traditionalism and a "rejection of modernism." Fascist movements reject women's expanding professional and individual opportunities, and instead push for a return to a romanticized, essentialized notion of men and women's respective roles in society.<sup>58</sup>

The stifling of women's non-domestic opportunities to limit their autonomy was also a result of economic pressures in the post-WWI era. Economic strain served as a central cause for the societal return to traditional gender roles under fascism, justifying limitations in women's economic and political rights. As automation led to the economic displacement of middle-class labor, a lack of professional work for an increasingly educated middle-class was compounded by post-war struggle. Within the nascent fascist ideology, such economic strife justified the appropriation of women's war-time jobs by men following WWI and societal backlash against their economic and political rights.<sup>59</sup> Pronatalism, then, served as a means to ease economic strain by lowering unemployment through forcing women out of the workforce, whilst promoting population growth to sustain extreme militarism.

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<sup>56</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 965.

<sup>57</sup> Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," 27–28.

<sup>58</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 947–48.

Policies that barred women from professional opportunities also took the form of tax benefits and government-funded programs. In Nazi Germany, Heinrich Himmler developed the “Lebensborn,” a network of “maternity and childcare facilities” where approximately 12,000 children were born from 1935 to 1945. Although the Lebensborn facilities were used by SS members, unmarried women who met the racial criteria of the SS were also welcomed in order to bolster the number of “eugenically valuable offspring.”<sup>60</sup>

Most impactfully in Fascist Italy, Mussolini utilized the National Organization for the Protection of Motherhood (ONMI), created in 1925, for the promotion of extensive pronatalist policies.<sup>61</sup> The organization provided a multitude of welfare services to mothers and children and expansions to its funding were supplied by heightened taxes on unmarried men, with the total budget reaching approximately 80 million lire.<sup>62</sup>

Similar tax policies that disadvantaged unmarried people or couples without children, and conversely benefitted those with children, were continuously implemented in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In 1933 in Germany, the Office for Exploring Population Policies was created in order to develop and implement pronatalist initiatives. Under such policies, newly married couples with children (in which the wife did not work), were given interest-free loans.<sup>63</sup> Married couples with children also benefitted from reduced housing and transportation costs, as well as the introduction of several tax benefits that were not extended to childfree couples.<sup>64</sup> In fascist Italy, men with large families were given preferential employment, and were eligible for salary adjustments based on their number of children.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Zielger, “Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps,” 29.

<sup>61</sup> Ipsen, “The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy,” 86.

<sup>62</sup> Ipsen, “The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy,” 89.

<sup>63</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 90.

<sup>64</sup> Zielger, “Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps,” 28; Ipsen, “The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy,” 91.

<sup>65</sup> De Grand, “Women Under Italian Fascism,” 965.

There is much overlap in the pronatalist tax policies of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, with many centering around financial incentives, which would have been especially motivating in the economically difficult wartime period. Although these policies may have benefitted families with children, and even vulnerable children and mothers, they did so while restricting women's ability to not have children. These policies restricted women's freedoms and rewarded submission to nationalized patriarchal values, rather than serving to support the interests of women with children.

### *Militarism and Patriarchy*

Fascism overtly relies on and motivates adherence to patriarchal gender roles, which mitigates the autonomy and freedom of women. Men, by a fascistic standard, are considered naturally authoritative, with the ideal of masculinity best embodied by the single male leader that acts as the head of the fascist movement.<sup>66</sup> More than simply embracing typically masculine ideals, fascist ideology also necessarily delegates the role of women to be subservient to that of men.<sup>67</sup> Pronatalism, in its rhetorical aspects, often reinforces the ideas of biological essentialism, constructing the patriarchy as moral and natural.

The centrality of patriarchy to fascist ideology was also necessarily constructed in the home. Submission to male authority was reflected in domestic settings through pronatalist rhetoric and policies, and mirrored in political beliefs.<sup>68</sup> Pronatalism adopts the idea that women are inherently suited to motherhood and domesticity, which is congruent with the gender roles promoted by fascist regimes.<sup>69</sup> Women can also be compelled to have children by emphasizing

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<sup>66</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 6.

<sup>67</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 7–8.

<sup>68</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 958.

<sup>69</sup> Hollingworth, "Social Devices for Impelling Women to Bear and Rear Children," 20–22.

romanticized and even mystified aspects of motherhood, such as a mother-child relationship, whilst obscuring less desirable aspects of motherhood. Discussion of maternal death during childbirth, or unfulfillment in domesticity, realities that steer pregnancy-capable people from child-bearing become lost, or even vilified, amidst a pronatalist social landscape.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, women who do not want children in a pronatalist society are stigmatized and characterized as abnormal; this creates an otherness to women who are not compliant with the roles of women in fascistic ideology.

Women's reproductive capacity was considered so essential to the family that In Germany in 1936, female infertility was classified as an illness, which had legal and insurance ramifications; new laws allowed men to divorce their wives on the grounds that their wives were infertile or no longer having children.<sup>71</sup>

In Fascist Italy, the incorporation of religious conservatism served to propagate pronatalist values while appealing to Italians' religiosity and cultural Catholicism. In 1929 and in 1930, Mussolini's fascist regime officially aligned its authority with the Catholic Church (under Pope Pius XI) and became more aggressively patriarchal. In this synthesis of Catholic and fascist doctrine, the family (of a married couple with children) became the essential component of a functioning state, rather than the individual.<sup>72</sup> In the words of Italian fascist Corrado Gini, The incorporation of religiosity into Italian Fascist pronatalism "strengthens family ties; it makes parents consider their offspring as a gift of God and the wealth of their country."<sup>73</sup> By incorporating conservatism and religiosity into pronatalist and political rhetoric, Mussolini's

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<sup>70</sup> Hollingworth, "Social Devices for Impelling Women to Bear and Rear Children," 26–27.

<sup>71</sup> Weindling, "Fascism and Population in Comparative European Perspective," 116; Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," 28.

<sup>72</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 956.

<sup>73</sup> Gini, "The Italian Demographic Problem and the Fascist Policy on Population," 696–97.

regime hoped to discourage women seeking autonomy by appealing to patriarchal values preexisting within Italian culture.<sup>74</sup>

In a fascist society, where the masses are encouraged to be militaristic and always at war with a greater enemy, strength and national pride are encouraged.<sup>75</sup> For women, this strength is often tied to having children and raising them with nationalistic ideals, so that child-bearing becomes a state-serving function rather than an individual decision. Women's role is necessary for this militarization, as they became "producers of soldiers" as well as the primary source of political socialization for Italy's fascist youth.<sup>76</sup> This military ethos surrounding childbearing was overtly expressed in fascist society. In both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, women who gave birth to many children were awarded medals.<sup>77</sup> In Nazi Germany, women could receive a "Mother's Cross" in different grades for having large numbers of children, and an Honor Card for having multiple young children. Both were entitled to preferential treatment similar to that of military honors.<sup>78</sup> Large populations also justified fascist regimes' expansionism. Using military force to occupy new territory, in the fascist view, is necessary to house a growing population. In fascist Italy and Germany, the ability to develop a large, homogenous, and militarized population signified superiority over other nations.<sup>79</sup> However, regimes simultaneously pushed rhetoric that their nationalized populations were endangered both by underpopulation and a lack of territory, with both illusions necessitating pronatalist action.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 957.

<sup>75</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 7.

<sup>76</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 963.

<sup>77</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 964.

<sup>78</sup> Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," 28.

<sup>79</sup> De Grand, "Women Under Italian Fascism," 957.

<sup>80</sup> Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," 25.

*Antiabortion Policies and the Criminalization of Choice*

Abortion policies played a critical role as one of the primary pronatalist initiatives in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These policies also serve as a critical example of how fascist pronatalism rescinds reproductive autonomy in favor of state interests. Both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy implemented abortion bans that evolved over the course of each regime. Both regimes criminalized reproductive choice, prosecuted women involved in abortion procedures, and contributed to eugenicist goals.

Under fascist rule, abortion, as all reproductive decisions, is dictated by and becomes knowledge of the state. Since abortion allows for potential population decline, and for women to maintain autonomy over their lifestyles, fascist regimes believed it was necessary to criminalize abortion and most forms of contraception. In Nazi Germany, the regime re-criminalized the advertisement and provision of abortion services (previously being partially legal) in 1933. Applications for medically necessary abortions were only approved after strict scrutiny from government-appointed physicians.<sup>81</sup> Beginning in 1935, all miscarriages were required to be documented by doctors and midwives, reported to the State Health Office, and investigated in case they were the result of abortions. The weaponization of surveillance against reproductive care created fear amongst pregnant women and deterred some from seeking medical attention following miscarriages or as a result of pregnancy complications.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, The Police Ordinance of 1943 criminalized many forms of contraception and contraceptive services, resulting in the closing of reproductive health centers.<sup>83</sup> Contraceptive devices were also made illegal, with the exception of condoms.<sup>84</sup> The prosecution of infringements upon anti-abortion

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<sup>81</sup> David et al., "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany," 90.

<sup>82</sup> Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany," 407–8.

<sup>83</sup> Zielger, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," 27.

<sup>84</sup> David et al., "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany," 96.

laws were investigated by the Reich's Central Agency for the Struggle Against Homosexuality and Abortion.<sup>85</sup>

The accessibility of legal abortions declined amidst growing regulations, while illegal abortions were increasingly punished. This lack of legal pathways to abortion caused both a stark decline in legal abortion requests and a rise in the arrest of abortion-providing physicians (who were mostly women physicians who had been disbarred).<sup>86</sup> Control over abortion became a state-serving tool meant to enforce racial hegemony, and was only accepted as such. Abortion as an autonomous decision (of white Germans) became legally and socially reprehensible as control over reproduction became instrumental to the Nazi regime.<sup>87</sup> The most extreme punitive measure for abortion was instituted in March of 1943, when new laws declared that women who self-administered or were provided an abortion would be imprisoned. Most extremely, women, midwives, and physicians who continuously threatened the “vitality of the German Volk” through abortions could receive the death penalty.<sup>88</sup> This was allowed through the Protection of Marriage, Family, and Motherhood law, whose title obfuscates the danger it posed to women.<sup>89</sup>

Fascist Italy, although it did not implement the death penalty for women who received or provided abortions, also instituted a multitude of policies meant to prosecute those who did. Abortion became criminalized in 1927, and allowed for the deportation of those who assisted in abortion procedures.<sup>90</sup> Laws criminalized the advertisement and sale of birth control products, with restrictions placed on birth control production. Additionally, midwives were required to report abnormal pregnancies and miscarriages to the state, as in Nazi Germany.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 408.

<sup>86</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 93.

<sup>87</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 97.

<sup>88</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 97.

<sup>89</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 408.

<sup>90</sup> Gini, “The Italian Demographic Problem and the Fascist Policy on Population,” 693.

<sup>91</sup> Ipsen, “The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy,” 89.

Under both regimes, women's ability to make their own reproductive decisions were eliminated. Barred from professional spheres, women who did not want or could not have children were left vulnerable to legal and social persecution. Furthermore, what were once private decisions became regulated by the state, demonstrating how the control of fascist regimes aim to infiltrate every aspect of life.

### *Eugenics and Antinatalism*

Pronatalism, under fascism, exists at the intersection of extreme sexism and racism. Pronatalism is used not only to eliminate the autonomy of women, but also to develop the exclusivity of an ethno-national fascist identity. The creation of a single, cohesive group by a fascist movement necessarily creates an out-group, which is demonized for any degree of difference, including differences in race or ethnicity.<sup>92</sup> By only encouraging certain social groups to have more children, the fascist state attempts to achieve homogeneity. Eugenics, as a pseudo-scientific form of racism, champions women (as mothers) as having the potential to create racial hegemony while disparaging them as contributors to racial diversity.<sup>93</sup> Fascist societies use pronatalism as a weapon of racism not only by encouraging specific groups to have children, but also through forced sterilization and systemic murder of certain populations.<sup>94</sup> Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy used pronatalism and antinatalism in tandem to racially homogenize their populations, effectively weaponizing childbirth and reproductive medicine against ethnic minorities.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany," 401.

<sup>94</sup> Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," 8.

<sup>95</sup> Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany," 403.

As pronatalist legislation developed in Nazi Germany, antinatalist reproductive legislation targeting ethnic minorities became increasingly severe, evolving from the continued legality of elective abortions to the nonconsensual sterilization and murder of Jewish and other women belonging to targeted minorities.<sup>96</sup> In 1933, the Nazi Minister of the Interior proclaimed that the German population was under threat from the encroachment of other ethnicities, necessitating forced sterilization.<sup>97</sup> The Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseases, enacted in July 1933, allowed for the sterilization of certain populations, mainly disabled people, as approved by specialized courts.<sup>98</sup> In court cases where sterilization could serve as punishment upon conviction, women were often judged on the basis of their deviation from societal standards of Nazi womanhood and motherhood.<sup>99</sup>

Abortion was also forced upon discriminated populations, even as it was outlawed for ethnic Germans. Foreign workers and forced laborers were prohibited from having sexual relations with ethnic Germans, they could receive an abortion upon request unless the child was considered racially integratable into the Nazi German population.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, women from occupied territories who were not considered a part of the “German Volk” were eligible for abortion so long as it was approved by an SS officer. However, the officer could conversely decide to force the woman to give birth, effectively eliminating her reproductive autonomy.<sup>101</sup> These uses of sterilization and abortion against minority populations within Nazi German courts segued into mass murder, as sterilization became common practice in concentration camps.<sup>102</sup> In

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<sup>96</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 408–9.

<sup>97</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 91.

<sup>98</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 91.

<sup>99</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 415.

<sup>100</sup> David et al., “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” 100.

<sup>101</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 418.

<sup>102</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” 417.

Fascist Italy, legislation produced by the ONMI similarly adopted the explicit intentions of creating and “protecting” the Italian race as constructed by the regime.<sup>103</sup>

This eugenicist aspect of fascistic pronatalism makes it an especially sinister mechanism that contributes to the larger violent goals of a fascist movement. Pronatalism and antinatalism may seem antithetical to each other, yet fascism is able to combine them as joint forces for population control, both physically and ideologically. Pronatalism’s unequivocal relationship to antinatalism under fascism demonstrates that it only serves the interests of the state, rather than the individual, at the cost of the health and autonomy of women and minorities.

## **Conclusion**

In fascist movements and regimes, pronatalism is inherently coercive. From the analysis of pronatalism in a fascist lens, we can distinguish fascistic pronatalism from other forms of pronatalism. In considering the degree to which women retain autonomy over their reproductive choices in a fascist regime, it is clear that the coerciveness of a totalitarian state that weaponizes strict gender roles and collectivism does not allow for individual choice without consequence. Wanting more children to be born under a fascist regime to allow the state to militarize a population and withstand massive loss of life is also far removed from any individual motivations for having children, and does not consider individual fulfillment. Furthermore, fascistic pronatalism is discriminately applied, utilizing racist rhetoric and discouraging reproduction that challenges the homogeneity of the masses. In sum, pronatalism aids fascist regimes by contributing to a large population, aiding in militarization, discouraging individualism, and reinforcing patriarchal and racist norms. From these conclusions about the

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<sup>103</sup> Ipsen, “The Organization of Demographic Totalitarianism: Early Population Policy in Fascist Italy,” 87.

operation of pronatalism under fascism, we can recognize fascistic pronatalism through its blatant coerciveness and concurrence with targeted antinatalism.

## **Chapter 2: Contemporary Pronatalist Groups in the U.S.**

As in other countries with declining birth rates, pronatalism has become an increasingly influential movement in the US. However, the rise of pronatalism in the US is not owed to a unified movement motivated only by resolving depopulation. Rather, pronatalism in the US has proliferated across several disparate groups that overlap and diverge in particular aspects of their respective pronatalist ideas. While US pronatalists are partially concerned with slowing birth rates and possible economic consequences, they are also strongly motivated by the preservation of a dominantly white and patriarchal national culture. This chapter will describe the contemporary pronatalist landscape in the US by analyzing the major pronatalist groups in terms of their identities, motivations, and beliefs, as well as how these groups interact amongst each other. The pronatalist groups I will discuss are wealthy executives within the tech industry, white Christian nationalists (WCNs), and right-wing influencers. These groups were chosen because of their apparent political and cultural influence, which has contributed to a growing coercive pronatalist culture in the US.

### **Tech Elites**

Wealthy entrepreneurs within the historically conservative and patriarchal US tech industry have become increasingly aligned with nationalistic right-wing politics, with

pronatalism serving as a major political interest.<sup>104</sup> They have emerged as figureheads of contemporary pronatalism, motivated by a need to secure economic stability amidst depopulation, and in reaction to perceived threats from feminist culture advances and demographic shifts.<sup>105</sup> Silicon Valley pronatalism is also shaped by a multitude of guiding philosophies, including conservatism and longtermism. Rather than acting as an organized, singular group, tech elite pronatalists exist as a collection of powerful individuals.<sup>106</sup> Although the tech elite pronatalist group is mainly limited to several individuals, rather than a larger demographic, their immense financial and economic resources enable their strong influence in political and cultural spheres. Their top-down effect on pronatalist culture in the US, the funding of private pronatalist initiatives, and support for pronatalist policies in government allow for the proliferation of their pronatalist beliefs despite being a relatively smaller, more exclusive pronatalist group.<sup>107</sup>

The US' falling fertility rate is currently below the replacement rate, which could place economic strain as a relatively small younger population must economically support a much larger older population.<sup>108</sup> In this way, a shrinking population is an economic threat. To tech elites who rely on capitalistic growth to maintain their wealth, depopulation poses an existential threat to the maintenance of their wealth. Elon Musk, one of the most politically influential tech pronatalists with 14 children of his own, who was appointed a federal government position by Donald Trump, is one of the strongest proponents of pronatalism as a solution to falling birth

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<sup>104</sup> Lewis, "Headed for Technofascism."

<sup>105</sup> Del Valle, "Trad Values Meets Tech"; Sherman, "The Rise of Pronatalism."

<sup>106</sup> There is no official or singular term for the wealthy US tech executives who align themselves with the pronatalist movement. However, contemporary literature on US pronatalism has developed a body of terms to describe these individuals. Some of these epithets include "Silicon Valley," "tech elites," and even "techno-fascists." I primarily utilize the terms "tech elites" and "tech pronatalists" to allude to the distinct inclusion of reproductive technology in their pronatalist rhetoric.

<sup>107</sup> Torres, "Against Longtermism."

<sup>108</sup> Sherman, "The Rise of Pronatalism."

rates.<sup>109</sup> At a far-right wing political rally in Italy, Elon Musk urged attendees and the people of other developed nations to prioritize having more children to avoid demographic collapse. He emphasized that the declining birth rate in Italy, France, and Japan posed a threat to national culture, seeing increased immigration not as a possible solution, but an additional threat that leads to the loss of national identity.<sup>110</sup>

Advances in the social equality of women, such as increased opportunities to pursue education, also pose a material challenge to increasing birth rates by allowing women to pursue non-domestic lifestyles and delay having children.<sup>111</sup> Gender equality also culturally threatens the goals of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Tech elites, since the early development of Silicon Valley, have been guided by reactionary anti-feminism and political correctness, which is perceived as a threat to the male-dominated industry, utilizing provocative rhetoric and publications to promote the conceptualization of the entrepreneur as inherently masculine. Successful executives in Silicon Valley have long associated themselves with political conservatism, favoring self-subsistency over wealth redistribution, and entrepreneurship as the ultimate expression of the male bread-winner role.<sup>112</sup> Gender equality challenges this gender traditionalism. The current phase of conservatism in tech emerged following the 2000 bubble, resulting in new figureheads such as Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, Mark Zuckerberg, Marc Andreessen, and several other powerful figures.<sup>113</sup> Both the patriarchal and politically conservative culture of Silicon Valley inform its leading figures as advocates for pronatalism. By advocating for pronatalism, tech elites seek to preserve the traditionalist gender roles central to Silicon Valley's entrepreneur culture.

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<sup>109</sup> Brady, "Citizen Mothers and Others: Natalist Discourse and Politics in the U.S. after Trump," 1; Del Valle, "Trad Values Meets Tech."

<sup>110</sup> Euronews, "Elon Musk Urges People in Developed Countries to Have More Children."

<sup>111</sup> Sherman, "The Rise of Pronatalism."

<sup>112</sup> Lewis, "Headed for Technofascism."

<sup>113</sup> Lewis, "Headed for Technofascism"; González, "American Technofascism," 3.

Tech elite pronatalists emphasize the use of technology for the purpose of increasing reproduction in a way that distinctly corroborates the historical racism of pronatalism. Tech pronatalists are strongly concerned with eugenics, believing that emerging technology can optimize desirable traits and minimize undesirable traits in future babies, and increase the overall number of babies born. Through embryo screening, in vitro fertilization (IVF), genetic engineering, and other technological advances, tech pronatalists hope to maximize the number of children born under certain criteria.<sup>114</sup> This eugenicist aspect of tech pronatalism is inseparable from the racist nature of eugenics, which has been utilized as a justification for the prioritization of white births and intentional efforts to decrease non-white births. The resurgence of eugenicist rhetoric in the US, even in a pronatalist context, is especially concerning considering the extent of reproductive violence committed against non-white people, historically and presently. Throughout the 20th century, the study and practice of eugenics was extensive amongst wealthy American scientists and academics, and the forced sterilizations that it promoted directly targeted women of color.<sup>115</sup> Although technologies such as IVF or screening for embryo health are not necessarily eugenicist, proposals for future advancements for these technologies from tech pronatalists are. Suggestions such as screening for IQ (which is not currently possible) or sex-selective IVF, with a preference for males, is a form of eugenics being championed by tech pronatalists.<sup>116</sup> The incorporation of eugenicism into reproductive technologies within a pronatalist movement is concerning because of the possibility of targeted use against non-white people, people with disabilities, and other populations historically subject to anti-natalism.

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<sup>114</sup> Sherman, "The Rise of Pronatalism."

<sup>115</sup> Brady, "Citizen Mothers and Others: Natalist Discourse and Politics in the U.S. after Trump," 5,6.

<sup>116</sup> Sherman, "The Rise of Pronatalism"; Factora, "Vivian Jenna Wilson, Elon Musk's Estranged Trans Daughter, Says Her Assigned Sex at Birth Was 'Bought and Paid For.'"

Declining birth rates not only pose an economic and perceived racial threat to tech elites, but also an existential threat. Many pronatalist tech elites associate themselves with philosophies that motivate their investments into pronatalist initiatives. Pronatalist tech elites, such as Musk, Thiel, subscribe to a worldview known as “longtermism,” and have invested millions of dollars in longtermist think tanks and organizations.<sup>117</sup> Longtermism is a collectivist ideology which seeks to maximize the future potential of humanity, even by condoning suffering on a widespread individual level for the sake of a potential, “greater good” in the future.<sup>118</sup> The longtermist views of several tech elites are conducive to support towards several fascistic mechanisms, including pronatalism. In order to maximize the future potential and longevity of humanity, longtermists believe that existential threats to humanity must be avoided. Longtermists see large populations as a means of reducing existential threats.<sup>119</sup> Larger populations allow for more people to die in the short-term while not threatening the overall survival of humanity as a whole. In this longtermist view, having children serves humanity as a whole, rather than an individual.

Longtermism and fascism both promote the idea of some teleological end to their ideologies. Fascism aims to completely usurp all other identities, peoples, and political authorities in total global dominance. Longtermism seeks to attain the full potential of humanity. Both use existential goals to necessitate people to fight for their respective causes. Longtermism and fascism also hold their goals as absolute and insurmountable: in fascism, there is no greater cause than the creation and spread of the nation; in longtermism, there is no greater cause than the total fulfillment of humanity’s potential. These vague and unattainable goals also make support for both ideologies a continuous battle. Fascism requires constant militarization and sacrifice to attain global authority, while longtermism continuously accepts and generates

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<sup>117</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

<sup>118</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

<sup>119</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

conflicts for their relative cost to a greater good. Longtermism also reinforces the eugenicist overtones of tech pronatalism by encouraging “transhumanism” as a means to maximizing humanity’s value. Longtermists theorize that through technological advancements, people can be altered to become a “superior” race, and see biological “superiority” as a moral good.<sup>120</sup> This philosophy serves as the backbone of tech pronatalists’ inclusion of eugenicist rhetoric.

Similarly, longtermists accept the suffering of some populations for the eventual success of others. Their completely utilitarian perspective sees global disasters (e.g. climate change, epidemics, global conflicts, etc.) relativistically. As long as they do not pose a direct or immediate threat to humanity, then the immediate suffering they cause must be accepted. This allows longtermists to take global catastrophes in stride, claiming they will have no long-term impact on the wellbeing of humanity.<sup>121</sup> The severe collectivism of longtermism is very similar to collectivism in fascist rhetoric. In both ideologies, the sacrifice of individual identity and wellbeing is necessary to promote the wellbeing of a whole: in fascism, the whole being a homogenous national population that spreads globally; in longtermism, the entirety of humanity. By deemphasizing individual choice in favor of collective gain, longtermism is at odds with the preservation of autonomy in making reproductive decisions.<sup>122</sup>

The pronatalist beliefs and actions of US tech elites exist within a much larger association with authoritarian action by the US government. As in historically fascist states, tech elites utilize pronatalism as a singular component of their political alignment, rather than as an isolated ideology. Just as tech elites promote and invest in pronatalist endeavors, they simultaneously invest in US militarism, particularly to combat immigration. Over the first and second Trump administrations, tech elites have increasingly aligned themselves with conservative politics,

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<sup>120</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

<sup>121</sup> Torres, “Against Longtermism.”

<sup>122</sup> Levin, “Playing to Lose.”

becoming thoroughly involved with federal politics. Silicon Valley executives, including Mark Zuckerberg of Meta and Sundar Pichai of Google, attended Trump's second inauguration. Elon Musk was appointed by Trump to lead the "Department of Government Efficiency," utilizing artificial intelligence to make governmental decisions.<sup>123</sup> By aligning themselves with the Trump administration and even becoming political figures within it, tech elites are working to reciprocally protect each other's interests. While the Trump administration protects the economic interests of wealthy entrepreneurs, the administration is able to utilize technology for its own interests. Mutual beliefs, such as pronatalism, are strengthened through this economic and political relationship. Utilizing the technology, economic power, and influence of elites is also concordant with the alignment of fascist movements with elites and experts.<sup>124</sup>

Silicon Valley executives have used their companies and technologies in collaboration with markedly authoritarian actions by the US government, demonstrating their support for an increasingly radical administration. Surveillance companies, mostly those that rely on AI technologies, are being used by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) against immigrants.<sup>125</sup> Technology companies used by ICE have been supported by Peter Thiel, who has been a major donor to conservative campaigns, including both Trump presidential campaigns. J.D. Vance was also formerly employed at one of Thiel's companies.. Companies such as Palantir Technologies, founded by Thiel, are being used by ICE to monitor self-deportations and to help ICE in determining which individuals to deport.<sup>126</sup> Several other Silicon Valley companies, including Anduril (a military tech company), Clearview (which uses AI for facial recognition), and Skydio (which builds surveillance towers and drones), have supplied ICE with technology

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<sup>123</sup> Chayka, "Techno-Fascism Comes to America."

<sup>124</sup> Chayka, "Techno-Fascism Comes to America."

<sup>125</sup> González, "American Technofascism," 3.

<sup>126</sup> González, "American Technofascism," 2.

and products that aid in their raids.<sup>127</sup> The use of Silicon Valley investments and technology to enable authoritarian actions by the US government emphasized how tech pronatalism is a component of larger political involvement; historically, fascist states couple pronatalism with nationalism through anti-immigration and anti-natalist stances for those deemed outside of the nationalist in-group.

The concurrent support of pronatalism and opposition to immigration through the US government solidifies the Silicon Valley pronatalist position as being distinctly a pro-white American position that prioritizes the homogeneity and economic power of a national identity. Additionally, the misogynistic and eugenicist nature of tech pronatalism, coupled with the tech elites' support of authoritarian political action, make their pronatalist ideology consistent with that of historically fascist states.

### **Christian Nationalists, White Supremacists, and White Christian Nationalists**

I focus this analysis on White Christian Nationalism, yet the inclusion of Christian Nationalists (whose ideology does not center race), and White Supremacists (whose ideology does not center religion) is also necessary for understanding how the beliefs of other conservative, discriminatory ideologies contribute to pronatalism in the US. White Christian Nationalists are always Christian Nationalists and White Supremacists, although the inverse is not necessarily true. Male Supremacy is also present in these ideologies, although it exists as a shared feature between these groups. Owing to its underlying presence across Christian Nationalism, White Supremacy, and White Christian Nationalism, I will treat Male Supremacy as a component of their beliefs rather than a separate ideological entity. These groups can diverge

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<sup>127</sup> González, "American Technofascism," 3.

in their membership and motivations for endorsing pronatalism, yet are often informed by each other's perspectives.

White Christian Nationalists (WCNs) have also emerged as a pronatalist group within the US. As a group identity, White Christian Nationalism exists as the synthesis of racial, religious, and political identity in reaction to demographic changes.<sup>128</sup> These three identities (white, Christian, nationalist) converge through the impulse of preserving several social and political hierarchies; specifically, the fear of demographic and cultural changes that threaten white, male, protestant supremacy in American culture.<sup>129</sup> Although there are of course non-white, non-patriarchal, and non-nationalistic Christians, these groups do not tend to support pronatalism as strongly, likely because they do not benefit from the often racist and state-preserving goals of pronatalism.<sup>130</sup> Mainly evangelical protestant denominations align themselves with Christian nationalism, and have historically aligned themselves with conservative politics.<sup>131</sup> Pronatalism, for WCNs, simultaneously serves their white supremecist, patriarchal, and nationalistic interests by being used as a tool to increase the population of white, religious conservatives while reinforcing traditionalist gender roles. WCNs support pronatalism because of their patriarchal and traditionalist perspective of gender, bolstered by their religious beliefs, and perceived threats to their group identity through religious decline and non-white immigration.

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<sup>128</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, "Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism," 384.

<sup>129</sup> Perry et al., "Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism," 996.

<sup>130</sup> Perry et al., "Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism," 1015.

<sup>131</sup> Whitehead and Perry, "Is a 'Christian America' a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology," 157; Perry and Grubbs, "Make One for the Team," 17.

*White Supremacy and White Christian Nationalism*

There are many strains of Christian Nationalism in America, originating from different Christian sects and each with differing beliefs and lifestyles.<sup>132</sup> The most influential and radical Christian Nationalists in the US today tend to belong to either “Charismatic Dominionism” or “Calvinist Nationalism,” both of which are evangelical groups that support the expansion of their beliefs over every sphere of life, including the political.<sup>133</sup> Despite some differences between different types of Christian Nationalists, they are unified by, among other beliefs, desire to reconfigure American politics as a conservative Christian nation that supports pronatalist policies and lifestyles. Unlike the pronatalism of tech elites or political opportunists, for whom pronatalism can serve as a means to ensuring economic and political goals, pronatalism is inseparable from the Christian Nationalist identity, and by extension the White Christian Nationalist identity.

To Christian Nationalists, Christianity is necessarily patriarchal, with pronatalism serving as an extension of their belief. They tend to embrace patriarchal and traditionalist family structures, and exclusively support marriage between one heterosexual man and one heterosexual woman, with distinctive familial roles for each.<sup>134</sup> In historical fascist societies, pronatalism was inherently patriarchal and required women to adopt a domestic lifestyle to create children that could serve the regime. Similarly, Christian Nationalists also relegate women to domestic roles that are subservient to male authority.<sup>135</sup> Conservative religious pronatalists also tend to disavow contraceptives and abortion, which acts as another means of restricting women’s reproductive

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<sup>132</sup> Saiya, “The Varieties of American Christian Nationalism,” 2025, 173.

<sup>133</sup> Saiya, “The Varieties of American Christian Nationalism,” 2025.

<sup>134</sup> Whitehead and Perry, “Is a ‘Christian America’ a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology,” 6.

<sup>135</sup> Perry et al., “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism,” 998.

autonomy.<sup>136</sup> WCNs integrate white supremacy into their anti-abortion stances by viewing abortion as a threat specifically to white populations. By attributing personhood to white fetuses, white supremacists are able to see abortion as an extension of the threat of replacement.<sup>137</sup> This anti-abortion aspect of WCN pronatalism serves as a strong point of connection to conservative politics.

WCNs and Christian Nationalists, unlike tech pronatalists, consider the traditionalist family structures central to their pronatalist ideology, and are opposed to some of the reproductive technologies supported by tech pronatalists. They consider a traditionalist family structure to be the foundation not only of their religious beliefs, but of America as a Christian nation. Increased social acceptance of diverse family structures, LGBTQ+ families, and interracial families are therefore seen as a direct threat to their conceptualization of America as a conservative Christian nation.<sup>138</sup>

Although White Supremacists and WCNs fear depopulation— similar to tech pronatalists— as it threatens the US as a politically powerful entity, they believe population growth must be achieved exclusively through an increase in births by white Americans, rather than through increased immigration. This type of selective pronatalism is meant to ensure a homogenous American population that reflects their political, social, and religious supremacy.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps the most central component of White Nationalist (and WCN) beliefs is the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, which motivates White Nationalist political involvement and pronatalist beliefs by serving as a convincing narrative of group-threat. Developed by French

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<sup>136</sup> Perry et al., “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism,” 998.

<sup>137</sup> Lina-Maria Murillo, “Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 34, no. 5 (2025): 724.

<sup>138</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, “Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism,” 385.

<sup>139</sup> Perry et al., “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism,” 1013.

novelist Renaud Camus in 2010, the Great Replacement conspiracy proposes that non-white immigrants and Jewish people are being used by economic and political elites to displace white populations.<sup>140</sup> This conspiracy has been culturally translated to the US, where White Nationalists have resonated with their economic, racial, and religious anxieties. The Great Replacement conspiracy is extreme and openly racist, and it is central to the pronatalist rhetoric and lifestyles of WCNs.<sup>141</sup> Through the Great Replacement conspiracy, White Nationalists integrate their beliefs on reproduction (opposition to birth control and women's prioritization of having children) and immigration (perceived as a cause of economic strain and racial threat) into their fears of white population decline.<sup>142</sup>

The Great Replacement is extremely compatible with WCN in the US by serving as further justification for the enactment of their religious beliefs and speaking to the racism deeply ingrained in their political conservatism. In this way, WCN pronatalism can serve as the synthesis of religious and racial bigotry. The WCN response to the racial and economic threat constructed by the Great Replacement is racially-exclusive and patriarchal pronatalism. Although the theory originates from a European author, WCN Americans share fears of racial displacement in a way explicitly tied to issues of reproduction. In a US context, non-white women, particularly Mexican women, are stereotyped as "excessive procreators of non-white babies"<sup>143</sup> This belief in the "hyper-fertility" of non-white women, to WCNs, enables them to replace white populations<sup>144</sup> This pseudoscientific belief and stereotype has contributed to the

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<sup>140</sup> Murillo, "Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US," 717.

<sup>141</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, "Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism," 400.

<sup>142</sup> Murillo, "Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US," 719.

<sup>143</sup> Murillo, "Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US," 720.

<sup>144</sup> Murillo, "Fears of White Population Decline: The Politics of Race, Gender, Reproductive Justice, and White Supremacy in the US," 720.

dehumanization non-white women, historically and presently, and has been used to justify forced sterilization, among other abuses.

The Great Replacement conspiracy strongly influences WCN pronatalist rhetoric, although it is obscured by religiosity when not overtly referenced. When adopted into WCN circles, fears of white population decline and displacement also adopts a major gendered component. Collectively, contemporary WCN rhetoric synthesizes pro-white racism, and anti-immigrant and anti-feminist fueled economic anxieties, with pronatalism serving all three.

### *Christian Nationalism and White Christian Nationalism*

Christian Nationalists are largely driven by fear of cultural persecution, and a desire to reinstate their conservative Christian beliefs politically. Although religion is centered in Christian Nationalist ideology, rather than race, it does overlap with White Supremacy in both its predominantly white membership and their tendency to support White Supremacist beliefs.<sup>145</sup> Understanding the religious impetus behind Christian pronatalism shows how Christian Nationalism and, by extension, White Christian Nationalism justify coercive pronatalism through belief and culture.

One of the most notable pronatalist conservative Christian actors, the Quiverfull movement, demonstrates how US pronatalism can be strongly motivated by religiosity, creating a longstanding cultural impact on reproductive discourse in the US. Although the Quiverfull movement is primarily conservative Christian pronatalist group, rather than a Christian Nationalist group, it demonstrates how conservative Christian ideology necessitates pronatalism. The Quiverfull movement, since it aims to establish a Christian pronatalist culture in American

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<sup>145</sup> Perry et al., "Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism," 1001.

(although not necessarily a pronatalist political regime), acts as an important case study for understanding the cultural motivations for pronatalism in adjacent groups that align themselves with conservative Christianity, such as White Christian Nationalism.

The Quiverfull movement began in the 1980s, building from conservative Christian opposition to birth control and progressivism. The primary goal of its adherents is to have as many children as possible in order to propagate their beliefs and reject ones they oppose, such as feminism and secularism.<sup>146</sup> Members of the Quiverfull movement do not belong to a single denomination, however they are generally associated with evangelicalism, owing to their Quiverfull ideology emphasizes group identity through these shared beliefs, which is strengthened by perceived enemies to their ideology. Quiverfull pronatalists feel that they are at war with feminism and social progress, and feel that their movement is necessary to restructure American society to be Christian, conservative, and white.<sup>147</sup> Quiverfull members understand their pronatalist and patriarchal beliefs to be countercultural as gender equality progresses, which further reinforces their interpretation of pronatalism as a defensive mechanism.<sup>148</sup>

Pronatalism within the Quiverfull movement is overtly averse to women's autonomy and access to safe reproductive healthcare. Within the movement, women are expected to use their bodies as a living sacrifice, accepting medical danger and personal wellbeing for the sake of having more children. Mothers aim to have as many children as possible, even at the expense of their personal health. This notion of using one's body as a sacrifice is, in Quiverfull interpretation, demanded by God.<sup>149</sup> Quiverfull women see motherhood as a means to combat the materialism and strain of capitalist society. Joined by their fervent belief in motherhood,

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<sup>146</sup> Harrison and Rowley, "Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement," 48.

<sup>147</sup> Harrison and Rowley, "Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement," 54, 55.

<sup>148</sup> Harrison and Rowley, "Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement," 59.

<sup>149</sup> Harrison and Rowley, "Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement," 56, 57.

religiosity, and patriarchy, these women construct a collectivist identity, rather than an individualistic one they feel is demanded by modern society.<sup>150</sup>

### *Tradwives and Online Pronatalism*

Although Christian Nationalist groups, like the Quiverfull movement, have acted as longstanding pronatalist advocates before the rise of contemporary pronatalist rhetoric, they have gained new traction amidst an increasingly right-wing political climate and through digital platforms and popular media attention.<sup>151</sup> Far-right conservatism, including WCN, has proliferated in online spaces, allowing for the proliferation of the Great Replacement conspiracies with racist patriarchal pronatalism as its solution.<sup>152</sup> Many far-right online influencers who promote gender traditionalism, pronatalism, and conservatism are men. This internet culture, dubbed “the manosphere,” has emerged as a new front for anti-feminist social and political commentary.<sup>153</sup> A distinctly masculine internet culture promoting social hierarchies that exclusively benefit themselves is not surprising. However, women have also emerged as powerful voices in favor of pronatalism in alignment with WCN perspectives. Through social media, conservative women have developed the “tradwife” culture and movement, characterized by their promotion of marriage, childbearing, and submissiveness to male authority (i.e. their husband and God).

Tradwives promote patriarchal gender roles and components of bioessentialism. They enact and encourage domesticity and subservience for women, often using Christian theology as

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<sup>150</sup> Harrison and Rowley, “Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement,” 57.

<sup>151</sup> Harrison and Rowley, “Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement,” 53.

<sup>152</sup> Brady, “Citizen Mothers and Others: Natalist Discourse and Politics in the U.S. after Trump,” 7.

<sup>153</sup> Tebaldi, “Make Women Great Again: Women, Misogyny and Anti-Capitalism on the Right,” 76.

justification.<sup>154</sup> Tradwife influencers produce content that often consists of them taking care of their children, performing household chores, or discussing advice for femininity or marriage.<sup>155</sup> Through their platforms, tradwives encourage women to have children. Although most tradwife content centers around taking care of their husband and children in a positive, romanticized, and curated way, there is variability in degree to which tradwives incorporate explicitly political or racist rhetoric into their content. Some influencers are more explicit in their racist motivations for promoting childbearing, citing the Great Replacement conspiracy as a provocation to have more white children.<sup>156</sup>

Unlike in the “manosphere” and other more overtly misogynistic pronatalist cultures, tradwives cater specifically to other women.<sup>157</sup> Tradwives, by branding their lifestyle and marketing it to others, attempt to generate new interest while also strengthening a WCN-aligned audience. Tradwives appeal not only to conservative women, but to women who partake in traditionally feminine activities in a non-conservative way.<sup>158</sup> On social media members of the public who participate or are interested in the tradwife lifestyle can interact with one another, thus developing a community where the tradwife lifestyle is legitimized.<sup>159</sup>

Women contributing to the reestablishment of a culture that disavows their autonomy and individuality, is likely a response to economic hardship. American culture is challenging contemporary advancements in gender equality. Challenges to women’s social, economic, and reproductive freedoms, including the loss of the federal right to abortion following the Dobbs decision and a continuous lack of social programs to support working mothers, create an

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<sup>154</sup> Sykes and Hopner, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers,” 455, 456.

<sup>155</sup> Proctor, “The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity,” 10, 11.

<sup>156</sup> Sykes and Hopner, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers,” 467.

<sup>157</sup> Sykes and Hopner, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers,” 549.

<sup>158</sup> Sykes and Hopner, “Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers,” 479.

<sup>159</sup> Proctor, “The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity,” 10, 11.

uncertain environment that may be pushing women back to a sphere of domesticity.<sup>160</sup> Mothers in America have a lack of resources to ease the burden of having children, compared to other wealthy nations. There is no federal paid maternity or paternity leave, universal childcare, or federal reproductive health protections.<sup>161</sup> By presenting a lifestyle in which women can relieve themselves of economic security in a heavily idealized lifestyle in a time of challenge and uncertainty, the tradwife movement appeals not only to women who are already conservative, but also those most vulnerable to conservative change.<sup>162</sup> Tradwives even recognize the economic pressures that drive them to pursue motherhood and dependency over the instability of a career, although they blame feminism rather than larger structural inequalities.

Even through individual influencers, the tradwife movement, as with other online communities, seeks to create a collective identity, as in the Quiverfull movement and other manifestations of WCN.<sup>163</sup> The tradwife movement, although it does not present itself as openly coercive, presents traditional motherhood as the *only* lifestyle that can bring women fulfillment, and the only lifestyle acceptable within their religious beliefs. Rather than being accepting towards other, more progressive lifestyles, the tradwife movement poses itself as anti-feminist, with tradwives seeing feminism as oppositional to women's theologically and biologically correct roles.<sup>164</sup> Others frame the tradwife movement as justified through choice feminism, in which choosing to lead a life subservient to men is justified because they, as women, are making that decision.<sup>165</sup>

Even though tradwife influencers are not always overtly political or racist, the lifestyle they embody is inseparable from political conservatism and an exclusively white femininity. The

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<sup>160</sup> Sherman, "Sundresses and Rugged Self-Sufficiency."

<sup>161</sup> Parker and Donnell, "Momfluencers, Tradwives, and the Perils of Modern Motherhood."

<sup>162</sup> Sherman, "Sundresses and Rugged Self-Sufficiency."

<sup>163</sup> Proctor, "The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity," 10.

<sup>164</sup> Sykes and Hopner, "Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers," 456.

<sup>165</sup> Proctor, "The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity," 9.

tradwife movement also bases itself off of an exclusively white historical narrative and white conception of femininity. Tradwife influencers embrace traditional gender values and roles experienced by white people in the mid-20th century, while ignoring the experiences of women of color during that period. The traditionalism that tradwives promote reflects racial and economic privilege. The narrative that historical women, who the tradwife lifestyle seeks to embody, did not work outside of domestic circles is largely untrue, particularly for historically underprivileged and marginalized women.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, they construct their ideal of femininity through whiteness, drawing from the characterization of white women as vulnerable and victims of non-white aggression. This construction of white womanhood has been historically weaponized to justify racial violence and ostracize women of color.<sup>167</sup> Conservatives have historically used the protection of white femininity and family values as a more palatable rhetorical platform for racism, since it argues that these things are threatened and must therefore be protected against non-white, liberal encroachment.<sup>168</sup> In white supremacist movements, the role of women is often used to soften the movement's image, make it palatable to a larger audience, and to normalize its racist beliefs.<sup>169</sup> Tradwives' openly pronatalist beliefs and their pursuit of a sometimes overtly (but always implicitly) racist lifestyle strengthens their ties to White Christian Nationalist identity.

This prominent digital dimension to contemporary pronatalism is culturally significant, in that it contributes to the normalization of far-right politics through a softer, "family friendly" image. Even when tradwives do not explicitly identify themselves as WCNs, they implicitly promote the cultural and political beliefs. By drawing from conservative social values promoted

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<sup>166</sup> Proctor, "The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity," 9.

<sup>167</sup> Proctor, "The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity," 10.

<sup>168</sup> Tebaldi, "Make Women Great Again: Women, Misogyny and Anti-Capitalism on the Right," 74.

<sup>169</sup> Love, "Shield Maidens, Fashy Femmes, and TradWives: Feminism, Patriarchy, and Right-Wing Populism," 2.

by the Trump administration, the tradwife movement is ideologically congruent with the larger political landscape.<sup>170</sup> Even though the tradwife movement focuses on the role of women in conservative Christian cultures, it reinforces the supremacy of white men as the head of this social order. The reestablishment of traditional gender roles mirrors the militaristic ethos of political conservatism. The glorification of the patriarchy and the role of men as providers is in opposition to welfare and government support, and further promotes the “strongness” of military imperialism and authoritarian politics.<sup>171</sup> In both tradwife and exclusively political spaces, WCNs see pronatalism as their primary weapon in a larger culture war against feminism, progressivism, and racial diversity.

## Conclusion

The association between WCNs and anti-immigrant, pronatalist ideas has regained political traction amidst larger destabilization. WCNs’ fear of social, religious, and demographic change, interpreted as a threat to their group identity, have increased their support for authoritarian views and policies.<sup>172</sup> Encouraging or coercing births from members of their own in-group to solidify a national identity while additionally discouraging the inclusion of other groups is markedly a fascist use of pronatalism.<sup>173</sup> Also, like tech-pronatalists, WCNs see having children as group-serving, in that having children contributes more to the attainment of white Christian supremacy than individual fulfillment.<sup>174</sup> Demographic change leads WCNs to support

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<sup>170</sup> Sherman, “Sundresses and Rugged Self-Sufficiency.”

<sup>171</sup> Tebaldi, “Make Women Great Again: Women, Misogyny and Anti-Capitalism on the Right,” 73.

<sup>172</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, “Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism,” 387.

<sup>173</sup> Perry et al., “Fill the Earth and Subdue It: Christian Nationalism, Ethno-Religious Threat, and Nationalist Pronatalism,” 998.

<sup>174</sup> Perry and Grubbs, “Make One for the Team,” 13.

pronatalism and pronatalist policies, as a means to reestablish the religious and racial hierarchy that supports their social and political influence.<sup>175</sup> WCNs are threatened by non-conservative democracy as the social equality and political participation of non-white people improves. Majoritarianism, in a diverse society, disfavors them. In order to preserve their power, male white supremacists—the top of the traditionalist social hierarchy—resort to authoritarianism to maintain their social and political security. Pronatalism, when coercive and exclusive to white women, protects the interests of WCNs by attempting to demographically establish a white-majority population, and by reconfiguring politics around their beliefs.

The friction between different pronatalist groups in the US is not a source of weakness. Rather, pronatalism's source of political and cultural influence lies in its ability to unite seemingly opposed groups into a powerful coalition. Though pronatalist ideas, such as the Great Replacement theory, may have once been considered extreme, the monetary influence of tech elites, the cultural authority of WCNs, and their shared political platform legitimize pronatalism and make it more broadly appealing. These groups converge and interact in the political sphere, where they exert their support and influence for pronatalism, amongst other policies and ideologies, with the most visibility and cohesiveness.

The pronatalist rhetoric of these groups, in spite of their differences, are similar in that they value childbearing insofar as it contributes to national or global success, rather than individual fulfillment. Across these groups, having children is not framed as an individual choice. Rather, they see having children as “group-serving,” by contributing to the power of their group or nation.<sup>176</sup> The decentering of individual choice, overt sexism and racism, and alignment

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<sup>175</sup> Walker and Haider-Markel, “Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism,” 386.

<sup>176</sup> Perry and Grubbs, “Make One for the Team,” 13.

with politically authoritarian beliefs is consistent across US pronatalist groups.<sup>177</sup> The nationalistic and coercive nature of US pronatalism, prompted by fear of changing national demographics, poses a rhetorical and political threat to women's social equality and reproductive autonomy, particularly for non-white women, who are a target of both the white supremacist and eugenicist beliefs of US pronatalists.

### **Chapter 3: Pronatalism in Contemporary U.S. Politics**

Pronatalist policies and rhetoric have become increasingly centered in US politics under the second Trump administration. As the second Trump administration evolves into a distinctly more authoritarian regime than the first, its adoption of pronatalism helps to solidify its conservative, coercive, and anti-individualistic positions. Pronatalism serves the Trump administration not only by acting as a unifying force for the varying groups within its conservative political base, but also by contributing to its authoritarian aspirations and fascistic political culture. Under the administration, pronatalism serves as a means of population-shaping that reinforces white male supremacy and the suppression of bodily and ideological autonomy.

This chapter first examines how contemporary pronatalist groups in the US, as discussed in Chapter 2, have extended their pronatalist influence into political rhetoric and policy. I focus on the extensive influence of Christian Nationalism within the administration, seen through its conspicuous use of Christian symbols and practices, and the ubiquity of Christian political stances in its policy decisions. I also discuss pronatalism during the interim of the two administrations, owing to Trump's lingering influence on US policy decisions following his first

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<sup>177</sup> Del Valle, "Trad Values Meets Tech"; Whitehead and Perry, "Is a 'Christian America' a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology," 3.

presidency and the resurgence of pronatalism during the Biden administration. I briefly touch on Covid-era<sup>178</sup> pronatalist legislation, examining its role as welfare-based pronatalist policy and its gendered implications. I then analyze the *Dobbs* Decision and consequential abortion-restricting state legislation, in regards to its support by the Trump administration and impacts on coercive pronatalism. This era of pronatalism holds overarching implications for women's reproductive autonomy in the US, and has enabled further pronatalist action by the second administration. I focus on the second Trump administration's substantial body of pronatalist actions through its executive orders, funding decisions, legislative actions, and rhetoric. In order to further contextualize the Trump administration's pronatalist actions within a broader right-wing authoritarian shift, I then analyze its antinatalist actions, which serve as a necessary component of population-controlling policies under fascist rule.

## **Influence of Pronatalist Groups**

### *Christian Nationalists*

The Trump administration has increasingly utilized conservative Christian rhetoric, symbols, and policy positions to inform its approach towards pronatalism and other authoritarian political actions. Rather than reflecting the actual religious beliefs of Donald Trump, this adoption of a conservative Christian posture is primarily opportunistic and politically motivated. This image is reinforced by the open religiosity of much of his cabinet, where many members of his cabinet subscribe to some denomination of conservative Christianity (typically either

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<sup>178</sup> In this chapter, I use the term "Covid-era" to refer to the time between December of 2021 (the early stages of the Covid pandemic) to January of 2025 (the beginning of Trump's second presidential term). This timeframe in no way reflects the actual longevity of the Covid pandemic, and is only used for rhetorical purposes to denote the era of pronatalist policy at the height of the pandemic, between the two Trump administrations.

Catholicism or a strain of evangelicalism). The influence of conservative Christianity within the Trump administration is reflected by its central members and their strategic use of conservative Christian rhetoric to justify pronatalist actions.

The Trump administration's alignment with conservative Christianity provides a religious motivation and justification for pronatalist policy. The patriarchal, traditionalist, and pronatalist values central to conservative Christian ideology serve as a widespread cultural stratum from which the Trump administration finds support for its pronatalist policies. These values, when taken to an ideological extreme, can align with fascist values and veil authoritarian action under a religious justification. American political culture can be inculcated into fascist culture's diminution of women's autonomy and promotion of subservience to male authority through this increasing integration of far-right Christian beliefs into government.

Although Trump himself is culturally Christian and was raised Presbyterian, he does not belong to a church or seem to actively practice the faith.<sup>179</sup> However, he appeals to the religious right by opportunistically adopting religious values when they align with his political interests, and by appointing legitimately Christian administration members who promulgate their beliefs within government. While campaigning for his second term in 2023, at an evangelical political coalition event, Trump spoke extensively about his support for conservative Christians, focusing on his contributions to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* through the appointment of anti-abortion Supreme Court justices. He utilized zealous religious language, saying “No president has ever fought for Christians as hard as I have,” and describing his movement as a “righteous crusade.”<sup>180</sup> Trump has also pushed a narrative of persecution against conservative Christians, mimicking Great Replacement rhetoric and legitimizing anger against vague cultural enemies

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<sup>179</sup> PC(USA), “Once Claiming to Be Presbyterian, Trump Now Says He’s a ‘Nondenominational Christian.’”

<sup>180</sup> Vigdor, “In Pitch to Evangelicals, Trump Casts Himself as Christian Crusader Who Helped End *Roe v. Wade*.”

amongst his base. “We’re going to take our country back,” he said at a rally in 2024. He claimed that “law enforcement has been weaponized against Christians and conservatives... They're persecuting Catholics.”<sup>181</sup> Trump also aligns himself with benchmark issues for conservative Christians, including those concerning the LGBTQ+ community and abortion.<sup>182</sup>

By painting himself as a defender of conservative Christians and their values, Trump mobilized a fervent political base that supported him in his reelection.<sup>183</sup> An Associated Press survey in 2020 reported that around 80% of white evangelicals (although only around 50% of Catholics)<sup>184</sup> supported Trump.<sup>185</sup> However, a January 2026 survey by the Pew Research Center shows a decline, with only 69% of white evangelicals supporting Trump’s current presidency.<sup>186</sup> Despite this decline, Trump has continued to publicly promote right-wing Christianity within the administration, including being prayed over by Christian pastors in the Oval Office.<sup>187</sup>

Trump's embrace of conservative Christianity during his campaign has transformed into substantive action during his second administration and the further integration of Christian influence. Through religious pronatalist language, Trump’s anti-abortion stances have continued into his second term within a conservative Christian framework. In January of 2026, the White House declared Trump to be “the most pro-life president in history” by having “reversed the Radical Left’s war on family and restored a culture of life to our society– recognizing that all humans are created in the image of God.”<sup>188</sup> The previous day, on National Sanctity of Human

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<sup>181</sup> Times News, *LIVE*.

<sup>182</sup> Trump’s political actions against the LGBTQ+ community and his enabling of anti-abortion legislation will be elaborated upon in the latter sections of this chapter.

<sup>183</sup> Smith, “Jesus Is Their Savior, Trump Is Their Candidate. Ex-President’s Backers Say He Shares Faith, Values.”

<sup>184</sup> This lower proportion of Catholic supporters, compared to evangelical supporters, could be owed to Joe Biden’s faith as a Catholic, which could have attracted Catholic voters.

<sup>185</sup> Schor and Cray, “AP VoteCast.”

<sup>186</sup> Rotolo and Smith, *White Evangelicals Remain among Trump’s Strongest Supporters, but Less so than a Year Ago*.

<sup>187</sup> The White House, “President Donald Trump Meets with Members of the White House Faith Office.”

<sup>188</sup> The White House, “President Trump Is the Most Pro-Life President in History.”

Life Day, Trump released a statement praising the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* for both its protection of “the unborn” as well as its deregulation of abortion legislation to the state level. The statement affirmed Trump’s attempts to “promote the growth and success of America’s families” and “uphold the eternal truth that every human being is created in the holy image and likeness of God.”<sup>189</sup> The use of overtly religious language to justify restrictions on abortion rights and the encouragement of cultural pronatalism demonstrates the Trump administration’s continued use of conservative Christian rhetoric to inform federal decision-making.

Trump has also strengthened his administration’s ties to conservative Christianity through the appointment of a largely evangelical and Catholic cabinet, and by supporting conservative Christian groups. Members of Trump’s cabinet, through their visible and publicized associations with Christianity, reinforce the presence of conservative Christianity in government, often utilizing Christian symbols and practices in media-focused settings. Some of the Trump administration’s most senior or otherwise visible members openly display their Christian faith and orient their political positions around their religious beliefs.

Vice President JD Vance serves as a prominent example through the centering of his Catholic identity in his political actions and rhetoric. Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, publicly champions a pro-family<sup>190</sup> political approach that is staunchly anti-abortion.<sup>191</sup> In an interview with *The American Conservative*, Vance stated that his “views on public policy and what the optimal state should look like are pretty aligned with Catholic social teaching,” and that the Republican party should align itself more with social conservatism.<sup>192</sup> Vance’s Catholic faith also informs his anti-abortion stance, which is a focus of his political activism. In his speech at

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<sup>189</sup> The White House, “Presidential Message on National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 2026.”

<sup>190</sup> “Pro-family” in the conservative meaning; exclusively supporting a nuclear family consisting of a married heterosexual couple with children.

<sup>191</sup> Dias, “How JD Vance Found His Way to the Catholic Church.”

<sup>192</sup> Dreher, “J.D. Vance Becomes Catholic.”

the 2026 March For Life, Vance proudly shared how the administration had passed legislation allowing for the refusal of abortions by healthcare providers on the basis of faith, and reaffirmed its fight against “radical gender ideology.” Like Trump, he also mentioned “building a culture of life.” He told crowds, “one of the things I most wanted in the United States of America was more families and more babies,” and that they had “an ally in the White House.”<sup>193</sup> Trump and Vance’s creation of a pronatalist culture through rhetoric reflects the fascist mechanism of reshaping and constructing the culture of a society to become identical to that of the regime. Through their encouragement of conservative Christian anti-abortion sentiment, Trump and Vance endeavor to create not only a pronatalist political base or administration, but an absolutely pronatalist American culture.

This intention is demonstrated through the administration’s focus on Christian interests and practices. In 2025, Trump created the White House Faith Office, a reconfiguration of similar offices established and dissolved since the George W. Bush administration, with the intention “to strengthen American families.”<sup>194</sup> Although this office is not officially Christian, its leadership reflects a strong evangelical influence, which is present in other aspects of the Trump administration. Upon its establishment, Trump appointed Paula White-Cain, who served in his first administration as the head of the office’s predecessor, the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative. White-Cain, a prominent evangelical and former megachurch pastor, is a member of the New Apostolic Reformation, which endorses Christian dominionism. This ideology aims to achieve the full integration of Christianity into American government

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<sup>193</sup> Staff, “Full Text.”

<sup>194</sup> The White House, “Establishment of The White House Faith Office.”

institutions in order to enforce evangelical Christianity's "cultural and political control," which includes the promotion of pronatalism.<sup>195</sup>

White-Cain has also acted as Trump's personal faith advisor. Under her leadership, the White House Faith Office coordinates the government's religion-related policy and action.<sup>196</sup> This office, as with other Trump administration policies concerning the protection of religious freedom, often focus on the protection of Christian interests and policy-making through Christian perspectives. Trump has, through this office and his executive powers, focused on "eradicating anti-Christian bias," often in the form of protecting the interests of "pro-life" groups.<sup>197</sup> He has pardoned anti-abortion protestors, supported the denial of abortion care based on religious conviction, and facilitated extensive legislation defunding abortion as reproductive care.<sup>198</sup>

In addition to Vance and White-Cain, many other members of the Trump administration identify as conservative Christians as well, rallying behind the administration's anti-abortion stance. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt is one of the most visible members of the administration, acting as the official liaison between the administration and media. As a Catholic, she often leads prayers before press briefings, sharing these moments with the media and increasing the visibility of her faith in her official position. In a 2025 interview, Leavitt shared her opinion on the role of divinity in the Trump administration, saying, "I certainly believe in spiritual warfare... I think I saw it first-hand, especially throughout the campaign trail with President Trump... I think there certainly were evil forces. And I think that the president was saved by the grace of God on July 13th" (referring to an assassination attempt against Trump).<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Freethought Caucus, "Establishing an Office to Promote Religious Conservatism and Enable Federally Funded Discrimination"; Saiya, "The Varieties of American Christian Nationalism," 2025, 174, 175.

<sup>196</sup> The White House, "Establishment of The White House Faith Office"; The White House, "President Trump Announces Appointments to the White House Faith Office."

<sup>197</sup> The White House, "Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias."

<sup>198</sup> The White House, "President Trump Is the Most Pro-Life President in History."

<sup>199</sup> Vision Editorial Team, "A Devout Christian at the White House—Meet the Press Secretary."

After her announcement of her second pregnancy in December 2026, Leavitt has also been serving as a symbol of the administration's pronatalist stances.<sup>200</sup> She claims Trump has been “fostering a pro-family environment in the White House,” thus enabling her to pursue both her family and her career.<sup>201</sup>

Other senior Trump officials use their conservative Christian faith to justify the authority and actions of the administration, including Secretary of War Pete Hegseth (who has seven children) and former Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, both evangelicals.<sup>202</sup> Hegseth is a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, which preaches sermons at the Pentagon that use theology to justify acts of war by the US, and he often utilizes religious language that paints military involvement in the Middle East as divinely just and necessary.<sup>203</sup>

The Trump administration's pronatalist actions are also influenced by civilian-led Christian nationalist groups. Most notably, the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing Christian nationalist think-tank, has published agendas that have served to guide the Trump administration in its policy decisions.<sup>204</sup> The Heritage Foundation bases its policy research and recommendations on a “pro-family” philosophy that “the family is the foundation of American life.” However, this follows the typically exclusionary conservative Christian view of the family, promoting only “the natural family—virtuous, faithful, growing.” It claims: “Families are breaking down, the birthrate is collapsing,” which must be combatted through “creating a

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<sup>200</sup> Women who act as senior officials in the Trump administration act in defense of its pronatalist policies, despite their negative consequences on women's reproductive autonomy. Although understanding this irony would require knowing the genuine rationale of Trump's female administration members, their religious beliefs and the empowerment gained from their careers (even at the expense of the rights and safety of other women) may serve as their guiding motivations. This is, however, speculative.

<sup>201</sup> Marquez, “White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt Announces She's Pregnant with Second Child.”

<sup>202</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Religious Affiliation of Each Member of Congress*; Wong, “Pete Hegseth's Holy War”; Blackwood, “Pete Hegseth's 7 Kids.”

<sup>203</sup> Wong, “Pete Hegseth's Holy War.”

<sup>204</sup> Reproductive Freedom For All, “MEMO.”

pro-family culture.”<sup>205</sup> The Heritage Foundation considers its conception of the ideal American family (i.e. conservative, Christian, and pronatalist) as integral to its goal of shaping the US government to be distinctly Christian.<sup>206</sup> Rather than seeing these values as personal lifestyle decisions, the Heritage Foundation believes in the dissolution of the boundary between personal and civic identity; its rhetoric and policy recommendations aim to construct a conservative Christian government that acts within a singular, exclusionary ideology.

The Heritage Foundation has become increasingly influential over policy decisions across both Trump administrations through lobbying and policy recommendations, resulting in the integration of its Christian Nationalist beliefs into federal decisions.<sup>207</sup> Thus far, the Heritage Foundation’s publication, *Mandate for Leadership: the Conservative Promise*, has exerted immense influence over the Trump administration’s actions. Colloquially known as “Project 2025,” the publication is a 900 page document with hundreds of contributors detailing political guidance for a conservative administration beginning with the 2025 election.<sup>208</sup> One of its main goals is to “Restore the family as the centerpiece of American life and protect our children.”<sup>209</sup> It urges the “next conservative President” to fulfill this goal by “deleting the terms sexual orientation and gender identity... gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender awareness, gender-sensitive, abortion, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and any other term used to deprive Americans of their First Amendment rights out of every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists.”<sup>210</sup> It also commends the

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<sup>205</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “About Heritage.”

<sup>206</sup> Although the Heritage Foundation promotes “religious liberty,” it almost exclusively uses this in reference to the protection of Christian beliefs and interests. Herit. Found., “Religious Liberty.”

<sup>207</sup> Pilkington and Fischer, “Rightwing Group Pours Millions in ‘Dark Money’ into US Voter Suppression Bid.”

<sup>208</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*.

<sup>209</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 3.

<sup>210</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 4, 5.

overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and urges for strict abortion bans across America, describing such policies as “pro-life and pro-family.”<sup>211</sup>

Trump, the subject of Project 2025’s recommendations as the next conservative president, denied having knowledge of Project 2025’s content or contributors during his reelection campaign.<sup>212</sup> However, he holds extensive ties with several of its authors and has successfully implemented many of its policy recommendations. Russell Vought, who Trump appointed as director of the Office of Management and Budget during both administrations, authored a chapter of Project 2025 meant to propose reforms to the “Executive Office of the President of the United States.”<sup>213</sup> Other administrative connections to Project 2025 include Peter Navarro, Trump’s senior counselor for trade and manufacturing who authored many of the publication’s trade policy recommendations; Brendan Carr, chair of the Federal Communications Commission who authored the chapter detailing FCC reforms; and contributor Tom Homan, Trump’s “border czar.”<sup>214</sup> According to the American Civil Liberties Union, a total 140 members of Trump’s first administration contributed to Project 2025, including over 50 senior officials.<sup>215</sup>

Many of the policy recommendations concerning pronatalism and reproductive rights outlined in Project 2025 have been implemented by and influential towards the second Trump administration. It calls for “statutory bans on the federal funding of abortion,” which has been legally pursued under Trump alongside other withdrawals of federal funding for reproductive

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<sup>211</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 6.

<sup>212</sup> Hillyard and Marquez, “Trump Disavows Project 2025, but He Has Long-Standing Ties to Some Key Architects.”

<sup>213</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*; Wardwell, “The Key Project 2025 Authors Now Staffing the Trump Administration.”

<sup>214</sup> Wardwell, “The Key Project 2025 Authors Now Staffing the Trump Administration”; Am. Civ. Lib. Union, “Project 2025, Explained”; The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, xxviii, 765, 845.

<sup>215</sup> Am. Civ. Lib. Union, “Project 2025, Explained”; Reproductive Freedom For All, “MEMO.”

medicine.<sup>216</sup> It also called for “Abolishing the Gender Policy Council,” which was executed by Trump in January of 2026 under the executive order “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.”<sup>217</sup> The Department of War has also followed Project 2025’s recommendation to prohibit transgender individuals and those with gender dysmorphia from serving in the military.<sup>218</sup> Project 2025 further contains hundreds of other suggestions for anti-abortion, “pro-family” pronatalist policies and policies meant to eliminate the protection of queer individuals and pregnancy-capable people’s reproductive autonomy in the US, maintaining its perspective that “abortion is not health care,” and that a pro-family approach should be prioritized in US policy.<sup>219</sup> The pro-choice non-profit organization, Reproductive Freedom For All, states that “nearly 40% of the policies attacking reproductive freedom [within Project 2025] are either completed or in progress.”<sup>220</sup> The Trump administration’s adoption of many of the Heritage Foundation’s suggestions, along with its guiding conservative Christian principles, are extensive. Most concerning, Project 2025’s policy recommendations are supportive of authoritarian governance outside of coercive reproductive policy, including the consolidation of executive power and the diminishment of checks and balances through the elimination of several government institutions.<sup>221</sup> The underlying focus within Project 2025— that the US government should not only be highly

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<sup>216</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 6; Ollstein, “Trump Admin Moves Title X Family Planning Program Away from Contraception, toward Conception.”

<sup>217</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 62; The White House, “Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government.”

<sup>218</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 104; US Dep. War, “DOD.”

<sup>219</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 449–97.

<sup>220</sup> Reproductive Freedom For All, “MEMO.”

<sup>221</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*; Larson et al., *Understanding President Trump’s Relationship with the Heritage Foundation*.

conservative, but also act in defense of a singular group's ideology that promotes the restriction of bodily autonomy— is markedly authoritarian.

The Heritage Foundation and its publications serve as a major Christian nationalist influence on the Trump administration's policy decisions, but are also representative of the administration's growing association with Christian nationalist political thought in a broader ideological and symbolic manner. The administration's implementation of Christian nationalist policy recommendations, alongside its conservative Christian membership, demonstrates how its pronatalist policies are thoroughly informed by a Christian nationalist perspective. Through its associations with Christian Nationalism, the Trump administration obscures the line between religious and political belief, demonstrating a significant encroachment of religiosity into the US government. The administration's commitment to integrating Christian viewpoints on gender, family, and childbearing into federal politics is reflected in its associations with right-wing Christian individuals and groups, and its protection of their interests through policy. By using conservative Christianity to inform its pronatalist agenda, the Trump administration exhibits the fascist tendency to promote the regime's political values through well-established religious values. In aligning itself with patriarchy and traditionalism, the administration constructs a pronatalist culture through a religious framework. In doing so, it has legitimized its pronatalist agenda not only through political justifications, but also to its associations with the nonpareil authority of religious belief.

### *Tech Elites*

Unlike the immense influence of Christian Nationalism on the Trump administration's policy decisions, tech elites primarily influence pronatalist policy through societal and monetary

influence, rather than directly advising policy development. The influence of tech elites on government policy is also not as longstanding or widespread as that of Christian Nationalism, and their pronatalist interests are much less central in their relationship to the federal government than their economic interests. The tech elites closest to the Trump administration do not tend to openly advocate for its pronatalist policies, even though they generally align themselves with pronatalism outside of the federal government, as discussed in Chapter 2. Instead, their political support is most actively tied to economic policies that support their business endeavors.<sup>222</sup> Tech elites contribute to the population-shaping goals of the Trump administration not through their overt influence on policy, but by acting as visible pronatalists associated with the administration, even if promoting pronatalism is not their primary focus. The growing and unwavering support of tech elites for Trump is demonstrated through their public appearances and meetings with Trump, frequent praise, and financial and technological contributions to his administration.<sup>223</sup> Their pivotal role in aiding antinatalist deportation operations through the provision of technology serves as their main contribution to authoritarian action under Trump, rather than pronatalist efforts.

The Trump administration has catered to the interests of tech elites through policy decisions, mainly regarding economic deregulation, the promotion of the cryptocurrency and AI industries, and the removal of policies protecting diversity.<sup>224</sup> Most unconventionally, tech elite Elon Musk was appointed head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), established in the January of 2025, until its early dissolution that November.<sup>225</sup> In this role, Musk

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<sup>222</sup> The White House, "ICYMI."

<sup>223</sup> Collins, "Tech Elites Take Center Stage at Trump Inauguration."

<sup>224</sup> The White House, "President Trump, Tech Leaders Unite to Power American AI Dominance"; The White House, "Preventing Woke AI in the Federal Government"; The White House, "Promoting The Export of the American AI Technology Stack."

<sup>225</sup> The White House, "Establishing And Implementing The President's 'Department Of Government Efficiency'"; Empson, "That Doesn't Exist."

was responsible for the elimination of government programs and mass firing of federal workers in a rash effort to reduce the size and costs of the federal government.<sup>226</sup> Through DOGE, the Trump administration appealed to the conservative goal of reducing the size of government in favor of concentrating and expanding its power in the executive branch. Although this shift in power is often described using more traditionally conservative language that argues for deregulating power to states and small government, this rhetoric, under Trump, is used to obscure intentions of concentrating executive power.

Additionally, the Trump administration continues to use technology created by tech elites to aid in aggressive deportation methods, such as AI, facial recognition, and security technologies created by Palantir under Peter Thiel.<sup>227</sup> The expanding role of influence for tech elites in government has enabled the Trump administration to pursue the consolidation of executive power and extensive racially-motivated anti-immigration efforts. Although they have not influenced reproductive policy as Christian Nationalists have, they have significantly contributed to authoritarian action under the Trump administration without centering pronatalism.

### **Pre-2025 Pronatalism in Government**

The first Trump administration did not overtly center pronatalist policy and Christian pronatalist rhetoric, despite its later emphasis under the second administration. While Trump did emphasize a racialized (largely anti-Mexican) antenatalist anti-immigrant agenda, revoke Title X funding, and reinstate the Mexico City Policy (which was later overturned during the Biden

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<sup>226</sup> Empson, "That Doesn't Exist."

<sup>227</sup> González, "American Technofascism," 2, 3.

administration and then reinstated under the second Trump administration), these actions were not accompanied by other pronatalist endeavors on the same scale as the second administration.<sup>228</sup> These federal actions occurred mostly as distinctly anti-immigrant and anti-abortion efforts, rather than with overt antinatalist and pronatalist intent. The second Trump administration progressed from these significant— yet isolated— pronatalist actions into developing an expansive, coordinated pronatalist movement with unprecedented consequences on reproductive autonomy.

The first Trump administration enabled pronatalist action during the Biden administration through its emboldening of conservative politics and appointment of anti-abortion legislative officials. The resulting *Dobbs* decision and its generation of state-level abortion restrictions not only served as a major pronatalist accomplishment, but also as a foothold for future federal abortion restrictions. Consequently, the first Trump administration poised the US government for more overt pronatalist actions during Trump's second term. During the interim period between the two Trump administrations, Covid-era tax and welfare policies also introduced pronatalism into the sphere of political acceptability, although in a less coercive manner than abortion bans. The consequences of these Covid policies, though, contributed to traditionalist gender roles in a pronatalist framework.

### *Covid-Era Pronatalist Policies*

The Covid-era politically and socially introduced pronatalism into contemporary American politics. In addition to the introduction of welfare-based pronatalist legislation, this era also exacerbated the disproportionate burden of childcare and economic insecurity on women.

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<sup>228</sup> Kandel, *The Trump Administration's "Zero Tolerance" Immigration Enforcement Policy*; Karnik-Friedrich and Easter, *Restricting Title X Results in Cascading Harms*.

Although this era of pronatalist policy positively supported families during the height of the Covid pandemic, it highlighted the disproportionate impacts of increased economic and childcare burdens on women. It is also worth noting that the existence of supportive, non-coercive pronatalist policy does not negate the existence of coercive pronatalist policies, as seen in historically fascist states. In analyzing these Covid relief policies, I maintain the importance of recognizing not only their immediate benefits, but also their long-term social consequences as a primer for later pronatalist legislation that is more overtly associated with authoritarianism.

During the height of the Covid pandemic, women's careers were disproportionately affected by job loss and market decline. The American Bar Association reports that "in February 2021, women's labor force participation rate hit a low last seen in 1988."<sup>229</sup> The massive loss of professional opportunities prevented and discouraged many women from searching for new positions. Additionally, the closure of schools and childcare services pushed formerly working mothers to stay home. This shift from paid professional labor to unpaid domestic labor impacted women more than men; more mothers than fathers were unable to maintain their usual working hours due to childcare commitments, and also stopped searching for new work at a higher rate than fathers.<sup>230</sup>

In order to remediate Covid-related economic strain, the federal government introduced substantial pronatalist welfare policies for families with children. In the early and severe stages of the pandemic, the US government implemented three major responses that concerned familial wellbeing: the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (March 2020), Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (March 2020), and the American Rescue Plan Act (March

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<sup>229</sup> Martin, "Women and the Workplace — What We Learned from COVID."

<sup>230</sup> Martin, "Women and the Workplace — What We Learned from COVID"; Hayes and Lee, "Women, Work, and Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic," 2.

2021).<sup>231</sup> The Families First Coronavirus Response Act increased the accessibility of the SNAP program and increased some states' SNAP funding. Additionally, it increased the applicability of the Family Medical Leave Act to accommodate losses in childcare.<sup>232</sup> The CARES Act provided several forms of financial assistance to families, including “direct cash payments to lower-and middle-income Americans of \$1,200 for each adult and \$500 for each child.”<sup>233</sup> It also provided reimbursement for family-related leave from work, and gave financial assistance to childcare providers.<sup>234</sup> Similarly, the American Rescue Plan act increased child tax credits and expanded eligibility.<sup>235</sup>

Despite the aid that these policies provided, they did not specifically address the pandemic's impacts on women and their push into domesticity. Although economic support did allow women to regain their footing in the workforce, the overall social consequences of the pandemic on women and their expected roles as mothers and homemakers may be more long-term.<sup>236</sup> Additionally, the Covid pandemic did provide Trump a platform for pushing anti-immigrant and generally racist rhetoric, sparking xenophobic fears and speculation over the pandemic.<sup>237</sup> Overall, although the supportive pronatalist policies implemented during the pandemic did provide some assistance to families, they failed to do so in a holistic way that addressed disproportionate impacts on women.

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<sup>231</sup> Hayes and Lee, “Women, Work, and Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 5.

<sup>232</sup> Hayes and Lee, “Women, Work, and Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 6.

<sup>233</sup> U. S. Congr. Donald Norcross, “CARES Act.”

<sup>234</sup> Hayes and Lee, “Women, Work, and Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 6.

<sup>235</sup> US Dep. Treas., “Child Tax Credit.”

<sup>236</sup> Rollins, “New Research Reveals Women's Progress—and Ongoing Struggles—Since COVID-19.”

<sup>237</sup> Hayes and Lee, “Women, Work, and Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 11.

*The Dobbs Decision and Anti-Abortion Legislation*

Although Covid policies circumstantially helped to introduce a body of pronatalist legislation in the US, the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision and subsequent pronatalist legislation was a direct result of the first Trump administration's influence. Although the Dobbs decision occurred under the Biden administration, the decision cannot be fully divorced from the overt influence of the previous first Trump administration through the appointment of anti-abortion Supreme Court justices and alignment on Christian Nationalist stances on religion and reproduction.

In June 2022, the Dobbs decisions rescinded the federal right to abortion by allowing for state-level abortion restrictions.<sup>238</sup> As a result, the US has experienced severe backsliding in the reproductive autonomy and safety of pregnancy-capable people. There is great variability in the severity of post-Dobbs abortion-restricting legislation. Currently, abortion remains protected in twenty-five states. In five states, abortion access is left vulnerable with no legal protections. Thirteen states are poised to implement abortion bans, with abortion being entirely illegal and criminalized in an additional thirteen states.<sup>239</sup> This means that in half of states, abortion is either unprotected or actively criminalized. Nationally, this has resulted in one in four OBGYNs having had patients unable to access abortion care.<sup>240</sup> States that are hostile to or criminalize abortion are primarily located in the South and Midwest, where medical care can be difficult to access even prior to the shuttering of reproductive care clinics. In these states, pregnancy-capable people face increasingly limited healthcare access, forcing many to travel long distances (when capable) even when in need of immediate care.<sup>241</sup> The denial of care in heavily restrictive states has

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<sup>238</sup> Kaufman and Mayall, "One Year Later."

<sup>239</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights, *After Roe Fell*.

<sup>240</sup> Frederiksen et al., *A National Survey of OBGYNs' Experiences After Dobbs*, 3.

<sup>241</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights, *After Roe Fell*; Kaufman and Mayall, "One Year Later."

directly led to maternal deaths. In states with abortion bans, mothers are at least twice as likely to die from pregnancy and childbirth complications, compared to states with accessible abortion care.<sup>242</sup> In Texas, maternal mortality rose 56% after the implementation of a state-wide abortion ban in 2022, including a 95% increase for white women.<sup>243</sup> These statistics include the death of a pregnant teenager in Texas in 2024, who was repeatedly refused treatment for pregnancy complications until she died of sepsis.<sup>244</sup> The criminalization of abortion, which can act as a lifesaving procedure in unstable or unviable pregnancies, has had extensive negative consequences on the health of pregnancy-capable people, particularly for women of color.<sup>245</sup> In particular, Black women are 3.3 times more likely to die than white women in states with abortion bans.<sup>246</sup>

The collapse of federal abortion protections following the *Dobbs* decision stands as one of the most notable and impactful instances of pronatalist political action since the first Trump administration. The post-*Dobbs* wave of anti-abortion policies clearly embodies how authoritarian pronatalism is not life-affirming, but rather state and ideology-serving, in that it compromises autonomy and health for population growth. As a result of the *Dobbs* decision, healthcare providers in restrictive states have delayed care or refused treatment, leading to preventable fatalities. Some providers, out of fear of legal prosecution, have avoided giving lifesaving care to pregnant people experiencing medical emergencies. As of June 2023, 68% of OBGYNs reported that *Dobbs* had a negative consequence on their ability to provide care for

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<sup>242</sup> *Maternal Mortality in the United States After Abortion Bans, 1.*

<sup>243</sup> *Maternal Mortality in the United States After Abortion Bans, 2.*

<sup>244</sup> Presser and Surana, "A Pregnant Teenager Died After Trying to Get Care in Three Visits to Texas Emergency Rooms."

<sup>245</sup> Kaufman and Mayall, "One Year Later."

<sup>246</sup> *Maternal Mortality in the United States After Abortion Bans, 1.*

“pregnancy-related emergencies.”<sup>247</sup> As a consequence, states with abortion bans tend to have higher maternal death rates and lower accessibility of care.<sup>248</sup>

Abortion bans in the US are not only medically unsafe, they are also highly coercive. Forcing pregnancy-capable people to carry high-risk pregnancies presents adverse physical and psychological consequences.<sup>249</sup> Additionally, these bans have not decreased the number of abortions being performed in the United States. Rather, they have increased the number of abortions after an initial decline, while pushing people to pursue less safe, self-medicated or otherwise unregulated abortion methods.<sup>250</sup> Rather than protecting the lives of pregnancy-capable and children, post-Dobbs abortion restrictions increase the number of preventable pregnancy-related maternal and infant deaths while limiting reproductive autonomy.

The uncertain legal landscape for pregnancy-capable people and healthcare providers after Dobbs has also endangered people who have miscarried. Despite miscarriage being an involuntary and tragic pregnancy complication, post-Dobbs legislation that implies the personhood of fetuses has jeopardized people who go through such a traumatic medical event.<sup>251</sup> Several women have been prosecuted for pregnancy loss after the Dobbs decision, including an Ohioan woman in 2023, who was charged for a “fifth-degree felony of ‘abuse of a corpse’” after miscarrying in her home.<sup>252</sup> Laws that predate Dobbs have also been weaponized against people who have miscarried, such as those criminalizing harming a fetus, even though they were originally created to protect pregnant people.<sup>253</sup> Around 10-20% of pregnancies end in miscarriage, usually within the first trimester, meaning many more pregnancy-capable people

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<sup>247</sup> Frederiksen et al., *A National Survey of OBGYNs’ Experiences After Dobbs*, 3.

<sup>248</sup> Kaufman and Mayall, “One Year Later.”

<sup>249</sup> Worrell, “Denying Abortions Endangers Women’s Mental and Physical Health.”

<sup>250</sup> Mueller et al., “Effects of the Dobbs Decision on Abortion and Related Service Provision among Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics in the United States,” 11.

<sup>251</sup> Sherman, “I Didn’t Know What I Was Supposed to Do.”

<sup>252</sup> Sherman, “I Didn’t Know What I Was Supposed to Do.”

<sup>253</sup> Baldwin III, *Losing a Pregnancy Could Land You in Jail in Post-Roe America*.

could be affected by these legal precedents in the future.<sup>254</sup> The criminalization of abortion, which has led to the circumstantial prosecution of miscarriages and stillbirths, not only endangers the health of pregnancy-capable people, but also serves as justification for the invasive tracking of pregnancies and failed pregnancies.

The secondary consequences of the Dobbs decision, beyond its generation of many state-level abortion bans, have helped develop a culture of fear and persecution for pregnancy-capable people at the expense of their health. Not only are pregnant people discouraged and prevented from seeking abortion, which is widely considered necessary healthcare internationally, they are subject to increasing social judgement and unsafe medical conditions.<sup>255</sup>

Trump's role in the Dobbs decision was indirect yet impactful. During his first term, Trump appointed three Supreme Court justices (in order of their appointment: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett), allowing for the conservative majority that ruled in favor of the Dobbs decision.<sup>256</sup> Although Trump has been flippant on his support for a federal abortion ban, he has strongly commended the Dobbs decision and emphasized his contributions to it.<sup>257</sup> During his reelection campaign in 2023, Trump claimed that he empowered the Pro Life movement to be able to enact state-level abortion bans, saying in a social media post: "I was able to kill Roe v. Wade... Without me the pro Life movement would have just kept losing. Thank you President TRUMP!!!"<sup>258</sup> By not only endorsing, but taking credit for the Dobbs decision, Trump demonstrates his willingness to utilize coercive policy for political gain, even at the expense of reproductive autonomy.

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<sup>254</sup> Sherman, "I Didn't Know What I Was Supposed to Do."

<sup>255</sup> Kaufman and Mayall, "One Year Later"; Sherman, "I Didn't Know What I Was Supposed to Do."

<sup>256</sup> Bouie, "Trump Owns Dobbs and Everything That Comes With It."

<sup>257</sup> Colvin, "Trump Says States Should Decide Their Own Abortion Laws, Declines to Endorse National Ban"; Kapur, "Trump."

<sup>258</sup> Kapur, "Trump"; Trump.

### **Proposed Pronatalist Legislation**

Beyond abortion restricting policies, a culture of coercive pronatalism is being expressed through proposed state-level legislation. House Bill 754 of the Ohio state legislature, which is currently in committee, would require birth and death certificates for fetuses, including as a result of abortion. The bill also stipulates that the cause of “fetal death” be specified.<sup>259</sup> This bill, as with several state-level abortion restrictions, confers personhood and the legal protections of personhood upon fetuses. This reflects a decentering of the life of the person carrying the pregnancy in instances of stillbirth, miscarriage, and abortion. The focus in this bill is on the personhood of the fetus, and provides a legal basis for the weighing of the fetal life over that of the pregnant person. Additionally, its legalization of invasive tracking of pregnant people could be weaponized against those seeking abortive care, or those suffering unsuccessful pregnancies, potentially discouraging pregnant people from seeking medical care.

Most severely, a failed bill in Tennessee sought to criminalize abortion as homicide, allowing it to be punished under the death penalty in some cases. If it had been passed, the bill would have focused its prosecution on women, effectively allowing for the state to take their life as a consequence of choosing to not carry a pregnancy to term. Although this Tennessee bill was unsuccessful, several other abortion-restricting states have pursued similar bills to treat abortion as homicide.<sup>260</sup> Although these proposed bills are seemingly ironic, owing to their belonging to the Pro Life movement, they highlight a central truth to contemporary US pronatalism: the production of new lives is prioritized over the wellbeing of pregnancy-capable people, while also

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<sup>259</sup> The Ohio Legislature, “House Bill 754 | 136th General Assembly | Ohio Legislature.”

<sup>260</sup> Yancey-Bragg and Jones, “A Bill Aiming to Treat Abortion as Homicide Has Failed in Tennessee.”

intending to restrict the social, legal, and reproductive autonomy of women. Although these more extreme pronatalist proposals have not been adopted into legislation, they signify the increasing acceptability of coercive pronatalism. These proposed policies demonstrate a growing cultural tolerance for the overreach of government into matters of bodily autonomy through increased surveillance and the legal deprioritization of pregnant people's lives over the survival of their fetuses.

### **Pronatalism Under the Second Trump Administration**

The second Trump administration has brought a pronatalist agenda into its focus more so than the first administration. There has been an increase in the bulk of pronatalist discourse from the second administration, as well as an authoritarian shift in its political expression. Rather than being in general alignment with Trump's religiously and politically conservative base, this second iteration of pronatalism in the US government has grown more overtly associated with white supremacy, Christian supremacy, and right-wing authoritarianism. Compared to Covid-era pronatalism, this era of pronatalist policy and rhetoric is distinctively more coercive and has been enabled by the loss of the federal protection of abortion under *Roe v. Wade*. Additionally, recent pronatalist legislation's concurrence with a more extreme shift towards racialized antinatalist action show it to be instrumental to the development of authoritarianism under the second Trump administration.

This section will compile major pronatalist actions undertaken by the Trump administration, which exists in many forms; executive orders, funding directives, federal legislation, and judicial trials have all contributed to the pronatalist wave under Trump. There is also an underlying coerciveness to these pronatalist actions. Policies meant to expand access to

reproductive medicine and increase child tax credits, although supportive, coexist alongside legal attacks on women's health and LGBTQ+ identities. Many of these actions, empowered by the Dobbs decision, further harm women's health and legal equality, and contribute to a pronatalist culture that values the birth of children over the lives of women.

### *The "Fertility President": Superficially Supportive Pronatalism*

Both Trump himself and the members of his administration have taken political efforts to increase birth rates in the US. However, these efforts focus on directly increasing fertility, rather than developing the economic stability that could make raising children, rather than only birthing children, more feasible. Donald Trump has developed executive orders and policies meant to actualize his role as the self-proclaimed "fertilization president."<sup>261</sup> His administration emphasizes more supportive pronatalist measures aimed at creating economic and medical security for families, although such policies are often more symbolic than effective.

On February 18, 2025, Trump signed an executive order, "Expanding Access to In Vitro Fertilization," meant to decrease the cost of in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment in the hopes of making reproductive technology more accessible.<sup>262</sup> However, the Trump administration, through its mass lay-offs of federal workers, disbanded "the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Assisted Reproductive Technology Surveillance team," which had been tasked with studying several aspects of IVF treatment and providing its insights to prospective patients. Gauging the success of different IVF clinics across the country, estimating patients' success with treatment, and increasing accessibility were some of the team's contributions to fertility care.<sup>263</sup> In halting

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<sup>261</sup> Mahdawi, "The Anti-Women 'Fertilization President' Who Wants to Have It Both Ways."

<sup>262</sup> Expanding Access to In Vitro Fertilization.

<sup>263</sup> Lovelace Jr. and Brooks, "CDC's IVF Team Guttled Even as Trump Calls Himself the 'Fertilization President.'"

their production of IVF research and resources, the Trump administration has created barriers to reproductive medicine despite lowering initial costs.

The Trump administration— through the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Treasury— also increased federal employees’ coverage for fertility treatments.

Through negotiations with pharmaceutical companies, the Trump administration also offers reduced pricing on fertility medications through TrumpRx.gov, a government-owned drug distributor.<sup>264</sup> However, the privatization of fertility medicine by a political enterprise poses issues, similar to Trump’s expansion of IVF coverage; it is similarly a performative initiative, rather than one actually capable of increasing IVF accessibility. The reduced price of fertility drugs has little impact on the total cost of fertility treatments, which require multiple expenses and procedures.<sup>265</sup> According to the Trump Administration, “The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates women can save up to \$2,200 per cycle of fertility drugs.”<sup>266</sup>

Compared to the overall cost of IVF treatment, where a single cycle can cost tens of thousands of dollars, this potential reduction is minimally effective at increasing IVF accessibility.<sup>267</sup>

Importantly, the Trump administration has not pursued similar cost-saving efforts for contraceptive medicine through TrumpRx or other initiatives.<sup>268</sup> Rather than increasing the financial accessibility of reproductive medicine through investing in fertility and contraceptive drugs alike, the Trump administration has chosen to only support the side of reproductive health that serves a pronatalist agenda.

Additionally, Trump’s emphasis on increasing the use of IVF treatments through policy demonstrates his divergence with his conservative Christian base. Generally, the conservative

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<sup>264</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet,” October 16, 2025.

<sup>265</sup> Green, “Fertility Treatment given Special Emphasis as Trump Rx Site Goes Live.”

<sup>266</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet,” October 16, 2025.

<sup>267</sup> Green, “Fertility Treatment given Special Emphasis as Trump Rx Site Goes Live.”

<sup>268</sup> “TrumpRx.”

Catholics who support Trump are opposed to IVF because, similar to abortion, they see the unused embryos as the destruction of human lives.<sup>269</sup> This contradiction between Trump and a large portion of his supporters shows his opportunistic use of conservative Christian pronatalist rhetoric, as opposed to an actual adoption of their beliefs.

These actions were taken by the Trump administration because, in his own words, “we want more babies, to put it very nicely... so we’re pro-family.”<sup>270</sup> The language of being “pro-family,” in the context of contemporary US pronatalism, means the heterosexual, nuclear family promoted by Trump’s largely conservative Christian political base.<sup>271</sup> Although increasing the affordability of fertility treatments, as a pronatalist endeavor, does not inherently discourage women’s autonomy in reproductive decisions or enforce nationalistic ideals, these actions are taken to benefit only this narrow conception of the family, while other populations (i.e. queer people, immigrants, and more generally people of color) are simultaneously targeted with antinatalist policies and actions. This selectivity, coupled with policies that prioritize sheer population growth over quality of life, as well as racialized anti-natalist policies, makes contemporary US pronatalism bear resemblance to historically fascist pronatalism.

### *Federal Actions and Policies*

Trump has utilized executive orders as a unilateral means to pursue pronatalism, often drawing from the coercive legal framework established by the Dobbs decision to invigorate abortion-restricting legislation. On January 24th, 2025, Trump issued the executive order

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<sup>269</sup> Waters, “Why the IVF Industry Must Be Regulated”; Green, “Fertility Treatment given Special Emphasis as Trump Rx Site Goes Live.”

<sup>270</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet,” October 16, 2025.

<sup>271</sup> Kitchener, “White House Assesses Ways to Persuade Women to Have More Children.”

“Enforcing the Hyde Amendment.”<sup>272</sup> First passed in 1980, the Hyde amendment prohibits the use of federal funding, mainly through Medicaid and Medicare, for abortion. Its exceptions include abortion as a life-saving procedure, in instances of rape and incest (although only when “reported promptly to a law enforcement agency or public health service”), and when two physicians determine the pregnancy would result in long-term health consequences.<sup>273</sup> By severely limiting the provision of abortion through Medicaid and Medicare, the Trump administration has nationally eliminated reproductive care for populations who cannot pay privately. Trump’s executive order, in addition to reasserting the Hyde Amendment, repealed two Biden-era executive orders, “Protecting Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services” and “Securing Access to Reproductive and Other Healthcare Services.”<sup>274</sup> This prompted further action by the Department of Health and Human Services, which in January 2026 determined that DHHS-funded healthcare providers are entitled to refuse “abortion or sterilization procedures” on the basis of moral or religious belief.<sup>275</sup>

On January 27th, 2026, the Trump administration further restricted abortion through federal legislation by reinstating the Mexico City Policy, which prohibits the federal government from providing foreign assistance to NGOs that provide abortion or abortion-related care.<sup>276</sup> Also known as the “Global Gag Rule,” the Mexico City Policy by extension does not allow for government-funded NGOs to share information related to abortion care, or to promote its legalization in foreign governments.<sup>277</sup> Along with its reinstatement, the Trump administration greatly expanded the policy’s applicability. Funding restrictions now apply to organizations that

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<sup>272</sup> The White House, “Enforcing the Hyde Amendment.”

<sup>273</sup> Liu and Shen, “The Hyde Amendment.”

<sup>274</sup> The White House, “Enforcing the Hyde Amendment.”

<sup>275</sup> Stannard, *Safeguarding Federal Conscience and Related Protections in Health Care*, 2.

<sup>276</sup> *Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance*, vol. 91.

<sup>277</sup> Block et al., “The Mexico City Policy: Understanding the Latest Expansion of U.S. Foreign Aid Restrictions.”

enact Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)-related initiatives or perform gender-affirming care for LGBTQ+ people.<sup>278</sup>

The expansion of the Hyde Amendment and the Mexico City Policy exposes the coerciveness of contemporary pronatalism in the US. Both show that the Dobbs decision was not merely intended to allow states to determine the legality of abortion, but to provide a legal framework from which more extreme federal anti-abortion legislation could be produced. Additionally, the incorporation of anti-LGBTQ+ stances into anti-abortion legislation points to the autonomy-restricting goals of such policies. Restrictions on gender-affirming healthcare does not contribute to the medically safe and ethical promotion of births, in the same way anti-abortion legislation does not. Both do, however, restrict the bodily autonomy of individuals in order to enforce a pronatalist culture which constrains women's autonomy and excludes LGBTQ+ people. Pronatalism, in an authoritarian framework, necessitates this suppression in order to maintain the supremacy of male authority and social rigidity.

### *Persecution of LGBTQ+ People*

The Trump administration's legislation targeted at LGBTQ+<sup>279</sup> individuals primarily focuses on the restriction of gender identity and gender-affirming care, seeking to legally disenfranchise and socially eradicate non-cisgender populations. In doing so, the Trump

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<sup>278</sup> Block et al., "The Mexico City Policy: Understanding the Latest Expansion of U.S. Foreign Aid Restrictions."

<sup>279</sup> In this section, I use the term "queer" interchangeably with "LGBTQ+" as an umbrella term for either non-heterosexual or non-cisgender individuals.

administration legally and socially persecutes populations that physically and socially contradict authoritarian pronatalism's reinforcement of strict, traditionalist gender roles.<sup>280</sup>

Through legislation, the Trump administration has predominantly targeted transgender and non-cisgender populations, further in alignment with a conservative Christian perspective. As mentioned in my discussion of Trump's association with Christian nationalist rhetoric, the executive order "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" serves as an overt, codified encroachment on the bodily autonomy of queer individuals. Under this order, the Trump administration asserts its recognition of only two genders, and only when they align with biological sex. The existence of intersex people is omitted, except to call for the rescission of the 2021 policy "Supporting Intersex Students: A Resource for Students, Families, and Educators."<sup>281</sup> The order further denies the existence of gender identity, and refers to its integration into the understanding of the sex-gender relationship, reflected in several Biden-era policies, as "gender ideology." On this basis, the order rescinds dozens of other policies meant to promote the safety and legal equality of non-cisgender individuals, including non-cisgender youth.<sup>282</sup>

On January 28th, 2025, Trump created the executive order "Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation." This order claims that there is a widespread "maiming and sterilizing" of children (individuals under nineteen years old) for the purpose of sex reassignment, referring to "the use of sex hormones, such as androgen blockers, estrogen, progesterone, or testosterone, to align an individual's physical appearance with an identity that

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<sup>280</sup> This section does not seek to fully evaluate the impact of anti-LGBTQ+ policy on LGBTQ+ individuals or credibility of these policies' claims. Instead, I primarily focus this analysis on these policies' relevance to fascist ideology.

<sup>281</sup> The White House, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government."

<sup>282</sup> The White House, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government."

differs from his or her sex; and surgical procedures that attempt to transform an individual's physical appearance to align with an identity that differs from his or her sex."<sup>283</sup> The order directs federal agencies to rescind policies informed by standards of care for transgender individuals as dictated by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. It also directs the DHHS to reform literature on gender-affirming care to be in accordance with the executive order, and to eliminate federal funding for gender-affirming care.<sup>284</sup>

“Protecting Children” repeatedly refers to “sterilization” as a dangerous consequence of gender-affirming care for transgender and non-cisgender individuals.<sup>285</sup> This emphasis on the reproductive capacity of queer people, and its instrumentalization in justifying anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, is thoroughly aligned with eugenics and white-supremecy. Those against gender-affirming care will use the term “sterilization” to refer to sex reassignment surgery, which is only performed on consenting adults, rather than children. Additionally, puberty blockers alone do not cause infertility.<sup>286</sup> By misrepresenting medical facts to incite public fear and mistrust of what can be life-saving care, the Trump administration constructs a false narrative around a vulnerable minority group, and attributes blame to them for constructed social issues. Within a white Christian nationalist movement, the existence of transgender individuals is persecuted not only because of its failure to conform to a rigid, pronatalist conception of gender, but also because it threatens the movement's ability to coerce as many white, pregnancy-capable people as possible to have children.<sup>287</sup>

The language of both “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government” and “Protecting Children from Chemical

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<sup>283</sup> The White House, “Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation.”

<sup>284</sup> The White House, “Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation.”

<sup>285</sup> The White House, “Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation.”

<sup>286</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “‘Sterilization’ Rhetoric and Trans Kids.”

<sup>287</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “‘Sterilization’ Rhetoric and Trans Kids.”

and Surgical Mutilation” exhibit the fascist tendency to use fear-inducing language, in which the efforts of a regime are seen as combative against a larger societal evil. Both executive orders describe the existence and bodily autonomy of queer individuals as a threat to non-queer individuals, particularly cisgender women. As in a Christian nationalist and fascist framework, the protection of cisgender women is used to legitimize violence and hatred towards an out-group (LGBTQ+ individuals), and by extension reinforcing the identity of the in-group (cisgender individuals who subscribe to a traditionalist understanding of gender).

In seeking to prevent gender-affirming care for minors through misrepresentation and fear-mongering, the Trump administration attempts to legislate transgender and non-cisgender individuals out of existence. Their anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric does not seek to protect the lives of children or cisgender women; rather, these policies prioritize potential reproductive capacity, rather than their wellbeing.<sup>288</sup>

### *Defunding Reproductive Choice*

Under the Trump administration, federal departments and agencies have used funding (or a lack thereof) to promote pronatalism. In doing so, the administration has decreased the accessibility of reproductive autonomy by creating policy and financial barriers to contraception and abortion. As with anti-LGBTQ+ policies, these federal pronatalist initiatives have also obfuscated medical fact in favor of potentially increasing fertility rates. Both the manipulation of funding and information for the purpose of increasing birth rates are coercive means of pronatalism.

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<sup>288</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “‘Sterilization’ Rhetoric and Trans Kids.”

For the 2027 fiscal year, the DHHS proposed the elimination of \$286.479 million of funding for family planning programs, and \$107.8 million of funding for teen pregnancy prevention.<sup>289</sup> This reduction represents the entirety of the Title X family planning program, which nationally provides a variety of reproductive care to low income patients.<sup>290</sup> The Trump administration has previously withheld \$27.5 million of Title X funding, although it was later released to clinics, likely as a result of being subject to lawsuits.<sup>291</sup> In March of 2025, the Trump administration rescinded millions of dollars in funding from Planned Parenthood clinics, which are partially funded through Title X.<sup>292</sup> In December of 2025, the Trump administration returned these withheld funds.<sup>293</sup> However, the nine month-long period of funding cuts caused the closure of clinics nationwide, effectively cutting off financially vulnerable populations from medical care. The clinics affected by the funding cuts were subject to DHHS investigation in order to gauge their compliance with anti-DEI and anti-immigration Trump administration policies.<sup>294</sup>

The Trump administration has also more overtly tried to shift Title X from a source of reproductive autonomy to a tool of state-sponsored pronatalism. In July of 2025, the Trump Administration also developed a plan to reallocate Title X funds in order to develop an “infertility training center” intended to help women who struggle with infertility to become pregnant through largely pseudoscientific methods, such as restorative reproductive medicine.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees: Fiscal Year 2027*, 428.

<sup>290</sup> Ollstein, “Trump Admin Moves Title X Family Planning Program Away from Contraception, toward Conception.”

<sup>291</sup> Ollstein, “Trump Admin Cuts Tens of Millions from Planned Parenthood.”

<sup>292</sup> Ollstein, “Trump Admin Cuts Tens of Millions from Planned Parenthood.”

<sup>293</sup> Ollstein, “Lawsuit Dismissed after Trump Admin Quietly Restored Tens of Millions to Planned Parenthood.”

<sup>294</sup> Ollstein, “Lawsuit Dismissed after Trump Admin Quietly Restored Tens of Millions to Planned Parenthood.”

<sup>295</sup> Kitchener and Stolberg, “Under Trump, a New Focus for a Birth Control Program: Helping Women Get Pregnant.”

Through such an initiative, the goals of Title X shifts from providing contraception, abortion, and a variety of reproductive medicine services to only focusing on increasing fertility.

In its new guidelines for Title X clinics, the DHHS promotes a variety of pronatalist rhetoric that contradicts previous reproductive care standards. In regards to contraception, the guidelines aim to reduce “overmedicalization in health care,” suggesting that birth control usage contributes to widespread fertility problems and long-term health issues.<sup>296</sup> These new guidelines also prohibit the use of Title X funding for abortion, in accordance with new legislation passed under the Trump administration.<sup>297</sup> The new DHHS budget guidelines also reflect Christian nationalist and anti-immigration policies pursued by the Trump administration. The DHHS funding restrictions include ending DEI-based programs, and any programs that could “facilitate or incentivize illegal immigration.”<sup>298</sup> New Title X guideline priorities include to “Protect parental rights to direct the religious upbringing of their children,” likely signifying the refusal of gender-affirming or abortion care for minors without parental consent.<sup>299</sup> Although the guidelines use vague language, the inclusion of these provisions demonstrates the Trump administration’s willingness to promote pronatalism primarily within white Christian groups. It is also worth noting that these changes to Title X are in alignment with changes recommended by the Heritage Foundation in Project 2025. The new DHHS guidelines for Title X funding recipients include Project 2025’s recommended emphasis on “fertility awareness”<sup>300</sup> as a method of family planning

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<sup>296</sup> Office of Population Affairs, *Notice of Funding Opportunity: Title X Family Planning Services Grants*, 12.

<sup>297</sup> Office of Population Affairs, *Notice of Funding Opportunity: Title X Family Planning Services Grants*, 10.

<sup>298</sup> Ollstein, “Trump Admin Moves Title X Family Planning Program Away from Contraception, toward Conception”; Office of Population Affairs, *Notice of Funding Opportunity: Title X Family Planning Services Grants*, 7.

<sup>299</sup> Office of Population Affairs, *Notice of Funding Opportunity: Title X Family Planning Services Grants*, 8; Moira, “Trump Has Turned Title X Upside Down.”

<sup>300</sup> The method of tracking days of potential fertility during the menstrual cycle to avoid or plan pregnancy.

alternative to birth control and the “religious freedom of health care workers” (meaning the right to refuse reproductive care on the basis of religious belief).<sup>301</sup>

The congruence between conservative Christian perspectives on reproductive care and the Trump administration’s policies affecting federally funded reproductive care show a disregard for autonomy in order to align with religious or state-serving pronatalism. Rather than promoting accessible and reliable reproductive care, the Trump administration creates financial chaos, physical barriers, and combative systems that prevent pregnancy-capable people from exercising autonomy. This is exacerbated by the erasure of research and information pertaining to contraceptives.

In January of 2025, the CDC removed information regarding LGBTQ+ health from its website, in compliance with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation created by the Trump administration.<sup>302</sup> After harsh backlash from media and scientific communities, some information pages were later restored. However, information regarding H.I.V. data and contraception guidelines remain missing. Attempts to search for information regarding abortion and transgender healthcare are similarly inaccessible. As a consequence of Trump’s executive orders prohibiting “gender ideology,” information and research concerning topics and groups of people that do not align with its pronatalist agenda have been removed from the CDC website.<sup>303</sup> Months later, the Trump administration cut the CDC’s team tasked with setting guidelines for the safe usage of contraceptives. The team’s research helped to guide healthcare professionals in counseling patients on contraceptive use, which proved immensely helpful in patients with complex medical backgrounds.<sup>304</sup> In cutting this research, the Trump administration further endangers the health of

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<sup>301</sup> The Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, 491.

<sup>302</sup> Gardner, “Public Health Information Pulled Offline in Response to Trump Orders.”

<sup>303</sup> Mandavilli and Rabin, “C.D.C. Site Restores Some Purged Files After ‘Gender Ideology’ Ban Outcry.”

<sup>304</sup> Riddle, *After CDC Cuts, Doctors Fear Women Will Lose Access to Contraception Research*.

pregnancy-capable people by restricting the effectiveness of their reproductive care in an effort to promote pronatalism.

The censorship of medical information and research contradictory to the Trump administration's pronatalist agenda is extremely concerning. Not only does it endanger women and LGBTQ+ individuals who benefit from such information, it is also an example of the suppression and destruction of factual information for a political purpose. This is a distinctively authoritarian action, in that the authority of established science is usurped by state authority, thus eliminating even factual ideological competition to the regime's ideology.

### **Antinatalism**

Pronatalism and antinatalism, as population-shaping mechanisms used by fascist regimes, work jointly to form a homogenized state-serving population. Connected by their shared role in fascist movements, pronatalism and antinatalism are distinctively present in the Trump administration. Under the second Trump administration, antinatalist efforts have become a focus of domestic policy meant to demonize non-white populations, effectively reinforcing white supremacy and justifying a pronatalist agenda.

The Trump administration uses historically fascist language and imagery to promote pronatalism and corresponding antinatalist stances in an attempt to physically and ideologically construct a white, populous America. At times, the Trump administration explicitly articulates its pronatalist stances by directly encouraging Americans to have more children. However, its pronatalist goals are also extensively present through fascistic language, dogwhistles, and imagery that implicitly reinforces racialized pronatalism.

*Authoritarian Anti-Immigration Rhetoric*

Pronatalist rhetoric in the US is bolstered by the usage of other historically fascist anti-immigrant ideas and language. When accompanied by fear-provoking language and Great Replacement-derived conspiracies, pronatalism becomes legitimized. Donald Trump has extensively used anti-immigrant rhetoric that mimics the language of not only the Great Replacement conspiracy, but also of historic fascist leaders. In a historically fascist context, the use of anti-immigrationism as a rhetorical device for justifying pronatalist politics adopts racialized language, which has been co-opted by Trump. He has, throughout his political campaigns and during his presidencies, repeatedly used the language of fascist leaders in regards to immigration. During his second presidential campaign in 2023, at a Nevada rally, Trump claimed that immigrants were:

“They’re poisoning the blood of our country— that’s what they’ve done. They poison mental institutions and prisons all over the world. Not just in South America, not just the three or four countries that we think about, but all over the world. They’re coming into our country from Africa, from Asia— all over the world. They’re pouring into our country. Nobody’s even looking at them, they just come in. The crime is going to be tremendous. The terrorism is going to be tremendous.”<sup>305</sup>

In this context, immigration becomes synonymous with non-white people. Trump exclusively mentions continents that are associated with non-white populations, and uses racialized language that overtly draws from eugenicist and fascistic concepts. The notion of “blood poisoning” is lifted from *Mein Kampf*, in which Hitler claimed that relationships between inferior and superior races result in the downfall of superior races because of a dilution of racial

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<sup>305</sup> POLITICO, *Trump Says Immigrants Are “Poisoning the Blood of Our Country”*; Gibson, “Trump Says Immigrants Are ‘Poisoning the Blood of Our Country.’ Biden Campaign Likens Comments to Hitler.”

purity.<sup>306</sup> Trump similarly suggests that non-white people— specifically, non-white immigrants— are interfering with the security of the US, and pose an inherent threat to white Americans, painting them as mentally ill and violent. During his second presidential campaign, this language became prominent in several of Trump’s interviews and speeches, focusing on the dehumanization of immigrants, even referring to some immigrants as animals.<sup>307</sup>

Through this rhetoric, Trump constructs immigrants, particularly non-white immigrants, as a threat to US racial purity (whiteness), which must be combatted. Anti-immigration policies and increasingly aggressive actions taken by ICE are a component of this strategy to deter non-white populations from entering the US. In addition to antinatalist rhetoric, Trump has also opened space for pronatalism focused on white Americans as another strategy for securing white racial hegemony in the US.

The detention and mistreatment of non-white population in ICE detention demonstrates the racial selectivity of pronatalism under Trump. While US citizens who fit into a white Christian nationalist framework are subjects of “protective” pronatalist legislation, racially profiled non-citizens are targets of severely abusive treatment.<sup>308</sup> Decided in September of 2025, the Supreme Court case *Noem v. Vasquez-Perdomo* allows ICE agents to racially profile people in order to stop and possibly detain them. As a result, communities of people of color have been facing violent arrests with no probable cause, targeted only because of their ethnicity<sup>309</sup>

Meanwhile, white immigrants have been protected by the Trump administration. Trump set a limit of 7,500 immigrants that can be admitted into the US per year, compared to 125,000 under the Biden administration. However, he has prioritized the admission of white South

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<sup>306</sup> Gibson, “Trump Says Immigrants Are ‘Poisoning the Blood of Our Country.’ Biden Campaign Likens Comments to Hitler.”; Gabriel, “Trump Escalates Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric With ‘Poisoning the Blood’ Comment.”

<sup>307</sup> Astor, “Trump Doubles Down on Migrants ‘Poisoning’ the Country.”

<sup>308</sup> “Racial Profiling Rampant After Supreme Court Ruling.”

<sup>309</sup> “Racial Profiling Rampant After Supreme Court Ruling.”

Africans, on the false justification that they have been subject to discriminatory violence in their home country.<sup>310</sup> By favoring white immigrants from South Africa, Trump subtly appeals to White Supremacist beliefs, by favoring an ethnic group responsible for White Supremacist apartheid.

### *ICE and Antinatalism*

In addition to being used as a tool of racism, ICE has been used to harm women and girls by causing extensive harm to their wellbeing in detention. In ICE custody, women and children are held for months under inhospitable conditions. There are innumerable instances of abuse in ICE detention facilities. Neglect of basic physical necessities, such as food, water, and medical care, as well as outright physical abuse have been widely reported. Instances of sexual abuse of detainees by officers and guards have also been reported.<sup>311</sup>

Although official ICE policy prohibits the detention of pregnant, postpartum, and nursing individuals, this policy is routinely contradicted.<sup>312</sup> Pregnant women in ICE custody have reported medical neglect and abuse, including being shackled, confined, malnourished, and denied necessary medicines.<sup>313</sup> Women have described being restrained while actively miscarrying, sometimes as a result of extreme physical neglect and mental duress, and being refused medical treatment for miscarriages.<sup>314</sup> ICE has, however, continued to refuse to document the number of pregnant, postpartum, and nursing individuals it has in detainment, even refusing

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<sup>310</sup> Santana, "Trump Limits Annual U.S. Refugees to 7,500. It'll Be Mostly White South Africans."

<sup>311</sup> Gassama, "Detained Immigrants Detail Physical Abuse and Inhuman Conditions at Largest Immigration Detention Center in the U.S."

<sup>312</sup> Sophia Venables, "What's Happening to Pregnant, Postpartum, and Nursing Women in ICE Custody?"

<sup>313</sup> Silva, "Pregnant Women Describe Miscarrying and Bleeding out While in ICE Custody, Advocates Say."

<sup>314</sup> Silva, "Pregnant Women Describe Miscarrying and Bleeding out While in ICE Custody, Advocates Say."

to provide such information to Congress.<sup>315</sup> The extent to which these individuals are being held and abused is therefore unclear.

Additionally, all unaccompanied pregnant minors in ICE detention are being sent to a single facility with inadequate medical resources. Located in San Benito, Texas, the facility houses pregnant girls, many of whom have high-risk pregnancies, with at least half resulting from rape.<sup>316</sup> Girls as young as thirteen are being held in this facility, which is owned by a private for-profit company.<sup>317</sup> Although there are multiple facilities designated to hold pregnant children in ICE custody, all minors are currently being deflected to this singular facility. By being moved to Texas, these minors have incredibly constrained legal access to abortion, and likely no actual access to abortion care.<sup>318</sup> Jonathan White, a first-term Trump official who ran the Office of Refugee Resettlement's program for unaccompanied children, stated that the detainment of these minors in Texas "is 100% and exclusively about abortion."<sup>319</sup> During the first Trump administration, girls were repeatedly denied abortion at the facility, and were emotionally manipulated by its director, through involuntary counseling and "pleading," to reconsider terminating their pregnancies.<sup>320</sup>

The egregious abuse of pregnant women in ICE detention, as directed by the Trump administration, clearly demonstrates that the administration's pronatalist endeavors are selective and motivated by state interests, rather than with the intention to promote or protect human life.

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<sup>315</sup> Strum, "Pregnant Women in ICE Detention Suffer Miscarriages, Neglect."

<sup>316</sup> Mizuguchi, "Trump Administration Sends Pregnant Unaccompanied Minors to Texas Shelter Flagged as Medically Inadequate."

<sup>317</sup> Betancourt, *The Trump Administration Is Sending Underage Migrant Girls Who Are Pregnant to This Texas Shelter*.

<sup>318</sup> Mizuguchi, "Trump Administration Sends Pregnant Unaccompanied Minors to Texas Shelter Flagged as Medically Inadequate."

<sup>319</sup> Betancourt, *The Trump Administration Is Sending Underage Migrant Girls Who Are Pregnant to This Texas Shelter*.

<sup>320</sup> Betancourt, *The Trump Administration Is Sending Underage Migrant Girls Who Are Pregnant to This Texas Shelter*.

Additionally, the severity of fascist rhetoric used by the administration to justify such abuse is further proof of the centrality of race in determining the administration's application of either pronatalist or antinatalist measures. By illegally detaining and abusing pregnant women, the Trump administration exhibits unmistakably authoritarian impulses to systematize the abuse and control of a scapegoated population.

The Trump administration's racialized antinatalist efforts have culminated in an attempt to overturn the fourteenth amendment, which establishes birthright citizenship. On the first day of his second term, Trump signed an executive order titled "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship." The executive order claims that birthright citizenship does not extend to those born in the US to undocumented parents or parents with temporary residency.<sup>321</sup> In response, the ACLU and other civil liberties groups have filed a lawsuit against the administration, resulting in the ongoing Supreme Court case *Barbara v. Donald J. Trump*.<sup>322</sup> By intending to strip constitutionally-ensured citizenship from the children of immigrants, the administration is attempting to legalize the violent expulsion of a much larger non-white population. Trump's determination to end birthright citizenship shows how the administration, as in other right-wing authoritarian regimes, only desires to have more children belonging to a nationalized, racialized in-group. Open hostility towards non-white mothers and children demonstrates that Trump's pronatalism is not intended to protect the lives of infants, children, or pregnant people. Rather, it is a means of nation-serving population control, often at the expense of lives deemed undesirable to the administration.

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<sup>321</sup> The White House, *Protecting The Meaning And Value Of American Citizenship*.

<sup>322</sup> Wofsy, *Trump's Birthright Citizenship Executive Order*.

## **Conclusion**

Contemporary US pronatalism mimics fascistic pronatalism because of its coexistence with other fascistic mechanisms and rhetoric being exercised to homogenize the US population. It is being used (alongside abortion criminalization, anti-immigration raids, etc.) to create a disproportionately white national identity, while reinforcing patriarchal values that diminish the authority of women's autonomy over reproductive decisions. Additionally, pronatalist rhetoric from both social and political spheres utilizes fascistic imagery and language. The Trump administration's pronatalist policies, rhetoric, and imagery bear a striking resemblance to that of historical fascist regimes, bolstered by uniquely American pronatalist groups with nationalistic beliefs. Pronatalism is being constructed as an omnipresent social and political force in the US, abetted by a growth in Christian Nationalism, the influence of tech elites, and the normalization of racist, eugenicist rhetoric in political contexts. The use of pronatalism by the Trump administration demonstrates, alongside other extensive historical similarities, its aspirations to authoritarianism through the use of historically fascist mechanisms and rhetoric.

## **Conclusion**

In the US, a coercive pronatalist culture is being constructed. Socially, economically, politically, legally, and medically—pronatalism is being implemented as a component in a larger right-wing authoritarian political movement heavily entwined with Christian Nationalism and White Supremacy. Pronatalism, under these influences, is becoming a widespread force that has stolen reproductive autonomy from millions of women. In doing so, women's abilities to decide their own reproductive decisions, as well as the direction of their lives, has been crippled. Under the

Trump administration, pronatalism has grown beyond being a tool to create economic stability. It has become an instrument of authoritarianism, intended to destroy the individuality and independence of women and reshape their identities in accordance with conservative, Christian, white supremacist ideals.

In Chapter 1, I demonstrated how fascist regimes have historically used policies to restrict the reproductive and social rights of women. The criminalization of birth control and abortion, the dismissal of women from professional life, and the pursuit of racial homogeneity through vicious antinatalism are all characteristics of fascist pronatalism. All of these indicators of right-wing authoritarian rule are present in the US today, and are being used in a targeted attempt to coerce women— particularly, white women— into motherhood.

However, pronatalism is only a single component of the rise of right-wing authoritarianism in the US. Although I have briefly discussed antinatalism as another piece of this movement, there is still a multitude of troubling rhetoric and policies that are deserving of attention. The restriction of voting rights, increased isolationism, erratic and combative foreign policy, judicial overreach, and deployment of armed forces against civilians have all contributed towards the Trump administration's fascistic goals.<sup>323</sup>

Culturally fascistic behaviors are also present in the US under Trump. Just as fascist movements adopt cultural characteristics from the nation they seek to control, the Trump administration has drawn from uniquely American conservative ideologies in order to rally support for and justify its pronatalist agenda. The extensive incorporation of Christian Nationalist belief and rhetoric into the administration and its pronatalist policies has justified antiabortion legislation, as well as an intense patriarchal culture, in the Trump administration.

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<sup>323</sup> Lopez, "Trump Signs a New Executive Order on Voting. Experts Say He Lacks the Authority"; Haddock and Roy, "ICE and Deportations: How Trump Is Reshaping Immigration Enforcement"; Baer and Brown, "Unstrategic Ambiguity."

The reverence for male authority and its conflation with divinity has saturated the administration as well, reflected in the unwavering and excessive praise of Trump by his political allies, as well as Trump unabashedly presenting himself as a pseudo-religious authority figure.<sup>324</sup> By literally depicting himself as the Pope and Jesus, despite fighting over foreign policy with the Catholic Church, Trump has embraced this confrontational, authoritative image meant to provoke his opposition and embolden his supporters.<sup>325</sup> Trump has also capitalized on anti-immigration rhetoric, drawing extensively from eugenicist and racist rhetoric that justifies the scapegoating of non-white communities for domestic issues.<sup>326</sup> Through his extensive dehumanization of non-white immigrant communities, by both spreading inflammatory untruths and relying on stereotypes, he has helped construct a conservative culture hostile to marginalized groups.

The increase in white supremacy and Christian nationalism-informed pronatalism, most importantly, is a facet of much broader right-wing authoritarian shift in the US government. Under the second Trump administration, the US has experienced rapid and severe democratic backsliding, which has been widely reported on in several political science publications. According to the Century Foundation's 100-point democracy metric, the US dropped from a democratic evaluation of 79 in 2024 to 57 in 2025. They report that the consolidation of government power to the executive branch and the threatening of the rights of immigrants and political dissidents are two primary concerns for the government's democratic decline.<sup>327</sup> Similarly, the Varieties of Democracy Institute, in its 2026 report, also cites executive overreach as a cause for the undermining of the rule of law. The second Trump administration, they note,

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<sup>324</sup> Oliver, "Blanche Invokes Trump 'Love' When Asked about Staying on after Bondi."

<sup>325</sup> The White House, Post; Rogers, "Trump Posted a Picture of Himself as Jesus. Now He's Trying to Explain It Away."

<sup>326</sup> Gold, "Trump's Remarks on Migrants Illustrate His Obsession With Genes"; Gabriel, "Trump Escalates Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric With 'Poisoning the Blood' Comment"; Gibson, "Trump Says Immigrants Are 'Poisoning the Blood of Our Country.' Biden Campaign Likens Comments to Hitler."

<sup>327</sup> Schenkkan and Cambanis, "Century's New Democracy Meter Shows America Took an Authoritarian Turn in 2025."

has also caused the most dramatic drop in their Liberal Democratic Index (LDI) in American history.<sup>328</sup> Specifically, they point to the Trump administration's dictation of government funding (a congressional power), unqualified federal appointments unchecked by the Senate, and the gutting of Congress-created agencies.<sup>329</sup> Through these reports, the sharp increase in executive overreach and consolidation of power under Trump is clear.

If the Trump administration is not fully recognized and condemned as creating a right-wing authoritarian movement that aspires to fascism, then its fascist mechanisms can be more easily fulfilled. Passivity that results from the normalization of the administration's actions only further enables its coercive political actions. Recognizing how the Trump administration has used pronatalism in a right-wing authoritarian, fascist way is a valuable step towards holding its harmful policies accountable, yet it is one that should prompt further analyses and criticisms of the administration.

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<sup>328</sup> Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026: Unraveling the Democratic Era?*, 33.

<sup>329</sup> Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026: Unraveling the Democratic Era?*, 35.

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