

The Contribution Conundrum of Republican Female Congressional Donors

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Although the number of female congressional donors has grown overtime, Republican female
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The number of female political donors has been increasing overtime. According to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, the number of female donors rose from 382,747 in 2012 to over 1.4 million in 2020. Although the number of female Republican donors has followed this increase, their numbers lag well behind the number of Democratic female donors. In 2016, 155,305 women contributed

Democratic female congressional donors and what do those differences tell us about their participation?

Female Congressional Donors

Early studies of political donors identified a gender gap between men and women when it came to making campaign contributions (Verba, Schlozman, Brady 1995; Brown, Powell, and Wilcox 1995). However, a 1996 survey of congressional donors also revealed a gender gap in both frequency of participation and in motivations for contributing.¹ Francia et. al. (2003) 1996 congressional donor survey demonstrated women are less driven by material benefits and are more likely to contribute in pursuit of purposive goals in accordance with specific issues, like abortion rights and environmental protections (55). This early survey also showed higher participation rates for Democratic women along with indications this might be because of more developed fundraising networks within the Democratic Party, maintained by group organizations in Democratic party help elect Democratic female candidates and promote by providing donors with clear targets for their contributions and a means to channel contributions to those targets (Thompson and Swers 2015; Cr

While structural asymmetries are likely culprits for the ongoing gender gaps prevalence in the Republican Party, it may also be the case that for Republican female donors, their party identity dominates their motivations more so than gendered considerations and that this is due to ideological asymmetries between the two parties. Previous work suggests Republican congressional donors are different from Democratic congressional donors. Not only are Republican donors more ideologically homogenous (Grossman and Hopkins 2016), they are also

about expectations when coupled with the known differences between donors in each party that have already been discussed. Using data from the American National Election Study in 2012

(ANES), Blane and Cosses (2016) find Republican women are 50% more conservative than Republican men with respect to subsidized child care, education spending, health care, gay rights, and the

millionaire tax. Additionally, they discovered an especially large gap for gun control with

Republican women much more disposed to support it. They uncovered no significant differences

between Republican female and male citizens on abortion, defense spending, or immigration but

when they compared female and male Republican primary voters, they found females to be more

conservative on abortion than males. In a closer examination of heterogeneity among Republican

women using both mediation analysis and structural equation modeling primary voters, they found

donors are actually more conservative than Republican male congressional donors, especially when it comes to views of modern sexism.²

Data and Methods

Using data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES) of 2016 and 2018, we examine how policy and partisan preferences differ between Republican female congressional donors and Democratic female congressional donors as well as between Republican female congressional donors and Republican male congressional donors. We utilize a series of logistic regressions to determine how these preferences correspond to membership in each group so that group differences can be compared and so that the decision to contribute to a congressional campaign by each group of donors

These choices are intentional as the outcome variable reflects both a behavior, the choice to contribute to a congressional campaign, as well as group membership. The logic is to see if issue positions affect the likelihood of contributing and in the case of the first set of models, contributing to one team or the other. In effect, when the predicted probabilities are examined, the distance between the opinions of both groups will be clear as well as what leads an individual to contribute as a Republican female donor. It is important to note that not only are specific issues examined but specific sub-positions under the heading of larger issues, such as abortion at 20 weeks or solutions to immigration, such as a border wall, are in question. This means that the likelihood of one very specific issue stance drastically impacting the probability of a Republican female contributing to a congressional campaign will be low because behavior can rarely be attributed to one very specific stance and only that stance within a particular issue category. In other words, someone might be pro-life and that might drive behavior but once nuances in the law are examined we can expect that probability to be watered down a bit in terms of its influence on behavior even for strong single-issue individuals. The good news is that the models can tell us if our respondents have nuanced views within larger issue categories that might reflect more moderation than simple questions about immigration or abortion might cover up. This nuance is important for our purposes because we want to see if the positions or whether they in fact reflect greater issue heterogeneity than male Republican congressional donors in their party. We are also examining whether, on some issues, they might not be so distant from Democratic female donors who contribute to congressional campaigns as one might imagine for this set of Republicans. If so, this would be surprising because previous research suggests these Republican female donors likely rank among the most conservative donors in the

Party, because they are congressional donors (La Raja and Schaffner 2016; Grossman and Hopkins 2016).

We include a number of control variables in all of the models. Whether or not someone chooses to contribute to a campaign is often dependent upon their income (*Family Income*) and ideological preferences (*Ideology*). Previous work suggests donors are often wealthier and more ideologically extreme than the average voter. Additionally, we include a dummy variable representing the race of the donor (*Minority*) (Folstein 2009; La Raja and Schaffner 2016; Grossman and Hopkins 2016).

partisan differences in this behavior are not yet fully known (Baker 2021; Francia et. al. 2003; *Interest Group Contributions*). Lastly, the importance of religion to the respondent may also impact their motivation to contribute to congressional campaigns, especially in the case of Republican donors contributing to Republican candidates (*Religion Importance*).

Using these control variables

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The DACA questions differed slightly in their wording between the two surveys but addressed the same issue quite clearly and thus, the responses were pooled together. Additionally, we utilize three questions on healthcare asking whether the Affordable Care Act should be repealed; whether it should be partially repealed in terms of removing individual mandates; and whether it should be partially repealed by removing individual mandates and reducing payments to Medicaid by 25 percent.

directly to congressional candidates, 36 percent contributed to a party committee, and 13 percent contributed to an interest group.

Results

The first set of models examines the predicted probabilities associated with being a Republican female congressional donor as opposed to a Democratic female congressional donor. They are displayed in Table 1 and Figures 1-?. These results will be compared issue by issue with the probabilities associated with being a Republican female congressional donor rather than a Republican male congressional donor. The results for this second set of models appear in Table 2 and Figures 1-?.

On the issue of abortion, the strongest driver for a Republican female making a contribution to a congressional campaign among all of the positions prowp TJ 287f0.00000912 0 612 raap25/F2

the EPA strengthening regulation of clean air and water standards were respectively 22 percent more likely to contribute and 24 percent more likely to contribute as a Republican female donor (see Table 1). The only exception was for reducing fuel efficiency standards in automobiles. Opposition to vehicles with lower fuel efficiency increased the chance of contributing as a Republican female. Conversely, these issues also did not strongly differentiate the likelihood of

Party and where they align with their Party in respect to whether those stances ultimately lead them to contribute. In terms of divergence, they were more moderate on certain abortion stances but this did not include federal funding of abortions. They were also more moderate in regard to DACA and on certain gun control issues. However, they aligned more closely with their Party on healthcare, border security, and environmental regulation. This is interesting given Barnes and Ecuugugau's 2018 study of female Republican Party, which showed a bit more tolerance for government intervention among female Republicans than male Republicans in policy areas like education and healthcare. Further, these results including support for repealing ACA, opposition federal funding of abortions, and opposition to greater EPA enforcement are all about limiting government intervention and arose as the leading drivers of contributing. Support for greater border security was the only policy in which government intervention was viewed positively as a reason to contribute. And it makes sense that more extreme issue stances would be greater drivers of contributing than more moderate issue stances.

Additionally, this set of issues makes it clear that female Republican congressional donors are not using a gendered lens as part of their choice to contribute. Even for abortion, the issue appears to be more about federal funding and government involvement than the individual choice to have an abortion. The stance that women should never be allowed to have abortions did not significantly affect the probability of contributing as a Republican versus Democratic female congressional donor. Their positions on sexism confirm this finding which is in keeping with previous studies (Barnes and Cassese 2016). They were much more conservative than Democratic female donors concerning women citing sexual discrimination as an excuse when they fail and the reasonableness of feminism. And in the case of their overall view of feminism, they were more conservative than male congressional donors

in their Party. In sum, this set of female donors appears to be contributing primarily based upon the areas where they find issue alignment with their Party. And, as mentioned, all of the issues

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studies revealing activists and donors in the Republican Party to be mainly concerned with

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party contributors or interest group contributors. These control variables were not significant in almost all of the models. Both findings suggest a disconnect from the sort of network observed in

candidates (Haley 2018). This statistic also underscores that Republican female donors care more about issues such as the economy and national security than do Republican male donors. In contrast, being a female congressional candidate provides fundraising gains in the Democratic Party (Crespin and Deitz 2010, Thomsen and Swers 2017). There is also some evidence that female Republican donors care more about issues such as education and healthcare than male donors (Swers and Thomsen 2017). But these are the women who are already participating and the results suggest their participation revolves around issues they are against that mostly relate to reducing government intervention in different policy areas rather than offering them a set of issues they can support, like certain gun control measures. And this may be indicative of the ways in which party asymmetry leaves other non-participating conservative women behind, although only additional surveys can confirm whether this is the case. In the

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