

Continuing Barriers to Parity in Participation:
An Empirical Investigation of the Gender Gap in
American Campaign Contributions

by

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Class of 2018

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Government

*To my parents, for making it all possible.
To Peter Hamilton King, for 18 years of best friendship, love and inspiration.
To Katharine Rogers King, for watching over me every step of the way.*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Throughout my life, my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart.”

President Donald Trump
January 6th, 2018

“Your advisor knows you are crazy. Virginia Woolf was also crazy. All the great women are.”

My mother
April 17th, 2018

Though I wish I could say that thesis is purely a product of my own mental stability and genius, this undertaking would not have been possible without the many, many people who have offered me incredible amounts of support throughout the last year.

First and foremost, the most enormous thank you to my three favorite #GirlsWhoCode—Emma, Lily and especially Val, for teaching me to love data analysis, something that would have never been possible without your help and patience. You deserve to be credited for every p-value in this thesis.

As for the Congressional Politics & Elections Lab, I don’t even know where to begin, but I know that this year would have been far less bearable had you all not been there to laugh with (and frequently at) me.

KOB and Caleb, thank you for refusing to let me back out of writing a thesis last spring. The rest of the Wesleyan basketball family, I am so grateful that you all have become like brothers (or more accurately, sons) to me—your constant antagonizing keeps me humble.

Sarah, Nate, Courtney, and the rest of the Wesleyan Sailing Team, thank you for sailing with me through all of life’s stormiest seas (both literal and figurative). An extra-special thank you to my scholar-sailor role models, Rachel, Earl, and Lewis.

Kevin, thank you for always bestowing your infinite Government major wisdom upon me in times of need. You have changed the course of my Wesleyan career for the better (excuse the sailing pun).

Meg, Colleen, Vienna, Manyata, Summer, Rachel, Serene, Sivan, Angela, thank you all for being such incredible friends to me, through this process and all the other infinite occasions you have been there to offer support, guidance and love.

Margot, thank you for being there for all of the most miserable library nights and making me laugh until I cry (or cry until I laugh) through them all.

Thank you to my adopted families, Duke & Julie (and, less importantly, JR); Ali & Pen; Godmother George, Hadley & Ava, for welcoming me into your homes, for your supportive messages, life advice, and faith in me and this project.

The Witches—thank you for not letting me take myself too seriously. I can't imagine a better house to come home to every night, nor one more filled with love, laughter, and friendship (although I can imagine a cleaner one). It is an honor to call such brilliant and driven women my best friends. And, as a relevant side note, to all the young men in our collective lives, for inspiring me to write a thesis rooted in my perpetually reinforced belief in the inherent superiority of the female gender.

Thank you to my amazing family—you are the best fan club a girl could ask for. I don't deserve all the things you do for me, but I'm so thankful you do them anyway.

And, of course, most of all, Professor Dancey—I wish I could go back and tell my freshman self how formative that Gov 151 course would be. Without the encouragement, guidance, gentle bullying, and unwavering support you have supplied over the last four years, I would not be the person I am today. No exclamation-point-filled anonymous teaching evaluation could capture how you have pushed me to face challenges head-on and helped me achieve things I never thought I was capable of (including, but not limited to, basic proficiency in R). You have been a rock throughout the last four years, even as I have displayed the full spectrum of human emotion to you in PAC 102, various classrooms around campus, and across the continental United States. As a thank you gift for believing in this thesis and in me, I will stop coming into your office when the door is closed.

ABSTRACT

Women in the United States have made up a lower percentage of political donors and accounted for a lower percentage of total campaign dollars in every national election cycle for which contribution data is reported and publicly available. While a significant body of literature has addressed women's under-involvement and underrepresentation in American politics, comparatively little research has been conducted on the gender gap in political giving. This thesis employs qualitative, empirical and experimental approaches to investigate why this gap has become a fixture in our political system, despite the impressive increases in women's empowerment, political engagement and participation that have occurred over the 170 years. I begin by reviewing the political impacts of the three major waves of the 20th century feminist movement and the significant female political mobilization that has occurred in recent years as a result of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, Donald Trump's election, and the rise of the #MeToo movement. After analyzing data drawn largely from Federal Election Commission reports and American National Election Studies surveys, I find that women's rates of educational attainment, employment, political engagement and political activity now rival or even surpass those of their male counterparts. However, further analysis shows that women are still significantly disadvantaged financially and less likely to be solicited for political donations than men, two possible explanations for why so little progress has been made in closing the gender gap in giving. Finally, I present the results of an experimental survey designed as a causal test of past explanations for women's low propensity to make political donations. I find that women were just as, if not more, likely than men to contribute in the experimental setting. These results, considered alongside the increases in female contributions that have been galvanized in recent years by the current sociopolitical climate, paint a more optimistic picture of the future of women's political giving.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Might it not be that a great force that has always been thinking in terms of human needs, and that always will think in terms of human needs, has not been mobilized? Is it not possible that the women of the country have something of value to give the nation at this time?”

*Jeannette Rankin
First woman to hold federal office in the United States*

On July 28th, 2016, as the 2016 Democratic National Convention (DNC) drew to a close, a slideshow of black and white images of former presidents played above the convention hall as thousands of attendees shuffled out of Philadelphia’s Wells Fargo Center. Once the final photograph had dissolved from the screen, Hillary Clinton’s face appeared via video conference, smiling as she spoke the evening’s final words, this time directed at the youngest of the millions of television viewers who had watched the event from home: “If there are any little girls out there who stayed up late to watch, let me just say, I may become the first woman president, but one of you is next” (Politico Staff, 2016).

These words of encouragement characterized the sentiment that had galvanized millions of women around the country and the world since Clinton first announced her bid for the White House. The 2016 DNC marked the first time in American history that a woman had received the official presidential nomination from a major political party—a major leap forward in the fight to increase the number of women in government that had been waged by female activists since before they even had the constitutional right to vote. Following Clinton’s speech accepting the party’s nomination, her campaign raised \$8.7 million in contributions

over one 24-hour period, its best online fundraising day at that point in the campaign (Schouten, 2016).

As Clinton's campaign continued, contributions from her enormous supportive base brought her the closest any woman had ever come to shattering the political glass ceiling. And unlike any candidate before her, this base was predominantly female—52% of donors contributing more than \$200 to her campaign were women (*Hillary Clinton (D): Donor Demographics*, n.d.). Though Clinton's campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, an examination of the deeply entrenched gender gap in political giving further demonstrates why her ability to mobilize female political donors was a ground-breaking victory in its own right.

The Long Road to Gender Parity

As of April 2018, women hold 19.6% of the seats in the U.S. Congress, 23.7% of seats in statewide elective executive offices, and 25.1% of seats in state legislatures (*Women in Elective Office 2018*, n.d.). The paucity of women both running for and holding elected office has garnered a significant amount of attention in the media and a growing body of academic literature. In stark contrast to their low rates of office-holding, 73.7 million women, or 63.3% of eligible adult American female population, voted in the 2016 presidential election. The female turnout rate was 4% higher than men's, with nearly one million more women casting ballots than men. These statistics echo the same trend in gender turnout that has been observed in every election since 1980, when women first voted at higher rates than men (*Gender Differences in Voter Turnout*, 2017).

Even as the number of women turning out at the polls has steadily increased, the gender breakdown of campaign contributions over the last two decades tells a different story, one that has held true in all cycles for which data are publicly available. On their website OpenSecrets.org, the Center for Responsive Politics provides a database of reports of Federal Election Commission (FEC) data for itemized contributions (those above \$200) to parties, candidates and political action committees (PACs) in every election cycle since 1990 (*About the Site*, n.d.). According to their records, women giving more than \$200 made up only 37.1% of the donor pool in the 2016 election cycle, and their contributions accounted for only 29.6% of the cycle's total campaign dollars. Though 2016 marks an all-time high in the proportion of donors who are women, the actual size of their donations continues to lag behind that of men. Even as the number of women giving has increased, their contributions have yet to make up even a third of the pool in any election cycle. This pattern, when considered alongside the fact that 415,281 more men than women gave in amounts above \$200 during the 2016 cycle, shows that gender parity in American campaign finance is far from a reality (*Donor Demographics*, 2018).

Compared to the significant amount of literature that has been published on the topic of women's underrepresentation in elected office, little research has been conducted specifically on the topic of the gender gap in political giving. Scholars have examined the historical roots of the paucity of female candidates and elected officials, identified factors that continue to prevent or dissuade women from seeking office today, and offered suggestions of ways to encourage more women to run at the local, state and federal level—yet solutions for specifically increasing women's giving are notably lacking.

Past research has found that women are more likely to support female candidates, and that men are more likely to support men (Bryner & Weber, 2013). While some scholars have argued that female candidates have become just as successful in fundraising as their male counterparts (Burrell, 2014; Fox, 2010; Darcy, Welch & Clark, 1994), other reports show that gender disparities in fundraising totals pervade (Barber, Butler & Preece, 2016). Regardless of whether they actually do have a harder time fundraising, women's lack of confidence in their ability to fund a campaign has been cited as a key explanation for why so many fewer women than men run for office (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Fox & Lawless, 2010).

Therefore, the lack of female candidates and the paucity of female donors may have created a self-perpetuating cycle of political gender inequality—more women will give when more women run, but a lack of female donors may contribute to potential female candidates' fears about their ability to fundraise as competitively as male candidates. Yet much of the existing literature on female candidates and their relationship with fundraising and contributions has largely neglected female donors—or the lack thereof—from depictions of the current state of women's continuing under-involvement in politics.

Though the aforementioned low rates of female political giving, candidacies and elected officeholders represent clear gender disparities in political involvement, the political gender gap in America extends far deeper than differences in representation and contributions. Research over the last two decades has consistently shown that women are less politically engaged than men, scoring lower on scales of political interest, knowledge and efficacy (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1995; Burns, Schlozman and Verba 1997, 2001; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Van Deth 2000).

They have also been found to be less likely to take part in even non-financial forms of political participation (Brady et al., 2001). As will be shown in later chapters, these findings are instructive to a deeper understanding of the root causes of the political giving gap.

This thesis employs historical, empirical and experimental approaches to examine why the pronounced gender gap in contributions has become a fixture in American politics. In these analyses, I find persuasive evidence that the tides of female giving may be changing.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two, I review the literature on factors that have historically prevented women from participating in politics at equivalent rates to men. I then examine the effects of each wave of the 20th century feminism, the suffrage movement, the women's movement, and the 1992 "Year of the Woman," on women's political orientations, mobilization and participation. Finally, I present evidence in support of the emerging hypothesis that the resurgence of feminist ideologies that has occurred in the years since 2012 should be considered the fourth incarnation of the women's movement. The widespread, international feminist activism that has been sparked by recent cultural and political events has already had important implications on women's political participation, especially in the realm of campaign contributions. I argue that these upsurges are evidence that the deep-rooted political participation gender gap may finally be closing, even in the domain of campaign contributions.

In Chapter Three, I analyze FEC, U.S. Census Bureau and American National Elections Studies (ANES) data for gender differences across a variety of measures related to political orientations, participation and giving. I first compare male and female rates of political activity in the years between 1996 and 2016, focusing on both traditional and financial forms of political participation. By 2016, I find that women exhibit equivalent levels of political participation across all forms of activity, including many categories of campaign contributions. I next empirically test the “conventional wisdom” that women have lower access to resources, levels of political engagement, and opportunities for recruitment to political activity than men. After comparing current levels of male and female educational attainment, employment, and income, I find that despite enjoying the same educational and occupational opportunities as men, women continue to be significantly disadvantaged in their access to financial resources. I then examine men and women’s responses to a battery of questions related to their political engagement, recruitment and participation. My analysis shows that women’s political engagement now rivals men’s across many key measures, and that they now appear to be contacted by parties and other political groups at the same rate. However, they are still less likely to be specifically solicited for political donations.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I present the results of an experimental survey designed as a causal test of two hypotheses that have been advanced in past research on the topic of gender differences in individuals’ propensity to make political donations. In the survey, male and female respondents were randomly sorted into treatment groups and exposed to one of three treatment conditions. All participants were then given the option to make a donation to a falsified political organization.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the clear and enduring gender disparities in giving rates that emerge when analyzing FEC data, female participants in every treatment group were just as likely as their male counterparts to make a political donation. Further, the percentage of both male and female respondents that chose to make a contribution was far higher than the donation rates observed in ANES or FEC data. In my analysis of these results, I discuss factors of the survey's design that may have facilitated such high rates of contribution, especially among women.

In conclusion, I argue that shifts in the American sociopolitical climate over the last 20 years have galvanized women's political activity across the board, as evidenced by increases in female candidacies, engagement, and participation, even in the form of political giving. Despite these changes, the gender gap in campaign contributions pervades, which I find to be evidence that continuing gender disparities in financial resources and recruitment have significant influence over women's contributing behavior. The results of my experiment do not necessarily show that past explanations for low female contribution rates are not relevant today. Rather, they suggest that women's low propensity to donate may not be the central factor driving the gender gap, opening the door for future research into gender differences in willingness to make political donations.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Though little scholarly attention has been paid to the history of female political giving, the evolution of women's political involvement more generally is well-documented. Before gender parity in contributions could be considered even a distant possibility, women had to first surmount innumerable barriers to politics—beginning simply with the right to vote. Examining how women have been politically mobilized over the last century elucidates the key trends that have prefaced increases in their engagement and participation in the past. The same galvanizing factors which were present in each incarnation of the 20th century women's movement can be identified in the American sociopolitical climate today, suggesting that another surge in women's political involvement may already be underway—even extending into increases in female rates of political giving.

In the 150-odd years since the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, American women have made major and enduring inroads into public life. The fight for women's empowerment thus far has come in three major waves: the suffrage movement from 1850 to 1920, the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the resurgent feminist movement that began in the 1990s and continued into the new century. As a result of these periods of national female activism, women gained the right to vote, brought women's issues onto the national agenda, cemented their place as a decisive voting bloc, and elected the highest number of women to office in national history. Though these important crusades have not yet translated into

complete political gender parity, they have led to a marked shift away from the “boy’s club” of American politics.

As the number of American women entering the ranks of the workforce and higher education increased throughout the 20th century, so too did their desire for formal government recognition and representation. Prior to their mass entry into public life, women had lacked the resources, political engagement and opportunities for recruitment that have been identified as the key causal steps necessary to mobilize participation (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1995). As will be seen in the following sections, each distinct incarnation of the women’s movement came in the wake of widespread gains in female employment and education. As a result, women were increasingly empowered with financial resources and civic skills, a lack of which had historically prevented them from taking part in political activities. Further, this historical review of the 20th century women’s movement and its major political victories demonstrates the power of collective female action in recruiting and mobilizing newly-empowered women.

Some feminist scholars argue that the fourth renaissance of feminism is currently underway, fueled by conversations over sexual harassment and violence, spread through social media, and aimed at bringing about justice for all women (Chamberlain, 2017). Since 2012, this modern feminist movement has gained traction both domestically and internationally, and its influence on American culture and politics has been pronounced. If this most recent resurgence of feminist ideology has the same success as past waves of the movement in mobilizing women, it could have positive effects on aggregate female political engagement, participation and representation.

The following chapter is organized in the following manner: first, I review the academic literature on the societal, situational and structural barriers to entry that have historically prevented women from participating in politics. I then examine the political impact of the three major feminist movements of the 20th century, focusing on how women's ability to surmount these barriers led to major increases in their engagement with and recruitment to politics. Finally, I argue that the upsurge in feminist ideology and activism that has emerged in the last few years should be considered the fourth incarnation of the women's movement. I find that recent political events have already acted as a galvanizing force for women entering the political sphere as voters, activists, candidates, and donors, suggesting that the 2016 election cycle and today's sociopolitical climate more generally may have set the stage for the next major push toward political gender parity.

Historical Barriers to Women's Political Participation:

A Review of the Literature

In response to the fact that women now vote more than men yet continue to lag in their rates of participation in other political activities and their representation in elected office, scholars have identified three central explanations for women's enduring "political passivity." Bennett and Bennett (1996) define these barriers as "(1) *sex-role socialization* (how boys and girls learn gender-appropriate attitudes and behavior that affect how they view politics); (2) *structural* (the impact of education, occupation and income); and (3) *situational* (marital status, motherhood, homemaking) (p. 34)." These explanations are echoed across the body of academic literature on the topic of women in politics and provide a basic outline of the

prevailing theories as to why women have historically participated, contributed and run for office at lower rates than men (Kittilson, 2016).

In 1960, researchers on the topic of American political behavior argued that observed gender differences in political attitudes were a result of what they called *sex-role socialization*: “that portion of expectations about behavior proper for a male or female that involves political responses” (Campbell, 1960, as cited in Bennett & Bennett, 1996, p. 34). Prior to female enfranchisement, one of the prevailing arguments against suffrage was that giving women the vote was that increases in women’s political engagement would upset the social order. Opponents of suffrage argued that if women wished to affect social change, they should do so through their roles in their own homes and neighborhoods, not in the political sphere (Prescott, 2015).

This belief pervaded in the years following the ratification of the 19th Amendment, when young girls were still socialized to perceive politics as a “man’s business” (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980, as cited in Bennett & Bennett, 1996, p. 35). The negative impact this form of political socialization had on women’s political orientations in the 20th century was noted in many studies of female political behavior in the decades following its initial observation (Hess & Torney, 1967; Greenstein, 1969; Rapoport, 1982, 1985). However, more recent literature suggests that cultural shifts in women’s political empowerment have the potential to subvert these socialization processes and alter girls’ perceptions of politics.

When girls are exposed to female political role models, whether in the form of politically active mothers or female politicians in the media, they are more likely to become involved in politics themselves (Atkeson, 2003; Campbell & Wolbrecht,

2006). Further, when female candidates run for office, women exhibit higher levels of political interest and knowledge (Dolan, 2011), two key measures of engagement where women have consistently lagged behind men (Burns et al., 2001).

The power of this role model effect is the basis of arguments in favor of increased female descriptive representation. Scholars on the topic advocate increasing the number of women in elected office as a meaningful way to improve the relationship women have with their political system (Mansbridge, 1999), which could in turn increase their levels of participation. Based on this literature, creating a visible and legitimate female voice in politics seems to create a trickle-down effect by which women at the mass level become more engaged and participatory, thus broadening social norms to accept political involvement as an acceptable female trait.

A second, widely accepted explanation for women's historical under-involvement in politics echoes many of the findings in support of the sex-role socialization hypothesis. The "situational factors" that have been recognized as key barriers to women's entry into the political realm are derived from traditional expectations that they fill roles in the home, as wives, mothers and homemakers, rather than entering the public world of business and politics. Gender roles, those which have long been held as norms in American society, dictate that women hold dominion over the "private sphere" of the home, while men control the "public sphere" of politics (Bennett & Bennett, 1996).

Historically, scholars have argued that burdens of the home, such as childcare and housework, demanded the majority of women's time and left little room for participation in public life. In order to subvert the influence of these deterrent situational factors, increases in women's educational and occupational opportunities

(those which have been witnessed in the last seventy years) would be necessary. However, even as traditional gender roles have become increasingly antiquated, women today still feel largely tied to their role in the home. Jenkins (2013) argues that this “separation of the sexes into domains that serve the interests of the state or family communicates to girls that fulfillment in life is achieved through their role in the private sphere (7-8).” Therefore, women’s decision-making process as they consider entering the political arena continues to be shaped by the enduring presence of traditional family structures in modern society (Fox & Lawless, 2003).

The final obstacles that have historically stood between women and meaningful political involvement are those perpetuated by the previously noted gender inequalities in education, occupation and income. In *Voice and Equality*, Brady et al. (1995) conceptualize a model that predicts an individual’s likelihood of taking part in higher-cost forms of participation based on three major categories of factors. Their Civic Voluntarism Model posits that the possession of adequate resources, a psychological engagement with politics, and instances of recruitment by others increase the likelihood of an individual’s political participation. More colloquially, the authors suggest that individuals will be most likely to take part in a political activity when they are able to, want to, and are asked (Brady et al. 1995, p. 16).

As a result of both sex-role socialization and situational realities, structural disadvantages have prevented women from possessing the resources necessary to have even the *ability* to participate, let alone the desire. In order for women’s political involvement to stand a chance of rivalling that of men’s, they would first need to overcome structural barriers in order to gain the resources—time, money and

civic skills—that enable participation. Lacking the capacity to become involved inhibited any hope of further political engagement or recruitment (Brady et al., 1995).

It is clear that these three groups of factors are highly interconnected. To overcome the barriers presented by each identified obstacle, women first needed to enter the public sphere through avenues presented by education and the workforce. The three waves of the 20th century feminist movement allowed women to make this exodus out of the home and into public life. Once this first step had been achieved, the galvanizing effects of the movement increased their political engagement and presented them with the opportunities for recruitment necessary for a mass mobilization to participate.

Seventy Years to Suffrage:

Female Enfranchisement and the First Wave of Feminism

Though female scholars and philosophers worldwide have been challenging the inferior position of women in society since the 14th century, the American women’s suffrage movement did not officially begin until July 20th, 1848, at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York (Degler, 1967, pp. 209-210). The movement was put on hold during the years between 1861 and 1865, when the Civil War demanded women’s full attention. However, women’s involvement in “war work” proved invaluable in the years following the war, as they returned to the fight for suffrage armed with new organizational skills and experience (Barber, 2006).

Between 1890 and 1920, individual states slowly began to ratify amendments that granted women the right to vote. During this period, a multiplicity of anti-

suffrage and pro-suffrage women's groups formed across the nation, and female suffragists became even further divided along pro- and anti-war lines during World War I. Though it deepened existing schisms in the already factious movement, the national debate over the war provided suffragists with a unique opportunity to galvanize elite support for a Woman Suffrage Amendment. By refusing to take part in anti-war campaigns, suffragist leaders earned invaluable political support from politicians desperate to increase the public's approval of the war (Burrell, 2006,). Among them was President Wilson, who in a 1918 speech before Congress asked "We have made partners of the women in this war... Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? (GWLII Staff, 2013)." Seventy-two years after the Seneca Falls Convention, the 19th Amendment was ratified on August 26th, 1920.

Political science scholars identify the possession of resources such as civic skills, time and money as a key predictor of an individual's likelihood of political participation, the first causal step in the Civic Voluntarism Model of political participation (Brady et al., 1995). The women who were most actively involved in the movement were those with the highest access to these resources, which meant suffrage leadership roles were largely occupied by white, middle- and upper-class women (Burkett & Brunell, 2018), and specific efforts were made to target wealthy, experienced, civic-minded volunteers. The National American Women's Suffrage Association's "society plan," launched in the mid-1880's, aimed to specifically recruit women already engaged in the women's club movement, typically middle-class women working on civic improvement projects (Graham, 1996).

As a result of white, wealthy women's dominance in the movement's leadership and membership, the concerns of working-class women, such as legislation relating to wages and work hours, received little attention. Belle Kearney, a Southern suffragist, even went so far as to advocate white female enfranchisement as a way to "insure an immediate and durable white supremacy honestly attained...the enfranchisement of women would settle the race question in politics" (cited by Coleman, 2016). Therefore, the negative effects of sex-role socialization and structural factors on women's political involvement endured, as visible roles in politics continued to be occupied by white men and the political world remained exclusive to most women, people of color, and those of lower socio-economic status.

Brady et al.'s Civic Voluntarism Model predicts that among those who have the resources necessary for participation, individuals with the highest likelihood of actually doing so are those who also exhibit high levels of political engagement (1995). Prior to the first wave of the women's movement, women's exclusion from politics and the prevailing norm of male dominance over the "public sphere" meant female political engagement was low. However, suffrage's "growth—the mobilization of women around the demand for the vote, their collective activity, their commitment to gaining increased power over their own lives—was itself a major change in the condition of those lives" (DuBois, 1978, pp. 17-18). The emergence of the debate over female enfranchisement elucidated to many women that their exclusion from politics was impeding their own liberation, and as a result, their engagement with politics began to rise.

The final causal step in the Civic Voluntarism Model is that of recruitment—an individual with the ability to participate and the desire to do so will be most likely

to take part in political activity when they are asked (Brady et al., 1995). The wide variety of groups affiliated with the suffrage movement and its broad reach across the nation meant that women of all stripes had significant opportunities for contact with and recruitment by feminist organizations. In 1890, a merger between the two largest rivaling suffrage organizations in the country, the American Women's Suffrage Association and the National Association for Women's Suffrage, merged many previously independent female suffragist groups under an organizational umbrella of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) (McMillen, 2008). A diverse group of women's organizations, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the National Association of Colored Women, came together in recognition of their shared belief in the need for female enfranchisement and officially united under NAWSA's new organizational umbrella (Burrell, 2006).

NAWSA's national recruitment efforts focused on encouraging participation through education and formal training for women. Beginning in 1909, NAWSA created "political settlements" across the country which aimed to educate the public about suffrage and how to become involved in local political activities. These efforts were organized in tandem with the "suffrage schools" put on by their daughter organization, the Women's Suffrage Party, which offered trainings for suffrage organizers at the local level (Graham 1996). As a result of their tireless recruiting, NAWSA was one of the nation's largest voluntary organizations by the 1910's, boasting two million members in groups at the local and state level across the country (Scott & Scott, 1982).

At the time of the 19th Amendment's ratification, the suffrage movement was heralded by its supporters as a major success. The prevailing expectation held by

many female activists during the movement was that enfranchisement would empower women's natural progression into the world of politics (Burkett & Brunell 2018), and beginning in 1920, all women, in theory, did possess the same fundamental democratic rights as men. Yet in practice, only white women could take full advantage of enfranchisement for many years. Discriminatory practices, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, discouraged and prevented women of color and lower socioeconomic status from casting votes for several decades after enfranchisement, when they were officially outlawed. Further, even the women who did vote did so in far lower numbers than men and appeared to take voting cues from their husbands, so no distinct women's perspective was expressed by female voting behavior until several decades after women were enfranchised (Lane, 1965; Campbell et al., 1960, as cited in Bennett & Bennett, 1996).

It is indisputable that women's suffrage was a key leap forward on the long road to increasing female political involvement. As Brady et al.'s Civic Voluntarism Model would predict, the increases in women's resources, engagement and opportunities for recruitment that resulted both directly from the rise of the suffrage movement and from evolving sociopolitical circumstances during the period between 1848 and 1920 led to corollary increases in their political participation.

However, women at the mass level were not so empowered by enfranchisement that they could immediately surmount the barriers that had prevented them from participation in the pre-suffrage era. It was not until the second wave of the feminist movement, beginning in the 1960s, that meaningful strides were made toward opening politics to women other than those who were white and upper-class and creating a distinct women's lobby.

Bringing Women onto the Agenda and Out to the Polls:

Political Victories of the Women's Movement

The second wave of the women's movement in America has been heralded in feminist literature as a critical turning point in women's political attitudes and participation. Though the seventy-year suffrage movement came to a triumphant end in 1920 after the successful passage of the 19th Amendment, newly enfranchised American women remained largely on the sidelines of the political process until the post-World War II era (Ware, 1981). Once suffrage was achieved, women's groups lacked a unifying central goal and spent the 1930s and 40s divided by positions on other women's issues—the most divisive of which was whether the proposed Equal Rights Act should include protective legislation that would limit the number of hours they could work (Klein, 1984). However, tension between opposing groups began to dissolve in the 1950's, when they abandoned the ERA. In the years that followed, women's organizations shifted their focus toward a less contentious agenda, one that aimed to secure equal pay, increase women's access to employment opportunities and give them improved representation in politics (Klein, 1984).

Activists' calls for equal rights for Americans of all races during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s inspired women of the era to make their own case for equality (Burkett & Brunell, 2018). Driven by the belief that “the personal is political,” feminists of the Women's Movement sought to increase women's political participation and give them a legitimate voice over issues that had significant influence over their private lives, such as workplace discrimination and birth control (Rosen, 2000). In the 1960s, efforts by early women's groups and women in government resulted in the passage of key pieces of women's rights legislation, the

Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the prohibition of sex-based discrimination in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Banaszak, 2008). These early victories marked the beginning of a lasting shift toward the inclusion of women's issues on the national agenda, as the women's lobby gained strength and political support. While only 236 women's rights bills were introduced in Congress during the 1950s, 884 introduced in the 1960s, though only 10 became law. During the Women's Movement's peak in the 1970s, 71 such bills were passed (Klein, 1984).

Prior to the 70s, a decade notable for its unprecedented amount of congressional action on issues involving gender and women's rights, men and women had exhibited mostly similar political attitudes and partisanship (Clark & Clark, 1996). However, gender's newfound influence over the national policy agenda meant women had an increased personal attachment to legislative outcomes. By 1980, both major parties had incorporated this newly polarizing issue into their party platforms (Wolbrecht, 2000). Democrats embraced feminism, advocating pro-choice policy and gender equality legislation. Further, their liberal stances on issues such as defense and welfare spending drew higher support from female voters (Norris, 2003). Meanwhile, the Republican party remained firm in their commitment to conservative social policies and "traditional values," which were largely irreconcilable with feminist ideologies (Freeman, 1993). As a result, female support for the Democratic Party has remained solid since 1966, while men have become increasingly Republican (Kenski, 1988, Bendyna & Lake, 1994).

Cultural shifts of the 1960s and 70s meant women were rapidly becoming more educated and more active in the workforce (Freeman, 1975). From 1954-64, the female labor force grew by almost 30%, and from 1964-74, it grew by over 40%. By

1980, women made up half of the labor force, a rate which continued to increase until it reached its peak of 60% in 1999 (Toossi and Morisi, 2017). While their increased employment empowered them economically, the combination of skills gained in the workplace and increased levels of education meant they were also developing the civic skills necessary for participation. Further, the sex-role socialization of women was evolving, and with it, situational factors of women's daily lives were no longer such major impediments to their political participation. No longer limited to the "private sphere" of the home, women's increasing presence in public life gave them the resources necessary to mobilize their participation and emboldened them with the belief that they, too, deserved a place in politics (Rosen, 2000).

As their presence in higher education and the workforce increased, women were empowered not only by a newfound *ability* to become politically active, but also by a new *motivation* to do so. Many women began to compare to themselves to men of equivalent backgrounds and become aware of the continued disparities in their earnings and occupational opportunities (Soule & McAdam, 1999). Feminist books of the late 50's and early 60's, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, gained widespread popularity among women of the era, who were becoming increasingly aware and critical of the deep-rooted, pervasive gender inequality in American society (Burkett, 2016). The reemergence of feminist ideologies during the second wave of the women's movement supported the development of what scholars have since called a "politicized feminist consciousness" (Renzetti, 1987 as cited in Cook, 1996) among women across the nation.

Though women had the ability and motivation to participate in politics during the movement, the Civic Voluntarism Model would suggest that their levels of participation may not have been as high had they not also been exposed to significant opportunities for recruitment. Much like the suffrage movement, women's groups affiliated with the second wave of feminism had an expansive national reach. Female involvement in other politically active organizations also grew, with over 3 million women belonging to labor unions by the mid-60s (Cook, 1968). Nationwide, increasing female membership in groups lobbying for gender equality across a range of societal and political domains meant women were more likely than ever to be presented with opportunities to for recruitment to political activity.

As can be seen in a historical review of the period, the mobilization of mass female political participation during the Women's Movement saw major success in creating a meaningful female voice in political conversation and bringing women's issues onto the national agenda. Women's participation reached a new high in the 1980 presidential election, when they turned out at higher rates than men for the first time (*Gender Differences in Voter Turnout*, 2017). The emerging "gender gap" in policy orientations was underlined by the election's results, which found 8% fewer women than men voting for Reagan (Sigel, 1999, as cited in Norris, 2003). Sparked by the 1981 *Washington Post* article "Women are Emerging as a Political Force," the news media began to devote increasing amounts of attention to the gender gap, bringing women's increasing political engagement, participation and power into the national spotlight (Norris, 2003). By the end of the movement, traditional American gender roles had been permanently altered—women's crusade into work and politics allowed them to stake a permanent claim over new territory in the public sphere.

The movement began to dwindle and eventually dissipate in the early 1970s, when the Equal Rights Amendment failed to pass in Congress. NOW became fragmented by rivalling ideologies among its members and leadership, and feminists nationwide began to waver in support for a movement they felt had largely achieved its goals (Burkett 1998). Yet gains in women’s participation and representation in office, while notable, were nowhere near significant enough to equal that of men’s. Though women were voting at higher rates than their male counterparts, they were still less likely to take part in other political activities for several decades following the movement (Brady et al., 2001). They were also highly underrepresented in party leadership positions (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013) and elected office—from 1973-1979, there were no women the Senate, and female representatives made up less than 5% of the House until 1985 (Pew Research Center, 2017). The women’s movement’s success in increasing female voter turnout marked a positive step forward, but left much ground uncovered on the road to full political parity. As the proverb would suggest, women’s work was far from done.

The Road to Representation: “The Year of the Woman” and Feminism into the 21st Century

Feminist scholars identify a third resurgence of the women’s movement and its feminist ideologies as having occurred in the 1990’s, led by younger, Generation X women who felt there was still progress to be made before gender inequality and sexism could be considered things of the past. Many of these young activists focused their efforts on subverting gender stereotypes and encouraging female sexual liberation (Burkett & Brunell, 2018)—issues that were related more to popular

culture than the political environment. However, events of the early 1990s made the national public aware of the continuing paucity of women in politics and inspired a push for increased women's representation in office, one of the final "glass ceilings" standing between women and full political equality.

Recognizing the importance of female involvement in partisan politics, the National Women's Political Caucus had formed in 1972 to put pressure on both parties to increase the number of women included in party activities and leadership (Burrell, 2006). Since 1980, the Democratic Party's rules have mandated equal representation of male and female delegates, while the GOP has made strides toward gender parity on the National Convention floor by encouraging state parties to elect more female delegates (Burrell, 2006). The significant presence of female activists and women's organizations at both parties 1988 National Conventions led many to proclaim that women had finally emerged as political insiders (Freeman, 1989).

In order for these largely symbolic efforts to increase representation to carry any substantive weight in politics, increases in women occupying more visible roles, as party leaders, candidates or officeholders, would have to follow. Literature on the effects of female political role models suggests that an increased presence of female candidates and party leaders would lead to increased feelings of inclusion and mobilization among women in the electorate (Mansbridge, 1999). In 1988, both parties added calls for more female candidates to their national platforms, though a lack of any actionable promises meant they were likely included for rhetorical purposes (Burrell, 2006), meant to appease or attract the recently emerged female voter bloc, rather than as actual party goals.

However, the sociopolitical context of the 1992 election cycle presented a unique set of electoral circumstances in which female candidates presented both parties with the opportunity for electoral success. In October 1991, African-American law professor Anita Hill sat before an all-white, all-male Senate committee to be questioned about the sexual harassment allegations she had raised against her former boss, Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Despite her testimony, Thomas was confirmed. Women across the nation were outraged over both the hearing process, which reflected the lack of diversity in the white-male-dominated 102nd Congress, and the confirmation of a man accused of sexual harassment to the highest bench in the nation (Dolan, 1998).

However, this outrage quickly translated into increases in women's political action. In the year that followed, a record number of women launched campaigns for public office, and on Election Day in 1992, four women were elected to the Senate, and 19 to the House (Dolan, 1998). A bipartisan push to include more women on the convention floor saw major success in 1992, when "showcasing candidates and raising money to elect more women were emphasized far more than in any previous convention" (Freeman, 1993, p. 22). Women's reactions to the hearing and resulting rise to political power marked 1992 as "The Year of the Woman." Though the women's movement had fizzled to an anticlimactic end twenty years prior, its success in paving the way for continuing advances in women's educational and professional opportunities and creating a legitimate place in politics for women meant that women in the 1990s were better suited than ever to mobilize politically in reaction to Hill's hearing.

Women's financial resources, which had improved dramatically as they entered the workforce during the mid-century, continued to grow in the years following the women's movement, as the number of female physicians, lawyers, judges, and professional athletes climbed throughout the 80s and 90s, and the number of women in entry- and mid-level management roles at American corporations rose from 17% in 1972 to fully 50% by 1998 (Morin and Rosenfeld, 1998). Further, over half of all bachelor's degrees were awarded to women in 1997, and the percent of doctorate degrees received by white women increased from 25% in 1977 to 44% in 1993, while African-American women earned more than their male counterparts (Morin and Rosenfeld, 1998).

Hill's hearing sparked a renewed engagement with feminist ideologies among women, who recognized that sexism and continuing societal gender inequality had significant political implications. In their 1993 analysis of the elections, Delli Carpini and Williams find,

Long-term trends in women's integration into public life may have provided the firewood, and the circumstances of the 1992 election may have been the kindling, but it was the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas spectacle that set the resurgent women's movement ablaze. Public consciousness was dramatically raised about both the tenuous position of *Roe v. Wade* and the sordid, degrading realities of sexual harassment in the workplace. Equally important, however, the televised image of the all-male Senate Judiciary committee put in stark relief the gender imbalance in Congress, and the very tangible relationship between who represents women and the quality of their lives (34).

Rising female professional success meant women were wealthier than ever, and their renewed awareness of the need for women in government in light of the Thomas confirmation gave them motivation to act. The combination of these two factors allowed them to take advantage of a new kind of recruitment opportunity, one that had only recently emerged for women.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the rising costs of campaigns meant that financial forms of political participation were increasingly vital for candidate and party success. In 1986, the cost of winning a House campaign (in 2016 U.S. dollars) was \$776,687—a number that nearly doubled to \$1,516,021 by 2016. Senate campaigns had already been more expensive, costing \$6,625,932 in 1986, but increased to \$10,464,068 over the same time period (*The Cost of Winning a House and Senate Seat, 1986-2016*, n.d.). In order for an interest group to increase the weight of their political voice, they would have to provide candidates and politicians financial support.

Recognizing this need, women’s organizations seeking to increase female representation began to create political action committees (PACs) specifically aimed at fundraising for and contributing to the campaigns of female candidates. In 1974, the first women’s PAC, Women’s Campaign Fund, was founded, and existing women’s organizations such as NOW and the National Women’s Political Caucus followed suit shortly after with the creation of their own women’s PACs (Burrell, 2006). Other women’s PACs that formed in the late 80’s and early 90’s have become household names in American politics—EMILY’s List, which supports pro-choice Democratic women, has helped elect 12 governors, 23 senators, over 100 House representatives and over 800 state and local officeholders since its founding in 1985 (*Women We Helped Elect*, 2017).

The importance of support from these groups in the “Year of the Woman” can be seen by comparing women’s issue lobby contribution data in the 1990 and 1992 election cycles. In 1990, 9 women’s PACs contributed a total of \$1,724,099 to candidates and parties (*Women’s Issues: Top Contributors to Federal Candidates*,

Parties and Outside Groups, 2018). In 1992, that number rose to \$2,969,848, and the number of women's PACs contributing increased to 17, nearly twice as many as the previous cycle.

The increases in the number of female candidates and women's successful campaigns for office that occurred during the 1990s should not be considered as having resulted solely from the nationwide outrage sparked by Hill's hearing. Though the Hill hearing was certainly a galvanizing event, other important changes in women's political involvement had been occurring behind the scenes in the years after the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 70s. However, the political victories that followed Hill's hearing did set a historical precedent for the same pattern of female outrage leading to influential political action that is being observed among American women today.

Women's Mobilization in the Pre- and Post-2016 Election Periods:

Evidence of an Emergent Fourth Wave of Politicized Feminism

The oft-repeated adage that history repeats itself is especially pertinent when comparing the uprising that occurred between October 1991 and Election Day 1992 to those that have unraveled between October 2016 and the present day. In early October, with just a few weeks left in the national election cycle, an Access Hollywood recording from 2005 surfaced, revealing footage of then-candidate Donald Trump discussing lewd sexual behavior and making inappropriate, objectifying comments about women with the show's then-host, Billy Bush (Fahrenheit, 2016). Already an unconventional candidate for president in many ways, Trump's campaign came under new fire as the media, voters, and politicians

from both parties reacted to the tape with outrage. The public's initial response to the video did not carry over to Election Day, when Trump still emerged victorious.

Prior to Election Day in 2016, women had already played a historically large role in the presidential election. As the literature on female political role models would predict, a viable female presidential candidate was a galvanizing force for women, 54% of whom cast their ballots for Clinton (Mohdin, 2016). Further, the Clinton campaign broke a national record after raising the highest amount of contributions from women in American history (*Hillary Clinton (D): Donor Demographics*, 2016). Women in 2016 recognized the power of financial participation, and though they still made up only 37.1% of all donors contributing over \$200, 599,315 women gave at least that amount in the 2016 cycle, a figure that had increased by more than 200,000 since the 2012 presidential election (Center for Responsive Politics, 2016). And in January 2017, the month of Trump's inauguration, over 300,000 women made contributions, a full 100,000 more than the number of men donating that month (Bryner & Weber, 2018).

The undeniably galvanizing effects of Clinton's campaign and Trump's election have already translated into marked increases in female candidacies and political contributions. However, the extent to which they have mobilized aggregate female political participation requires further empirical investigation. As recently as 2001, research on women's political involvement found that even in the wake of the 1992 "Year of the Woman," women still fell behind men in measures of their resources, engagement, recruitment and participation in political activities (Burns et al., 2001). In light of the current sociopolitical climate, it is possible that these patterns have changed—women are exhibiting renewed levels of political

engagement, and their recent levels of participation have been record-breaking on several accounts. Seeking to understand how American women's political orientations have changed in the years since the original Year of the Woman, the following chapter compares data on male and female levels of engagement, participation and political donations over the last two decades.

CHAPTER THREE

AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS AND BEHAVIOR

The previous chapter's historical review of the last 170 years of feminist activism demonstrates how the three major waves of female political mobilization in the 20th century led to major leaps forward on the road to women's political parity, including significant increases in female voter turnout, candidacies and officeholders. However, even in the wake of these major victories, research conducted in the decades since 1992's "Year of the Woman" has identified continuing gender gaps in nearly every form of political participation and engagement. Yet the tides of women's political involvement may still be changing. If the same patterns observed in previous waves of the women's movement hold true today, the resurgence of feminist ideologies that has occurred in the years since 2012 may have already precipitated further increases in women's political engagement, opportunities for recruitment, and participation, even in the realm of political donations.

In this chapter, I first analyze self-reported participation data collected in six American National Election Study's (ANES) Time Series Studies from 1996-2016 to compare male and female rates of participation in the presidential election cycles that followed "The Year of the Woman."¹ Rather than uncovering evidence in support of earlier 21st century findings that women participate less than men (Brady et al., 2001), I find that women today take part in political activities, such as encouraging

¹ My analysis is based on unweighted ANES survey data.

others to vote or attending political events, at rates equivalent to those of their male counterparts.

However, FEC contribution data shows that these same increases in female participation have not been observed in rates of female “checkbook participation,” as women have consistently given at lower rates and in lower amounts than men in every national election cycle since 1990. In order to understand why this marked disparity between women’s rates of participation and contributions has emerged, I apply Brady et al.’s Civic Voluntarism Model (1995) to my analysis of U.S. Census and ANES survey data from the same 1996-2016 period, seeking to identify any gender differences in resources, engagement and opportunities for recruitment that emerge.

Female Political Orientations and Participation at the Close of the 20th Century

One of the most impressive results of efforts made by parties and women’s groups to mobilize women politically was their success in increasing levels of female voter registration and turnout to equal and ultimately surpass those of their male counterparts. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, American women have turned out on Election Day at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1980 (*Gender Differences in Voter Turnout*, 2017). Increased female turnout has, in turn, increased the representation of women’s interests in American politics, as politicians’ electoral futures have become increasingly dependent on securing female support at the polls (Burrell, 2010). The low-cost nature of voting makes it unique from other political activities in that it is accessible to groups that might not have the

resources—such as civic skills, time or financial capacity—that would enable them to participate in other, higher-cost activities.

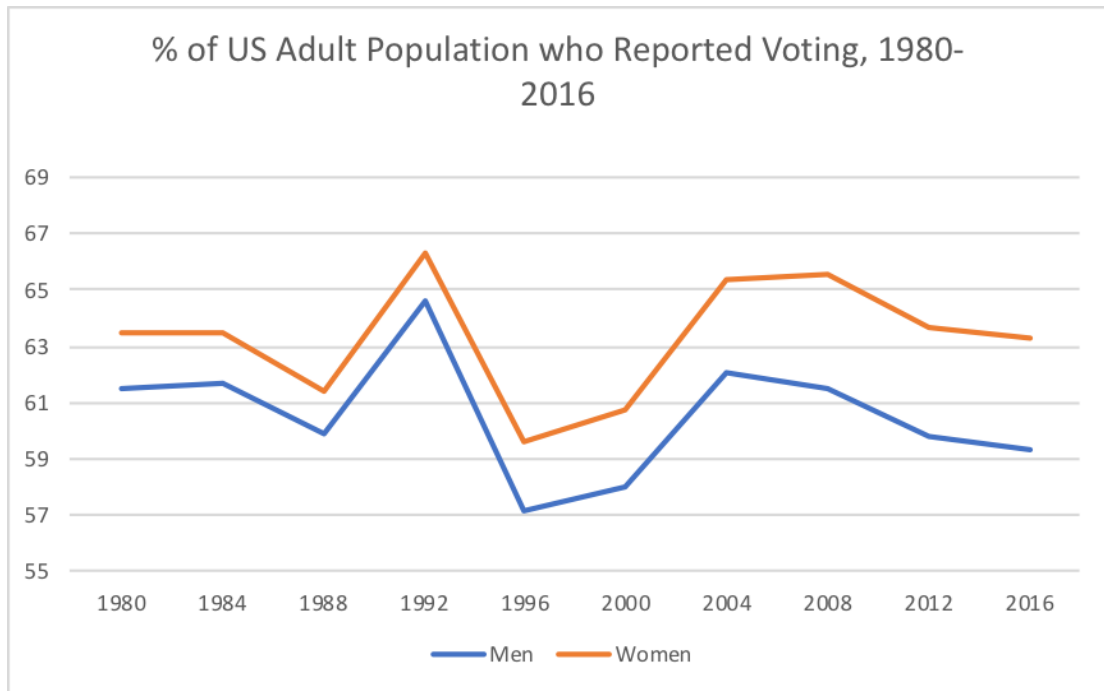


Figure 3.1 Voter Turnout 1980-2016. Based on voter turnout data collected by the Center for American Women in Politics (*Gender Differences in Voter Turnout*, 2017).

Brady et al. (1995) argue that electoral outcomes are weak expressions of voters’ political attitudes and preferences, because winning candidates are unable to determine which of many contributing factors led to their ultimate electoral victory. Compared to simply casting a vote, other political activities are more “information-rich” in their ability to explicitly communicate the concerns and opinions of those who participate to candidates and elected officials (10). Therefore, the most influential ways for a group to increase the weight of their collective voice in elections and politics are higher-cost forms of participation, which require more resources and higher levels of engagement but have a larger potential to affect

meaningful change. These types of political activities range from attending a rally to working for a candidate, and include making a contribution to a party, candidate or political organization, which the authors call “checkbook participation.”

Brady et al.’s Civic Voluntarism Model, introduced in Chapter One, predicts that increases in an individual’s possession of relevant resources (time, civic skills, money), level of political engagement, and opportunities for recruitment lead to increases in their likelihood of political participation. Research conducted in the last two decades shows that, even in the wake of the three incarnations of the 20th century women’s movement, women have had fewer resources, lower levels of political engagement, and fewer opportunities for recruitment than men (Brady, Scholzman & Verba, 1999; Burns, Scholzman & Verba, 1997; 2001; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Van Deth 2000). The Civic Voluntarism Model would suggest that these disadvantages have contributed to the low levels of non-electoral female political participation that have been observed in past research (Norris, 2003; Gidengil et al. 2004).

The finding that American women consistently participate at lower rates than men has been considered fact in further reports on the state of women’s political involvement (Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007; Kittilson, 2016), despite the lack of recent empirical research on American women’s political participation. Other authors have also argued that the forms of political activity in which women and men engage differ significantly (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010), so broad statements about a participation gender gap may not accurately capture the nuances of differing male and female participation. In the following section, I break down the term “participation” into specific types of political activity and examine whether women in

recent election cycles have, as past literature would suggest, participated at lower rates than men in activities that are “higher cost” than voting due to demands of time, money or skills.

The Changing Tides of Women’s Participation, 1996-2016

The ANES Time Series Study is conducted during every presidential election cycle and surveys thousands of respondents on key measures of political attitudes and behavior (American National Election Studies, 2018). In the six studies that were carried out during each presidential cycle between 1996-2016, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had taken part in several different political activities during the election cycle. I analyze participants’ responses to a battery of questions regarding participation, specifically whether or not they had talked to anyone about voting for/against a candidate or party; attended a political meeting, speech or rally; worn a campaign button, posted sign or bumper sticker; or done any (other) work for a party or candidate. The data shown in Figures 3.2-3.5 demonstrate that any statistically significant gaps in male and female participation rates disappear after 2000.

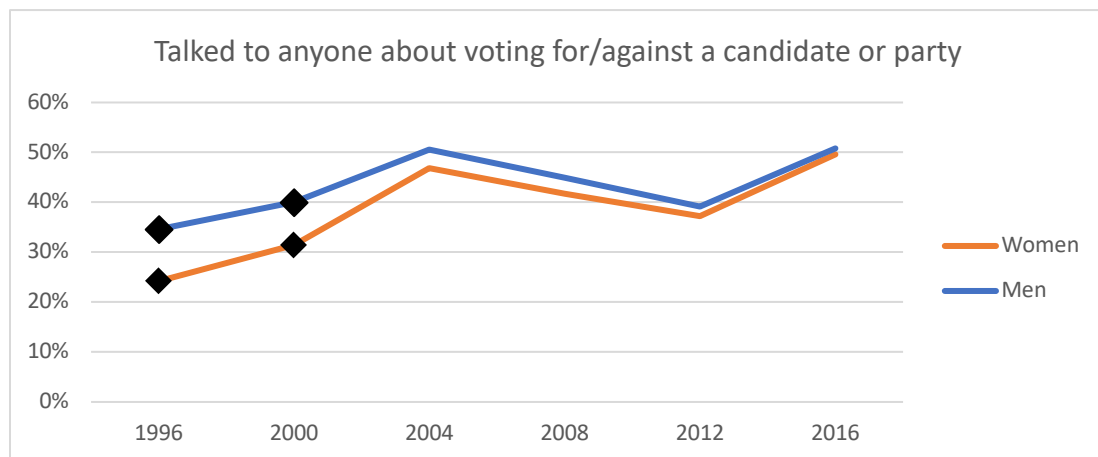


Figure 3.2

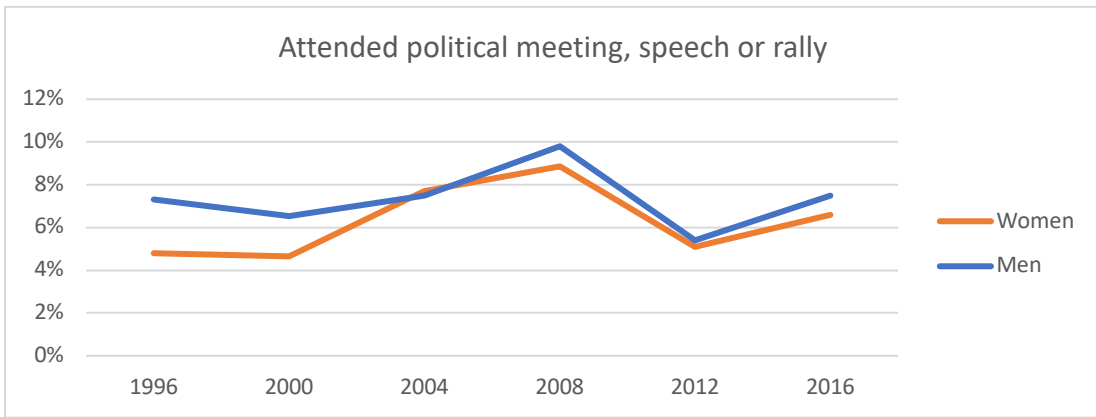


Figure 3.3

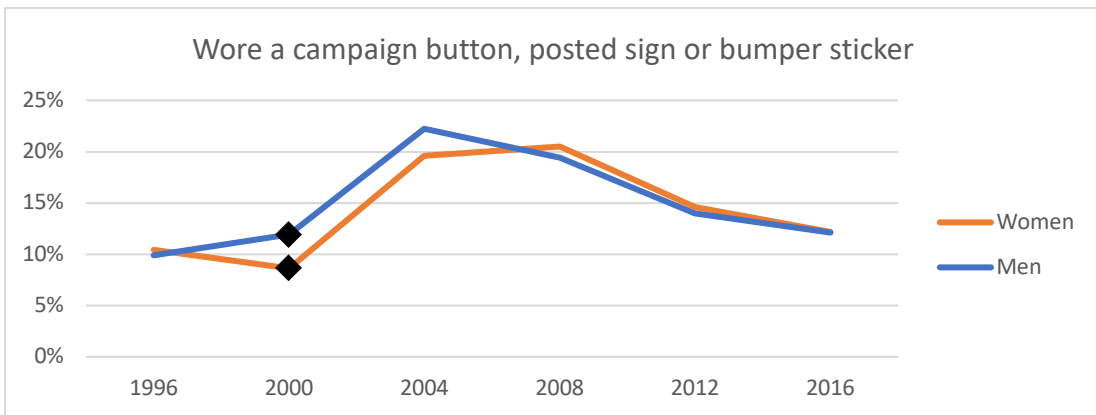


Figure 3.4

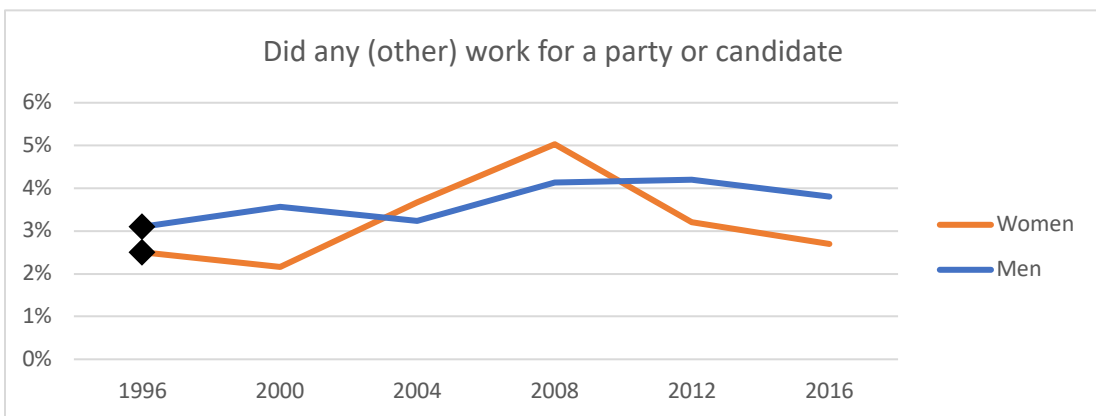


Figure 3.5

Figures 3.2-3.5 Women's Political Participation, 1996-2016.

Based on ANES respondents' self-reported participation in each activity.

◆ = Statistically significant difference between % of male and female respondents who indicated having taken part in the given activity (p-value < 0.05).

However, one key form of participation excluded from this analysis is that of “checkbook participation”—making contributions to parties, candidates or political organizations. In order to examine how male and female contributing behavior has differed in the last several federal election cycles, I now turn to FEC data and ANES survey respondents’ self-reported contribution behavior.

Established in 1975, the FEC tracks and publicly discloses all contributions of over \$200 made to PACs, parties and candidates. Though these data are limited to include only these larger donations, they provide insight into overall trends in the fundraising processes that drive federal elections. Since 1990, The Center for Responsive Politics has published online reports of FEC data for every federal election cycle, each of which includes a gender breakdown of donors (*About the Site*, n.d.). Utilizing the reports available on the Center for Responsive Politics’ website, OpenSecrets.org, the following graphs show differences in both the rates of male versus female giving and their overall contribution totals.

The FEC contribution data in Figure 3.10 show that in all election years for which data are available through the Center for Responsive Politics, women have made up a far lower percentage of political donors than men. Further, when they do give, they give less than men do. In every cycle since 1992, the percent of women contributing has been higher than the percent of campaign dollars contributed by women, as can be seen in Figure 3.12. For example, in 2016, even as the number of female donors increased to make up 37.1% of all contributors giving above \$200, their aggregate contributions only made up 29.6% of the total campaign dollars raised in the cycle (*Donor Demographics*, 2018). If women’s donations were as large as men’s, these two rates would be equal. Both graphs show that even as women’s

political giving has risen in recent years, parallel increases in male giving have left women unable to make significant gains toward gender parity in contributions.

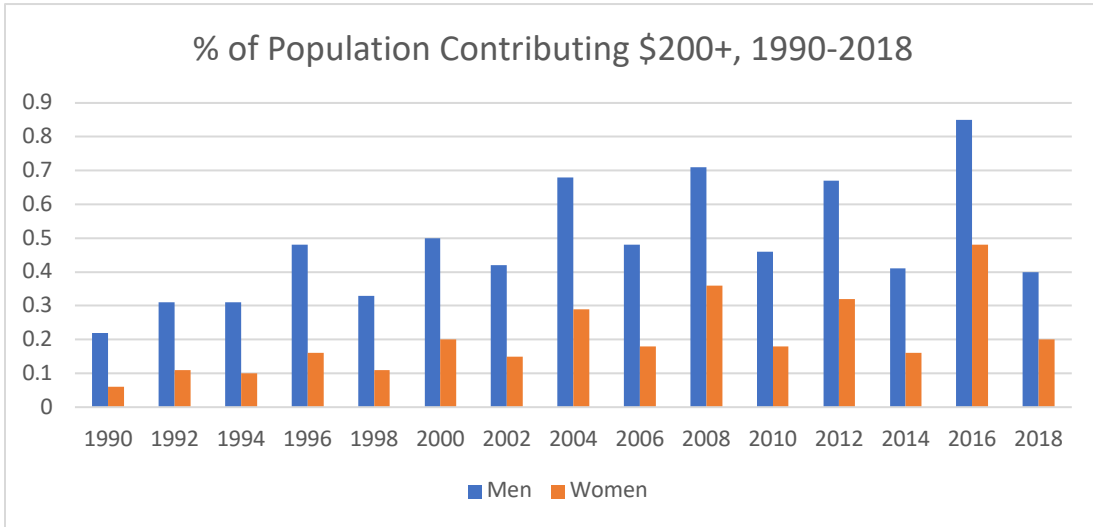


Figure 3.6 Male vs. Female Contributions, 1990-2018. Based on Federal Election Commission data for all contributions of \$200 or higher made to candidates, parties or PACs. Data reported by The Center for Responsive Politics (*Donor Demographics*, 2018).

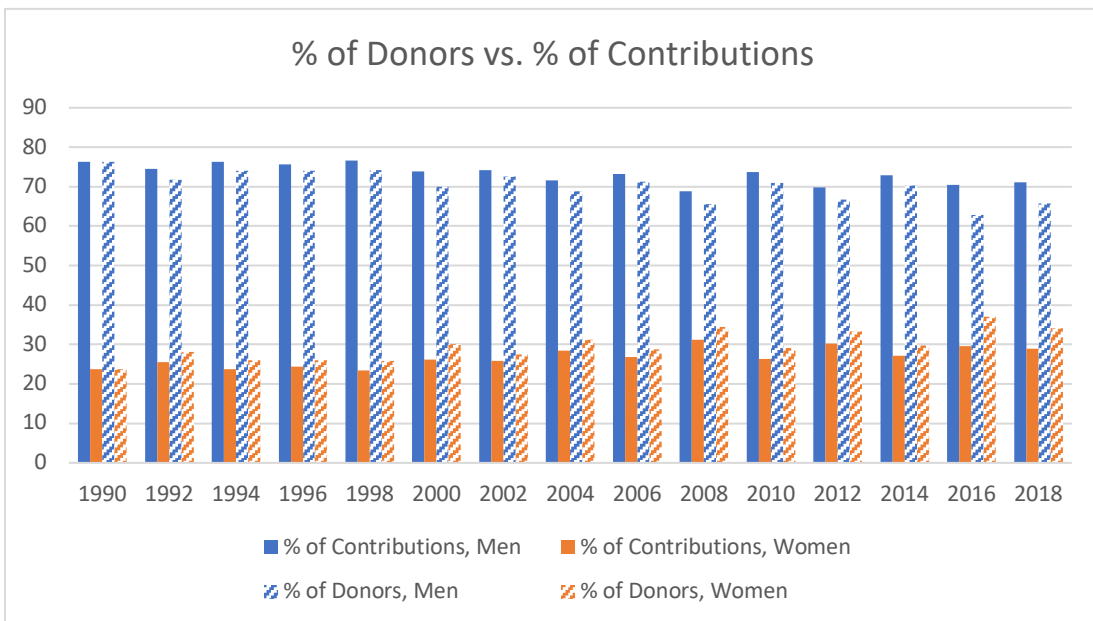


Figure 3.7 Percentage of Male vs. Female Donors and Percentage of Total Campaign Dollars Contributed by Men vs. Women, 1990-2018. Based on Federal Election Commission data for all contributions of \$200 or higher made to candidates, parties or PACs. Data reported by The Center for Responsive Politics (*Donor Demographics*, 2018).

However, FEC data paint a limited picture of gender differences in contributions, as it only reports contributions above \$200. Research has found that women give in smaller amounts than men (Francia, Goldberg, Green, Hernnson, & Wilcox, 1999), meaning their donations likely reach the \$200 FEC minimum less frequently than men’s. Though ANES survey respondents were not asked questions related to the size of their contributions, their indication of whether or not they donated is more representative of aggregate differences in male and female political giving.

Figures 3.6-3.9 show that a higher percentage of men have made political donations to these three groups in every presidential election cycle but 2004. Though gender gap in contributions does not reach statistical significance in every cycle, the fact that male respondents consistently report having made a political contribution at higher rates than their female counterparts in nearly every category measured below confirms the existence of a pervasive gender gap in American male and female political giving.

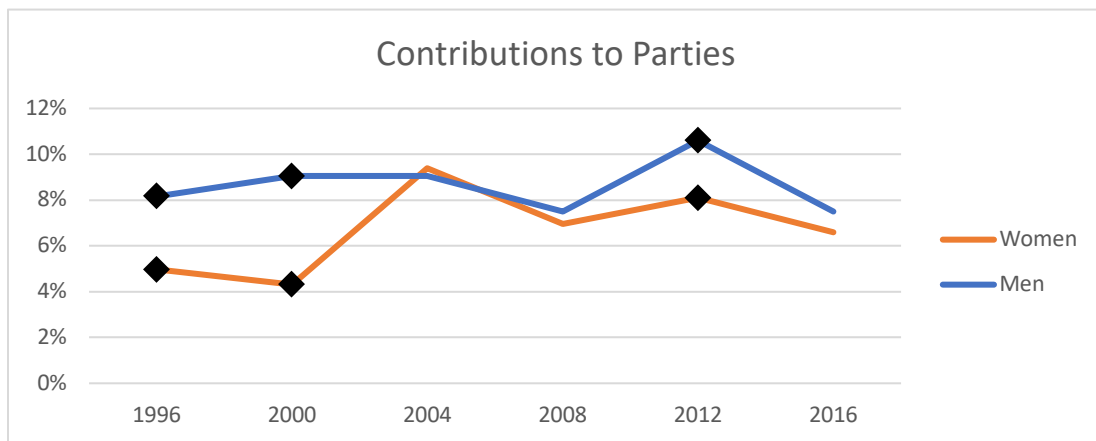


Figure 3.8

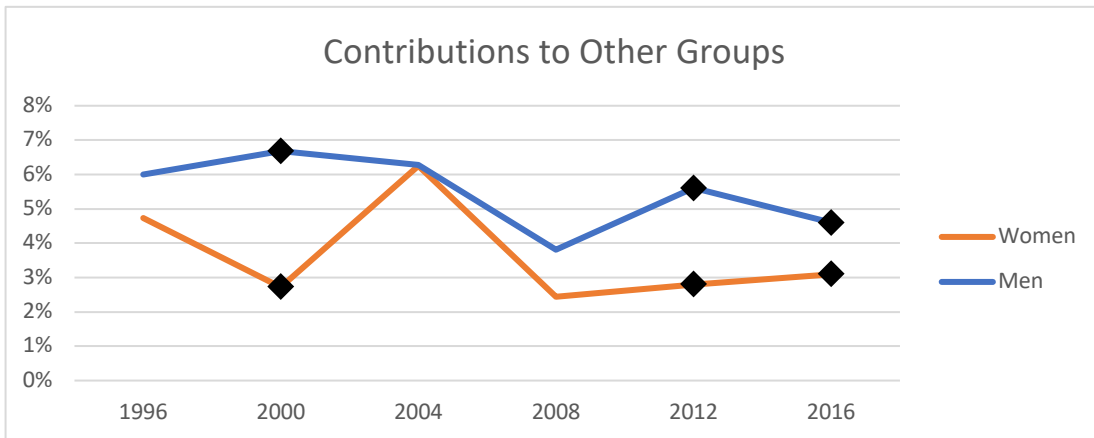


Figure 3.9

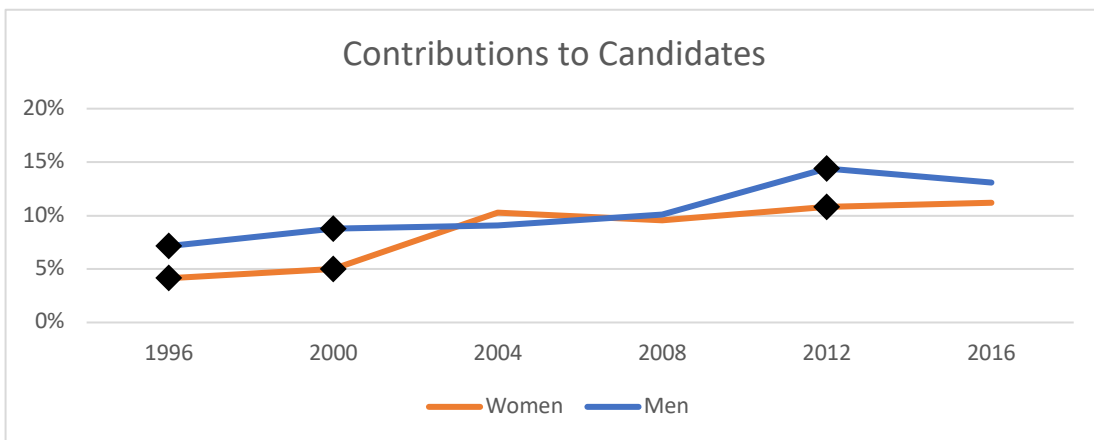


Figure 3.10

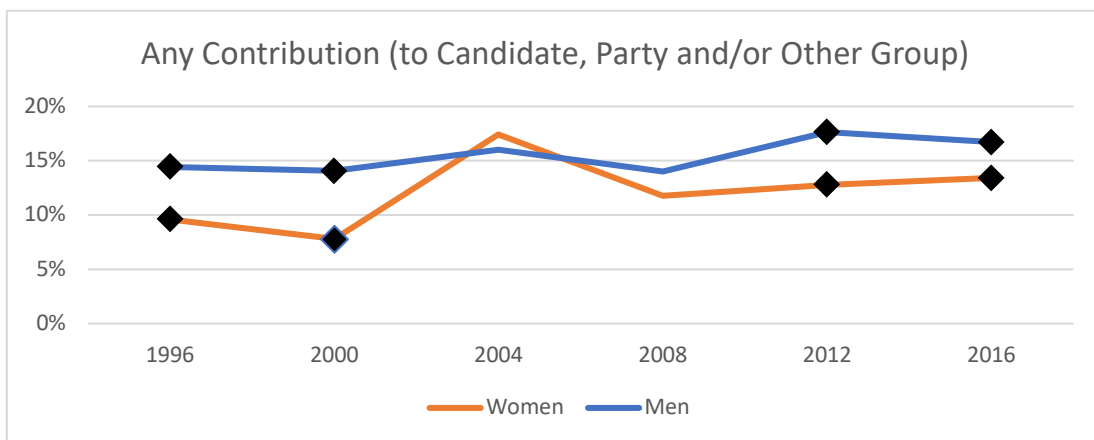


Figure 3.11

Figures 3.8-3.11 Male and Female Self-Reported Political Contributions, 1996-2016. Based on ANES respondents' self-reported participation in each activity.

◆ = Statistically significant difference between % of male and female respondents who indicated having taken part in the given activity (p-value < 0.05).

Because the FEC does not report contributions of less than \$200 and ANES data do not include donation size, it is hard to know how men and women differ in “small-dollar” donations. However, some survey data is available on the size of male and female contributions that fall under this \$200 limit. In 2013, Pew Research Center published the results of their August 2012 Civic Engagement Survey (n=2,250), a national tracking survey run by Princeton Survey Research Associates International for the Pew Internet & American Life Project. This publicly available dataset provides insights into American civic engagement, specifically regarding “online and offline political engagement” and “the role of social networking sites in people’s political activities” (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Among survey respondents, 19.77% of men and 20.5% of women reported having made a political donation in the last 12 months. Though women in this survey sample gave slightly more than men, the gender gap was not statistically significant. Those who reported having made a contribution were then asked to indicate the amount and whether they made it on- or offline. Their responses can be seen in Figures 3.12 and 2.13. The gender differences in giving rates were not statistically significant in any amount category, though this is likely in part due to the low percentage of participants who indicated having contributed and resulting small sample sizes for these survey questions.

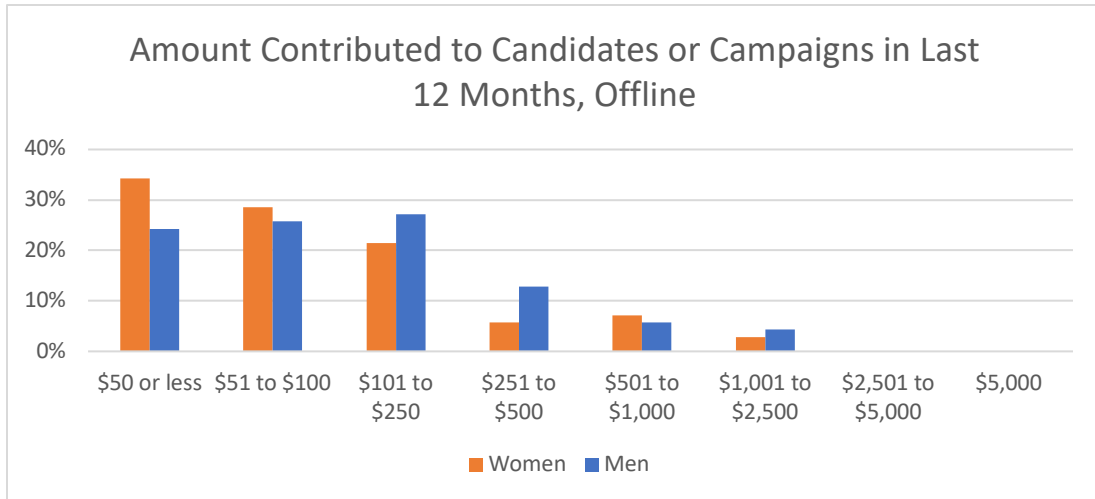


Figure 3.12

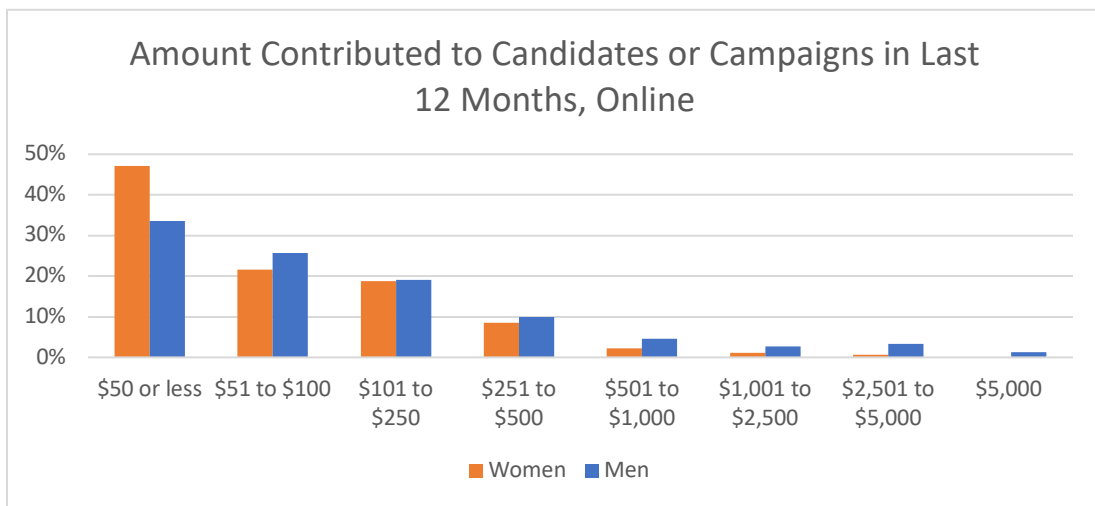


Figure 3.13

Figures 3.12-3.13. Amount Male vs. Female Respondents Indicating Having Contributed in Last 12 Months, Online and Offline. Based on data from the Pew Research Center’s 2012 Civic Engagement Study (2013).

Among respondents who contributed offline (N=328), women gave contributions of \$50 or less, \$51-\$100, and \$501-\$1,000 at higher rates than men, but men gave at higher levels in every other category. Though it is surprising that women gave slightly more than men in the \$501-\$1,000 amount category than men, the 1.4% difference is not statistically significant. Among respondents who contributed online

(N=140), men gave at higher levels than women in every amount category except “\$50 or less.” Though the differences in the size of male and female contributions did not reach statistical significance, the overall pattern that emerges echoes those observed in the FEC contribution data—even when women give at the same rate as men, they are more likely to give in smaller amounts.

Brady et al.’s Civic Voluntarism Model would suggest that the observed increases in women’s level of political participation can be explained by their increased financial resources, political engagement and opportunities for recruitment. Yet the fact that women’s rates of political giving—and the amount that they give—continue to lag behind men’s suggests that the factors that mobilize participation in political activities differ from those that mobilize political giving. In order to understand why this clear and significant disparity between male and female political contributions pervades today, despite women’s demonstrated mobilization toward participation in other forms, the following section will re-frame the Civic Voluntarism Model to focus specifically on “checkbook” forms of participation.

Gender Differences in Resources, Engagement and Recruitment, 1996-2016

When examining how the factors of resources, engagement and recruitment influenced an individual’s likelihood of making a campaign contribution, Brady et al. (1995) found that income was by far the strongest predictor of an individual’s propensity to give. Among the measures of political engagement included in their model, political interest and partisanship were the only significant predictors of contributing—political efficacy and information had no effect. Further, an

individual's political interest, though statistically significant, had far less of an effect on their likelihood of contributing than their likelihood of participating in other political activities. The authors concluded that "writing checks for political causes demands little political interest and political information and even less sense of efficacy. In comparison to other activists, contributors are—all else being equal—affluent but not especially engaged" (361).

Based on these findings, it seems that the Civic Voluntarism Model must be re-framed in order to accurately predict an individual's contribution likelihood. Though non-financial resources and political engagement play a role in determining whether an individual will contribute, far more important is their financial capacity to do so. As was shown in the above analysis of ANES data, women now participate in traditional forms of political activism at the same rates as men, meaning their resources, engagement and opportunities for recruitment may have increased. Yet if women still do not possess the same financial resources as men, these increases will not be enough to increase the rates at which they give politically. In the following section, I examine ANES survey responses for the existence of enduring gender differences in each causal step of the Civic Voluntarism Model.

Political Engagement

Brady et al (1995) use the term "political engagement" to encompass an individual's political interest, political efficacy, political information and the strength of their party identification. They find that all four of these factors are positively correlated with political participation. While past research has found that women exhibit lower levels of political engagement than their male counterparts (Burns et

al., 1997; 2001; Brady et al., 1995; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Van Deth 2000), part of the rise in female participation observed in the previous section could be explained in part by increases in women's political engagement across these four areas. Turning again to ANES data from 1996-2016, I compare measures of respondents' political interest, efficacy, knowledge and partisanship to see if any clear gender differences in political engagement emerge.

In each ANES Time Series Study, respondents were asked to rate their interest in political campaigns on a three-point scale.² "Not much interested" was given a score of 1, while "Very much interested" was given a score of 3. Figure 3.13 shows that men scored significantly lower than women in every cycle, with lower numeric scores indicating higher levels of interest. Similarly, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" on a five-point scale, ranging from a score of 1, "Agree strongly" to a score of 5, "Disagree strongly." Figure 3.14 shows that in every year the question was included in the survey, the gender gap between male and female responses was significant. Women's consistently lower scores indicate their higher level of agreement with the statement that politics are too complicated to understand.

² In 2008, respondents were randomly chosen to be asked either the "old" version of the political interest question (the same format that is utilized in the other Time Series Study surveys from 1996-2016) or a "new" experimental version of the question, which is not directly comparable. Therefore, the sample size for this year is smaller than years in which all respondents answered the same question (N=1032).

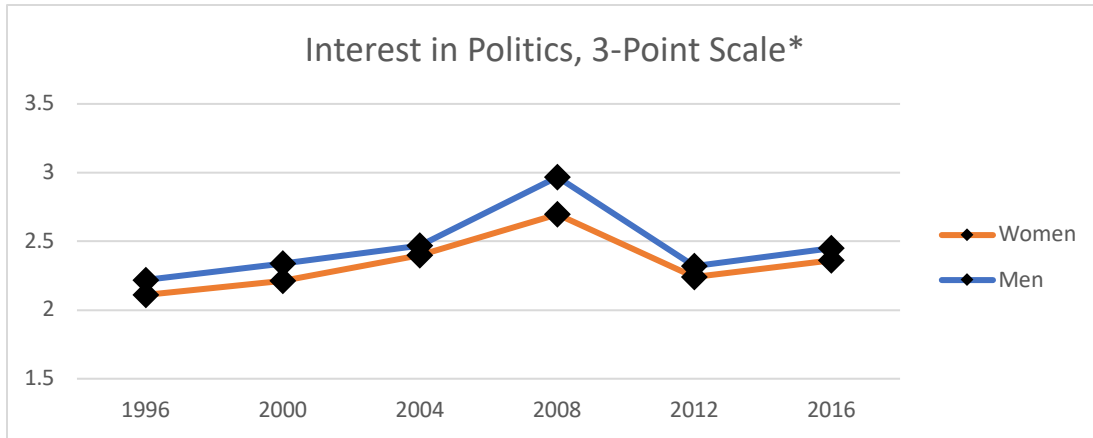


Figure 3.14 Mean Male vs. Female Interest in Politics, 1-3 Scale, 1996-2016.
 ◆ = Statistically significant difference between male and female mean responses (p-value < 0.05).
 * In the 2008 version of the study, interest was rated on a 4-point scale. Respondents were asked how closely they follow politics, from “Extremely Closely” to “Not closely at all.”

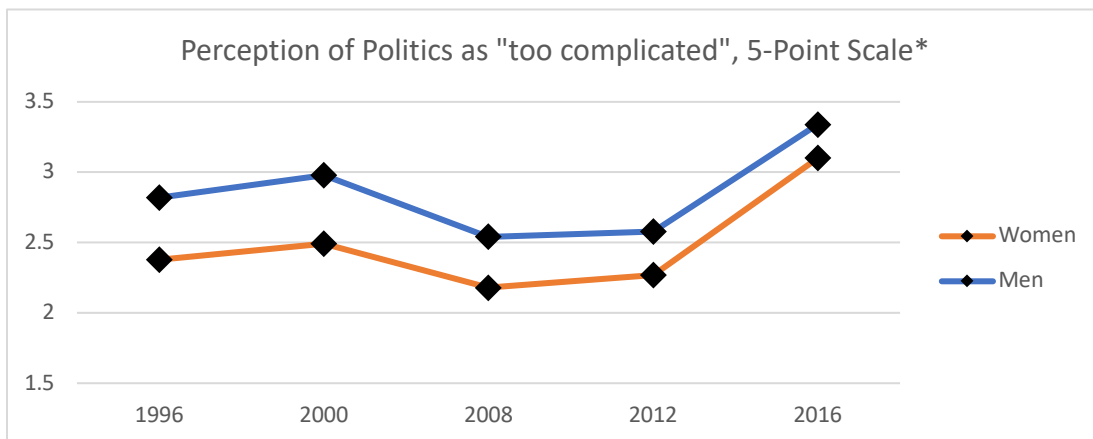


Figure 3.15 Mean Male vs. Female Agreement with Statement “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on,” 1-5 Scale, 1996-2016.
 ◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female mean responses (p-value < 0.05)
 * In the 2004 version of the study, no similar question was asked. The year was omitted from this figure.

A less clear picture emerges after examining male and female self-reported levels of political discussion, another indicator of political interest, in the 1996-2016 period. Figure 3.16 shows that the gender gap in the percent of respondents who indicated ever discussing politics with friends or family did not reach statistical

significance in any year after 1996. However, Figure 3.17 shows that the difference in the actual number of days men and women had spent discussing politics in the last week was significant in both 2000 and 2012. Overall, it seems that men and women discuss politics in relatively similar amounts, however, the lack of a clear pattern between the two makes it hard to draw a clear conclusion.

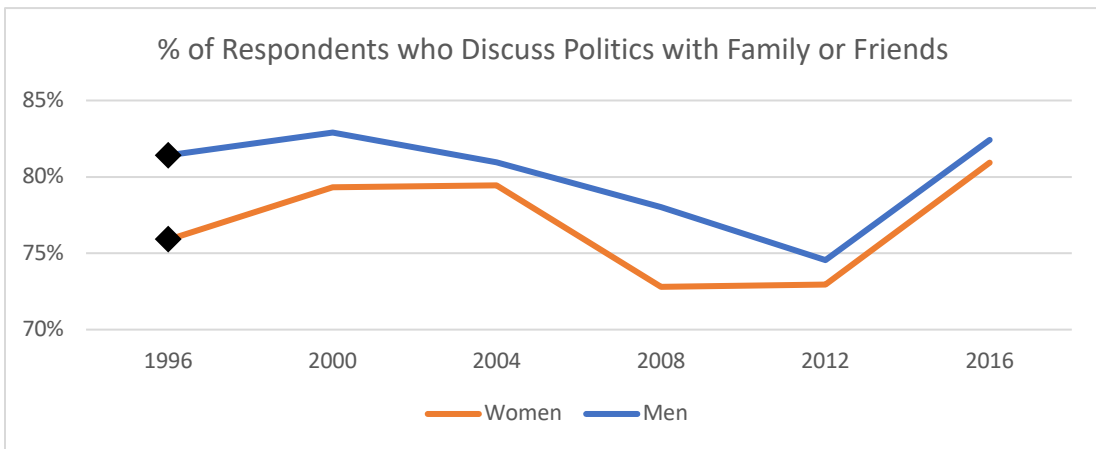


Figure 3.16 Percent of Male vs. Female Respondents Reporting Ever Discussing Politics, 1996-2016.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in frequency of male and female respondents indicating they discuss politics (p-value < 0.05).

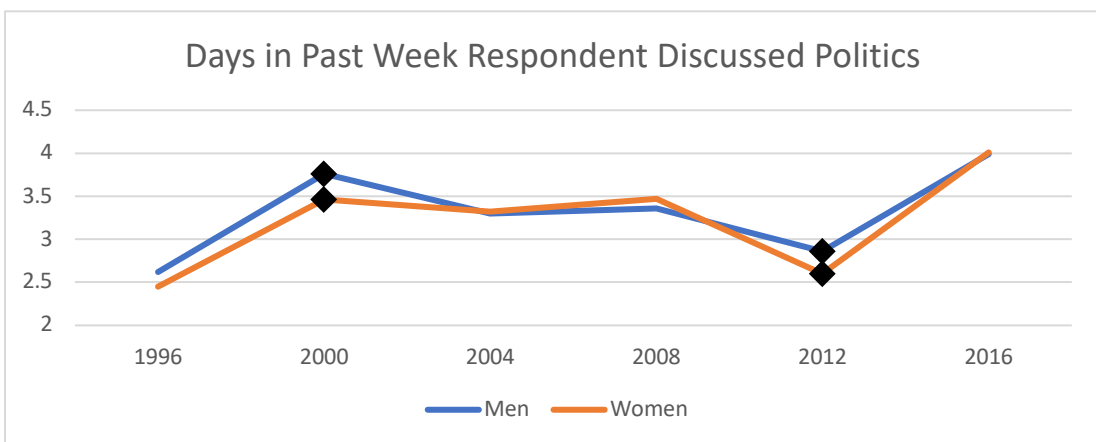


Figure 3.17 Male vs. Female Mean Days in Last Week Discussing Politics, 1996-2016.

Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

In order to analyze whether male and female levels of political efficacy differed in the 1996-2016 period, I examine responses to questions regarding perception of public officials' responsiveness and faith in the government. Figure 3.18 shows respondents' level of agreement with the statement "Public officials don't care much what people like me think," ranked on a five-point scale from a score of 1, "Agree strongly," to 5, "Disagree strongly." No significant gender differences emerge. Respondents' agreement with the statement "People like me don't have much say in what the government does" was ranked on the same five-point scale, and Figure 3.19 shows that while initially, in 1996 and 2000, women reported feeling like they had significantly less say in government than men, the gap decreased by 2004 and remained statistically insignificant in all subsequent cycles. When asked how often they trust the government to "do what's right," a question that was removed after 2008, no significant gender gap emerged, as can be seen in Figure 3.20.

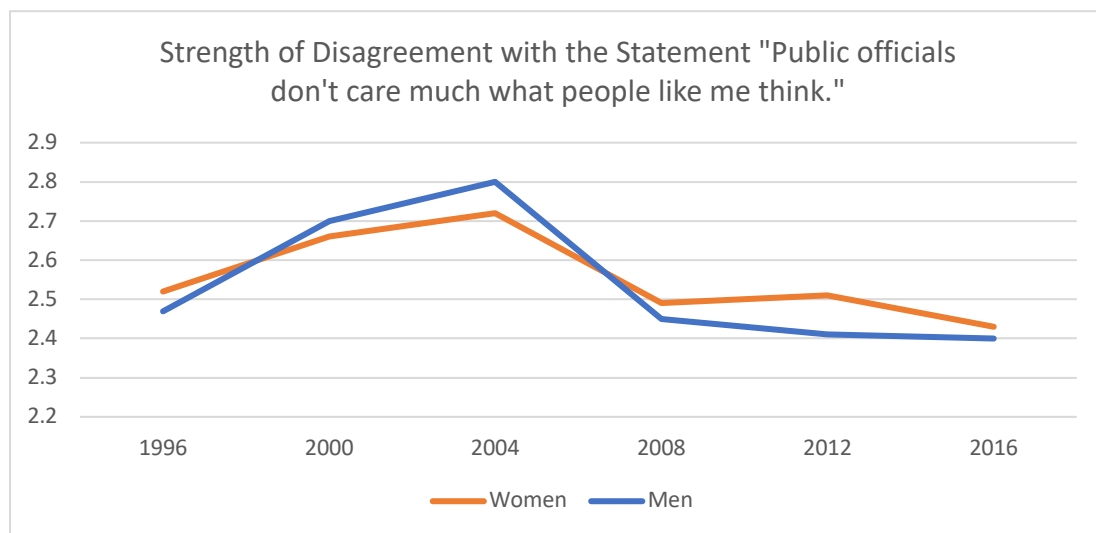


Figure 3.18. Male vs. Female Level of Political Efficacy, Measure 1, 1996-2016. Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

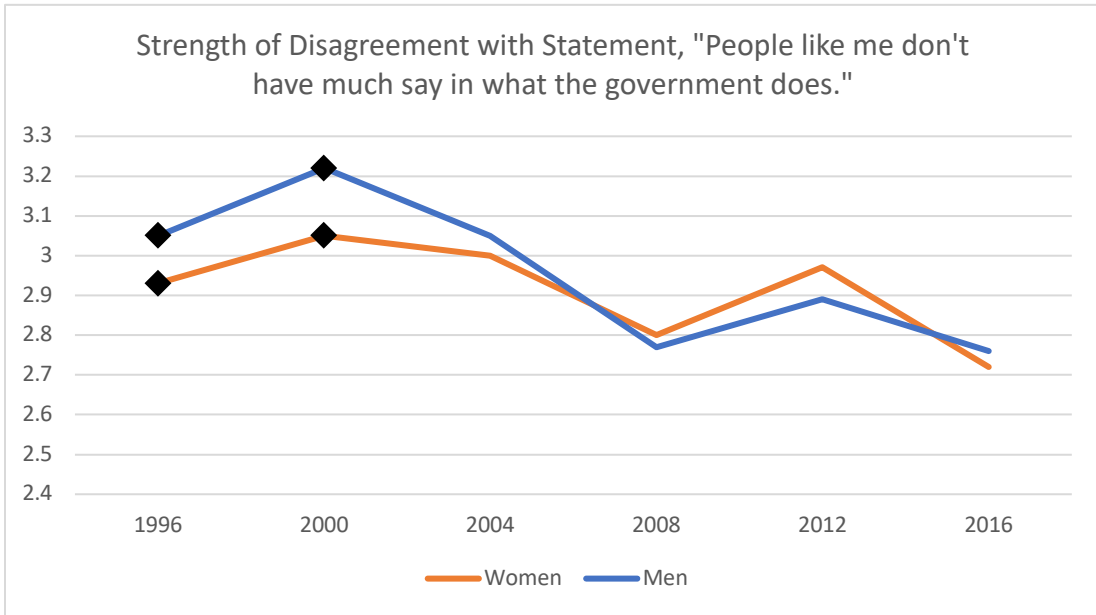


Figure 3.19. Male vs. Female Level of Political Efficacy, Measure 2, 1996-2016. Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

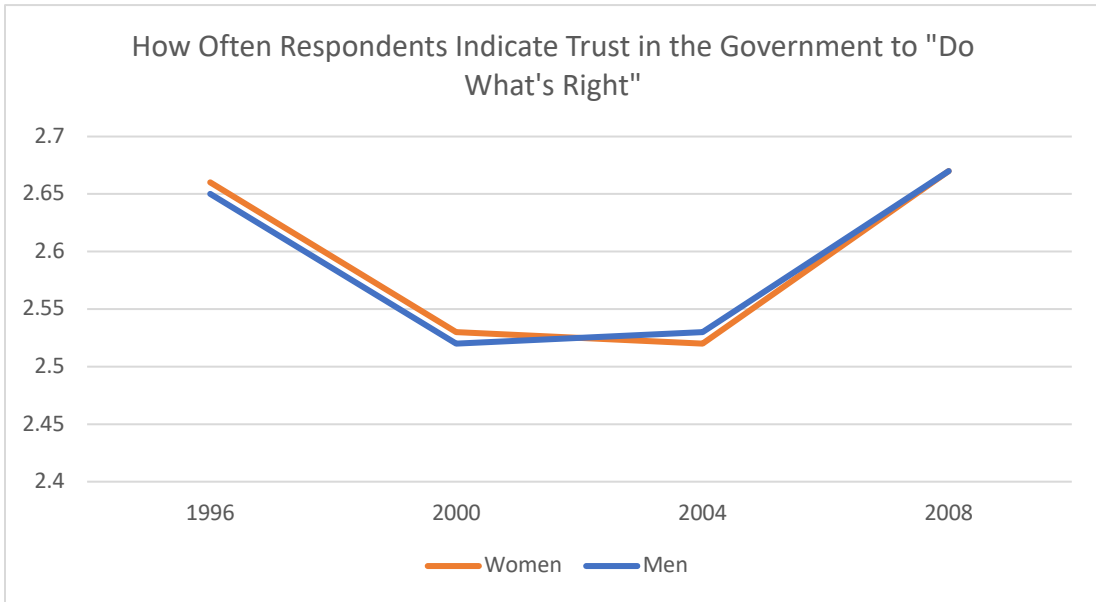


Figure 3.20. Male vs. Female Level of Political Efficacy, Measure 3, 1996-2008. Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

The Time Series Study also includes several questions in which respondents are asked basic questions about the government and asked to identify political

figures.³ To measure whether men and women exhibit significant differences in their levels of political knowledge, I assigned correct responses and identifications a score of 1, and incorrect responses a score of 0. The highest possible score depended on the number of political knowledge questions included in that year's survey, and the lowest possible score each year was 0. The score includes whether or not respondents knew which party held the majority in the House and Senate before that year's election, and whether or not they could correctly identify a public figure's position in government.

For example, in 2000, respondents were asked, "The first name is Trent Lott. What job or political office does he NOW hold?" If the respondent correctly answered that Trent Lott was the Senate Majority Leader, they were given a score of 1. If their response was incorrect or incomplete, they received a score of 0. Figure 3.21 shows that the male mean political knowledge score was significantly higher than the female mean in every election cycle for which data is available. This gender gap is a consistent finding in the literature on political knowledge (Burns et al., 2001; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Dow, 2009).

³ The coded responses for the battery of questions related to political knowledge in the 2008 and 2012 ANES surveys were not available online at the time of writing, so they have been excluded from the analysis below.

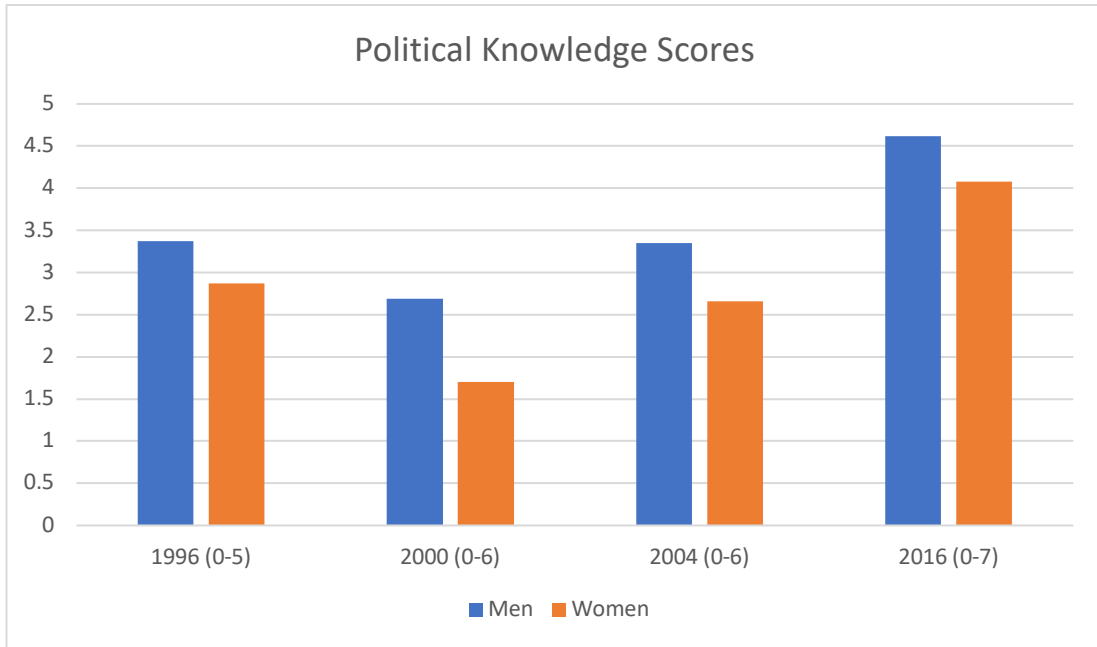


Figure 3.21. Male vs. Female Political Knowledge Scores, 1996-2016. Based on ANES survey responses.

The fourth component of political engagement under Brady et al (1995)’s definition is the strength of an individual’s partisanship. They argue that more extreme partisans are more mobilized to participate than those with weaker political ideologies. The Times Series Study measures partisanship by asking respondents to rank themselves on the standard seven-point scale ranging from “Extremely Liberal” to “Extremely Conservative.” I re-coded responses on a four-point scale, ranging from a score of 1 (indicating that the respondent is a “Moderate”) to a score of 4 (indicating that they are an “Extreme partisan,” either liberal or conservative). “Slight partisans” were coded as a 2 and “Partisans” were coded as a 3. Figure 3.22 shows that while in 1996 and 2004, men had more extreme political ideologies than women, the statistical significance of this gender gap disappeared after 2004.

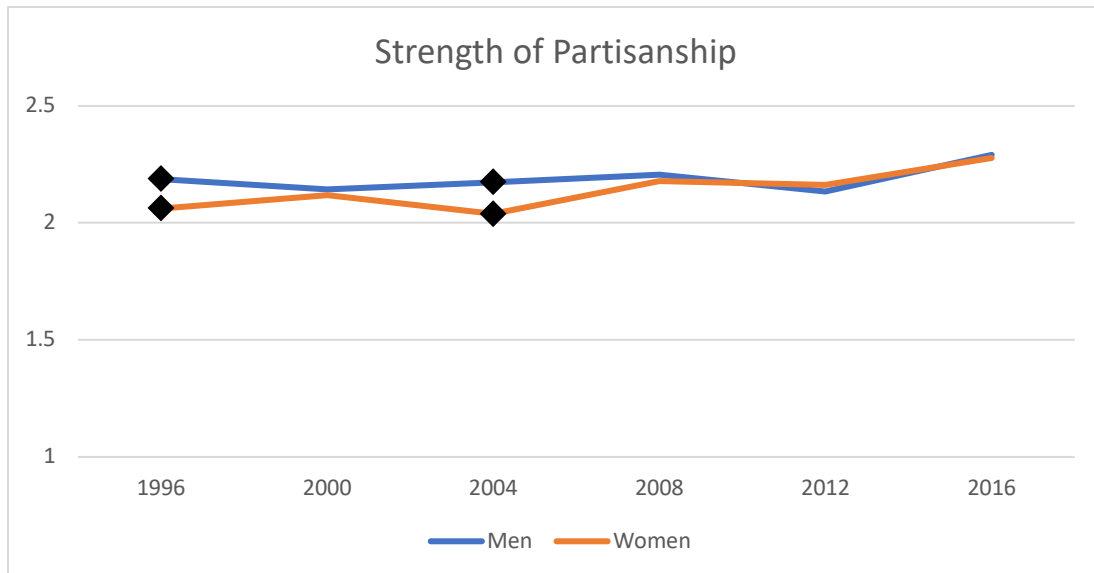


Figure 3.22. Male vs. Female Mean Strength of Partisanship, 1996-2016.

Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

This review of recent data on Americans’ political engagement suggests that in recent presidential election cycles, women were less politically interested and knowledgeable than men, but were not any less partisan or politically efficacious. Women’s low levels of political interest and knowledge compared to men across the 1996-2016 do not appear to have impeded their equal participation in all non-financial political activities, as evidenced by ANES participation data from the same period.

However, the fact that even the observed increases in political engagement have not led to increased “checkbook participation” lends support to Brady et al.’s earlier finding that increases in efficacy and partisanship strength have almost no influence over an individual’s likelihood of contribution, and that engagement overall has little effect when compared to the strength of income in predicting donations. If increases in political engagement have not been enough to mobilize women to contribute, it would seem that the deepest roots of the giving gap exist in gender

disparities in the two other components of the model, either in women's financial resources or their lower levels of recruitment to political activity.

Recruitment

According to the Civic Voluntarism Model, even if an individual has the *ability* and *desire* to participate in politics, they are the most likely to do so when they are *asked* (Brady et al., 1995). Scholars focusing specifically on the topic of campaign contributions agree that solicitation is a determinant factor of an individual's likelihood of "checkbook participation," and note that "the decision to contribute appears to stem from an assortment of political considerations. It is affected by the stimuli of political solicitation, and it flourishes among those who display unusual levels of political activity, information and involvement (Grant & Rudolph, 2002, 32, citing Sorauf, 1992, 42).

While Brady et al. initially (1995) reported that income was the strongest predictor of an individual's propensity to give, their later findings acknowledge that even habitual donors would be less likely to contribute if they were not continually solicited (Brady et al., 1999). Grant and Rudolph (2002) suggest that solicitations provide potential donors with valuable information as to how their contribution will be used and why, reduce the effort and therefore participation costs of giving by acting as a direct channel for the donation, and are persuasive enough to "supply the essential ingredient of motivation (37)" to donors who might not have otherwise given.

Past research has found that women were recruited for political activities at lower rates than men due to lower levels of involvement in the organizations and

institutions where this type of recruitment occurs (Burns et al., 2001). Further, because recruiters seek potential activists through “rational prospecting,” choosing to target those who they believe are most likely to agree to their request (Brady et al., 1999), it is possible that women’s historically lower levels of participation and access to financial resources have created biases among recruiters, who may as a result make efforts to solicit men at higher rates than women. In order to test whether women today are less likely to be recruited for participation or solicited for contributions, I first analyze ANES data on respondents’ contact with political parties and organizations. I then turn to survey data on contact specifically related to contributing.

The Time Series Study asks respondents to indicate whether they were contacted by someone from one of the two parties or someone without an official party affiliation to talk about that year’s campaign. The data shown in Figures 3.23 and 3.24 show that in every election cycle except 2012, male and female respondents indicated having received the same levels of contact from both party and non-party-affiliated representatives. And in 2012, women actually were contacted more than men. This measure of recruitment is relatively inexact in that it does not offer insight into whether the contact was related to registering to vote, turning out, participating or donating. However, it does suggest that women today are recognized by recruiters as key political players, certainly as voters and potentially as activists.

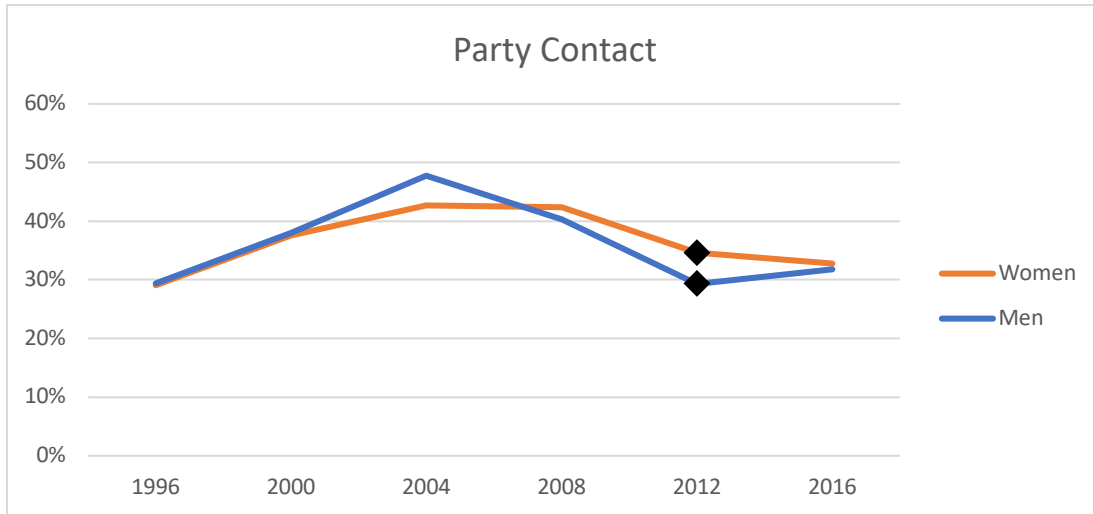


Figure 3.23 Male vs. Female Rates of Party Contact, 1996-2016.

Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

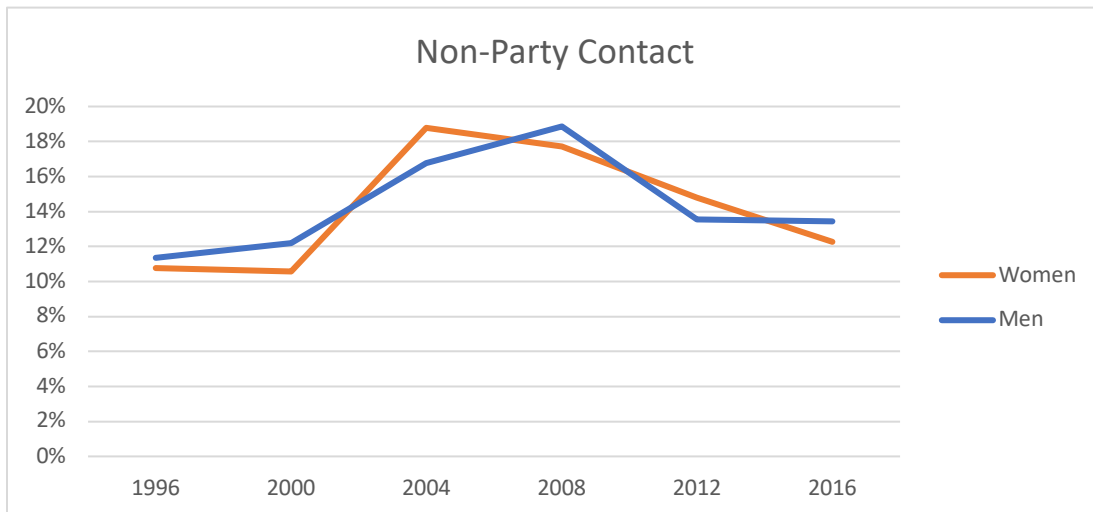


Figure 3.24 Male vs. Female Rates of Non-Party Contact, 1996-2016.

Based on ANES survey responses.

◆ = Statistically significant difference in male and female means (p-value < 0.05).

Based on these data, it appears that women today are just as likely as men to be contacted by parties and other political organizations. Equivalent opportunities for recruitment may help to explain why men and women are now participating in political activities at equal rates. However, the fact remains that nationally, there are dramatically fewer women than men making contributions of over \$200, and

women's contributions account for a far lower percentage of overall campaign dollars raised than men's. Therefore, a more specific analysis of rates of solicitation for contributions is needed.

In April 2018, I was able to add questions to a survey of 2,000 Americans conducted through Survey Sampling International. The survey sample matched Census demographics on several variables, including gender (52% female and 48% male).⁴ Of those surveyed, 26% of men had made a political donation in the last two years, compared to only 17% of women (a statistically significant difference at $p < 0.01$). Further, 50% of men reported having been asked to donate in the last two years, compared to only 38% of women (again, a difference significant at $p < 0.01$). In light of these results, it seems that the equal rates of contact reported in the ANES data do not capture continuing differences in rates of contribution solicitation.

Taking both of these findings into consideration, it seems that Brady et al. (1999) and Grant & Rudolph (2002) are correct in underlining the importance of recruitment as the final causal step in a model of an individual's decision to contribute. Women's access to resources (specifically, those of time and civic skills) have increased, as has their political engagement, and they are now being contacted by political parties and groups at the same rate as men, three factors that would, under the Civic Voluntarism Model, explain why their rates of voter turnout and political participation are now equivalent to men's. Yet a continuing lack of financial resources and lower instances of solicitation seem to have significant implications on their rates of "checkbook participation."

⁴ Thank you to Erika Franklin Fowler, Sarah Gollust, Logan Dancey, and Geoff Sheagley for allowing me to place questions on the survey.

It is possible that women are less likely to be solicited because recruiters are using “rational prospecting” techniques and targeting those who have historically demonstrated a higher propensity to contribute (Brady et al., 1999). If women’s economic empowerment has not increased to the same degree as their access to other resources or their levels of political engagement, it follows that their capacity to participate financially has also not risen, potentially dissuading recruiters from soliciting them in the first place. Increases in women’s capacity to give could, in turn, lead to increased opportunities for solicitation and precipitate increases in female contribution rates. However, women’s current financial disadvantages seem to be a key explanatory factor as to why the gender gap in giving has pervaded, despite demonstrated female political mobilization.

Resources

The gender pay gap in America has existed since women entered the workforce, with women being paid less for the same work across occupations, industries and education levels. Despite women making gains in educational attainment and workforce participation, in 2016, women still only earned 80% as much as men. However, a comparison of the wage gap in 1960 relative to 2016 demonstrates just how much progress has been made on the road to gender wage equality. In 1960, women only earned about 60% as much as their male counterparts (Semega, J. L., Fontenot, K. R., and Kollar, M. A., 2017). Between 1967 and 2012, the number of mothers earning at least 25% of their household income increased from 28% to 63%. Further, in 2015, 42% of mothers brought in at least half of family earnings (Glynn, 2016). The increases seem to be linked with women’s rising

education levels and presence in the workforce, as American women today obtain college and postgraduate degrees at higher rates than men (Bauman & Ryan, 2015) and make up 47% of the civilian workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

If women are increasingly well-educated and employed, it follows that they have also gained the skills and money required to meaningfully participate in political activities. Though increased employment may put more constraints on women's time, the increases in women's participation in other, time-demanding activities suggest that these constraints have not had a significant demobilizing effect. "Checkbook participation," however, differs from the previously discussed forms of political activity because it does not directly require time or skill. Yet it remains—literally—the "highest cost" activity, for which the "money" component of Brady et al.'s resource model especially significant.

Figure 3.25 shows how the gap between American men and women's median income has eroded in the period between 1980-2016. Today, American women today are far more economically empowered than they were in the late 20th century, which has translated into increased independence in their financial decision-making. Figure 3.26 compares the income gap and political contribution gap for each election cycle since 1990, based on U.S. Census and FEC contribution data from the years analyzed.

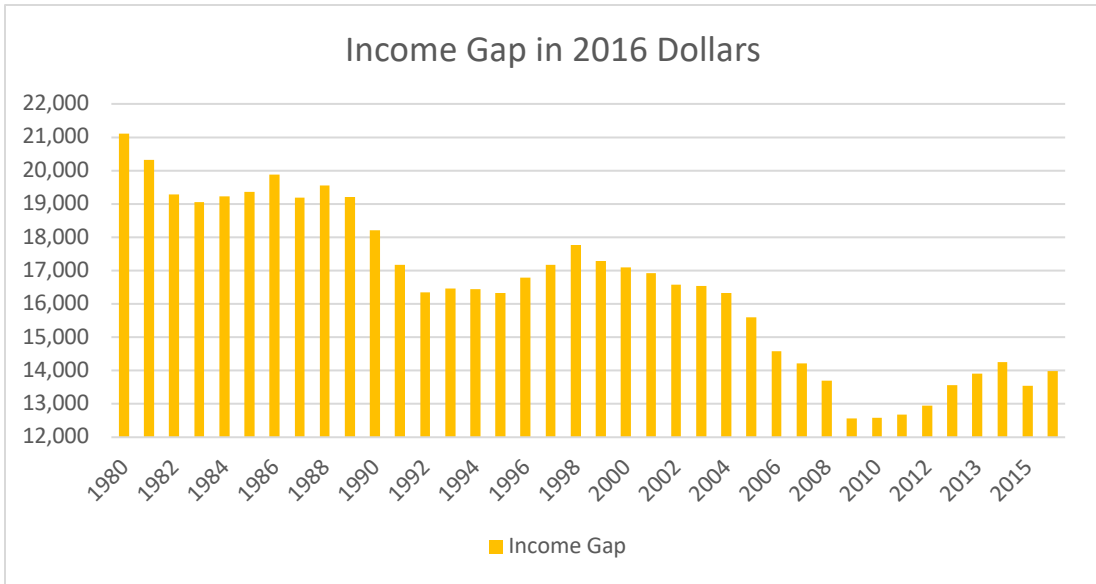


Figure 3.25 Difference between Male vs. Female Median Income, 1980-2016. Based on US Census Data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

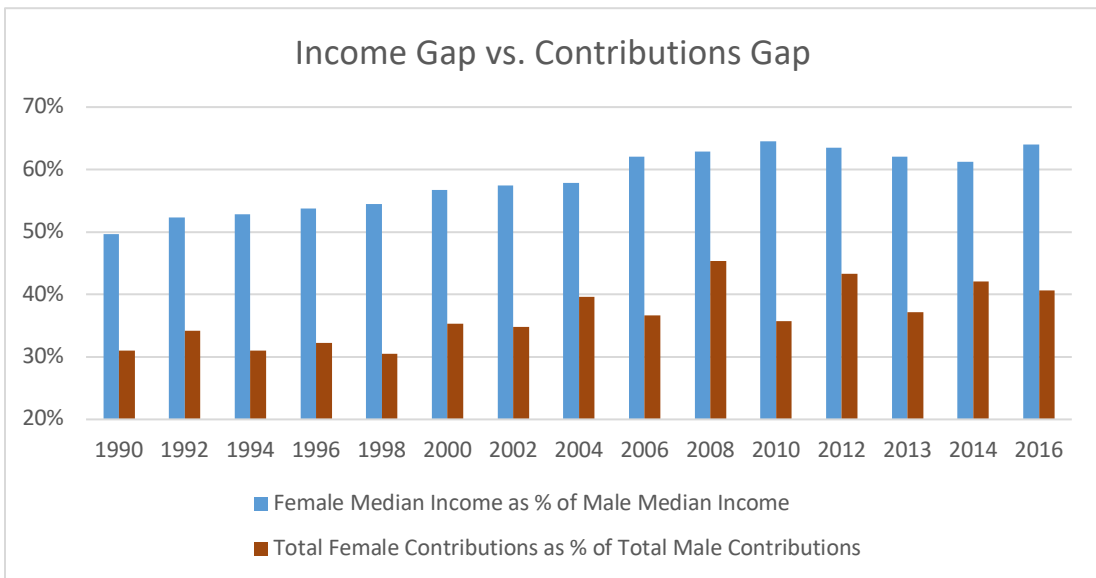


Figure 3.26 Female vs. Male Median Income and Female vs. Male Total Campaign Dollars, 1990-2016.

Based on Federal Election Commission data for all contributions of \$200 or higher made to candidates, parties or PACs, as reported by The Center for Responsive Politics (*Donor Demographics*, 2018), and U.S. Census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

In 2016, the female median income of \$24,862 was 64% that of the male median, \$38,869 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Meanwhile, contributions from women made up only 28.9% of the total campaign dollars raised in the election cycle,

meaning they contributed only 41% as much as men did (*Donor Demographics*, 2018). The same roughly 20-point disparity between the female median income as a proportion of the male and their total contributions as a proportion of men's can be seen in every election cycle. This echoes the trend shown in Figure 3.10, which shows that even as women's contributions have risen, so too have male contributions.

Collectively, these data demonstrate that even as women have gained the financial capacity to give, they have not been able to make up for lost ground in the male-dominated world of campaign finance. Though increases in the female median income have been accompanied by increases in their political giving, men's giving has continued to increase as well. As a result, women's contributions still do not make up even half the campaign dollars given by men.

Conclusion

This empirical investigation of women's political participation over the last two decades shows that as women have become more empowered with the resources of civic skills and time, increasingly politically engaged, and more likely to be contacted by parties and political groups, their rates of participation in several political activities have become equivalent to men's. Yet the factors of engagement and recruitment do not seem to be as predictive of women's likelihood of contributing as their access to financial resources and instances of solicitation, which continue to lag behind men's.

Financial disadvantages seem to constrain the amount women are willing to contribute when they do decide to make a political donation. Therefore, it is possible that the gender gap in giving is not perpetuated by the fact that women lack the

motivation to give, but instead that they lack the financial capacity to do so. The survey data and FEC reports analyzed in this chapter suggest that even when more women do give, the comparatively small size of their contributions and simultaneously increasing rates of male political giving prevent them from making up an increased percentage of the total campaign dollars in an election cycle.

Further, the fact that women today report being solicited for donations at lower rates than men supports earlier findings that recruitment is a key motivating factor of an individual's decision to contribute (Grant & Rudolph, 2002; Brady et al., 1999). Women's historically low rates of giving may be biasing recruiters against soliciting them, perpetuating a vicious cycle of low contributions and low likelihood of recruitment. If women were being recruited at the same rate as their male counterparts, it is possible that further increases in their political giving would follow.

Though there is significant evidence of continuing gender differences in access to financial resources and instances of solicitation, the presence of these barriers to participation does not mean other factors do not continue to play a role in depressing female political giving rates. The finding that women today are more politically engaged and take part in political activities at higher rates than they have in the past does not necessarily mean that their willingness to make political donations has also risen. In Chapter Four, I present the results of an experimental study designed to empirically test past explanations for women's lower propensity to contribute. Utilizing a hypothetical political donation scenario in which all respondents are solicited for a small contribution, I examine whether women today are less willing to contribute than men.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF GENDER

DIFFERENCES IN INDIVIDUALS' PROPENSITY TO MAKE

POLITICAL DONATIONS

The data presented in the previous chapter suggests that women's low rates of political giving could be explained by their continuing financial disadvantages and lower instances of solicitation for contributions. However, the fact that "checkbook participation" is the only political activity in which they are found to be less likely to take part than men could also be evidence that they simply don't *want* to donate. Past research has linked women's attitudes regarding political giving with their decreased propensity to contribute, but no experimental tests of this hypothesis have been conducted. Therefore, I designed a causal test to determine whether altering women's attitudes towards giving would increase their contributions. This chapter discusses the results of the experiment and their implications.

"Vote With Your Purse": Early Explanations for the Giving Gender Gap

Women's Campaign Fund (WCF) was founded in 1974 in the wake of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision to support pro-choice female candidates in electoral races across the nation (Carroll, 1994). Today, WCF works with the nonprofit She Should Run, founded in 2011, to motivate women to run for office. Through research and educational efforts, the two organizations work to increase the number of female candidates seeking local, state or federal office and help them run

successful and well-funded campaigns. As a result of their work, “over 18,000 women have been inspired to run for office through She Should Run since the 2016 election (She Should Run, n.d.).”

One such effort is WCF’s report “Vote with Your Purse,” first published in 2007 by the Women’s Campaign Fund Foundation as a guide for female donors and candidates going into the 2008 election cycle (*Vote With Your Purse: Harnessing the Power of Women’s Political Giving for the 2008 Election and Beyond*, 2007). The research was conducted as a response to the significant gap in rates of male and female political giving, aiming to “understand women’s political giving, to determine how women make political spending decision and to develop methodologies to motivate greater political action from women” (3). WCF and She Should Run then released an updated 2011 edition, drawing insights from 2010 election cycle data to support new conclusions and suggestions for the upcoming 2012 election. However, the 2011 report did not include any survey research.

The 2007 report used polling data collected in December 2006 from 400 political donors (200 men and 200 women) and 200 charitable donors (100 men, 100 women). The political donors were those who had contributed to candidates in the last five years, and the charitable donors were those who had given to charities or causes in the last five years but had either not given politically at all or had not contributed more than \$250 to candidates. In February 2007, the organization also conducted research among focus groups of charitable and political donors in New York, Boston and Los Angeles. However, the report notes that these interviews were mostly “intended to provide knowledge, awareness, attitudes and opinions (17),” and the insights collected were limited due to the small size of the respondent pool (47).

Their study was especially interested in why women make charitable donations at far higher rates than men while continuing to lag in the realm of political contributions. In order to understand differences in how charitable and political donors are motivated to give, their survey measured respondents' perceptions of both politicians' and charities' abilities to impact issues. The survey's results show that donors in these two distinct groups had markedly different perceptions of both the potential significance and impact of their donations. Seventy percent of charitable donors surveyed felt that if they made a contribution to a charity, their donation would make a difference for the cause they cared about. However, when the recipient was a candidate, only 26% felt it would make a difference. Comparatively, 60% of political donors believed that their contribution to a candidate would make a difference.

Only 32% of charitable donors felt they could impact issues they cared about by contributing to a candidate, compared to 57% of political donors. Seventy-eight percent of charitable donors also felt that even small charitable contributions could still have an impact, a figure that dropped to 40% when asked about the potential impact of small political donations. Meanwhile, 66% of political donors felt that small contributions to candidates could still be impactful. However, both political and charitable donors cited the same motivation for making contributions—a desire “to affect change on the issues that are important to them” (10). Therefore, the authors find that the key difference between these types of donors seems to be in their perceptions of the political system and its potential to act as an avenue for productive change. Charitable donors, they argue, “do not connect political leadership with positive social change the way political contributors do. When they understand the

connection between political leadership and social progress, charitable women are much more receptive to political giving” (10).

The survey also found that while 50% of political donors viewed giving as a civic responsibility, only 30% of charitable donors viewed it as such. The authors find that women are just as likely as—if not more likely than—men to participate politically in activities that they view as civic duties, such as voting. Taken together, these findings lend credence to the author’s argument that women might be more inclined to give politically if they viewed it as a way to fulfill a civic duty.

The research that provides the basis for both the 2007 and 2011 “Vote with Your Purse” publications does not utilize any experimental methodology to investigate the hypotheses that the authors advance. Therefore, though women may agree with the idea that political giving is not a civic duty or that leaders are not capable of affecting positive social change, this finding is not necessarily evidence of a direct link between the possession of these attitudes and a lower likelihood of donation. My experimental study was therefore designed as a causal test of whether increases in female contribution rates can be precipitated by increasing women’s support for the idea that either (1) political giving is a civic duty or that (2) political leaders are capable of affecting positive social change.

Literature Review

Though the Vote With Your Purse authors’ central explanations for the gender gap in contributions are novel in their application to women’s propensity to make political donations, existing literature suggests more generally that an

individual's likelihood of political participation is indeed linked to both their sense of civic duty and their trust in political leaders.

Possessing a sense of civic duty has long been considered a predictor of whether or not an individual will vote or participate in politics (Campbell et al., 1960; Lewis-Beck, 2008). Early rational choice scholars such as Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) first underlined the potential influence of civic duty in their explanations of why any citizen in a democracy would choose to vote—a form of political activity that has little to no chance of affecting the election's outcome. They suggested that the benefit these individuals derive from fulfilling their sense of duty outweighs the costs of voting, making the net effect of voting positive and the action itself rational. Brady et al. (1995) found that of the 1989-1990 Citizen Participation Study respondents that marked having taken part in voluntary political activities, 79% indicated that they derived civic gratifications from their participation, underlining the significance of these benefits in motivating individuals to act.

As previously discussed, women have been more likely than men to register to vote and turn out at the polls since 1980, demonstrating that they are willing—and perhaps even more willing than men—to take part in seemingly “irrational” political behaviors. However, voting is a low-cost form of participation, as it demands very little time, skill or expense. Therefore, only a low-level sense of civic obligation towards voting is required to outweigh the costs of participation. Making a contribution to a campaign is comparatively high-cost—both in the literal cost in dollars of making a donation and the figurative costs of investing the time and energy required to become politically informed and confidently select which candidate, organization or party best deserves financial support. If women do not feel strongly

that they have a civic responsibility to make political contributions, they will not derive a sense “civic gratification” from the act of giving. If the WCF’s “civic duty” hypothesis is correct, it follows that the costs of political giving outweigh its benefits and make it an irrational and therefore unappealing form of participation among women.

The theory that an individual’s belief in their political leaders’ ability to affect positive, productive change in society increases their likelihood of participation has previously been advanced in literature on the topic of citizens’ trust in government. While studies of voting behavior find that a citizen’s trust in their government does not have significant influence over their decision to vote (Citrin 1974, Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), studies of other, higher-cost forms of participation such as protesting and contacting representatives have found key links between the strength of an individual’s trust in government (or lack thereof) and their level of political participation (Rosenau, 1974). If, as the authors of “Vote with Your Purse” suggest, women have less faith in political leaders’ ability to affect change in society than their male counterparts, they could continue to vote and even participate at comparable rates to men without being compelled to take part in the highest-cost political activity: contributing.

Methods

In order to create a causal test of the Vote With Your Purse authors’ two key hypotheses, I designed a survey containing demographics questions and one experimental component. A link to the survey was posted as a HIT (Human

Intelligence Task) on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform.⁵ "Workers," anonymous participants completing surveys on the platform, were told they would be paid 60 cents to take a 5-minute survey on political attitudes and behavior. In the questionnaire portion, respondents were asked basic demographics questions (such as age, gender, and income) and some questions related to their political attitudes and behaviors (such as their party identification and past political participation). Before being exposed to one of the three experimental conditions, respondents were told that they had been randomly selected to receive a 5-cent bonus in addition to their 60-cent compensation.

You have been randomly selected to receive a bonus of five cents upon completion of the study. In a moment, we are going to tell you about a political organization. If you would like, we can donate the five-cent bonus to the organization on your behalf, or you can choose to keep the bonus. The decision of whether to keep the five cents or donate it is completely up to you.

Respondents in the control group then saw the following blurb before being redirected to the donation scenario:

On the next page, we are going to provide you with information from a political group's fundraising materials. Please read that information and decide whether you want to donate your bonus to the group.

Respondents in either the Civic Duty or Social Change saw the same introductory blurb, and then were presented with one of the two following treatments:

Civic Duty:

Just like voting, many consider donating to political campaigns a civic duty. One of the best ways an individual can advocate for their own interests in government is by supporting the campaign of a candidate who shares their views. With the 2018 midterm elections on the horizon, voters have an opportunity to fulfill one

⁵ I used the TurkPrime platform to launch my survey (Litman, Robinson & Abberbock, 2016).

of their key civic duties by pledging monetary support for candidates who will fight to represent their beliefs and ideologies in national politics.

Social Change:

While charitable organizations and everyday citizens can demonstrate their positions on issues and mobilize others, at the end of the day, only politicians have the institutional power necessary to impact change in society. Even in today's gridlocked national government, there are many political leaders who fight to bring about positive, productive social change through national legislation. With the 2018 midterm elections on the horizon, voters have an opportunity to pledge monetary support for these dedicated leaders.

Respondents were then blocked based on gender (ensuring that the number of respondents of both genders in each treatment was equal) and randomly exposed to one of three experimental conditions. The "Civic Duty" treatment was a short blurb about how political giving is a key civic duty in American democracy. The "Social Change" treatment was written in the same format but instead discussed how political leaders are able to affect positive, productive social change. The third treatment was a control, meaning respondents were told about the bonus and donation opportunity but not given additional language about the social or civic benefits to donating.

Respondents in every treatment group were then presented with a hypothetical political donation scenario. Based on their response to the survey's partisanship questions, respondents were shown a brief pitch from a political organization aligned with their party ID—Democratic, Republican or Independent. After reading a brief description of the organization and its goals, the respondent was given the option to donate their bonus. For example, a respondent who indicated identifying as a Republican was then exposed to the following treatment:

On Election Day this year, Republicans will have controlled Capitol Hill for two years. Republican members of Congress have

seen several major legislative victories in the last year, such as a massive tax overhaul and the repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate.

GoRight, a new conservative group, is fiercely committed to raising campaign funds for Republican politicians facing Democratic opponents in the midterm elections this fall. Giving to these qualified, dedicated and driven candidates is a major step toward ensuring that Republicans maintain a strong influence over national politics.

If you would like to donate your 5 cent bonus to GoRight, opt-in below.

- Yes, I would like to donate my 5 cent bonus to GoRight.
- No thank you!

In order to ensure that respondents were reading the content of the survey carefully and attentively, I included a 'screener' question in the second set of demographics questions. Instructional manipulation checks (IMCs, or for my purposes, 'screener questions') have become a popular tool in experimental and survey research for their utility in measuring whether or not participants are reading directions. Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko (2009) suggest that identifying participants who are hurrying through a survey without carefully considering its questions and excluding their responses from analysis can increase the statistical power of the survey. Berinsky, Margolis and Sances (2014) find that in experimental research, textual treatments are more powerful among respondents who pass screener questions, because these participants are more likely to have read the text closely and better absorbed its content. After analyzing data from experiments conducted through MTurk, Thomas and Clifford (Thomas & Clifford, 2017) confirm that the exclusion of participants who fail to correctly answer screener questions boosts the statistical power of the results without significantly biasing the post-exclusion respondent pool.

In the directions given before the second set of survey questions, respondents were told that one of the questions (“What is your eye color?”) was intended to test their level of attentiveness to the questionnaire, and that regardless of their actual eye color, they should select the ‘red’ option. Asking these questions allowed for ex-post exclusion of respondents who did not read directions carefully or who were not responding to the survey’s questions thoughtfully. Berinsky et al.’s findings (2014) suggest that the priming effects of the “Civic Duty” and “Social Change” treatments may have been less powerful among these participants. However, Montgomery, Nyhan and Torres (2018) argue that if a screener is placed after respondents have already been assigned to an experimental group, excluding the responses of participants who fail the screener may distort the estimated effects of treatment conditions. The following section includes reports of my survey’s results both before and after excluding responses from participants who failed to correctly answer the screener question.

Results

In total, 751 responses were collected before the HIT was deactivated, with 334 female (44.53%) and 416 male (44.27%) respondents. After excluding responses from participants who failed to pass the screener question, the sample was distilled to 633 respondents, with 291 (45.97%) women and 342 (54.03%) men. If, as WCF argued in 2007 and again in 2011, women are less likely to give because they do not view political giving as a civic duty and do not feel that political leaders are capable of affecting positive, productive social change, female respondents in the two treatment groups would have donated at higher rates than female respondents exposed

to the control. Male respondents would have given at higher levels than women in the control treatment group, but exposure to either of the experimental treatments should not have led to significant increases in giving rates.

Overall, 34.28% of male and 39.82% of female respondents chose to donate their bonus to the falsified political organization to which they were exposed. This gap between men and women's propensity to give did not reach statistical significance ($p=0.14$). However, after exclusion based on participants' failure to correctly answer the screener question, 33.0% of men and 41.2% of women donated, a statistically significant difference, with women overall giving more than men ($p=0.04$). The fact that exclusion brought overall differences in male and female donation rates to a conventional level of statistical significance is in line with Berinsky et. al's (2017) argument in that excluding data from inattentive respondents increases the statistical power of experimental results. In the results described in the paragraphs below, giving rates and p-values are based on the excluded sample.

Within different treatment groups, women also gave at consistently higher rates than men. While excluding responses from participants who failed to correctly answer the screener question increased the statistical power of the difference between overall male and female contributions rates, the differences in these rates within each treatment group did not reach conventional levels of significance even after exclusion. Figure 4.1 compares contribution rates before and after exclusion.

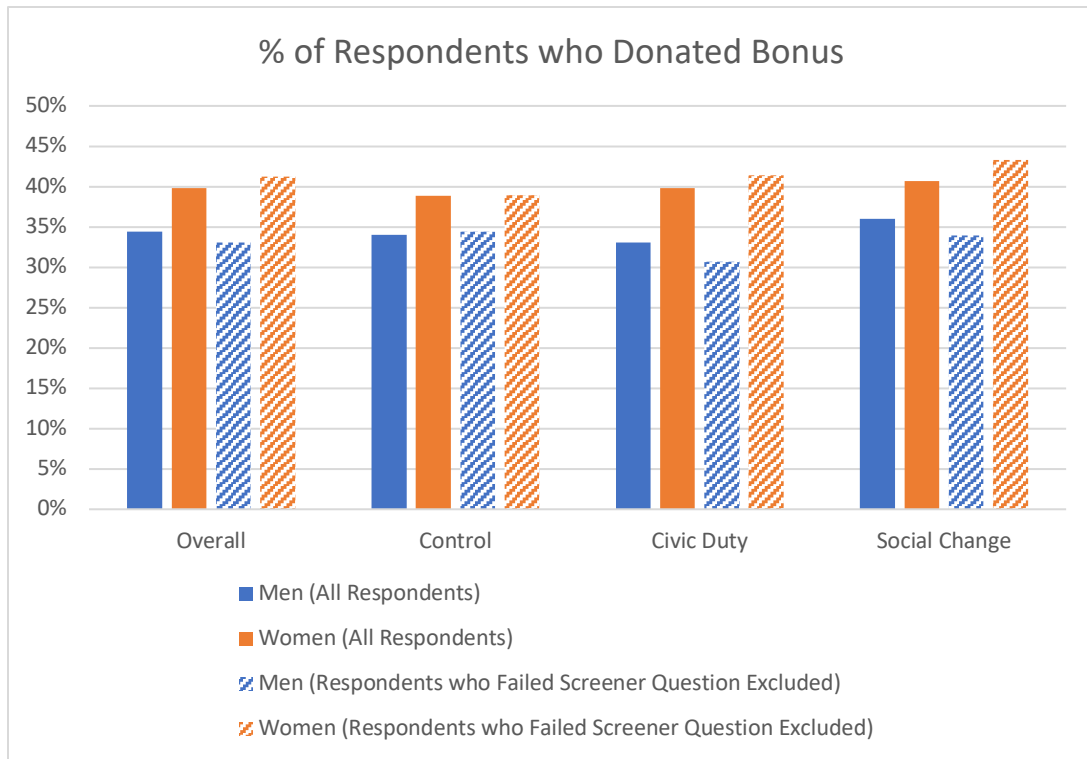


Figure 4.1. Percent of Respondents who Donated Bonus, By Treatment and Gender.

In the control group (N=214), 34.5% of men and 38.9% of women donated their bonus in the hypothetical donation scenario. The 4.4% gender gap did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($p=0.5$). In the two experimental groups, women also gave at higher rates than men, and at higher rates than in the experimental treatment. Men, meanwhile, gave at lower rates in both the Civic Duty and Social Change groups. However, none of these changes were statistically significant.

Among respondents exposed to the Civic Duty treatment (N=213), 30.7% of men and 41.4% of women donated their bonus, a 10.7% gap that again did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($p=0.105$). Women gave 2.5% more frequently after being exposed to the Civic Duty treatment than women in the control group ($p=0.636$), while men gave 3.8% less ($p=0.272$). Therefore, changes in

donation rates when exposed to the Civic Duty treatment did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance for either gender group.

In the Social Change treatment group (N=206), 33.9% of men and 43.3% of women chose to donate. Compared to the control group, the percent of women choosing to donate after being exposed to the Social Change treatment increased 4.4% ($p=0.729$), while the percent of men choosing to donate decreased 0.4% ($p=0.468$). Again, these differences did not reach conventional levels statistical significance.

Across party groups, Democrats were the most likely to give, as can be seen below in Figure 4.2. 42.1% of Democrats chose to donate their bonus after respondents who failed to pass the screener question were excluded. 32.77% of Republicans and 22.22% of Independents donated. It is worth noting that the sample sizes from each party were imbalanced, and the sample is not nationally representative. Democratic respondents made up the majority of the sample (43.2%), while only 24.9% of the sample's respondents were Republican and only 12% were Independents.

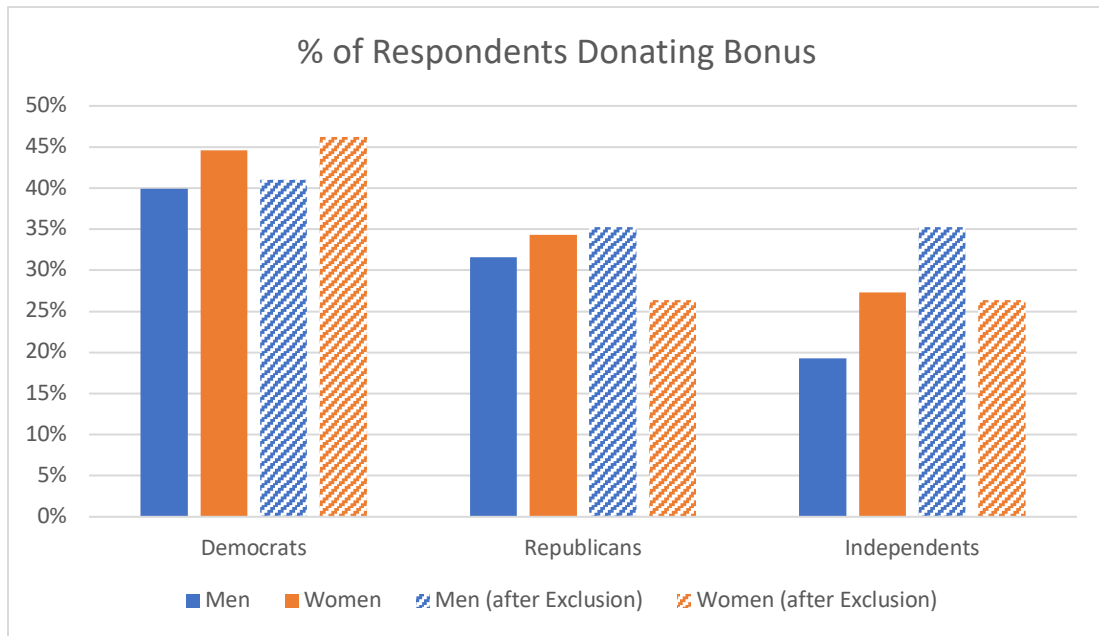


Figure 4.2. Percent of Respondents Donating by Party and Gender.

Figure 4.3 shows the probability of donation based on a logistic regression model of the likelihood of donation as a function of gender, treatment condition and interactions between gender and treatment conditions. As can be seen in the graph, the confidence intervals are roughly 20 percentage points for every prediction, meaning the predictions are quite imprecise. As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the confidence intervals remain nearly as large even after respondents who failed the screener question are excluded. It is possible that the statistical power of these results could be strengthened by increasing the sample size of the survey, which in turn would decrease the size of the confidence intervals.

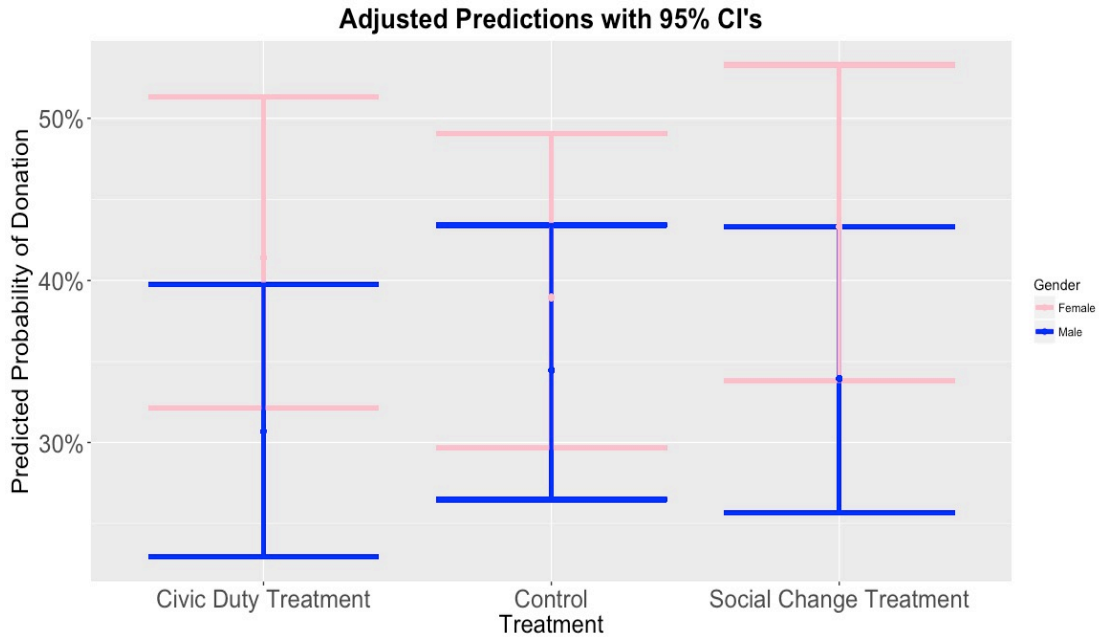


Figure 4.3. Predicted Probability of Donation as a Factor of Treatment and Gender, Before Exclusion.

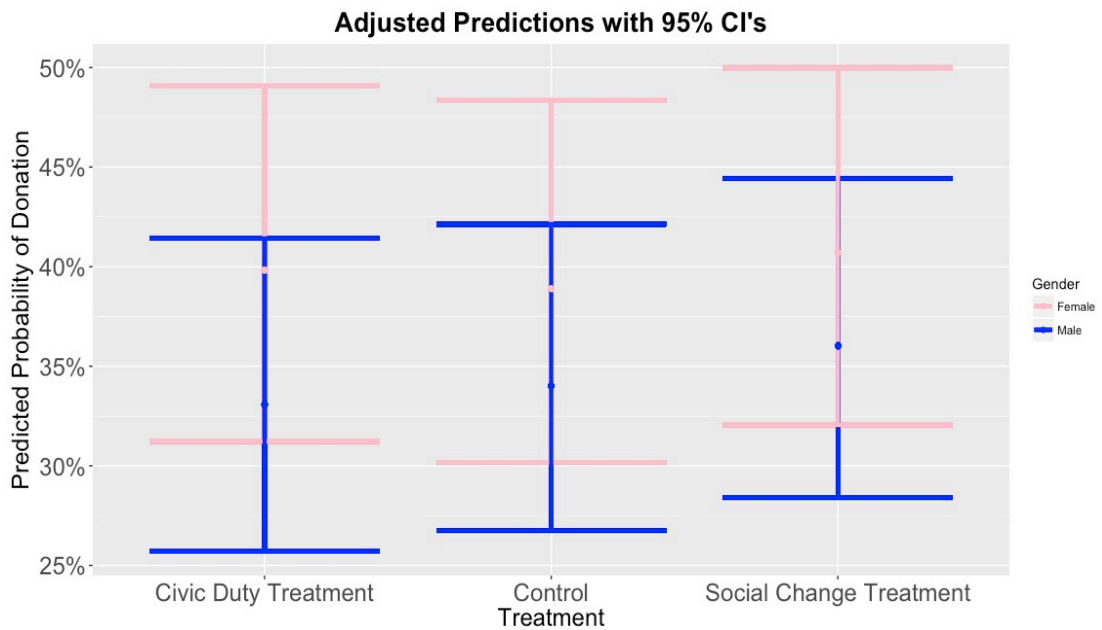


Figure 4.4. Predicted Probability of Donation as a Factor of Treatment and Gender, After Exclusion.

Discussion

While exposure to both treatment conditions did lead to slight increases in donation rates among female respondents and slight decreases among male respondents, the lack of statistical significance suggests that exposure to the primes did not precipitate gendered differences large enough to provide solid evidence in support of WCF's original hypotheses. Further, few statistically significant differences emerged in male and female levels of political participation and engagement, suggesting that women today are becoming just as politically inclined as their male counterparts. However, the fact that this experimental test failed to conclusively support WCF's "Civic Duty" and "Social Change" hypotheses does not necessarily mean their theories were not accurate at the time their report was published, nor that they do not have some validity in explaining the gender gap in political donations that continues to be observed today.

Several key factors of the survey's design and execution prevent my findings from being entirely conclusive. As noted in my analysis of Figures 4.3 and 4.4, the survey's small sample size limits the meaningful conclusions that can be derived from its results. However, even if the N of the survey were to be increased, factors inherent to its design likely influenced the rate at which all participants, though especially women, chose to donate their bonus. In the following section, I will explore the ways in which my survey results could have been affected by the presence of solicitation, a low donation amount, and the political context at the time of its running as confounding variables in my experiment.

Solicitation

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one key difference between my survey and the research conducted by WCF is its experimental component. However, inherent to the hypothetical donation scenarios included in my survey is an aspect of recruitment—in order to measure female’s propensity to give, I asked them to donate. Recruitment has been identified as a key factor leading to increased levels of political participation (Brady et al. 2001) and found to be one of the most significant predictors of an individual’s likelihood of making a political donation (Grant & Rudolph, 2002). Many scholars on the topic of women in politics have underlined the specific importance of recruitment and encouragement in efforts to increase women’s political involvement, ambition, turnout and candidacy rates (Fox & Lawless, 2004, 2011; Crowder-Meyer, 2013).

Parties’ and organizations’ efforts to increase female voter registration and turnout have historically capitalized upon women’s receptiveness to recruitment. 2004 Get-out-the-Vote efforts emphasized “frequent personal contacts to bolster the confidence of women feeling inadequately prepared to vote, which yielded innovative ways of mobilizing different subsets of women voters” (MacManus 2006, 57). The rapidly growing number of women-oriented groups worked to target female voters with these “frequent personal contacts” as part of their overall mobilization campaigns. Meanwhile, parties, candidates and other advocacy groups ramped up their direct-mail campaigns to better target specific, niche groups of women. When combined with the increased visibility of women in the 2004 election campaigns, these targeted female mobilization efforts saw great success, and women made up

54% of all voters on Election Day—a full 2% increase from 2000 (MacManus, 2006).

After considering that solicitation has been identified as a key predictor of political giving and that women especially are far more likely to take part in political activities when recruited, the fact that women were actually *more* likely than men to give to a hypothetical political organization becomes less surprising. Though in the survey, fully 36.81% of respondents chose to give, only 19.9% of female and 22.8% of male survey respondents indicated having actually made a political contribution in the last two years. These numbers are both far higher than the 0.68% of American adults who made an itemized campaign contribution (\$200 or more) in the 2016 election cycle (*Donor Demographics*, 2018). However, as the data presented in Chapter Two show, 16.7% of male and 13.4% of female survey respondents in the 2016 ANES Time Series Study indicated having made a contribution to either a candidate, party or outside group in the 2016 election cycle. This rate may be a better representation of overall contributions, as this would include contributions below the \$200 level, which are not included in FEC reports. Yet even compared to these figures, participants in my experiment gave at twice the rate seen in self-reported indications of contribution history.

Being personally asked to give may have incentivized both men and women to donate at higher rates than they would have if simply presented with the description of an actual political organization and left to research how to donate on their own time. If recruitment is more motivating for women than men, this could explain why women's giving rates were higher than men's in every treatment group. However, further experimental research is required.

Donation Amount

The hypothetical donation scenario in the survey also differed from an actual donation opportunity in that it asked respondents for only 5 cents, which is far lower than a standard political donation amount. The low amount potentially makes the donation scenario more appealing to all respondents, but especially women, who tend to give in smaller amounts than men. Both the literature on gender differences in contributing behavior (Burrell 2005; Francia, Goldberg, Green, Hernnson, & Wilcox, (1999) and FEC data (*Donor Demographics*, 2018) demonstrate that even when women make up a higher number of donors, they account for a far smaller proportion of campaign dollars than men do. For example, in January 2017, when women made up 61% of donors, they still only contributed 40% to the overall funds raised that month. Men still dominate the list of top individual contributors and those giving in large amounts, with women making up less than half of donors giving more than \$10,000 or \$100,000 in the 2018 cycle (Weber & Bryner, 2018). Given that the size of women's contributions continues to lag despite increases in the number of female donors, it is possible that more variation would have emerged between respondents of different genders or in different treatment groups had the donation scenario asked for a contribution in the amount of the respondent's choosing, rather than requesting a set amount. If further research is to be conducted, the consideration of size of donation, rather than just likelihood, could be included in experimental design for more in-depth results.

Political Context

The differences in the political contexts at the time of my survey and the initial “Vote With Your Purse” research are significant, and could offer some explanation beyond the aforementioned experimental constraints as to why women appear so likely to give in a hypothetical scenario.

WCF’s polling and focus groups took place in late 2006 and early 2007, during Bush’s final term and before Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton had even emerged as the top candidates for the Democratic party’s presidential nomination. My survey ran in the wake of Hillary Clinton’s historic 2016 campaign, the Women’s Marches of 2017 and 2018, the #MeToo movement, and in the midst of the 2018 midterm election cycle, which marks an all-time high in the number of women running for elected office (Weber & Bryner, 2018). Just one of these political factors could have had the potential to galvanize women to participate at higher levels, whether motivated by inspiration or rage, but in combination, they have brought about a groundbreaking rise in women’s political involvement.

If women are informing themselves about politics, becoming politically active and running for office at significantly higher levels than they have in past election cycles, it is very possible that their increased mobilization has also led to progress in the domain of political giving. Contribution data supports the argument that “The Year of the Woman” has inspired women to “vote with their purse” like never before—as of October 2017, the number of women who had made contributions to candidates and committees was 284% higher than it was at the same time in the 2015-2016 cycle. The number of female political donors has increased by 670% since the early stages of the 2011-2012 cycle, when WCF published their updated “Vote With

Your Purse” report (Ackley, 2017). By March 2018, women made up at least 50% of donors for 39 House candidates who have raised at least \$100,000 in campaign funds—the highest number since the previous all-time high of 13 in 1996. And so far in 2018, the percent of federal contributions from women has remained at the same level as in the 2016 cycle, 30%, even without the galvanizing force of a female presidential candidate (Weber & Bryner, 2018).

Though survey-specific factors could have resulted in the unexpectedly high rates of female donations seen in my results, there is also ample evidence that the current political climate in America has led to important and durable shifts in women’s political orientations and behavior. Past research has demonstrated that solicitation has a significant effect on the decision to make a political donation for potential donors of genders. Further, campaign finance data shows that women who do give to politics still give in smaller amounts than men. Yet even when the amount in question is small and the respondent is being directly solicited, a certain level of political awareness and engagement is still required for an individual to consider making a donation. More American women today are involved in politics than ever before, and at higher levels. If, as recent campaign finance data suggests, women’s increased political engagement has translated into an increased propensity to make campaign contributions, it is possible that the lack of a gender disparity in respondents’ donation rates is reflective of this wider trend in female political giving.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

“So my friends, let us have faith in each other, let us not grow weary, let us not lose heart, for there are more seasons to come. And there is more work to do.”

Hillary Clinton, in her concession speech,
November 9th, 2016

On the morning of November 9th, 2016, Hillary Clinton stood before a crowd of hundreds, gathered in the Grand Ballroom of The New Yorker hotel in Manhattan, and delivered a concession speech that her audience of supporters had been dreading since the final vote tally the night before. Her speech marked the end of one of the most ground-breaking presidential campaigns in American history, the outcome of which had shocked the nation. However, even as Clinton relinquished her fight against President Elect Donald Trump, the public’s crusade against his presidency was only just beginning. In New York alone, 5,000 protestors took to the streets to show their disapproval for the election’s results, rallying in front of Trump Tower on the evening of that same Wednesday. Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., Clinton supporters held a candle light vigil before the White House. In liberal cities where the Clinton victory had seemed like a guarantee, such as Portland, Los Angeles, Austin and Boston, protests raged into the following weekend.

Discontent over Trump’s election did not dissipate in the months that followed. Public outrage over his ascendancy to the White House continued to spread as his inauguration approached, especially among women. The day after the ceremony, four million demonstrators took to the streets in Women’s Marches across the globe. Half a year later, the #MeToo movement swept across America and the

world. Feminist ideologies and activism reminiscent of those which fueled the 20th century women's movement have resurged in full force, and just as in feminist uprisings of the past, this resurgence has had meaningful effects on female political involvement. Although Clinton herself failed to shatter the glass ceiling of the White House, the galvanizing effects of her presidential bid seem to have shattered a glass ceiling of their own—women's political mobilization has extended beyond campaigning into activism, bids for office, and most importantly for this research, political giving.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The gender gap in political giving has garnered increasing attention in the news media and in efforts by outside organizations in recent years. However, the existing literature on the topic has been almost entirely based on FEC data and qualitative interviews, rather than experimental tests of potential explanations for the gap. My own findings suggest that continuing gender imbalances in access to financial resources play a key role in determining who will contribute, a hypothesis that could be empirically tested in further experimental research.

A clear jumping-off point for continued experimentation would be to create a study that utilizes a falsified donation scenario but divides respondents into treatment groups based on the size of the contribution amount, rather than variant textual conditions. If women become less willing to give as the donation being solicited grows in size, it would seem that trends in federal contribution data hold up on a micro level—even when women do contribute, they contribute less than men,

meaning increases in the number of female donors does not translate to equivalent increases in their overall contribution to total campaign dollars.

This research has also largely referred to “women” as a cohesive identity group. Women cannot simply be grouped together based on their sex—dividing lines of race, class, gender identity, partisanship, and other demographics should be considered in further studies of female giving behavior, as aggregate increases in women’s giving do not necessarily mean that all women are being mobilized to give. As more research is conducted on the types of women who contribute, specific attention should be paid to demographics that further divide women within the category of “female.” Factors that inhibit wealthy women’s giving may be different from those that prevent women of lower socioeconomic classes from giving, and therefore, blanket strategies to mobilize their giving will be less effective than targeted efforts to mobilize financial participation among different groups.

Implications

Since the beginning of the American feminist movement, women’s collective mobilization has allowed them to make significant and enduring inroads into the public sphere, including the ranks of the workforce, higher education and politics. My analysis of recent ANES data offers little empirical support for the continuing existence of a gender gap in political participation, and further, the gender gap in political engagement which has been identified in past research seems to be rapidly closing. Though the deep gap in political giving has pervaded, the results of my survey suggest that, at least in an experimental context, women today appear to exhibit the same propensity to give as their male counterparts. If the recent increases

in female giving observed in the 2016 presidential election and the 2018 midterm cycle thus far continue to climb and extend into future years, it would appear that the contributions gap is slowly but surely eroding.

The surprising results of my experimental research should not be taken as evidence that past findings related to women's attitudes toward political giving are no longer valid. It is possible that women still do not view contributing as a civic duty, or that they do not trust political leaders to affect positive, productive social change. However, at least in an experimental context, introducing priming content related to these two theories did not have a significant effect on female participants' propensity to give. The lack of significance could be in part due to sample size limitations, and increasing the number of responses could increase the statistical power of the differences in male and female reactions to the treatment conditions. Yet the results in their current form suggest that women may be just as willing, if not more willing, than men to make political contributions—at least when the donation amount is low and they are being specifically solicited. This finding is, at once, troubling and cause for optimism.

On one hand, it would appear that the pervasive gender gap in political giving is born not from women's reluctance to give, but rather, their inability to do so. Women have been demanding equal pay for equal work for decades, and although the gender wage gap has decreased significantly over the course of the century, women today still make only 80% as much as their male counterparts (Semega et al., 2017). The gap in contributions seems to be yet another manifestation of this inequality, one that has implications for women's ability to meaningfully exercise their political voice.

As the cost of campaigns continues to grow, candidates' chances of electoral success are increasingly dependent on contributions from individuals and PACs. Criticisms of the undue influence wealthy interest groups and individual donors wield over campaign and elections have become common, especially among advocates of campaign finance reform. Internationally, the same gender gap in political giving has been observed in many Western Democracies, some countries have made successful efforts to mitigate the gender inequalities in campaign finance by limiting the size of donations, thus levelling the contribution playing field for all potential donors, including women (Cigane and Ohman, 2014). Absent such reforms, however, the current American political system will continue to benefit those who can support candidates by contributing, meaning women's interests will continue to go underserved if they lack strong financial backing.

However, change may be on the horizon. While only 197,893 female donors made contributions of over \$200 in the 2014 midterm elections, women in this cycle had already surpassed that total by the first months of 2018, with FEC data reporting 249,841 female donors by April (*Donor Demographics*, 2018). Factors that have historically galvanized women's giving—such as an increased number of female candidates on the ballot and an active feminist movement—seem to be aligning as the nation enters the final months of the 2018 midterm election cycle. The willingness to contribute demonstrated by women in my experimental survey, coupled with the fact that increases in female political mobilization in recent years seem to have brought about corollary increases in female contributions, offers hope that gender parity in political giving is not an impossibility.

APPENDIX: Propensity to Give Survey Codebook

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

What is your age?

- 18-24 years old (1)
- 25-34 years old (2)
- 35-44 years old (3)
- 45-54 years old (4)
- 55-64 years old (5)
- 65+ years old (6)

What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Hispanic or Latino (6)
- Mixed (7)
- Other (8)

Where would you place yourself on the following scale?

- Very liberal (1)
- Liberal (2)
- Somewhat liberal (3)
- Moderate (4)
- Somewhat conservative (5)
- Conservative (6)
- Very conservative (7)

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

- Republican (1)
- Democrat (2)
- Independent (3)

IF: Independent

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?

- Closer to the Republican Party (1)
- Closer to the Democratic Party (2)
- Neither (3)

IF: Democrat

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- Strong Democrat (1)
- Not very strong Democrat (2)

IF: Republican

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- Strong Republican (1)
- Not very strong Republican (2)
-

ALL RESPONDENTS:

You have been randomly selected to receive a bonus of five cents upon completion of the study. In a moment, we are going to tell you about a political organization. If you would like, we can donate the five-cent bonus to the organization on your behalf, or you can choose to keep the bonus. The decision of whether to keep the five cents or donate it is completely up to you.

IF: Assigned to “Civic Duty Treatment” Group

On the next page, we are going to provide you with information from a political group’s fundraising materials. Please read that information and decide whether you want to donate your bonus to the group.

Just like voting, many consider donating to political campaigns a civic duty. One of the best ways an individual can advocate for their own interests in government is by supporting the campaign of a candidate who shares their views. With the 2018 midterm elections on the horizon, voters have an opportunity to fulfill one of their key civic duties by pledging monetary support for candidates who will fight to represent their beliefs and ideologies in national politics.

IF: Assigned to “Social Change Treatment” Group

On the next page, we are going to provide you with information from a political group’s fundraising materials. Please read that information and decide whether you want to donate your bonus to the group.

While charitable organizations and everyday citizens can demonstrate their positions on issues and mobilize others, at the end of the day, only politicians have the

institutional power necessary to impact change in society. Even in today's gridlocked national government, there are many political leaders who fight to bring about positive, productive social change through national legislation. With the 2018 midterm elections on the horizon, voters have an opportunity to pledge monetary support for these dedicated leaders.

IF: Assigned to “Control Treatment” Group

On the next page, we are going to provide you with information from a political group's fundraising materials. Please read that information and decide whether you want to donate your bonus to the group.

IF: Independent

American politics have become increasingly gridlocked in recent years. Neither major party is willing to negotiate or compromise, creating an ineffective national government that spends more time fighting than legislating.

BackToCenter, a new moderate group, is fiercely committed to raising campaign funds for Independent politicians facing Republican or Democratic opponents in the midterm elections this fall. Giving to these qualified, dedicated and driven candidates is a key step toward a national government led by problem solvers who prioritize bipartisanship over partisan bickering.

If you would like to donate your 5 cent bonus BackToCenter, opt-in below.

- Yes, I would like to donate my 5 cent bonus to BackToCenter. (1)
- No thank you! (2)

IF: Democrat

On Election Day this year, Republicans will have controlled Capitol Hill for two years. Republican politicians have proven themselves to be incapable of negotiation or compromise, with two federal government shutdowns in 2018 alone, as well as many other legislative failures over the last year.

GoLeft, a new progressive group, is fiercely committed to raising campaign funds for Democratic politicians facing Republican opponents in key electoral races this November. Giving to these qualified, dedicated and driven candidates is a major step toward ending the dominance of conservative ideology in national politics.

If you would like to donate your 5 cent bonus to GoLeft, opt-in below.

- Yes, I would like to donate my 5 cent bonus to GoLeft. (1)
- No thank you! (2)

IF: Republican

On Election Day this year, Republicans will have controlled Capitol Hill for two years. Republican members of Congress have seen several major legislative victories in the last year, such as a massive tax overhaul and the repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate.

GoRight, a new conservative group, is fiercely committed to raising campaign funds for Republican politicians facing Democratic opponents in the midterm elections this fall. Giving to these qualified, dedicated and driven candidates is a major step toward ensuring that Republicans maintain a strong influence over national politics.

If you would like to donate your 5 cent bonus to GoRight, opt-in below.

- Yes, I would like to donate my 5 cent bonus to GoRight. (1)
- No thank you! (2)

How much attention do you pay to politics?

- A great deal (1)
- A moderate amount (2)
- A little (3)
- None at all (4)

In the last 2 years, have you...? (Check all that apply)

- Voted (1)
- Attended a protest/rally (2)
- Donated to a political campaign/organization (3)
- Written to an elected official (4)
- Volunteered for a political organization or campaign (5)

ALL RESPONDENTS:

We sometimes hear labels like liberal, conservative, or moderate applied to different members of Congress. When you hear a member of Congress described as **liberal/conservative/moderate**, what does that label mean to you? There is no right or wrong answer. Just briefly tell us what that label means to you in the text box below.

Some people are fully prepared to take risks when they make financial decisions (such as investing, saving, or spending), while others try to avoid risks. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

I am willing to take risks when making financial decisions.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
-

We are now going to ask you a few more questions about yourself. One of the questions will ask about your eye color and give you several possible answers. Please do not answer with your eye color, but instead select the 'red' option. This will demonstrate that you have read the instructions and ensure that you are fully paying attention to the survey. Thank you!

What is your marital status?

- Single (1)
- Married (2)
- Divorced/Separated (3)
- Widowed (4)

What color are your eyes?

- Blue (1)
- Brown (2)
- Green (3)
- Red (4)

What is the highest level of education or degree you have completed?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- 2 year degree (4)
- 4 year degree (5)
- Professional degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)

What is your total household income?

- Less than \$25,000 (1)
- \$25,000-\$49,999 (2)
- \$50,000-\$74,999 (3)
- \$75,000-\$99,999 (4)
- \$100,000-\$124,999 (5)
- \$125,000-\$149,999 (6)
- \$150,000+ (7)
- Prefer not to say (8)

Which of the following people do you believe have the power to create positive, productive changes in society? (Check all that apply)

- Politically active citizens (1)
- Political leaders (2)
- Philanthropic individuals (3)
- Leaders of charitable organizations (4)
- Community leaders (5)
- Business leaders (6)

Which of the following do you believe are civic responsibilities?

- Voting (1)
- Staying informed on politics and current events (2)
- Discussing politics (3)
- Political activism (4)
- Volunteering for political campaigns (5)

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