

If You Can't Join 'Em, Beat 'Em

The Gender Gap in Individual Donations to Congressional Candidates

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The authors revisit the gender gap in campaign finance and find an advantage for women candidates in earning donations from individual donors due to the activities of female donor networks and the changing congressional donor pool. Women supported by these networks, especially Democratic women, receive a boost in campaign fund-raising compared to their male counterparts, whereas women not supported by these networks receive significantly less. The ideological leanings of congressional donors also advantage Democratic women. Substantial partisan gender differences in this area of campaign finance persist, and this fund-raising gap may contribute to the growing partisan gender gap in Congress.

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Gains in women's congressional representation have had a strong Democratic bias, and this partisan gap between Republican and Democratic congressional women is predicted to widen (Elder 2008). Explanations for this gap include a paucity of Republican women in the pipeline of state legislative office, a regional realignment that has led to the defeat of Republican representatives, and the high success levels of minority women who disproportionately run as Democrats (Elder 2008). Another possibility for this partisan gender gap may be differences in fund-raising capabilities among these candidates. We find that real campaign finance differences between Democratic and Republican women exist, and these differences stem from the activities of female donor networks and the ideological leanings of individual donors in the congressional donor pool. Because networks and donors favor liberal Democratic women, campaign finance may help explain this partisan gender gap among women in Congress.

Individual donors to congressional races contribute slightly more than half of all campaign dollars (Herrnson 2004), and as such, these donors have a genuine opportunity to affect the electoral fortunes of candidates. Because money is a necessary condition for winning elections (Jacobson 1980), campaign fund-raising remains a focus of research examining the causes of women's underrepresentation in Congress

(e.g., Burrell 2005; Fiber and Fox 2005). Work on gender bias in campaign fund-raising has concluded that men and women candidates raise the same amount of total campaign dollars (Uhlener and Scholzman 1986; Burrell 1994).¹ However, it is possible that these candidates are taking different paths to achieve this outcome, emphasizing different sources of campaign funds. Women candidates cite their reliance on individual donors as a central aspect of their fund-raising strategies (Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Female donor networks, such as EMILY's List, WISH List, and the Susan B. Anthony List place a special emphasis on soliciting individual contributions from women and funneling those donations to women candidates. A primarily female donor base and a strong emphasis on contributing to women candidates characterize these donor networks. Yet aside from understanding the important role of these female donor networks in providing the seed money that makes the electoral success of women congressional challengers possible (Francia 2001), we know relatively little about the way in which individual contributions, especially those that

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are bundled through such groups, have redefined the gender gap in campaign finance.

We examine both the effect of female donor networks and the composition of the congressional donor pool on the fund-raising efforts of women candidates and find that when female donor networks support women candidates, they have a substantial advantage in raising funds from individual donors. In addition, recent changes in the congressional donor pool (Francia et al. 2003) have created a fund-raising environment that benefits women candidates. However, this gender gap differs appreciably by party: active female donor networks and the ideology of the congressional donor pool create greater advantages for Democratic women than Republican women in raising individual donations. This research has implications for other subfields beyond campaign finance, particularly those that examine the explanatory role of gender or issues of women's underrepresentation. Analyzing gender effects while accounting for the partisan context in which it operates is a theoretical approach that applies to a broad range of empirical inquiry into the causes and consequences of underrepresentation.

Gender and Campaign Finance

Much of the work examining the campaign finance of men's and women's bids for office focuses on total campaign receipts (Uhlener and Scholzman 1986; Burrell 1994; Bonneau 2007), campaign spending (Hogan 2007), the amount of political action committee (PAC) contributions raised (Wilhite and Theilmann 1986), or the amount of financial support received from parties (Burrell 2006b). However, findings with regard to the role of gender in attracting these sources of campaign donations do not necessarily speak for all aspects of campaign finance and do not directly address the largest donor pool, individual contributors. The perception that women have to rely on many small contributions while men are able to collect fewer, large contributions as well as counting on the financial support of their party has persisted (Burrell 2006a) and may reduce the number of women who are willing to run (Burrell 1985; Lawless and Fox 2005).²

Women House members consistently raise the largest share of their total campaign funds from small contributions of less than \$200 (Dabelko and Herrnson 1997). This fact can be an advantage for women candidates, indicating that they "rely on a broader base of financial supporters" (Dabelko and Herrnson

1997, 124) than men, although it might also be that women are working harder, one contributor at a time, to raise the money they need. We find evidence for the argument that women have a broad base of funding support in the bundling activities of PACs. While PACs provide direct hard money contributions to all candidates, they are much more important to the fund-raising goals of women candidates because of their ability to generate individual contributions through their use of donor networks. If these individual contributions are coordinated through a female donor network or the PACs send signals to individual donors through endorsements, they are likely to help women candidates establish their viability early.

Individual Contributions: Understanding Donor Motivations

The relatively few studies of individual contributors describe the demographics of these activists (Berg, Eastoland, and Jaffe 1981), the determinants of their giving (Jones and Miller 1985), and the motivations guiding their behavior (Brown, Powell, and Wilcox 1995; Francia et al. 2003; Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008). Campaign donors are described as an elite group of activists who are relatively small in number (Berg, Eastoland, and Jaffe 1981; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Donors who gave large amounts of money were mostly wealthy white men (Berg, Eastoland, and Jaffe 1981).

More recent work cites evidence that the donor pool is an ideologically polarized one, reflecting partisan extremes (Francia et al. 2003). Gimpel, Lee and Pearson-Merkowitz (2008) examined individual donations to campaigns from outside the district and concluded that partisan goals motivate the practice of monetary surrogacy. Because these recent findings confirm the partisan nature and motivation of these donors, they produce even more questions regarding the unrepresentative nature of campaign contributors in general and underscore the point that some candidates may be in a better position than others to attract their contributions.

Francia et al. (2003) concluded from their survey of 1996 congressional contributors that 85 percent of donors tend to fall into one of three categories based on their motivations to contribute. A quarter of congressional donors are investors, individuals who have material incentives to contribute to campaigns. These donors contribute to seek access to individual members of Congress and to protect their economic interests. Most of these donors are conservative Republicans.

Francia et al. labeled another quarter of the donors intimates. These contributors give to campaigns because they enjoy socializing with political elites; they tend to donate when they are invited or personally asked to do so.

Ideologues constitute the third and largest category of congressional donors (Francia et al. 2003). These contributors donate to congressional campaigns for purposive reasons, citing their goal to influence the composition of Congress. These activist donors are aware of the electoral connection and seek to influence electoral outcomes and Congress as a whole. Of these donors, 93 percent indicate that they support a social or political cause, and more than 90 percent consider a candidate's ideology when deciding whether to give (Francia et al. 2003).

This extensive survey of congressional donors demonstrates that while there are differences among political contributors, there are some commonalities among their motivations and strategies. Because the majority of donors are giving for ideological or issue-oriented reasons, we expect that their strategies would affect certain kinds of candidates who are more likely to support donor policy preferences. For example, candidates who are incumbents, especially those who are in positions of leadership or political power, should attract more donations from investors who, for purposive reasons, hope to maintain good ties and access to those in positions of power. Ideologues will donate defensively to weak incumbents to maintain existing representation of their issues, but they are more likely than other types of donors to invest actively in challengers to increase the number of elected officials who share their ideological commitment to addressing policy concerns. We also expect candidates in open seats to raise more funds from these donors compared to candidates facing entrenched incumbents because exciting races should increase donations by individuals. In sum, candidates possessing attributes associated with protecting or advancing donor-preferred policies should attract donations from individual contributors.

Because gender is yet another candidate attribute that is associated with certain policy preferences, donor motivations also have implications for the fund-raising efforts of women candidates. Previous research indicates that gender is important in attracting certain types of PAC contributions (Nelson 1994; Rozell 1999; Deitz 2007) and in gaining financial support from political parties (Burrell 2006b). Similarly, we argue that candidate gender, and its accompanying cues regarding ideology and policy positions, is another important determinant of individual contributions.

Money raised from female donor networks has become a substantial source of individual contributions for women candidates (Francia 2001). As such, it is important to explore systematically the ability of women candidates to attract individual contributions, especially since success at fund-raising is a necessary condition for success at the polls.

Individual Contributions to Women Candidates: Gender as Campaign Resource

Bundling and Female Donor Networks

Networks of many types play essential roles in the political process by encouraging participation (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1999; Cho 2003; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Female donor networks in particular have been successful in encouraging women to become politically involved by financially supporting women candidates. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (2008), there were forty-seven PACs and donor networks in 2008 "who either gave money predominantly to women candidates or have a predominantly female donor base," including twelve national women's PACs or donor networks. PACs are limited in the amount of money they can directly contribute to any specific candidate, but they can significantly amplify their contribution amounts through the practice of bundling. Female donor networks have turned bundling into an art form, raising and contributing large amounts of money for women candidates with much electoral success (Francia 2001).

One well-known female donor network is EMILY's List. According to its Web site, EMILY's List has more than 100,000 members and contributors who in the recent 2006 elections contributed approximately \$11 million directly to group-endorsed candidates. The bundling practice created by EMILY's List involves a pledge by members to donate at least \$100 to the group and to donate at least \$100 to two of the candidates endorsed by EMILY's List in the next election cycle. Individuals can also contribute to "featured candidates" directly from the group's Web page. EMILY's List consistently ranks among the top bundlers to congressional candidates. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the majority of EMILY's List contributions are less than the \$200 itemization threshold, so the names of these donors are unreported to the Federal Election Commission. Yet due to the large membership base, EMILY's List maintains the impact of these individual

contributions has been vital to the election of many women to various levels of political office including “67 Democratic pro-choice members of Congress, 13 senators, and eight governors.”

The Republican counterpart to EMILY’s List, WISH List, is another example of a successful female donor network. Formed in 1992, WISH List identifies viable Republican pro-choice candidates and encourages its members to contribute any amount to two group-endorsed candidates during an election cycle. This group asserts that the contributions of their members have amounted to more than \$1 million per year. The pro-life answer to EMILY’s and WISH List is the Susan B. Anthony List. This group claims a membership base of more than 145,000 individuals. Susan B. Anthony’s Candidate Fund actively engages in bundling with the goal of increasing the number of pro-life women elected to Congress and statewide office. The Susan B. Anthony List is effective; in the 2006 congressional midterm elections, the group’s candidates won in twenty-one of the thirty-eight contests where it made endorsements.³ Regardless of partisan bias, all of these networks have increased women’s political participation as campaign donors, and as the membership of these groups has expanded, the advantage certain women candidates have in raising individual contributions from these sources has increased as well.

Other evidence also points to a changing donor pool. While describing the donor pool in 1996 as being “just as white, and possibly just as male” as in 1978, with women constituting approximately 17 percent of all House donors, Francia et al. (2003, 33) noted that “there are reasons to suspect that women have increased their levels of giving . . . [and that] 33% of all 1996 Senate donors were women.” Other scholars have also noted this increase of women’s representation in the donor pool. For example, Green et al. (1999) found a 35 percent increase in women donors in the past two decades and that nearly half of all women donors who engaged in bundling did so through EMILY’s List (others included WISH List). We suspect that changes in the gender composition of the congressional donor pool has occurred at the same time that the membership of female donor networks has increased, providing evidence that women donors are becoming more active.

In sum, previous research tells us that campaign donors can be described as investors, ideologues, or intimates based on the particular motivations they have for making their contributions (Francia et al. 2003). Some donors are motivated to increase the

number of women elected to office, while others may wish to advance a particular policy goal. Some donors may feel a sense of pride or that they have made a personal connection with a female candidate by giving to her campaign. Female donor networks are particularly effective because they can attract contributions from donors who may give for any or all of these reasons. Whether giving for reasons of good policy, representation, or personal connectedness, contributors to female donor networks will find their civic needs met. Candidate gender should therefore be a resource in attracting individual contributions. Women targeted by female donor networks should receive more individual contributions than men, due to the increased activity of these groups.

Strategic Entry and Female Quality Challenger Advantage

Gender may also be a resource beyond attracting contributions from female donor networks. Because most individual donors want to affect policy (Francia et al. 2003), they need to invest in those candidates who will be elected and therefore in a position to bring about policy change. They will bet on the likely winners—the quality challengers. Women seeking congressional office are likely to be these quality challengers, for they often run as strategic politicians (Gertzog 2002). Quality challengers tend to raise more money than nonquality candidates (Jacobson 1980), and they have experience. Indeed, Gaddie and Bullock (2000) found that for the most competitive of congressional elections, open-seat elections, more women candidates than men had prior electoral office experience. However, when asked about their political ambition, women report that they do not believe they are as qualified as their potential male opponents are and decide not to run for elective office (Lawless and Fox 2005). Because they often underestimate their ability to win elections, when women do enter a race, they may actually be stronger candidates than their male opponents. Because most women run as strategic and politically experienced candidates, we should expect that women candidates, especially those high-quality challengers, should have an advantage in attracting individual contributions.

Gender, Ideology, and the Congressional Donor Pool

An additional theoretical reason to expect candidate gender to act as a campaign resource for some women candidates has to do with the attribute of gender itself

and the policy-relevant information it signals to potential donors. Because the gender signal is a liberal one and because the donor pool is polarized but liberal leaning on social issues (Francia et al. 2003) this liberal signal should increase contributions to women, especially Democratic women.

Women candidates have made great progress in attracting voter (Dolan 2004), party (Burrell 2006b), and financial support (Francia et al. 2001; Burrell 2005) for their campaigns at levels similar to men's. Burrell (2006a) noted that a focus on these structural similarities in the campaigns between men and women demonstrates that the role of gender "may be fading" (p. 359), a true mark of progress. Although women candidates in general benefit from this progress, some kinds of women candidates enjoy greater benefits than others. As women have become more strategic and sophisticated in their candidacies for office, their candidate pool has also diversified politically, both in partisan and ideological terms. Gender itself sends a liberal ideological signal to voters in addition to the standard party identification cue (Koch 2000). Because individual donors are strategic and most contribute for substantive or ideological reasons, these candidate signals act as important measures of electability, which affects the contribution decision for donors who want to support viable candidates with the right policy preferences. Demographic cues may signal these policy preferences.

Demographic group membership serves as a heuristic for voters (Conover and Feldman 1985; Rahn 1993; McDermott 1997; Koch 2000), especially in low-information environments such as congressional elections. For substantive and purposive donors, belief stereotypes (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993) are most relevant to the decision to contribute to congressional campaigns. Belief stereotypes include assessments and perceptions of candidate ideology, policy preferences, and issue competencies—important information for donors who contribute based on policy concerns. Belief stereotypes differ substantially by gender. Voters rate women candidates more competent in dealing with domestic and social welfare issues, while they rate men as more competent in dealing with economic and foreign policy issues (Rosenwasser and Seale 1988; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Alexander and Andersen 1993). To the extent that men and women emphasize these belief stereotypes in their campaigns (Kahn 1996; Bystrom and Miller 1999), women should have an advantage in attracting donations from a congressional donor pool that leans liberal on social issues, and we expect this

advantage to be particularly strong for Democratic women.

Gender produces "substantial effects" on voters' perceptions of candidate ideology, even after accounting for voters' own ideological orientations (Koch 2000). Many studies have found that voters consistently perceive women are more liberal than they actually are (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; McDermott 1997). Because ideological positioning is so important to candidate success, perceptions of being too liberal may hurt certain women at the polls but may also help some earn financial support. In terms of electability, when voters perceive a Republican woman to be more moderate compared to a man from the same party, she may be able to attract some crossover votes from independents (King and Matland 2003). A Democratic woman, on the other hand, sends a liberal signal, appears ideologically extreme, and is therefore less likely to attract crossover votes. If a donor were giving for reasons related to electability, then, we would expect the advantage to go to Republican women. However, because much of the donor pool consists of polarized contributors who give for ideological reasons and are liberal leaning on social issues (Francia et al. 2003), the net contribution advantage should flow toward Democratic women.

Unlike voters, these policy-minded donors do not reward moderation among candidates. The moderating cues of gender and party that work to increase electability among Republican women may work to decrease their ability to attract donations from individuals. Republican women may be better able to attract corporate PAC contributions due to their fiscal conservatism, and therefore these candidates may not rely on individual donations in the same way as Democratic women. With an ideologically polarized donor pool, candidates who are perceived as moderate in terms of policy representation will be less likely to attract these funds. Except for those involved in donor networks like WISH List that fund moderate, pro-choice, Republican women, Republican women candidates may have difficulty appealing to these ideologically extreme individuals who make up the majority of the donor pool. The electoral disadvantage Democratic women may confront because of the reinforcing liberal signals of gender and party (King and Matland 2003) becomes an advantage to these candidates in attracting donations from individuals. As a result, an ideologically polarized donor pool that tilts in a liberal direction on social issues should help Democratic women raise campaign funds from this particular source and at the same time may hurt Republican women.

From the discussion above, we test several hypotheses regarding the role of gender in attracting individual contributions. First, because female donor networks help raise money for women candidates of both parties, we expect that women are advantaged in attracting individual contributions. However, the advantage should largely be a function of being part of a female donor network. Second, to determine if female candidates are more strategic in their entry decisions, we test to see if women quality challengers earn more contributions than male quality challengers. Finally, we expect that when comparing gender within and across party, Democratic women should have the greatest advantage compared to Democratic men and Republicans due to their perceived liberalness.

Data

To test our hypotheses, we relied on campaign finance data from the Federal Election Commission for three House elections (1998-2002).⁴ We examined only candidates from the Democratic and Republican parties who ran in the general election, and following Jacobson (1987), we dropped all candidates who ran unopposed. We also excluded candidates who did not report any funds from individual donors. This left us with a total of 2,144 candidates in our data set. From these candidates, we were initially interested in the total amount of contributions coming from individuals. In additional analyses, we broke down the amounts into the four category levels given by the Federal Election Commission, total contributions less than \$200, contributions greater than or equal to \$200 and less than or equal to \$499, contributions greater than or equal to \$500 and less than or equal to \$749, and contributions of \$750 or more. We use these categories to test if there are any differences present at various contribution levels.⁵

Next, we coded each candidate's gender (1 for *women* and 0 for *men*) based on information from the Center for American Women and Politics and determined that 353, or 16.5 percent of our 2,144 observations, were women. Arguably, gender alone does not separate our two main theoretical points that women maintain an advantage by (1) their donor networks and (2) their perceived liberalness combined with a polarized donor pool. This is why we first tested for the influence of gender alone, then controlled for networks and finally interacted gender with party to test for party differences.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of campaign contributions for each category and by gender. The first row in the table provides the mean level of contributions

for all receipts, including individual, party, and PAC contributions, using constant 1998 dollars divided by \$10,000. On average, candidates receive \$671,100 in total contributions, with women receiving a slightly greater but not statistically different amount of funds. Looking at the contribution levels by gender, the same general patterns are present, but with a few slight differences. First, male candidates get 50 percent from individuals, and women 57 percent. On average, women bring in \$48,900 more from individuals compared to men. This difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. Second, gender differences become evident when examining total amounts raised by men and women across the four donation levels. For men, 42 percent of dollars raised come from contributors making the largest contributions, while 28 percent come from the low dollar amount category. In contrast, women collect only 38 percent of their contributions from the top category and 33 percent from the lowest category. Women do the same as men in the \$200 to \$499 level (13 percent), whereas men take in 2 percent more of their funds from the \$500 to \$749 category. In terms of dollars, women earn about \$32,700 more than men in the smallest donation category and \$8,800 at the next level.⁶ For the highest two levels, there is no statistical difference in terms of dollar amount. These results suggest that although women take in more individual donation dollars, most of the advantage results from the lower contribution categories.⁷ Because these descriptive statistics do not control for other factors that may influence campaign contributions, such as being part of a female donor network or the strength of the candidate, we should not conclude at this point that all, or even most, female candidates do better compared to men.

To investigate these patterns in a more systematic fashion, we turn to a series of multiple regressions where the dependent variable is the constant 1998 dollar amount divided by 10,000. Since the dependent variable is continuous, we use ordinary least squares and cluster the standard errors on each district for each election year to control for any problems with dependency between candidates competing with each other.⁸ In the first set of regressions, we initially test for just the influence of gender on campaign contributions to determine if women still have an advantage in collecting individual donations once we control for other factors. Then, in the next set, we include measures that control for female donor networks to determine how much of any advantage can be contributed to the networks, or if it is just a candidate's gender that is influencing donors. Finally, we run a third set of regressions to test for any additional

Table 1
Mean Total Receipts and Individual Contributions by Gender and Party, 1998-2002

	Total Receipts (\$)	Total Individual Contributions (\$)	Percentage of Total Receipts	Contributions < \$200		Contributions ≥ \$200 ≤ \$499		Contributions ≥ \$500 ≤ \$749		Contributions ≥ \$750	
				\$	% ^a	\$	% ^a	\$	% ^a	\$	% ^a
All candidates (<i>N</i> = 2,144)	67.11	34.48	51	9.84	29	4.46	13	6.02	17	14.16	41
Men (<i>n</i> = 1,791)	67.01	33.67	50	9.30	28	4.31	13	5.99	18	14.07	42
Women (<i>n</i> = 353)	67.63	38.56	57	12.57	33	5.19	13	6.18	16	14.63	38
Democrat (<i>n</i> = 1,070)	64.79	31.82	49	8.52	27	4.34	14	5.71	18	13.24	42
Men (<i>n</i> = 836)	64.90	30.20	47	7.30	24	4.09	14	5.65	19	13.16	44
Women (<i>n</i> = 234)	64.39	37.57	58	12.90	34	5.25	14	5.89	16	13.53	36
Republican (<i>n</i> = 1,074)	69.41	37.13	53	11.15	30	4.57	12	6.34	17	15.07	41
Men (<i>n</i> = 955)	68.85	36.71	53	11.05	30	4.51	12	6.29	17	14.86	40
Women (<i>n</i> = 119)	74.00	40.52	55	11.93	29	5.06	12	6.74	17	16.79	41

Note: In constant 1998 dollars divided by 10,000.

a. Percentage of total individual contributions.

gender differences within the two parties or the field of quality challengers.

Before moving on to the regressions, we discuss several control variables that could also influence the amount of individual contributions. Based on previous research (Jacobson 2004; Herrnson 2004), we expect members of the Republican Party to earn more contributions than Democratic candidates because they were in the majority during the entirety of our data set. Consequently, we include the dichotomous variable Party, coded 1 for *Republicans* and 0 for *Democrats*. Next, we control for quality challengers since they should bring in more donations than nonquality challengers. Following Jacobson (1980), we use previous electoral experience as a proxy for candidate quality. If a nonincumbent candidate has previously held elective office, he or she is coded 1; all others are coded 0. This variable is also interacted with gender to determine if there is any advantage among this select group of candidates. We also control for membership on a power committee or whether the candidate is a member of the leadership (coded 1 in each case, 0 otherwise). Power committees include Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means, and we consider a member to be in the leadership if they are Speaker, Majority or

Minority Leader, or Whip (Uhlener and Schlozman 1986). It is also necessary to control for incumbency status. Similar to quality challengers, incumbents should raise more funds than candidates who do not currently serve in the House. A dichotomous variable is included if the candidates were running for an open seat. Again, following Jacobson (2004) and Herrnson (2004), we expect these candidates to raise more funds since they have a greater chance of winning relative to candidates who are up against incumbents. We also control for candidates who were involved in a primary election. By running in two campaigns, these candidates will have to raise more funds compared to candidates who ran in only the general election. Finally, we include a variable that measures a candidate's other fund-raising dollars. This variable controls for candidates who are good fund-raisers generally or are running in an expensive race.⁹

Results

Table 2 presents the results from our initial regressions. The dependent variable for each of the models corresponds to the total from individual contributions and the four categories discussed above in constant

Table 2
Individual Contribution by Level, 1998-2002

	Total Individual Contributions	Contributions < \$200	Contributions ≥ \$200 ≤ \$499	Contributions ≥ \$500 ≤ \$749	Contributions ≥ \$750
Gender	7.42* (1.92)	4.14* (0.86)	1.05* (0.27)	0.56 (0.30)	1.65 (0.91)
Party	6.22* (1.30)	3.28* (0.69)	0.37* (0.17)	0.68* (0.21)	1.89* (0.63)
Quality challenger	16.06* (2.92)	5.40* (1.37)	2.22* (0.42)	2.73* (0.47)	5.71* (1.30)
Power committee	-4.65* (2.03)	-3.97* (1.00)	-0.66* (0.26)	-0.42 (0.33)	0.41 (1.10)
Leadership	18.48 (15.44)	4.69 (7.28)	-0.98 (1.67)	2.76 (2.82)	12.02 (9.87)
Incumbent	21.01* (2.54)	6.39* (0.90)	2.79* (0.32)	3.96* (0.42)	7.87* (1.18)
Open seat	11.72* (4.28)	1.04 (1.74)	1.92* (0.61)	2.65* (0.73)	6.11* (1.98)
Involved in primary election	5.00 (4.60)	0.332 (2.20)	0.70 (0.51)	1.10* (0.55)	2.87 (1.51)
Other fund-raising	0.30* (0.08)	0.07* (0.02)	0.03* (0.01)	0.05* (0.01)	0.15* (0.04)
1998	-0.47 (1.95)	3.15* (1.07)	0.62* (0.25)	-0.29 (0.29)	-3.96* (0.84)
2000	3.31 (2.04)	2.81* (0.98)	0.83* (0.27)	0.46 (0.32)	-0.79 (0.93)
Constant	-0.37 (4.53)	-1.04 (2.19)	-0.12 (0.50)	0.03 (0.54)	0.77 (1.49)
<i>N</i>	2,144	2,144	2,144	2,144	2,144
<i>R</i> ²	.226	.074	.192	.266	.247
<i>F</i>	56.25*	15.72*	49.99*	83.07*	61.12*

Note: Dependent variable is the dollar amount of contributions in each category per candidate in \$10,000, using constant 1998 dollars. The standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the district for each election cycle.

* $p < .05$.

1998 dollars divided by 10,000. When it comes to the total amount of contributions, female candidates do about \$74,200 better than male candidates, *ceteris paribus*. This suggests that even after controlling for other factors, female candidates have a substantial advantage when it comes to collecting campaign funds from individuals. As we discussed earlier, this is probably a function of their donation networks. We explore this possibility in more detail shortly. In terms of the other control variables, most are in the expected direction. Incumbents take in \$210,100 more than candidates who do not currently serve in the House, while quality challengers receive an additional \$160,600 compared to candidates who have not previously held elective office. Candidates who are running for an open seat raise \$117,200 more than candidates running in the presence of an incumbent. It is also the case that Republican candidates receive about \$62,200 more than Democrats do. Of course, we cannot determine if this is a function of being a Republican or being in the majority party since the Republicans were in the majority for the period under study. Finally, we see that other fund-raising positively predicts fund-raising from individuals. Somewhat unexpectedly, it seems that being on a power committee means the candidate is actually raising fewer funds from individual contributors. This result may indicate that members on these committees concentrate most of their efforts on raising

money from PACs, since PACs are more likely to give to members who serve on powerful committees such as Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means (Grenzke 1989).¹⁰ There is no difference in fund-raising for members serving in the leadership, for candidates who ran in a primary, and for different election cycles.

Although the results indicate that female candidates have an advantage when it comes to collecting individual campaign contributions, it is worth investigating if the boost is consistent across donation levels. Since our theory and previous research suggests that the advantage may only persist at the lower ends, we ran four additional regressions for each of the donation categories. We display these results in the final four columns of Table 2. As expected, female candidates do significantly better than men at the two lower contribution levels, but there is no difference in the higher categories. Women receive \$41,400 and \$10,500 more from contributors giving less than \$200 and between \$200 and \$499, respectively. So, although women do have an advantage in collecting funds from individuals compared to men, these initial results suggest that the benefit is present only when reaching out to donors of smaller amounts. For the control variables, the rest of the results are generally consistent, with the exception of a lack of statistical significance for the upper two categories for members serving on power committees.

Table 3
Donor Networks, Quality Challengers, and Partisan Advantage, 1998-2002

	All Candidates	Women Candidates	Democratic Candidates	Republican Candidates
Gender	-10.23* (1.89)	4.89* (2.09)	—	8.07* (2.64)
Female donor network	23.03* (3.00)	—	—	—
Party	6.34* (1.29)	6.19* (1.30)	-3.70 (3.80)	—
Quality challenger	15.39* (2.87)	13.64* (3.31)	10.46* (4.47)	17.97* (4.74)
Quality × Gender	—	10.30* (5.21)	—	—
Power committee	-4.09 (2.04)	-4.67* (2.03)	-1.48 (5.18)	-6.87* (2.56)
Leadership	18.84 (15.51)	18.26 (15.39)	-15.04* (4.64)	30.61 (36.02)
Incumbent	19.42* (2.49)	20.95* (2.53)	1.90 (5.25)	18.20* (2.98)
Open seat	10.42* (4.23)	11.91* (4.28)	11.17 (9.07)	10.28 (5.77)
Involved in primary election	4.71 (4.61)	5.18 (4.68)	11.72* (5.22)	11.57* (2.47)
Other fund-raising	0.30* (0.08)	0.30* (0.08)	0.92* (0.15)	0.22* (0.09)
1998	-0.55 (1.94)	-0.42 (1.95)	1.74 (4.01)	-2.87 (2.43)
2000	2.97 (2.04)	3.35 (2.03)	4.97 (3.89)	2.02 (2.48)
Constant	1.16 (4.53)	-0.18 (4.59)	-5.52 (4.88)	-1.70 (2.30)
<i>n</i>	2,144	2,144	353	1,070
<i>R</i> ²	.235	.227	.475	.220
<i>F</i>	67.41*	57.55*	30.95*	35.84*

Note: Dependent variable is the total dollar amount of individual contributions per candidate in \$10,000, using constant 1998 dollars. The standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the district for each election cycle. Dashes indicate variable was not used in that particular regression.

**p* < .05.

In addition, the boost in funding for open seats is not present for the smallest donation level.

Donor Networks, Quality Challengers, and Partisan Advantage

The next set of regression results, presented in Table 3, provides the results for tests of our additional hypotheses and allows us to compare three groups of candidates: women supported by female donor networks, women not supported by female donor networks, and male candidates. We test for the influence of female donor networks to determine how much of the advantage comes from being a member of a donor network, and how much is a function of the candidate's gender. Similar to the Center for American Women in Politics, we define a female donor network as a group that predominantly comprises women donors and that predominantly supports women candidates. To determine which candidates were parts of the female donor network, we turned to the Center for Responsive Politics, which provides a list of interest groups that it labels "Women's Issues" groups under the Ideological/Single Issue grouping. While the Center for Responsive Politics's categorization places the Susan B. Anthony List elsewhere, we added this

female donor network to this list.¹¹ For each of these groups, the Center for Responsive Politics then lists the names of candidates who received PAC contributions from the groups. If a candidate is on one of these lists, we code the variable *female donor network* = 1; 0 = *all other candidates*. In our data set, 52 percent of Democratic and 25 percent of Republican women were on at least one of these lists. While a greater proportion of Democratic than Republican women are on these lists, the activity of female donor networks is not a fund-raising dynamic that exists for Democratic women only.

We present the results for the group hypothesis test in the second column of Table 3. They indicate that donor networks do in fact appear to be driving the different levels of fund-raising between male and female candidates. In the previous model, for total individual contributions, the coefficient on gender was positive and significant. Now, it is negative and significant and of similar magnitude (7.42 vs. -10.23).¹² However, the coefficient on female donor networks is 23.03 and significant at the .05 level. To determine the total effect of these two variables, we can add these two coefficients to see that women candidates who are part of the female donor network receive an extra \$128,000 (\$230,300-\$102,300), but

women not in the network earn \$102,300 less compared to men.¹³ This indicates a substantial lift in contributions for some but not all female candidates. Thus, based on these results, it appears that women in the donor networks have a clear advantage over candidates outside the network—both men and women. Women who fall outside the network have the lowest fund-raising levels on average, and male candidates fall somewhere in between. These findings are consistent with the idea that female donor networks are doing an excellent job of funneling individual contributions to their preferred female candidates either through bundling or by sending cues to their donor pool about where to send their contributions. Although women have to depend on female donor networks for a significant portion of their campaign contributions, those endorsed by these networks have a clear fund-raising advantage.

To see if there are any differences between male and female quality challengers, we estimated a model that includes an interaction between quality challenger and gender (Quality \times Gender). Since previous research has indicated that female candidates tend to be of higher quality and more strategic in their entry decisions (Gertzog 2002), even within the pool of quality challengers, we expect female quality challengers to do better relative to male quality challengers. We present the results of this model in the third column of Table 3. Due to the interaction, it is necessary to calculate meaningful standard errors as the “usual” standard errors in a regression output are no longer correct (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). A joint *F* test including all three components of the interaction is significant at the .05 level. Substantively, we find that challengers who have previously held elective office receive \$136,400 more than nonquality challengers. However, female quality challengers earn an additional \$103,000 (Quality \times Gender) plus \$48,900 (gender) for a total advantage of \$151,900 over quality men and an astounding \$288,300 more in contributions compared to nonquality men.¹⁴ Clearly, female quality challengers have a substantial fund-raising advantage over all other challengers.

Finally, based on our theoretical expectations about the polarized donor pool and the perceived liberalness of female candidates, we should find that *ceteris paribus*, Democratic women should receive most of the fund-raising advantage. To test for this, we run three additional regressions, presented in columns 4, 5, and 6 of Table 3. In column 4, we include only women candidates. This enables us to test if there are any differences across parties. Here, we find that the

coefficient for party is no longer significant. Previously, members of the majority Republican Party received more than \$60,000 more than members of the minority Democratic Party. Now, there is no difference between the two. This suggests the contention that either female Republicans receive no additional fund-raising boost for being in the majority party or the benefit Democratic women have is on par with the majority party advantage and the result is no difference in the amount of funds raised. Of course, both of these events could be happening. In columns 5 and 6, we split our sample between Democratic and Republican candidates so we can test for differences within the two parties. If Democratic women benefit from a congressional donor pool that is liberal leaning on social issues, then the coefficient for gender should be greater for Democratic candidates than for Republican candidates. This is indeed the case as gender is positive and significant for the Democratic regression but not different from 0 in the Republican model.

In sum, we can determine that women candidates have a fund-raising advantage over men in attracting donations from individual donors. However, not all women come out ahead; only those women who are included in a female donor network enjoy this advantage. We also find that female quality challengers earn more donations than men who have also held elected office. This result holds because women are strategic when they decide to run for office (Gertzog 2002). Finally, we find that within the pool of women candidates, there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans. This suggests that the large pool of liberal donors willing to give to liberal Democratic women but not to female Republicans can counteract the majority party advantage. Related to this result, we find that across the two parties, Democratic women, but not Republicans, have the advantage over men in fund-raising from individual donors.

Conclusion

There is a gender gap in individual contributions to congressional candidates, and this gap favors Democratic women most. The successes of female donor networks combined with changes in the ideological makeup of the congressional donor pool have redefined the gender gap, creating funding differences not only between men and women, but among women as well. Specifically, we find that the magnitude of the gender gap in individual contributions differs with respect to level of donation and party. While

Democratic women have the greatest advantage in attracting individual contributions (at the smallest donation level), they also have the greatest gender gap (at the highest donation level). For Republican women, there is no real gender gap across all levels of individual donations. Furthermore, the perceived moderate ideologies of Republican women do not help attract contributions from a polarized, congressional donor pool.

Gender differences still exist in certain aspects of campaign finance. Yet difference alone is unimportant if it lacks consequence. We argue that the gender gap evident in individual contributions has both good and bad consequences for different types of women candidates. On one hand, the gender gap favoring women in the area of individual contributions indicates that gender parity in campaign finance has been achieved through the creative use of individual contributions like bundling and female donor networks. This fund-raising strategy is working for women candidates, and we find that it is working especially well for quality Democratic women candidates. On the other hand, the consequence of this gap could be harmful for women candidates in that our results indicate that women must rely on these individual donations to remain competitive in the race for campaign contributions. Democratic women in particular may need to rely on these contributions the most. Women who are not in a network are at a substantial disadvantage in raising individual contributions. Without female donor networks, women may not reach fund-raising parity with men, depending on their ability to attract donations from other sources.

Although our research uncovers some interesting patterns that may give us some additional insights into gender and campaign finance, there is still more work to do. Because our data cover only elections before the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, we hope soon to conduct another analysis using post-Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act data. If post-Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act campaigns put more emphasis on individual contributions and Democratic women continue to outpace Republican women in the race for these donations, then we expect our future results will demonstrate a growing partisan gender gap in this important aspect of campaign finance. Yet the degree to which certain types of candidates rely differently on individual donors may underscore their relative vulnerability with regard to any potential changes in campaign finance regulations. Because of the advantage women candidates—especially Democratic women—get from being part of a female

donor network, it is worth investigating what it takes to be a part of this important group.

While this research specifically addresses the gender and partisan gap in individual contributions, these findings have implications for women's political participation and representation more generally. Women's increasing political participation is evident not only in the growing number of women voters, candidates, and officeholders but also in the number of women contributors to campaigns. Recent work on monetary surrogacy (Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008) finds that partisan goals trump social identity as motivations for giving, and our analysis confirms that there is indeed a strong partisan bias when examining individual contributions. Women hold an advantage over men, and within this subset of candidates, Democratic women have an advantage over Republican women. Yet the partisan nature of monetary surrogacy remains especially relevant for women candidates who are more likely than their male counterparts to rely on this source of funding from outside the district (Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008). Female donor networks organize and directly channel this critical funding, which adds credibility and helps give a competitive edge to these campaigns. Republican women may very well be able to rely on other sources of campaign fund-raising to offset this advantage among Democratic women. If this is not the case, however, and the Democratic bias in female donor networks and the congressional donor pool persists, the partisan gender gap in Congress may continue to grow.

Fund-raising is important not only in winning office but in exerting influence and furthering the institutional ambitions of women once elected. It is no surprise that women who rise through the ranks of legislative leadership are also those who have mastered the art of fund-raising. As Rosenthal and Peters (2008) noted in their profile of Nancy Pelosi's ascendance to Speaker, success at fund-raising helps women get around the otherwise gendered opportunity structures for legislative leadership. Leadership positions maximize the substantive representation of women by placing women in the most influential positions to affect the content and process of policy making. As women in elective office become better fund-raisers, they increase their chances of gaining access to positions of leadership. Individual donations to women candidates may very well help set the stage for later fund-raising success when women are elected to office.

Democratic women are uniquely positioned to benefit from the increased and successful fund-raising activities of female donor networks and a liberal-leaning

congressional donor pool. Yet many questions arise from this finding that merit scholarly exploration. For example, are those Democratic women who rely so heavily on individual contributions, especially from female donor networks, more likely to advance and support the policy preferences of those groups once elected? Do these findings hold across the career cycle for women members of Congress? How does contributing online affect the power of female donor networks to funnel contributions to women congressional candidates? Many of these findings depend on the current congressional donor environment. If that environment changes, then perhaps the findings presented here will lend us clues about subsequent changes in the gender gap and representation in Congress.

Notes

1. What constitutes true fund-raising parity remains an issue in the literature. While research has confirmed overall fund-raising parity, other research has demonstrated that male and female candidates do differ with regard to the value and electoral impact of similar dollars raised (Herrick 1996; Green 2003).

2. It is important to note that the questions we pose also extend to campaign finance analyses in subfields beyond congressional elections. Recent studies of campaign finance in state legislative elections (Hogan 2007) and state Supreme Court elections (Bonneau 2007) find no disadvantage for women in campaign spending and fund-raising, respectively.

3. For more information, see <http://www.emilyslist.org/>, <http://www.thewishlist.org>, and <http://www.sba-listcf.org>.

4. We made several methodological decisions during the course of this study. We discuss these decisions and possible consequences in the electronic version of our article available at <http://prq.sagepub.com>.

5. The less than \$200 category was not given by the Federal Election Commission but was created by subtracting the total of the other three categories from the total amount. Since these data provide only totals for each candidate, we cannot change the category sizes. The Federal Election Commission does not require that amounts less than \$200 be reported by candidates. However, there may be an incentive to do so because it increases the total number of campaign donors—another sign of electoral support and candidate viability. We do not know if there is a pattern to the kinds of candidates who report these small donations, so data for this category should be interpreted with caution.

6. These differences are also statistically different at the .05 level.

7. Unfortunately, the Federal Election Commission provides the total number of contributions for the three largest contribution categories only. Looking at the number of contributions for the available categories, women do significantly better than men in the \$200 to \$499 level, with no difference for the other two categories.

8. Clustering the standard errors also implies that the Huber/White/sandwich estimator of variance should be used in place of the “normal” standard errors. A test for heteroskedasticity suggests that robust standard errors should be used. However, the results are not dependent on this modeling choice.

9. We attempted to tap the competitiveness of a race by including the vote margin. The variable was never significant and did not change the results.

10. The definition and measurement of committee power can vary depending on the type of political action committee, the policy area it is most interested in, and the kind of influence it wishes to exert (see, e.g., Grenzke 1989).

11. A complete listing of these groups is included in the electronic version of our article.

12. Since switching signs but remaining significant is a classic sign of multicollinearity, we ran a variance inflation factor test and did not find any factors greater than 4.

13. If the reader is worried about the interactive nature of gender and female donor network, an *F* test of joint significance for the two variables is significant at the .05 level.

14. The interaction does not serve as a proxy for female donor network as the result, albeit dampened a bit, is still present if female donor network is included in the model. However, due to the interactive nature of some of our variables, we run separate models to ease interpretation.

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