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POLITICAL GIVING AS CIVIC PARTICIPATION: IDENTIFYING DONORS AND MOTIVATING GIVING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
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ABSTRACT

The study of political donations has previously been limited to surveys of identified donors and analysis of reported giving data, and oftentimes limited to higher-dollar donors. A comprehensive review of the current political giving literature yields two distinct questions: first, what role do resources play in determining who gives, and second, what ultimately prompts people to donate to a political organization? I utilize secondary survey data in my first chapter to examine the role of resources and gender in political giving. This chapter provides insight to whether gender merely represents the availability of resources necessary for participation, or whether it is indicative of differing implicit motivations that drive giving. I use three original, partnered field experiments, two of which are fielded with a state-level political action committee, and one that is fielded with a national PAC, to examine which type of strategic appeal most effectively motivates political giving.

These chapters yield several distinctive findings. First, while resources ultimately predict who gives to political organizations, gender is marker not only of differing levels of resources but also of different intrinsic motivations for giving. Second, in line with practitioner best practices, explicitly asking supporters to donate does generate donations; however, non-solicitations ultimately drive more traffic to organizations' websites. Added minor costs – or barriers – to giving do not seem to deter or depress the rate of donations. Finally, I find that when pitted directly against each other, appeals using temporal urgency to prompt giving outperform expressions of gratitude and policy-related anxiety induction. This indicates that we might not fully understanding of what costliness is, in terms of political giving and online political activity. These findings also shed light on the strategies that effectively motivate alternative forms of civic participation.

CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTION

Within political science, civic engagement is almost always conceptualized as a question of whether or not someone has voted (Wattenberg, 2007). But voting is not the only measure of civic engagement. Citizens choose to engage civically in many different ways, such as joining a political party, volunteering for a campaign or nonprofit, running for office, protesting, letter or email writing, or donating financially to political organizations (Wattenberg, 2007; Dalton, 2008b). More recently, we have seen a shift from traditional, duty-based civic engagement (voting) to modern, alternative forms of engagement-participation such as signing petitions, boycotting or protesting, recycling, and volunteerism (Dalton, 2008b).

The number of people who choose to participate by donating money to political causes are, admittedly, a small group, and largely unrepresentative of the U.S. electorate (Panagopoulos & Bergan, 2006; Lipsitz & Panagopoulos, 2011). Less than one half percent of Americans donated $200 or more to a federal campaign during the 2012 election cycle (Donor demographics, 2017). To put this in perspective with another comparison, widely used by pundits, Americans annually spend more money on Halloween candy (roughly $11.3 billion) than they do on elections within an average two-years election cycle (roughly $4 billion) (Fuljenz, 2014). This speaks to the fact that the average American does not care about giving money to political causes, candidates, or organizations, or at least that they are unwilling to do so themselves.

Despite the non-representative nature of the political donorate, I argue that understanding who donates and how to deploy effective strategic appeals that motivate donations is of growing importance. While civic engagement is frequently only conceptualized as voting, the act of voting is a particular form of engagement, and unlike any other manifestation of political

efficacy. Not only does voting occur during a particular, defined time period, with a fixed end, but it receives high levels of media attention (Han, 2016). Political activism is steadily evolving to encompass much more than simply casting a ballot. This is highlighted by the recent post-election surge in donations to left-leaning advocacy groups and campaigns, particularly following the 2016 elections (Chandler, 2016; Itkowitz, 2016). Overwhelmingly, activists have turned to giving contributions as a tangible way of responding to political events.

Since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* (2010) ruling, though, the government has had even less of a role in overseeing and regulating campaign contributions. This limited government role, combined with the incredible growth of the PAC cottage industry, has given way to not-unprecedented concerns about the roles of donations within our political process. It has also created added barriers to gaining a representative and comprehensive understanding of just who gives. This is particularly true of reporting standards for federal elections, in which only donations over $200 must be reported, virtually wiping out any way forward in studying lower dollar donations and the people who make them. These recent changes to campaign finance laws highlight just how little we know about *who* these donors are. Without a knowledge of who gives and why they do so, it is exceedingly difficult to form strategies for how to encourage this form of civic activism.

At a baseline level, we know that the average U.S. political donorate are wealthier and more ideologically polarized than non-donors (Panagopoulos & Bergan, 2006). Additionally, donors are generally more secular, older, less racially diverse than the general population. As would be expected, they are more likely to vote than non-donors. Overall, donors are demographically and ideologically distinct from non-donors; these differences are greater even than those between voters and non-voters (Hill & Huber, 2016).

In her recent recounting of the 2016 campaign, Hillary Clinton (2017) made it a point to note that hers was the “first campaign in history in which the majority of donors were women” (p. 98). While her claim that the bulk of the funds raised came from females is factually correct, and substantiated by FEC data, is only opens the door to more questions about the gendered differences in giving (Donor demographics, 2017). Rates of political giving and engagement vary by gender within charity and nonprofit giving. However, little research has been done to answer the question whether this gap also exists within political giving, and if so, why it does. Is this recent, marked increase in female giving, noted by Secretary Clinton, indicative of a broader, shifting trend? The presence of female candidates is shown to increase level of female political participation (Hansen, 1997); this could alternatively be a symptom of a major political party nominating a female for president.

One of the distinctive facts that we do know about political giving is that the act of participating civically is driven by the availability of the resources necessary to participate (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). This resource-based approach to explaining participation is premised on the idea that in order to donate, one must have the necessary money – expendable income – with which to donate. Those without discretionary income are less likely to donate simply because they lack the resources to do so. Women, who, on the whole, earn less money than men and take on much of the work within a household, have less time and money with which to participate civically. If a gender gap exists within political giving, it could simply be explained by women’s lack of the necessary resources with which to donate.

Yet, research on philanthropic giving finds that women are more likely to give to nonprofits and charities and to do so at higher monetary amounts. They argue that this gender difference in behavior is because women are prompted and motivated to give by different

mechanisms and intrinsic motivations than men. While men are believed to give to enhance their own standing, some theorize that alternatively, "women given to promote social change or help others less fortunate" (Hall, 2004, p. 71). Why is this? Based on these theories, I explore the question of who, gender-wise, gives to campaigns, and whether the gender-based differences in giving are the result of available resources or in differences in motivations between the genders. In doing so, I seek to contribute to our understanding of who gives and the role that resources plays.

While surveys of political donors are helpful in producing demographic information, these surveys fall short of isolating causation behind giving, or how would-be donors might be prompted by give by various stimuli. Additionally, surveys depend on donors' recollections, which are subject to various biases; ultimately, recall deficiencies ultimately call into respondents' responses, making them unreliable or inaccurate. Following a discussion of just *who* gives, I turn to field experiments to ask two questions.

First, does the act of explicitly asking someone to donate make them more likely to donate? Politics scholars argue that people participate in politics for three reasons: they want to, they can, and because they are asked (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Colloquial knowledge in the practitioner world follows this theory: if you want someone to donate to a campaign, you must explicitly ask them to do so. While this is certainly the case in increasing voter registration and turnout rates, does it also apply to donating to political causes? Just how much effect does simply being asked have in nudging people toward donating? Academic research and practitioner knowledge alike both indicate that when barriers toward completion of a task are added to already costly activities, that less people will complete the task. In the case of civic participation activities, such as voting, volunteering or giving money, practitioners and researchers do their

best to lower the burden of completion for tasks, in order to encourage greater participation. Do added barriers actually affect completion rates of costly civic good activities? I explore this through a partnered field experiment with a state-based political organization, later replicating the experiment with a national political action committee.

Second, strategic appeals for individuals to register to vote or to vote have been found to be more effective in eliciting the prompted behavior than basic outreach appeals. Past research finds that expressions of gratitude produce statistically significant increases in turnout (Panagopoulos, 2011). People experiencing policy-based anxiety increase their information seeking in an attempt to mitigate the feelings of anxiety (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015). Can anxiety be used to motivate costly participatory actions, as anger does (Valentino, Gregorowicz & Groenendyk, 2009)? Finally, reminding people of an approaching deadline for an action is shown to spur completion of the task by simplifying the cognition around the decision making (Ordonez & Benson, 1997; Zur & Breznitz, 1981). This is a widely-used tactic in fundraising campaigns (Stein, 2013), but does it actually spur donations?

Beyond a basic donation appeal, strategical appeals for donations that draw on gratitude, anxiety induction, and urgency should elicit different rates of giving comparable to those elicited when driving voter registration and turnout, similarly costly activities. Answering this question has two purposes: first, it provides a test of multiple established "best practices" of political fundraising practitioners, which has, thus far, gone untested. Second, this test offers the opportunity for a crossover of literature of ballot chasing. Both questions leverage a behavioral measure (rate of giving and/or clicking) as the outcome measure. If particular strategic treatments effectively prompt voting, one type of civic engagement, is it possible that it might also be effective in prompting greater political giving?

The results of these three studies add to our understanding of who makes campaign donations, and why they do so. Contributing politically is viewed as a means for those with greater resources to exert extensive influence on the political process (Bartels, 2010; Gilens, 2012). Understanding gender-based differences in giving habits and testing different strategic appeals for increasing giving allows us to better comprehend how to expand the base of individual donors, thereby limiting the monetary influence of the disproportionately wealthy. Substantively, these studies test long-used fundraising tactics commonly deployed by practitioners and provide a true test of their effectiveness in garnering donations.

Summary

Political giving is a cornerstone of modern politicking. Our political system's existence is entirely dependent on political contributions, yet we lack a comprehensive understanding of just who gives and why to do so. To look at who gives and how to turn would-be contributors into donors, this dissertation looks at three facets of political giving: 1) it looks into the gender-based differences in giving, inquiring whether the gap is the result of a lack of available resources or of a gap in motivations; 2) whether the act of explicitly asking for a donation actually impacts rates of giving; and 3) testing theoretical predictions from the political behavior literature about the effectiveness of specific strategies for encouraging increased giving.

In the rest of this paper, I lay out the rationale for why giving matters – and contribute to the body of research telling us just who donates, and how to encourage more political giving. In Chapter 2, I build the theoretical framework for my research questions and hypotheses, drawing from previous research on political giving, with specific sections dedicated to each of my three methodological chapters. Throughout Chapter 3, I explore the relationship between gender and rate and likelihood of giving politically. I test whether gender-based differences in political

giving are the result of variance in accessible resources or whether gender serves as an indicator of differing implicit motivations to give. In Chapters 4 and 5, I test whether explicitly asking for donations has an additive effect on online giving and email conversion rates, and whether affectively-based giving appeals generate different levels of giving, respectively. I also present the results from each respective methods section. Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss the key findings of my research, their implications, and the limitations of this research, before providing potential directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2
UNDERSTANDING WHO GIVES AND WHY THEY DO SO

Campaign donors represent a small and elite group of political activists (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Donors to congressional campaigns tend to be wealthy, white males; large contributors are predominantly Republican, affluent, and active in many aspects of politics – not just in giving (Berg, Eastland, & Jaffe, 1981). Though donors represent a miniscule fraction of the general electorate, individuals are the single largest contributor to political campaigns, giving far more money to candidates than either PACS or corporations (Ansolabehere, deFigueiredo, & Snyder, 2003). Though the ratio has shifted in the last decade, this held true even in 2016, in which of over 70% of the total cost of the election cycle was generated by donations from individuals giving $200 or more (Donor demographics, 2017).

Donors represent less than 1% of the total United States population; why do we care about studying them (Donor demographics, 2017)? While the donorate is certainly unrepresentative of the broader US population, individual donors are the unsung heroes of our democratic election system – and the single largest source of donations to political campaigns (Sorauf, 1994). The presence of individual donors – and the influence that they represent – ultimately mutes the level of PACs and advocacy groups. If individuals were to choose to donate less money and in a lesser frequency to political causes, interest group money would have a larger impact on the political process, and ultimately exert a disproportionate amount of influence. Donors who give to campaigns and candidates ultimately protect the stalwartness of our electoral process by insulating elected officials and candidates from greater interest group influence (Ansolabehere et al., 2003). Ultimately, though they are proportionately a small group, they exert significant influence on our political system and should be studied.

Within the field of campaign finance research, individual donors are generally passed over in favor of focusing on the impact of PACS and interest group organizations. This is largely due to the fact that the campaign finance literature frames giving, as it does other forms of civic participation, purely as a rational choice-based decision. As a rationalized choice, the benefits of making a political donation are weighted against the potential costs of doing so (Grossman & Helpman, 1996; Stigler, 1971). The few articles that do address individual donors generally do so by surveying past contributors to political causes and questioning them about their motivations for giving. However, it is exceedingly difficult to identify lower-dollar donors below the $200 federal campaign reporting cut-off, making even these surveys non-representative of the general donorate.

Previous donor surveys indicate that the vast majority of donors (85%) are motivated by one of three rationales for giving. Some are investors who draw from a material incentive to donate, while roughly one fourth are intimates of political elites, who donate when personally asked to do so. The final and largest category of donors are ideologue, who contributed explicitly to influence the composition of Congress, and who support a specific social or political cause (Francia, Green, Herrnson, Powell & Wilcox, 2003). These findings are echoed by more recent research, in the form of surveys of contributors from public donations records. Contributor surveys find that donors are motivated to give by ideological and policy-based motivations (Francia et al. 2003; Barber, 2016). Motivations are not always positively framed – anxiety related to the threat of undesirable policy changes has also been shown to motivate giving (Miller & Krosnick, 2004). This indicates that at least in the realm of congressional giving, donors possess a high level of political knowledge and interest – which ultimately motivates their

giving. These motivations closely mirror the broader theoretical explanations for why individuals choose to participate in politics or civic life at all.

Broadly, explanations for why people partake in civic participation come down to a combination of three factors: people participate in politics because they can, they want to, and because they are asked to (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995, p. 271). This first necessary characteristic – that of being able to participate – comes down to the possession of the resources necessary to participation – i.e. one's ability. One of the most significant determinants of resources availability is on the basis of socioeconomic status (SES), or how factors such as education, income and occupation come together to yield higher or lower amounts of monetary and temporal resources. These things can also be considered functions of human capital, as they can include time, money, or even variables of civic skills, which, albeit, are harder to quantify than time or money. The second factor – desire to participate – is a determinant of motivations, or attitudes about politics as a whole. It can also be thought of as a measure of interest and engagement with politics, as people rarely participate in activities in which they possess little interest. This factor requires a level of desire. Finally, the third factor – being recruited, implies a connectedness with social networks that draw people in to politics in the first place (Brady et al., 1995). It could also be interpreted as requiring a base-level of free time, in which to have developed a social network from which they could later be recruited into politics.

These factors – ability, desire, and being asked to participate – together present a plausible explanation for the long-standing gender gap in civic engagement, purely based on a rationale based on people participating if they have the resources necessary to do so. If women lack the necessary resources to participation, their levels of engagement will lag behind men's. In

the 2016 election cycle, only a little over one-third of individual donors (37.1%) were female. In terms of the amounts contributed, females had even less influence, ultimately contributing only 29.6% of the total amount contributed during the cycle (Donor demographics, 2017). This imbalance is not limited only to the most recent election cycle, and certainly not only to the act of political giving. Rather, it is a marked sign that women and men participate in politics differently. In the case of political gift-giving, it is largely a male exercise.

For virtually all research in giving, inquiries about donors beyond donor-specific surveys have been limited to analyzing the donors that are reported. This data generally comes from the Federal Election Committee (FEC). The cutoff for itemizing federal contributions is $200, though contribution reporting thresholds vary widely depending on the state in which the races are held. One of the strengths of this dissertation is its level of analysis. Unlike many other works on political giving, these chapters conceptualize giving overall as a binary variable. Individuals either did or did not donate to the organizations, regardless of donation amount. This is possible because I first utilize self-reported survey data from donors before proceeding to two original, partnered experiments fielded with two political action committees. The partnered field experiments, elaborated upon in Chapters 4 and 5, provide the unique opportunity to analyze all donations made to an appeal – as opposed to analyzing only the giving trends of donors who give more than $200. Likewise, the survey research conducted in Chapter 3 addresses all levels of giving, asking respondents whether they have or not made a donation to a political candidate, campaign or organization in the last year, with no mention of amount. Next, I turn to a discussion of the literature review and theories upon which I build my hypotheses for the next three methodological chapters.

Gender Differences in Participation

In Chapter 2, I discuss the effects of individual-level characteristics that drive likelihood of giving. Among the variables discuss are gender, resource-based variables, such as family income and education, and political interest and strong partisanship, which are known to predict political engagement. I begin by first reviewing the literature on the gender gap in political engagement, before laying out my hypotheses and the relevant literature that supports these predictions. These hypotheses are then tested and analyzed in Chapter 3.

Gender Gaps in Participation

The political gender gap, defined as male-female differences in political identification and behavior, is endemic within the study of civic engagement. The smallest shifts in party identification and voting behavior of the sexes can have large and over-arching influences on election results (Kaufmann, 2006), meaning that this gap has major implications for electoral results, as well as the representativeness of elected officials. The modern gender gap, which emerged in the 1964 election, has been extensively documented (Mueller, 1988; Kaufmann, 2006; Klein, 1984). While this gender gap, conceptualized by party identification and differences in voting, has declined steadily since 1996, there are still distinct gender-based differences in how people engage politically (Kaufmann, 2006). These gaps exist in form politics across a variety of developed, Western nations (Norris, 2002; Brady et al., 1995; Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010). Do these gaps exist within the United States when it comes to political giving? To test this, my first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) proposes the following: more men than women have donated to a political candidate, campaign or organization in the last year.

Despite the rising numbers of women who are choosing to run for public office and serve in government, there continues to be a persistent, gender-based gap in a variety of forms of civic

engagement (Lovenduski, 2005). Gender gaps in participation yield unbalanced levels of governmental representation, and undercut the importance of participation as a foundation of democratic governance (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; Verba, 1996). There are various explanations for the differences in participation along gender lines. Some literatures attribute gender differences in interest to differences in the resources needed for participation (Baxter & Lansing, 1983). Other research points to gender consciousness (Rinehart, 1992), or to social role differences among women (Sapiro, 1983) as explanations for varied engagement rates.

Broader attempts to explain the gap purport that the gaps are the result of more intrinsic, gender-based differences in predispositions which make them more likely to be drawn to politics (Delli, Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Baxter & Lansing, 1983). Alternatively, Miller and Saunders (2016) propose that instability of individual-level political participation is the result of differences in motivation. Resources, in this model, are only half the rationale for participation. Once the accessibility of the necessary resources for participation is met, individuals consider whether they even want to participate, and whether they got what they wanted out of the last time they participated (Miller & Saunders, 2016). This suggests that perhaps differences in motivation are the result of varied objectives for participation on behalf of men and women. Overall, these two approaches to explaining the gendered participation gap across forms of participation and countries are largely at odds with each other.

Alternative Explanations for the Gender Gap

The first major explanation is based on a resource-based model for participation, ultimately arguing that women have comparatively less access to the resources necessary for participation. This idea that resources matter – and indeed dictate whether someone is going to participate in politics is so regular a finding that it is said to appear in participation research

"with monotonous regularity" (Nagel 1987, p. 59). Women, in this model, are less likely to participate purely because they lack the resources (when compared to men) necessary to participate – specifically, financial resources and the civic skills (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). Much of this accessibility (or lack thereof) is dictated by the socioeconomic status (SES) of women: their education, income and occupation, all of which are comparatively more limited than that of males (Bennett & Bennett, 1986; Milbrath & Goel, 1965). Wolfinger & Rosenstone (1980) pioneer a basic resource model (BRM) of participation that draws largely from socioeconomic status as an explanation for the development of stable skills. Beyond simply predicting participation based on the socioeconomic status of an individual, though, a resources-based model for participation more comprehensively explains most participation, in that resources like time and civic skills do not associate directly with SES. Rather, a more specific and accurate understanding of why people participate is based on whether they possess the specific resources – time, money, and civic skills – to do so (Brady et al., 1995).

Resources are not equally distributed, and particular socioeconomic groups possess more resources than others. Women, on average, possess lower levels of socioeconomic-related resources, making it more difficult for them to partake in forms of participation that are financially expensive, time-intensive, or that require a high level of skillsets (Burns 2007; Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). Correspondingly, men more frequently participate in resource-dependent modes of activism (Dalton, 2008a; Gallego, 2007; Norris, 2002). In particular, we know that higher educational attainment, positive employment status, and higher incomes are all tied to greater likelihood of political participation. Under this model, then, by controlling for markers of socioeconomic status which represent the availability of resources necessary for participation, gender-based differences in participation should

disappear almost entirely. Particularly for women, marriage and presence of children in the house are thought to correlate with decreased civic engagement – at least when it is conceptualized through more traditional, duty-based forms of engagement. This is largely due to institutions within society which result in women bearing the brunt of household, and ultimately, childrearing work, leaving them with less discretionary time for outside of home pursuits.

The second explanation for gaps in participation along genders is simply that there are intrinsic differences between the genders in how they opt in to participation. While resources *do* matter for participation, when controlling for differences in socioeconomic characteristics and political attitudes, women are still more likely to engage in private types of activism than men, who tend toward direct contact, group membership-based forms of participation (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010). This could be the result of differences in socialization, opportunities, and attitudes about politics and/or specific forms of participation. Women are socialized to be more passive, private, and compassionate, with an emphasis on rule-following behavior (Brownmiller, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This socialization is in line with evidence that women tend toward forms of participation that are less visible and formal (Lister, 2003; Lovenduski, 1998).

Women have lower levels of political interest than men (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997). However, the bulk of these differences are thought to be attributed to differences in how the genders are respectively socialized (Burns, 2007; Lovenduski, 2005). This is bolstered by evidence that gender-based differences in attitudes toward politics exist not only in college-aged populations (Bernstein, 2005), but even in young adolescents (Schwartz et al. 1987; Hooghe & Stolle, 2004; Fridkin, & Kenney, 2007). This indicates either an intrinsic difference in motivations and interest, or distinct gender-base differences in early life socialization.

Combining these, the noted later-in-life differences that are often framed as intrinsic differences between the sexes could simply be because of early-in-life socialization.

Beyond type of participation, women are also shown to participate based on intrinsic motivations. In the case of adolescents, girls more likely to take action politically out of a desire to help, while boys do so to act on their values (Malin, Tirri & Liauw, 2015). When it comes to giving, the body of research around philanthropic giving indicates that the genders differ on the intrinsic motivations for giving: "men tend to give to enhance their own standing or maintain the status quo…while women give to promote social change or help others less fortunate" (Hall, 2004). This finding could be seen to be in line with research on the motivations of political donors, in which a portion are said to donate to further their material gains, as the vast majority of political donors are male (Francia et al., 2003). Yet, while men dominate political giving, they are "far less likely to give to charity"; this is correlated with a battery of personal characteristics, in which women scored higher on personality traits like empathetic concern and helping behaviors, which motivate charitable giving (Mesch, Brown, Moore & Hayat, 2011, p. 349).

Piper and Schnepf (2008) found that women are more likely to give to charities, but also that they were more likely to contribute higher amounts of money, even when holding constant the marital status of women and other background factors. This indicates that the gender gap in political giving cannot entirely be entirely chalked up to differences in giving. Rather, it seems that the gap is present only when it comes to *political* giving. This seems to refute the idea that differences in giving by gender and race are due to the fact that different groups process information differently (Gray, 1992). Instead, the philanthropic literature, when taken together with the gender-based giving literature within political science, indicates that the female gap in

political money is not due to resources, but due to some type of intrinsic motivation to participate in the political sphere through giving money to political causes and candidates.

Markers of Resource Availability

In understanding what makes people more or less likely to participate, the availability of resources necessary for participation precludes any discussion of motivations or whether the person has been recruited to participation. Marital status influences various forms of political engagement, not only in terms of spillover effects of mobilizing efforts, but in terms of access to resources. Initial research found that married individuals were more likely to turnout to vote in elections, but single individuals are more inclined to participate in forms of engagement beyond voting (Kingston & Finkel, 1986). More recent findings indicate that the overall effects of marriage in encouraging participation are mediated by the level of one's partner previous to getting married, and that the mediation effects are greatest for actions, such as financial giving, that draw on collective resources (Stoker & Jennings, 1995).

Marital status, as a marker of resources, though, could be even more important than gender in predicting giving (Kaplan & Hayes, 1993). In a philanthropic experiment that examined the effects of race, gender, and marital status on giving levels, researchers found that both single and married women were more likely to give to charities than both single and married men (Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Denton, 2006). Married couples are also more likely to donate more money, and to do so more frequently than single individuals (Mesch et al., 2006; Rooney, Mesch, Chin, & Steinberg, 2005). The comparative advantage is thought to be the result of increases connection with social networks (in a resource-based model, this represents a greater opportunity of being recruited to participate pro-socially). Ultimately, it seems that the political

science and philanthropic literatures are at odds, as marital status is a proven marker of divergent giving patterns in nonprofit giving, but holds less influence overall, at least for voting habits.

In discussing marital status, an important distinction is in how marital status is accounted for. The majority of surveys provide for a variety of responses beyond married and single to the question of marital status. In the case of the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey, response options include: married, separated, divorced, widowed, single, domestic partnership, and skipped (Ansolabehere & Schaffner 2016). Scholars have addressed these varied response options through a variety of methodological approaches. Weisberg (1987) utilizes a two-category system for characterizing marital status – compressing the ordinal variables to fall into one of two categories: married and non-married and finds that the marriage gap in presidential turnout disappears when controlling for race and income. Kingston and Finkel (1987), alternatively characterize individuals through a three-level categorical variable in which people are either married, single, or previously married. They find that after controlling for demographic variables, there are significant differences between married and never married voters in predicting vote choice. Gerson (1987) uses a four-category system for categorizing marital status that also takes into account the difference between traditional (where the wife does not work) versus nontraditional (where the wife works) married individuals. Finally, Plutzer and McBurnett (1991) use a five-category system that looks at those who are single, married, widowed, divorced, and traditionality of the marriage. The CCES data I use to test these hypotheses in Chapter 3, offers seven possible responses to the question of marital status. To address the broad range of respondent options, I conceptualize marriage two different ways. First, I test the specific effects of marriage – a response of "married" in the categorical variable – by creating a dummy indicator for variable. All other responses are lumped together. This new marker for being

married is used to test Hypothesis 2, which predicts that married women are more likely than unmarried women to have donated politically in the last year. I also create dummy variables for those who are divorced and widowed. I do this in order to better isolate the effects of increased resources, which I hypothesize are represented by being married, compared to marital states in which the respondents have potentially different levels of resources. I include all three binary variables (married, divorced, widowed) in my analysis of gender and political giving.

Societal Influences on Female Participation

The presence of young children in a household has previously been shown to also have a statistically significant negative impact on female civic participation rates. This is largely due to the fact that because of societal constructs, women tend to be more responsible for housework, childcare and household-related tasks than men (Gauthier & Furstenberg, 2002), leaving them with less time for out-of-home pursuits like politics. Quaranta and Dotti Sani (2018) find evidence that life course stages, such as parenthood, have a much stronger negative effect on women's civic engagement rates than on men's, across twenty-seven European countries. However, they find the effects are more strongly related to levels of political knowledge and party identification, factors that are correlated with higher levels of political participation, than outright civic activities like voting or attending protests. Other research finds, in discussing political giving specifically, that women experience modifications in available resources when experiencing different stages of life. Women are slightly less likely to donate when they have children younger than school age in the household, though this ultimately bounces back to rates comparable to single women's donations rates once the children reach school age (Quaranta, 2016). To account for this, I draw on survey questions that inquire about whether the household contains young children, and include the variable as a control to determine whether the presence

of young children in the home affects availability of one or multiple of the resources necessary to give politically.

While women vote at proportionately higher numbers than men in elections, political giving is still an overwhelmingly male-dominated practice (Gender differences in voter turnout, 2017) – though I do test this within my first hypothesis. This trend, over time, has persisted, even at a time when thirty-eight percent of US married women out-earn their husbands – roughly four times the rate in 1987 (Fry & Cohn, 2010). This seems to indicate the strength of the argument that giving differences in the political realm are not the result of available resources, but instead that the gap is the result of differences in intrinsic motivation. The motivation to give to political causes seem to be distinct from the "empathetic concern and helping behaviors" which motivate philanthropic giving (Mesch et al., 2011, p. 349). However, from the civic engagement literature, pure ability (i.e. the presence of expendable income) dictates who is likely to donate, at least according to the resource-availability models of participation (Brady et al., 1995). How do I remedy these seemingly incongruent previous findings and shifts in resource accessibility?

In the case of giving money – the measure of participation focused on within this chapter, two resources are inherently necessary. First, in order to give a donation to a political organization, the would-be donor must be in possession of the necessary monetary funds to donate. As those who are rich are more likely to possess money, this is one resource which is strongly linked to socioeconomic status: those with higher levels of income and higher educational attainment are more likely to have money, fulfilling the first necessary condition for being able to give money. The second condition for giving is that an individual must have an interest and/or knowledge of politics, which ultimately leads to a desire to give. In order to make the financially and figuratively costly decision to donate money, an individual is assumed to

have enough of a functional knowledge of the political sphere to identify the organizations and/or candidates to which they will donate, and to which they are ideologically aligned and subsequently motived to give.

I propose the following: in order to understand whether topline gender-based differences in political giving behavior are the result of discrepancies in resource availability or interest, I look at two models that both operationalize socioeconomic status and resource markers. My basic assumption is that the gender marker drives differences in political giving, and that a model that includes gender, along with these socioeconomic markers, will have stronger explanatory power. I run three logit regressions that take into account variables that would otherwise bias the results to directly test whether this is indeed the case. In order to do this, I include the following variables in my model: educational attainment, family income, employment status and marital status (conceptualized as dummy variables for divorced, widowed, and married), presence of strong partisanship, and high political interest. Educational attainment, family income, and employment status are directly related to the availability of financial resources. Individuals who spend more time in school have higher correlated incomes, while family income and affirmative employment status likewise indicate (directly, and indirectly) the presence of financial resources. The presence of children in a household is thought to indicate a limited amount of discretionary time that parents might otherwise have devoted to civic engagement activities; the majority of the responsibilities for childcare have traditionally fallen onto women, though this is more largely the effects of socialization. This trend might also be changing as the average educational attainment for women increases. Marital status seems to have some type of influence on participation, though the directional findings are somewhat muddied. To suss out these effects, I split marital categories into three individual variables for married, divorced, and widowed to see

whether positive marital status indicates any type of additional financial resources, and consequently increased likelihood of donating politically.

I also include two markers of political interest: a measure condensing strong partisans (those that rank themselves as strong or moderately strong Republicans or Democrats, or 1, 2, 6, or 7 on a seven-point ideological scale) and those who express a strong interest in public affairs. Both of these factors lead to increased rates of engagement: those who are interested are more likely to engage in political activities, such as donating, and people who rank as strong partisans are more likely to participate in order to help their party win or progress.

Given that money is a finite resource, one logically can assume that an individual will make a political donation only if they have an interest in politics, and simultaneously, a level of political knowledge which yields an awareness of the organization and/or candidate to which they ultimately donate. Political knowledge is strongly tied to political engagement (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Within knowledge, there are well-documented gaps between males and females. Even when attempting to explain knowledge gaps as a function of ability, motivation, and opportunity, the gender gap in knowledge remains (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Though this has been slightly mitigated by women's increasing rates of educational attainment (Hansen, 1997), there is no single explanation for why the participatory gender gap stubbornly lingers. Taken altogether, the literature points to the fact that demographic and attitudinal characteristics influence participation different among men and women, across types of participation (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010). To test this theory, I propose in Hypothesis 3 that even when holding constant all resource and political interest markers, females are less likely to donate to political causes than men. To test this hypothesis, I lay out three models that attempt to predict political giving. Model 1, which lays out a resource-based model of participation but without a predictor

of gender, Model 2, which includes all the variables of Model 1, plus the binary variable denoting male, and finally Model 3, which includes all the same resource and interest variables as Model 3, but with the added binary female variable. A point of notice here is that while the measure within the CCES data asks for the gender of participants, it offers only two options – male and female; though these are measures of sex, I use them as stand-ins for gender. However, I acknowledge that the lack of nuance in doing so is largely due to a lack of data with more options for gender.

Socialized Receptiveness to Duty-Based Appeals

My fourth hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) has to do with female socialization norms and how they might impact female participatory levels. Voting is often discussed by the media and within popular culture as a moral duty (Maskivker, 2016), but alternative forms of civic participation do not enjoy the same type of duty-based framing. Civic duty treatments have also been effective at mobilizing individuals to voting. The use of duty framing, broadly conceptualized as the civic gratification received from participating, a part of which is civic duty, are some of the most widespread motivations for undertaking the costly act of voting (Verba et al., 1995). Blais (2000, p. 112) goes as far as to argue that roughly half of voters choose to vote because of feelings of duty. Dalton (2008b) argues that use of civic duty framing is effective at mobilizing duty-based forms of civic engagement, such as voting, rather than newer, emerging forms of engaged citizenship. Feelings of duty and responsibility are thought to stem from a respect for authority and group loyalty (Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, & Ditto, 2011). The stronger the loyalty to a specific group someone exhibits, or the regard for authority or authority structures, the more likely they are to participate in an activity framed as a duty. In terms of voting, individuals who view voting as a civic duty believe in the principles of democracy and ultimately believe that

they should do their part to support the system by vote (Blais & Galais, 2016). To this end, the proportion of women who vote has exceeded the proportion of male adults who vote in every election since 1980 (Gender differences in voter turnout, 2017), indicating that women might be more susceptible to duty-based calls to action.

Women exhibit different concerns about moral values, such as harm, fairness and purity, within the political realm, even when controlling for political ideology (Graham et al., 2011). The prioritization of fairness could hint at the existence gender-based differences in attitudes toward duty: the more an individual believes in fairness and in "doing their own part," the more likely they might be to participate in activities in which there is a strong moral imperative, or at least activities which are framed as duty-based. However, research has found no significant gender-based differences in obedience to authority (Blass, 1999), indicating that duty based appeals on the basis of an authoritarian or authority-laden appeal should not exhibit any significant gender-based variance in participation rates. Are there gender-based differences in attitudes toward political giving when it is framed as a civic duty, rather than as just another type of civic activity? I argue that this might be the case. My fourth hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) tests whether there is a relationship between gender and attitudes toward giving when it is framed as a civic duty. I predict that women are more likely than men to express support for the act of political giving when it is framed as a civic duty.

Individuals choose to engage civically for a variety of reasons, and within various forms of participation, there are gender-related differences in participation rates. In this section, I lay out the rationale for four distinct hypotheses that propose relationship between various relationship between gender and aspects of political giving in Chapter 3. First, in Hypothesis 1, I examine whether there even is a gender gap in political giving, as reported in a survey of United

States citizens. Next, I look at whether marital status and gender affect giving rates; I propose in Hypothesis 2, that marriage should signal the increase of available resources (i.e. money) necessary for giving, and be related to increased rates of giving, particularly for women. My third hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) compares three models for explaining political giving, based on individual level variables, from resource-based models (Model 1) which look at marital status, employment status, family income, educational attainment, presence of children in the household, strength of partisanship and high political interest. Model 2 includes all the same resource and interest markers, but also includes a marker for male (as a binary variable). The third model (Model 3) is identical to Model 2, but instead of the male variable, I include a female variable (also binary) that isolates the effects of femaleness on giving, when holding constant all resource and interest markers. I predict that when all other resource and interest-based variables are controlled for, that females will ultimately be less likely to donate politically than men. Hypothesis 4, examines whether there are gendered differences in support for giving when it is framed as a civic duty; I propose that based on perceptions of duty that women should be more supportive than men of giving when it is framed as a civic duty. Next, I discuss the basis for my second methodological chapter (Chapter 4), which discusses whether the act of explicitly asking for a behavior – in this case, asking people to donate – prompts increased rates of donating. I also examine whether adding barriers to the act of giving decreases the rate of gift giving.

Does Asking Matter?

One of the core mechanisms we have for mobilizing people toward a specific action is simply to ask them to complete the task. This essentially serves as the rationale behind the third explanatory condition for why people participate in politics, in the resource model for political participation: people participate because they have been asked to do so (Brady et al., 1994). But

how much does asking actually do to mobilize people toward an action? Is it the fact that individuals are reminded of the action through the reminder re-triggering an inclination to participate, or is it through the explicit request for action that individuals are prompted to task completion through feelings of obligation or guilt? This question has been broadly conceptualized in recent years by asking whether the outreach efforts of campaigns and political organizations actually impacts voter turnout, encouraging civic engagement (Gerber & Green, 1999). While its study has primarily been limited to encouraging traditional forms of participation, such as voter registration and voter turnout, there is no real rationale for not expanding this study to include new and growing forms of civic participation.

The Rise of Field Experiments

The study of political mobilization and outreach efforts has been approached through experimental projects, as well as through observational effects. The earliest work began in the 1920s with Harold Gosnell's (1977) randomized field experiments on voter registration and turnout reminders in New York, and was built upon by Eldersveld (1956), who examined the effectiveness of personalized versus impersonal communication in Ann Arbor in 1953 and 1954. Gosnell found that contact, through nonpartisan mail reminders, increased turnout in both presidential and municipal elections, indicating that the act of reminding and asking someone to register and vote *does* affect behavior. However, for most of the second half of the 20th century, field experiments were ignored in favor of observational research. The advent of modern field experimentation came in 1999 with a brief research note that examined whether nonpartisan get-out-the-vote messages delivered in-person by canvassers could affect voter turnout (Gerber & Green, 1999). Arguably, this piece marks the advent of modern field experimentation in civic participation research. In the time since that initial piece, field experiments have been used to

measure the effects of various campaign outreach methods, including canvassing (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009; Gerber & Green, 1999; Gerber & Green, 2000; Green, Gerber & Nickerson, 2003;), phone calls (Green & Gerber, 2008; Nickerson, 2006; Nickerson, 2007), robocalls (Green & Gerber, 2008; Ramirez, 2005), direct mail pieces (Gerber, Green, & Green, 2003; Doherty & Adler, 2014), and even yard signs (Kam & Zechmeister, 2013). The majority of these pieces focus on measuring impact of outreach on voter registration or turnout – a traditional measure of civic engagement. However, in the recent past, scholars have moved to characterizing civic participation with broader strokes, including actions that previously had been overlooked.

Field Experiment Successes: An Overview of Measured Effectiveness

While results indicate that face-to-face contact is far superior in successfully motivating behavior, even non-personal outreach has noted (though occasionally non-significant) impact on turnout (Green & Gerber, 2008). These findings also extend beyond just voter mobilization attempts to explicitly non-political, collective action behaviors, such as recycling and blood donations (Christensen, Fierst, Jodocy, & Lorenz, 1998; Wang & Katzev, 1990). General get-out-the-vote messages from nonpartisan sources are found to vary in their motivational effectiveness based on their method of delivery

Overwhelmingly, the more personal an appeal, the more effective it is. Face-to-face mobilization is indisputably the gold standard of contact, with substantially significant results; direct mail treatments have measured but small effects on turnout, while paid telemarketing-style calls have virtually no effect (Gerber & Green, 2001; Gerber & Green, 2008). Similarly, an experiment aimed at boosting turnout through use of a nonprofit's email lists – a relatively impersonal undertaking – yielded no significant effects (Nickerson, 2007). However, with the rise of the internet, the digital realm has increasingly become a mainstay in political

communication. Particularly for smaller political organizations, political action committees, and non-federal political candidates, who might not have the resources to develop direct mail programs, online communication allows them to build supporter bases and communicate with their target populations for a fraction of the cost of traditional communication. These online interactions – in the form of short, less person appeals, have replaced more intensive, face-to-face communication of the past (Skocpol, 2003).

The entire field experimentation literature on turnout is premised on the idea that asking someone to complete an action, in fact, does impact behavior, with measurable results. This is line with the Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) rationale, in which people are prompted to utilizing available resources after they are asked to do so. Based on this premise, I propose that political giving, an alternative form of civic participation, can also be prompted simply by the act of asking, even when the ask is delivered through even email – a decidedly impersonal form of communication. Han (2016) finds through a series of three experiments, all fielded with a partner organization to an established supporter base, that even organization emails can effectively be used to stimulate high-cost supporter actions on behalf of the organization's interests. Though none of these outcome actions are explicitly fundraising related, they ask for high-cost behaviors from the supporter base -- signing petition, recruiting others to the organization, and attending offline meetings – which are arguably as costly as the act of making a donation. Similarly, studies in European election campaigns have found that within representative survey samples, individuals who received invitations to vote for a party or candidate by email or social media were significantly more likely to engage in political activities than those who did not receive an online invitation (Vaccari, 2017). This is counter to findings that email invitations to vote, sent from civic organizations, had negligible effects on registration rates and ultimate voter turnout

(Green & Gerber, 2004; Nickerson, 2006b). These more recent findings indicate that despite the impersonal nature of email communication, in comparison to more direct, interpersonal messages delivered by live individuals on the phone or in person, digital delivery of messaging has the potential to generate significant effects in civic participation, particularly as it has the potential to reach a broader audience than traditional, offline outreach methods (Krueger, 2006).

Previous research on GOTV communication uses a mix of treatments, some which remind people of the upcoming election, and some which explicitly prompt the recipients toward a specific action. Is it the act of receiving communication prompt behavior, or the act of acting for specific behavior? Does mere contact serve as enough of a catalyst to prompt giving, or is it the explicit ask for a donation that really motivates giving? To answer this question, I utilize a two-by-two randomized field experiment design in which I test whether a touch email – which serves as a reminder of the organization's accomplishments – or a treatment that contains an explicit ask for donations ("Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund") performs best. By pitting a touch, or nudge email directly against an ask email, I am testing whether it is the mere reminder of an organization that prompts giving among supporters, or whether people respond to explicit asks, in which a particular behavior is being prompted. My design also tests whether added barriers to an action deter giving, or whether once someone has decided to partake in an action, they follow through even when it is difficult to do so.

Does Added Costliness of an Action Deter Giving?

Colloquial knowledge states that when prompting someone to undertake a costly action, such as voting or donating money, people are more likely to complete the action when it is easy to do so. In this experiment, I test whether or not this is actually the case. Of the four email treatments designed, two treatments contain links to the organization homepage. Upon reaching

the homepage, would-be donors can easily access the donation page by clicking on a red, highlighted "DONATE" button in the top right corner of the webpage. The other two emails link directly to the donation webpage, where donations can immediately be made. The idea of costly behavior draws on an economic theory of civic engagement behaviors.

Particularly in voter registration, reforms to the voter registration process to make it less costly have been undertaken with the expectation that more convenience will result in higher registration and subsequent turnout (e.g. Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, & Toffey, 2008). This expectation is based on a classic rational choice framework that citizens will participate only when the costs of voting are lower than benefits from voting (Downs, 1957; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). To apply this theory to political giving, mitigating barriers to donating should result in higher rates of donations. Or rather, donors should in higher numbers when it is easy to give. Specifically, those treatments which include direct links to the donation page should bring in more donations than those treatments which navigate to the homepage, forcing would-be donors to navigate an extra step in their donation-making process.

My hypotheses, tested in Chapter 4, ultimately lay out an expected order of how I expect each treatment to perform. First, Hypothesis 1 states that each treatment will elicit a different level of giving. This is largely due to the fact that each treatment in this two by two design offers either an explicit ask for money and/or an added barrier to giving, which should ultimately deter or encourage different rates of giving. Next, Hypothesis 2 predicts that treatments that explicitly ask for donations should elicit more donations than treatments that do not explicitly ask for donations. In the vein of "ask and you shall receive," this is the idea, supported by the field experiment literature that people will complete a task when they are asked to do so. Next, I propose (Hypothesis 3) that the email that explicitly asks for donations then links to the donation

page will garner more donations that the ask treatment that then links to the homepage. Hypothesis 4 states: "the email that does not explicitly ask for a donation and links to the homepage page (Treatment A) will elicit a lower number of donations than an email that does not explicitly ask but links to a donate page (Treatment B)." The act of having to navigate from the homepage to a donation page represents an extra step (or cost) in the giving process that should act as a deterrent for ultimate task completion. Next, I turn to a discussion of the theoretical basis for the hypotheses presented and tested in my final methodological chapter, Chapter 5, which explores the effectiveness of various strategic appeals in encouraging political giving.

Appeals for Encouraging Giving

Pundits and political candidates regularly acknowledge the role of emotions in shaping public opinion and generating or limiting support for individuals and policies. One has only to type in the term fear monger into any search engine to arrive at a list of articles that apply the term to any variety of politicians. Though the 2016 election cycle was perhaps the most immediate and obvious example of the strategic use of emotional appeals by campaigns, this is not a tactic that is new to American politics. While the media's ebbing focus on the climate of election cycles is subjective, irregular, and largely anecdotal, the vignettes used to personify the effects of specific emotions on public sentiment and individual-level changes are nonetheless useful. They point, implicitly, to the power of strategic advertising appeals within the political climate in triggering particular emotions, and implicate framing in the political decision-making process.

Broader trends in political participation are generally explained by socioeconomic status or resource-based models that predict participation based on variables that ultimately result in

those with greater resources participating civically at higher rates than those with lesser resources. However, individual-level participation varies between elections at a much higher rate than is predicted by resource-based models. Rosenstone and Hansen's (1993) Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) includes engagement as a long-term and stable predisposition, and thus one that is unlikely to be changed by a specific appeal, or by a campaign context. As it is modeled, participation is the operationalized a combination of access to information, party identification, and political interest (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p. 346). This participation, which is characterized as stable and slow to change, is not temporary, nor is it short-term. Thus, it fails to fully explain the individual level, short-term variations in affect, which ultimately lead to different outcome variables and participatory levels beyond those predicted by more stable predispositions. Emotional states, not to be confused with predispositions, are not stable; they are short-term, affective responses to environmental stimuli (McCullough, Kimeldord, & Cohen, 2008).

Contemplation about the role of emotions in the decision-making process has been the topic of centuries worth of writings. In this work, affect has been painted as the enemy of reason, or at least an inhibiter to rational thought. However, more recent work within political psychology has focused specifically on the role of affect and framing in politically-related decision making. Damasio and Sutherland (1994) find that emotions hold the power to improve decision making by serving as positive or negative signals of the implications of specific behaviors. Some of the first of the most research on the impact – the theory of Affective Intelligence – argues that emotions drive anxiety, which heightens attention, and facilitates learning. This model also proposes that positive and negative emotional states trigger unique coping strategies, respectively as a result to stimuli and environments (Marcus et al., 2000).

Further research finds that specific emotions can trigger information seeking, and ultimately how that information is processed (Lodge & Taber, 2005; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, & Davis, 2009; Albertson & Gardarian, 2015). As all political objects are, to some extent, emotionally-linked (Lodge & Taber, 2005), the very act of engaging with a political object triggers an affective response.

Particular emotions, then, instead of being seen as a barrier to rationality, has come to be viewed as a precursor, or perhaps a simultaneous processing mechanism, to cognition, partially or entirely driving decision-making, political or otherwise (Lodge & Taber, 2005; Huddy et al., 2007). In that sense, it affects virtually all aspects of political cognition, including the motivation to participate civically (Valentino et al., 2009) particularly valuations of policy (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015). In disentangling the effects that positive and negative emotions trigger, researchers find that specific forms of both positive and negative emotions are linked to increase activity. In particular, Brader (2005) finds that mere exposure to political ads has the power to change how citizen choose to engage civically, simply to showing images and using music to evoke particular emotions, confirming past beliefs that short-term emotions play a distinct role in decision-making, separate from simultaneous existing long-term, stable predispositions. Enthusiasm, in this experiment, was found to motivate participation and activate existing loyalties, while fear stimulated vigilance, and increased reliance on contemporary evaluations of the stimuli (Brader, 2005; Brader, 2006). While anger, enthusiasm and anxiety all lead people to claim heightened attention to campaigns (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008), anger actually depresses information seeking, but increases internal efficacy (Valentino et al., 2008). Anger also increases the likelihood of participation in campaigns, while enthusiasm is positively, but insignificantly, related to participation (Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, &

Hutchings, 2011). Ultimately, positive feelings such as pride and hope – both of which are triggered when things are going well, when there are no immediate risks present—are only mildly mobilizing. Hope, in particular, is related to thinking about the future and about the potential, but also contains tinges of uncertainty. The lack of certainty around the future can ultimately result in the hope being tied to feelings of fear, making it less of a clear-cut emotion, but one that also acts as a catalyst for behavior (Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989).

Just as emotions have been harnessed by practitioners to further their political ends (Brader, 2006; Ridout & Searles, 2011), researchers have begun exploring the effects of specific affective inductions – and strategic appeals – on political participation. Field experimentalists have begun to utilize emotions within an experimental context in an attempt to understand the influence of individual emotions on various forms of political participation. Going forward, I focus specifically on strategic appeals that utilize expressions of gratitude, urgency, and finally, anxiety induction, all of which serve as the basis for the treatments. I chose these three treatments for various reasons: gratitude has outperformed a generic control mailing in previous tests around voter registration and turnout. However, it is a well-used tactic of practitioners for direct mail and email fundraising. Why is there a disparity in what we know about gratitude, and why practitioners believe they know about effective deployment of this strategic appeal for fundraising? The urgency appeal was chosen for much of the same reason. The vast majority of research on urgency deals with cognition in situations in which the subjects are presented with choice. However, some note of urgency is deployed in almost every fundraising appeals. Does urgency work? Based on its frequency of use, one would expect it to be particularly effective. Finally, use of anxiety induction is known to encourage information seeking but not high-cost engagement behaviors. However, researchers do not have a firm definition for what costliness is

in terms of online activity. Can anxiety be used to incite giving when the barriers to task completion are all contained within an online sphere, without added offline activity required? Ultimately, I compare these three distinct appeals head-to-head to determine which is the most effective at garnering donations to a political organization, as well as in comparison to a baseline, generic appeal for donations that does not use a strategic appeal (this serves as a control).

Gratitude

Gratitude is defined as a "positive emotion that flows from the perception that one has benefited form the costly, intentional or voluntary act of another person" (McCullough et al., 2008, p. 281). It is said to have three distinct, psychological features that result in its motivating prosocial behavior. First, expressions of gratitude serve as a benefit detector, alerting to a received benefit from another person. Second, gratitude reinforces prosocial behaviors; receiving an expression of gratitude increases the likelihood that the recipient will continue perpetuating the behavior for which they are being thanked (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001). In a sense, this is because the act of thanking someone for an action marks the recipient of the benefiting action as a "safe target for future investments" (McCullough et al., 2008, p. 282). Finally, receiving gratitude motivates people to behave pro-socially after receiving its benefits (McCullough et al., 2001). This is thought to be through a process by which gratitude influences the emotional states surrounding generosity, by which it is then reinforced.

Past scholarship in field experiments has highlighted the role of strategic appeals in encouraging particular political behaviors (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Panagopoulos, 2010), and there is distinct evidence that evoking positive emotions through tailored appeals can effectively motive political behaviors (Panagopoulos, 2010; Williams & DeSteno, 2008; Brader,

2005). Virtually all that we know about gratitude, though, has come out of research originating in the last seventeen years. For largely all of the 20th century, gratitude was overlooked by psychological research, though researchers have noted gratitude's role in forming and growing interpersonal relationship and networks (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Harpham, 2004). Gratitude, as an emotion, is distinctly different from other positive emotions, such as happiness or feelings of indebtedness (McCullough et al., 2008). In the first place, gratitude is premised on the perception that one has received a benefit from another person (McCullough et al., 2001). Additionally, gratitude stimulates prosocial behavior, even when the action of doing so is explicitly costly (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). It is also distinct from obligation or feelings on indebtedness, both of which have negative connotations, and which are linked with discomfort; alternatively, gratitude is associated with feelings of contentment (McCullough et al., 2001).

Expressions of gratitude ultimately motivate the thankee to give more effort and work harder on behalf of others (McCullough et al., 2008), to reinforce kidney donation (Bernstein & Simmons, 1974), to elicit more visits from case managers (Clark, Northrop, & Barkshire, 1988) and to increase volunteerism (Bennett, Ross, & Sunderland, 1996). Panagopoulos (2011) specifically looks at the role of expressing gratitude for past political behavior as a catalyst for encouraging future behavior. In three randomized experiments across distinct electoral contexts, Panagopolous (2011) finds that the act of thanking voters for past voting behavior elicits significant increases in voter turnout in ensuing elections. These results are robust across various minority subpopulations, as well as across elections of various salience levels; they provide unequivocal support for the thesis that expressions of gratitude can effectively be used to elicit pro-social behaviors. While Panagopoulos uses gratitude to elicit greater voter turnout in elections, I propose that gratitude should work equally well when applied in an attempt to

influence other forms of pro-social, politically-related behaviors – specifically, giving donations to political organizations. This approach also has significant consequence for practitioners; expressions of gratitude for past contributions are commonly utilized in fundraising appeals by political fundraisers. However, to date, there is no research on the measured the effect of an expression of gratitude within an appeal for monetary donations in a field experimental context. Gratitude treatments have had small but significant effects on voter turnout. Based on this, I propose in Hypothesis 1 that all treatments (including gratitude) will elicit a higher response rate than the control mailing.

Urgency

My second strategic appeal focuses on testing whether urgency The fundraising world is rife with examples of appeals that use urgency to motivate giving. Using urgency within appeals, in fact, is recommended by a variety of philanthropic resources as a "best practice" (Stein, 2013). Recommendations in how to drive urgency within appeals center around setting a close deadline, creating scarcity, and being specific in the ask. Ultimately, this is meant to focus the potential donor's attention and build pressure around a deadline. Urgency, which I use synonymously with temporal pressure, is applied to a variety of contexts: selling tickets to charity balls, proximity to an upcoming election, and time-sensitive needs that the asker is attempting to mitigate through solicited support. Temporal pressure in fundraising appeals, at least within the political fundraising sphere, is perhaps best highlighted by money bomb appeals.

Money bomb is a colloquial term for a grassroots fundraising effort over a brief, fixed time period. The concept was first pioneered by the Ron Paul campaign in 2007, but has been adopted and utilized by virtually every major candidate for federal office, as well as many political advocacy organizations (Friedman, 2008). A money bomb appeal identifies a giving

deadline, which is almost always tied to fundraising reporting deadlines with the FEC. The organization then sends anywhere between three to six or seven emails counting down the time to the fundraising deadline, generally with a countdown clock. The series of emails does three things: it ensures that the recipients are aware of the deadline, builds pressure related to an imminent deadline, and provides a means by which readers can mitigate the pressure: by donating through links within the email. Large amounts of anecdotal evidence indicate that money bombs are effective as a fundraising tactic – marked mostly by the performance of money bombs in fundraising significant amounts of money in a short period of time for candidates as dissimilar as Ron Paul, Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Paul Ryan. The implication within this, taken with the accepted best practice of urgency building indicates that temporal pressure must work, because otherwise, why would practitioners continue to utilize this tactic? Despite the seemingly overwhelming practitioner knowledge of urgency, there is no measured evidence that urgency appeals outperform any other tested strategic appeals for eliciting donations, and certainly no academic research that indicates this.

The act of decision making is implicitly stressful, as it involves conflict and the foreboding threat of negative consequences tied to the fear of making a wrong decision (George, 1974). When time pressure, defined in terms of the information that has to be processed a limited, fixed amount of time, is introduced, it exacerbates the baseline stress of decision-making (Zur & Breznitz, 1981). Additionally, time pressure forces the decision maker to disregard certain informational items that the individual would otherwise consider important, rushing cognition (Zur & Breznitz, 1981). Ultimately, when time pressure is introduced into risky decision-making situations, it causes the decision maker to weigh negative information more heavily (Wright, 1974; Wallsten, 1993) and attempt to avoid expected pain (Breznitz, 1974). It

also causes decision makers to switch to simpler strategies for making their decisions (Edland & Svenson, 1993; Smith, Mitchell & Beach, 1982). Ultimately, Ordonez and Benson (1997) find that the introduction of time constrain makes subjects less likely to engage in cognitive tasks and process the task and possible outcomes more quickly and less intensively than they otherwise would without the time restraint.

Urgency, in relation to a proximate deadline, has also commonly been used as a temporal context for encouraging traditional forms of political participation (i.e. voting). Campaigns are significant events within the political calendar, and occur at scheduled intervals throughout the year (Sears & Valentino, 1997). Based on temporal patterns of voter registration, we know that the bulk of voter registration when a voter registration deadline looms, rather than when the deadline is far away (Gimpel, Dyck, & Shaw, 2007; Street, Murray, Blitzer, & Patel, 2015). This indicates that proximity to a deadline spurs greater activity – and reminders about an upcoming deadline registration hold the ability to motivate registration (Mann, Stiles, & Sui, 2017).

Within the treatment, I repeatedly stress the importance of the upcoming election and emphasize the temporal proximity to the election. In order to create with an introductory, bolded sentence stating, "…you know that we're hours away from the Treasurer's race, and **this is an important one."** I then detail how an immediate gift will allow for the PAC to conduct last-minute GOTV to "make one last push." Finally, the second to last line of the email details how the donor's financial support will propel us (the PAC) through the next 3 days of the election cycle. By explicitly mentioning the need to donate before an electoral deadline, this treatment is meant to impose time pressure into the decision making equation of whether or not to donate, an already high-cost behavior. Alone, the reminder of a giving deadline should prompt greater

giving than an an ask that does not utilize a specific deadline. I anticipate, in Hypothesis 2, that based on the stress introduced to a decision making process, the negative affective state induced by the urgency treatment will outperform the other treatments, as well as the control.

Anxiety

My third treatment utilizes an emotional induction in an attempt to motivate increased political giving. Anxiety is viewed by early scholars as an example of human intelligence, or at least the shadow of it (Liddell, 1950). Experiencing anxiety is a signal to individuals that there is a threat present within there environment that directly affects them. Anxiety is linked to both greater levels of vigilance (Eysenck, 1992), ultimately paying more information to even news of potentially threatening policies. Beyond merely signally the presence of threat, though, it can also signal when there is a loss of control within a situation. Anxiety ultimately is what motivates a desire and need for protection in response to the threat, through the development and usage of coping mechanisms (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015).

Anxiety is thought to be the result of expected threats and having little control over situational events (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Ultimately, anxiety evokes pessimistic risk estimates and leads to risk adverse decision making (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Yang, Zhao, Wu, Tang, Gu & Luo, 2018). Depending on the context, this can lead to different reactions and behaviors. The participation in politics itself is considered a risky undertaking (Kam, 2012), and when incited by a situation denoting positive urgency, this could ultimately result in greater likelihood of participating (Cyders, Smith, Spillane, Fischer, Annus, & Peterson, 2007). Anxiety is related positively to increased amounts of particular, though arguably more low-cost, types of campaign participation (Valentino, Gregorowicz et al., 2009). However, it deters responses to macro

threats, such as war (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007); it also negatively affects engagement rates in response to U.S. government monitoring (Best & Krueger, 2011).

Politically, the introduction of anxiety shapes how citizens search for information, overall government trust, and policy attitudes. Albertson and Gardarian (2015) document how anxiety prompts information seeking, particularly information that is useful in helping the individual cognitively manage (and mitigate) the anxiety they are experiencing (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993; Albertson & Gardarian, 2015). This is particularly true with the knowledge is seen as a solution to the anxiety (Brader, 2006). Broad information seeking is undertaken in order to balance any anxiety that they must feel – and to adopt strategies to rid themselves of this unpleasant affective state. Anxiety is found to increase citizens' knowledge levels (through prompting information seeking), and increasing trust in those political actors who are seen as being potentially useful in addressing and limiting the anxiety-inducing item (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015). Both of these behaviors are a form of risk or threat mitigation.

Albertson and Gardarian (2015) induce policy-related anxiety in their experimental samples around a variety of topics. In the case of a public health threat, anxiety prompted greater trust in government officials (the CDC) who were capable of handling and communicating about the risk. In the case of immigration, the anxiety induction affected trust in three of the more visible actors in federal immigration policy – the political parties and the president, but not in the more on-the-ground actors (i.e. Border Patrol and Minutemen). Ultimately, when it comes down to anxiety about partisan issues, versus general, less-politicized topics, such as a public health epidemic, anxious citizens increase their trust in the political party that is seen as the more competent in dealing with the issue – the party with the greatest amount of issue ownership on the topic.

I argue that information seeking is a manifestation of a greater desire to mitigate anxiety, or to directly address the anxiety-inducing problem. Under some circumstances, individuals react to threat by acting impulsively to mitigate feelings of anxiety (Valentino et al., 2009). Though this is a far rarer for high-cost actions requiring time and money, an induction of anxiety and anger, combined, should result in both information seeking about the topic, as well as greater action toward mitigating the anxiety/anger-inducing topic (Valentino et al., 2011). In this experimental treatment, I attempt to induce policy-based anxieties related to the Louisiana state budget within the supporters of a right-leaning, Louisiana-based political action committee. While induction of anxiety is normally created through use of music (Brader, 2006), distinctive visuals (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015), I attempt to induce anxiety through an email. This is an arguably weaker method by which to induce an emotion as it depends on literacy, that a certain amount of attention and discernment be applied to the stimuli by a subject, and in strength of messaging. This induction is far subtler than those previously conducted in previous anxiety-based research, largely because of the method of delivery.

To bolster the attempts to elicit policy-related anxiety through a written appeal, I use a variety of tactics. I begin by reminding email recipients of the current state budget crisis through the sentence, "…you have heard all about your perpetual state budget problems." Over the last five years, the state has undergone a severe and sustaining budget crisis. One of the most salient symptoms of this crisis is the constant threat of the state legislature enacting new taxes in an attempt to balance the budget. The next sentence of the treatment emphasizes the lack of a comprehensive solution and the fact that the budget crisis has still not been solved, indicating that the problem is large and wide-reaching. The central anxiety-inducing sentence is in the middle of the email copy: "With one vote from them (the state legislature), **you'll lose more of**

your paycheck because the Democratic Governor and Republican state legislature couldn't manage their budget." The highlights the imminent threat of increased taxes – and explicitly states the threat, which is a decrease of take home income. This is meant to elicit anxiety about the individual's financial status by highlighting a threat to their money. This threat is one that is not only realistic, as the Legislature has repeatedly turned to taxes as an option for backfilling the state budget deficit, but also one that directly affects most Louisianans.

Finally, I offer an immediate solution to the anxiety: by donating to the PAC, I discuss how the PAC will hold the legislature accountable for its actions if it chooses to raise taxes. The last part of this email builds off the work on anxiety in increasing trust for perceived solvers of the anxiety by stating that "LVF will watch the Legislature – and will make sure they're held responsible." By framing the PAC as a vehicle for anxiety alleviation, I hope to efficiently prompt support – in the form of donations – to the organization. However, pure anxiety as an induction has only a weak link to prompting costly behavior. For this reason, Hypothesis 3 states that the anxiety treatment will outperform the gratitude treatment.

Use of Email and Outcome Measures

Ultimately, emails have been evaluated on their mobilization effectiveness by a variety of scholars, with mixed outcomes. However, emails are an integral part of the political communication ecosystem. As noted by Nickerson (2007), campaigns and other political entities view email as an effective tool and voters view emails as a means of increasing voter turnout. Though Nickerson's attempts to use email to boost election turnout ultimately result in null findings, the context for digital communication has changed drastically in eleven years. Now, the majority of direct communication between political campaigns and organizations and supporters has shifting online. During the 2004 mid-term election cycle alone, scholars estimate that more

than a billion political emails were sent, and that roughly 90% of those emails were sent to voters (Pinkus, 2005). Those numbers have only increased in the fourteen years since that estimate was released with increased internet access and the rise of smart phones. Given the wide-spread adoption of this form of communication by practitioners, it seems not only logical, but imperative, to attempt to measure how email communications can be used to influence civic behavior, particularly in encouraging online actions.

In designing all three field experiments, the original intended outcome measure, or independent variable, was the rate of donations made in response to treatment stimuli. This, however, was an overly ambitious action to seek to motivate. Giving is a costly behavior to motivate, not only because it requires a financial commitment, but also in that it requires supporters to complete several tasks – navigating to a donation page, entering in one's information correctly – in order to successfully donate. Due to low levels of response, which I attribute to the costliness of the outcome measurement, I also include counts of both the open rates per email treatment fielded (open rates) and the click rates (also called click-through rates) per email treatment mailed. These allow for me to compare the levels of delivery and whether the randomization of the list resulted in equally distributed – serving as a quasi randomization check.

Each of the three field experiments (two in Chapter 4, a third in Chapter 5) were fielded through electronic mail to a cultivate list of the respective political action committee's past supporters. Virtually all political organizations cultivate lists of supporter emails, called email lists, which they use to maintain contact with supporters, send information, and solicit donations. Both of the partner organizations – Louisiana Victory Fund and Black Conservatives Fund – have done this through a form of permission marketing. The theory of permission marketing is

that organizations should seek permission in advance from individuals before sending them communication. It is based on the idea that by building trust and lifting the levels of permission with the supporter, as opposed to soliciting them without consent, the supporter will be more loyal to the organization (Godin, 1999; Mehta & Sivadas, 1995). While this theory was pioneered in relation to customers in a marketing setting, it is also widely-used in political outreach. Practitioners widely acknowledge that opt-in lists, in which supporters have explicitly opted-in to receiving communicating from the organization, are superior to non-opted-in lists. This takes the form of increased open rates and response rates. Both of these measures are commonly used benchmarks used by practitioners to measure the health and effectiveness of email marketing and outreach programs (Lehmann, Lalmas, Yom-Tov, & Dupret, 2012).

Open rates are the measurement of how many emails from an email send are ultimately opened by recipients. They are calculated as a percentage of the emails that were opened, compared to the number of email addresses that were designated to receive the email. Open rates are generally reported as a means of guaranteeing delivery of the emails. Bulk email sends can have delivery issues as a result of being flagged by a spam filter, or even blocked by an email or internet service provider (Quist, 2013). I use open rates as a quasi-randomization check for my email randomization. Given the size of the email lists, there should be relatively equal distributions of addresses from various providers, which should ensure comparable levels of open rates between the groups. Email list counts are fluid and fluctuate frequently based on people switching emails and unsubscribing from an organization's email. Even the healthiest and most current email list exhibits drop-off between the designated send number and the ultimate delivery rate because of this, even without taking into account bounces or delivery issues that result from spam filters or being flagged by specific email providers. Because of this variability,

delivery and open rates are used as central markers of an email list's overall performance, and specific email appeals' success rates.

Click-through rates are another widely-used metric for effectiveness of email communication and digital advertisements (Lehmann et al., 2012). Click-throughs, much like open rates, are calculated percentages of the number of people who click on an embedded link within a specific email appeal. Mass marketing or solicitation email sent between 2010-2015 averaged click rates between 4.3%-6.0%; an important distinction, though, is that this measured lists that were regularly cultivated and mailed to, in which recipients had a strong link to the brands (Email marketing benchmarks, 2017). Many practitioners argue that lick through rates are the best measure of advertising response or success of a digital advertisement or email. This is because the act of clicking through an email is a direct, behavioral response to the stimuli within an email (Briggs & Hollis, 1997). Additionally, it is an easy to observe measurement, as virtually all mass email sending platforms track the open rates for sends.

CHAPTER 3
GENDER AND POLITICAL GIVING:
AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SURVEY DATA

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Generally stated, I explore whether the gender gap in political giving is the result of variance in resource availability or whether it can be attributed to different intrinsic motivations for giving. In this chapter, I also ask what role gender plays in relation to political giving. To answer these research questions, I offer the following hypotheses:

H1: More men than women have donated to a political candidate, campaign or organization in the last year.

H2: Married women are more likely than unmarried women to have donated politically in the last year.

H3: When holding constant all resource and interest markers, females are less likely to donate to political committees, organizations, and candidates than are men.

H4: Women are more likely than men to express support for the act of political giving when it is framed as a civic duty.

Data

To test the discussed research questions and hypotheses, I turn to the Common Content of the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). This dataset is a collaborative effort of 60 research teams and organizations, but is assembled and disseminated by Stephen Ansolabehere and Brian Schaffner, through the Harvard University Dataverse.

The Common Content portion of the dataset, from which I selected my data, has a sample size of 64,600 individual cases (Ansolabehere & Schaffner, 2016). Subjects were recruited and surveyed online in October (pre-election survey) and November (post-election survey) 2016 by

YouGov using a sample matching methodology that ultimately results in a representative sample, though it is selected from a non-random pool of respondents. To do so, researchers drew a random sample of individuals from the target population (all adults in the United States), then drew an individual that was as characteristically similar as possible from the YouGov pool of opted-in respondents, using a proximity matching method. This ultimately produced a matched sample. Given the large number of YouGov subjects, the matched sample is nearly representative of the target population – i.e. the general U.S. population – bit was also weighted to the sampling frame to account for any remaining imbalances among the matched sample.

I have chosen to use this survey-based dataset because it includes the type of individual-level information that my hypotheses focus on: demographic information. While there are several robust databases that include information on political giving trends, such as Adam Bonica's Database on Ideology, Money in Politic, and Elections (DIME), these datasets overshoot the questions that I am attempting to answer. I am interested in the average donor's trends and in creating composite for comparing the differences in the average male and female donors, excluding factors such as ideology or membership in an interest group.

Variables and Measurements

My research question and hypotheses focus on individuals who have donated to a political cause in the last year, answering positively to the question, "During the past year, did you donate money to a candidate, campaign or political organization?" This question represents the dependent variable that I am interested in predicting – whether or not someone has given to a political entity. Though the total CCES Common Content sample draws from 64,600 respondents, only 12,390 of the respondents answered affirmatively when asked this question.

My hypotheses focus on the presence of a gender gap in political giving. My independent variable within this model is gender, denoted in this survey as participants self-identifying as either male or female. Of these 12,390 individuals who have given politically, a little under half of the donors are female (5,744, or 46.4%). This allows me to determine first whether there is a gender gap in giving, tested with my first hypothesis, which tests whether there are gender-based differences in the rate of political giving to a candidate, campaign or organization in the last year.

Next, I move toward testing whether specific resource availability affects the gender gap in giving. In particular, I am interested in a variety of demographic and socioeconomic status markers within the data that I use as indications of availability of resources. I use the following variables as explanatory, as research that points to them as being responsible for gaps in participation: marital status, employment status, family income, educational attainment, and the presence of young children in the household.

First, I look at the marital status of those who have answered affirmatively to any type of giving. Marital status is offered, in this survey, as married, separated, divorced, widowed, single, domestic partnership, and skipped. I create two different variables representing marital status, as I am interested in whether it is the act of being married, or simply the benefits of being married or formerly married that carries with it the resource benefits that causes decreased participation. My first model uses a three-level categorical measurement for marriage. My three categories are: single (2,162 respondents; 17.4%), which includes those who explicitly state they are single; married (8,021 respondents; 64.7%), which includes those who are married and in domestic partnerships; and formerly married (2,151 respondents; 17.9%), which contains all the other respondents. The respondents who opted not to answer the question (56 respondents) were excluded from the calculation. Within the philanthropic study literature, marital status frequently

predicts giving rates, as married people have greater combined resources, allowing them greater flexibility on donating money.

Employment status should logically affect whether people have access to money – one of the obvious resources necessary to make political donations. Employment status is asked in the survey as "Which of the following best describes your current employment status?" Just as in the previous response, the survey provides a variety of responses, including: full-time, part-time, temporarily laid off, unemployed, retired, permanently disabled, homemaker, student, and other. Because I am most interested in the effects of non-employment, full-time employment, and part-time employment, I condense this scale into three distinct categories. Of the12,390 donors, 5,267 (42.5%) were fully employed, 1,127 (9.1%) were employed part-time. The third category, non-working contains 5,996 (48,4%) respondents who were either temporarily laid off, unemployed, retired, a homemaker, or permanently disabled.

Family income is an obvious and explicit marker of financial resources: those who have higher family incomes have higher levels of discretionary resources. Surprisingly, donors are not disproportionately distributed in the upper income brackets. 2,360 (19%) donors had an income of $39,999 or less, while 1,980 (16%) had a family income of $40,000 - $59,99. 15.5% (1,917 individuals) of donors recorded an income between $60,000 – $79,999; 2,366 donors (19.1%) had an income between $80,000 – $119,999, and 1,042 (8.4%) individuals in the sample had family incomes between $120,000 - $149,999. Finally, 1,252 (10.1%) donors had annual family incomes totaling $150,000 or greater, and 1,473 donors (11.9%) preferred not to report their income. The median income category for those who made political donations was between $70,000-$79,999.

Educational attainment is strongly correlated with income, likelihood of participating civically (Dalton, 2008b; Wattenberg, 2007), political knowledge (Galston, 2001) and overall resource availability. As such, I would expect those respondents with higher levels of educational attainment to be more likely to participate overall in politics, and certainly to have greater financial resources and discretionary income available to donate. Of the 12,390 survey participants who donated to a political entity, just 115 participants (roughly .09%) had no high school education. 1,507 individuals had attained a high school education (12.2%), while 29.7% had some college education (3,042 participants). 1,330 participants (10.7%) had attained a 2-year college degree, and 3,593 (29%) had a college degree, and 22.6% (2,803 participants) held a post-graduate degree. Those who had donated had a higher median education attainment rate (attainment of a 4-year degree) than those who had not donated to a political candidate or organization in the last year (a median education attainment of "some college").

Finally, literature points to the idea that women might be less likely to participate civically when there are young children in the household, as they undertake the bulk of the childcare responsibilities within a household (Gauthier & Furstenberg, 2002; Quaranta, 2016). Though this should be far more correlated to availability of the resource of time over money, I use it as a means of triangulating availability of time and knowledge. The more time spent on childcare, the less discretionary time women have to devote to hobbies or interests such as politics. To address this documented gap in participation along gender lines, I utilize the question that asks whether there are children under the age of 18 in the household. Of the 12,390 individuals, only 2,162 (17.4%) of respondents who gave money to a political entity within the last two years are the parent or guardian of a child under the age of 18.

The resource model of explanation for political participation is a three-legged stool of resources, desire/interest, and having been prompted (asked) to participate (Brady et al., 1995). In modeling the resource portion of political giving, I would be remiss for not attempting to capture some measure of interest, which ultimately drives the desire to participate politically. I include in the model a variable of expressed political interest as it relates to likelihood of participating (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al,. 1997). In the CCES, this question is framed as the frequently of whether respondents "follow what's going on in government and public affairs…" I create a binary variable reflecting those who follow what's going on politically either "most of the time" or "some of the time." 41,736 of the total 52,899 survey respondents report following politics more or some of the time. Of these, 11,970 respondents also reported giving politically.

Strength of partisanship is also linked to increased participation. The CCES asks survey respondents questions about both their ideology and their party identification. Party identification is asked in two separate questions: as a three-point scale of "Democrat", "Republican" or "Independent" and also as a seven-point scale that expresses strength of party identification. For the sake of identifying more extreme self-identified partisanship. I create a binary variable for those who identify as majority Republican or Democrat – the 1's, 2's, 6's, and 7's on the seven-point ideological scale. Total, 32,899 respondents identify as strong partisans, and 8,206 of those strong partisans have donated to a political candidate, campaign or organization in the last two years.

I also examine whether there are gender-based differences in perceptions of political giving as a civic duty. The CCES asks whether respondents agree or disagree with the following statement: "For anyone who can afford to contribute, it is a civic duty to contribute financially to campaigns." Responses are offered on a five-point Likert scale, in which respondents either

strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, either agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree with the sentiment. Twenty-two respondents skipped the question, while 47,376 respondents were not asked the question.

Results

To test my first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1), which proposes that more men than women give politically, I perform a basic Pearson's Chi-square test of independence to examine the relationships between gender and political giving, with no control variables included within the test. I find that the relationship to be strongly significant, X^2 (1, N = 52,897) = 695.67, p < .001. Men are more likely than women to donate politically, supporting my first hypothesis. This is in line with previous research which traces the sustained existence of a giving gender gap, in spite of the progress women have made professionally and societally in the last thirty years.

My second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) examines the effects of marital status on giving rate. Based on the various methodological approaches to characterizing marital status, I first look at whether condensing the categorization of marital status effects the correlated effect of this variable to political giving, based on two different approaches within past research. I create two separate variables, the first which characterizing marriage as a multi-level categorical variable predictor of giving (characterized as single, married, and formerly married), and the second which is a dichotomous variable (married versus not married). I test the relationship of both these variables to political giving through two, independent rounds of chi-square test of independence on just marital status. I find that regardless of whether marital status as a two or three-level variable, being married is positively associated with political giving, though this effect is stronger when marriage is characterized as a dichotomous "married" versus "non-married" status, X^2 (2, N = 52,897) = 175.52, p < .001, versus as a three-level variable that differentiates

between "non-married" and "formerly married" X^2 (3, N = 52,897) = 189.44, $p < .001$. Both models produce strongly significant results between marriage status and political giving, through the test of the three-level measure for martial status produces a slightly higher chi-square. Marital status is a significantly related to political giving, and measures of marital status as two versus three-level variables are produce essentially identical results.

Next, I move onto testing the full model through a logit regression to examine the main effects of gender and marital status on political giving. For this model, I use a binary measurement of marital status as either "married" or not married. The model reveals that each of the variables individually, when controlling for the other, is significant at the .001 level. Being female yields a .67 smaller likelihood of giving politically, holding constant marital status, while being married makes an individual .31 times more likely to donate than if they were single or identified some alternative type of marital status (i.e. divorced, widowed, or separated), holding constant gender. In terms of an interaction effect, married females were .81 less likely to donate to a political cause. This indicates that while the being female, holding constant marital status depresses the likelihood of giving, being both married and female makes people slightly more likely to donate (a positive difference in the odds ratio of .14), though still short of the net positive impact that being married, holding constant gender, has on giving likelihood. Overall, I find that this supports Hypothesis 2, which predicts that married women are more likely to donate to political causes than single women.

My third hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) examines the effect of gender on predictive models for giving that take into account a battery of variables that represent the accessibility of resources, modeling the effects, individually, of a base model (Model 1), a model that takes into account the effects of resources and being male (Model 2), and finally a third model (Model 3)

that looks at the effects of female when resources are controlled for. I predict in Hypothesis 3 that females are less likely to donate politically, even when holding constant resource and political interest markers. My hypothesis is premised on the need to account for variables shown by past research to be linked to variance in participation levels, and that the effects of gender will be different when it is conceptualized as dummy variables for both female and male. To test this hypothesis, I use a series of logit regression models, since the dependent variable of interest – political giving – is dichotomous. This statistical method helps examine the individual effects of resource-focused variables, and gender, conceptualized both as a binary indicator for 'male' and for 'female', individually.

My first model (Model 1) tests an explanation for political giving based on the idea that basic accessibility of resources and variables that we know drive engagement will ultimately predict and explain individuals' decision to donate to political organizations, and includes a binary marker for female as a means for including gender as an independent variable. My second model contains the same variables as Model 1 - marital status, employment status, education level attained, family income, whether or not there was a child below the age of 18 in the household, markers for whether someone is married, divorced, or widowed, strength of partisanship, and presence of high political interest. However, I run this analysis on only male survey participants. My third model contains all the same resource variables accounted for in Model 1 and 2, but instead of running it only on male respondents, as I did in Model 2, I run the model on only the female subjects. This allows me to isolate the effects of isolated maleness and femaleness specifically on likelihood of giving, holding other markers for accessibility of resources constant. Model 3, just as with Models 1 and 2, were run as logit regressions to isolate the effect of individual variables on likelihood of giving.

Table 3.1: Summary of Logistic Regression Models Predicting Giving

	Model 1 (All Respondents)		Model 2 (Male Respondents)		Model 3 (Female Respondents)	
Variable	**Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**Estimate**	**Standard Error**
(Intercept)	-4.04***	.064	-3.769***	.095	-4.571***	.084
Family Income	.002***	.001	.001**	.001	.002***	.001
Education Level	.279***	.008	.241***	.011	.317***	.011
Children in Household	-.547***	.029	-.394***	.041	-.679***	.041
Employment Status	-.171***	.023	-.186***	.033	-.178***	.033
Married	.228***	.027	.219***	.038	.243***	.039
Widowed	.334***	.052	. 338***	.092	.345***	.065
Divorced	.178***	.038	.078	.057	.252***	.051
Strength of Partisanship	.206***	.023	.195***	.031	.210***	.034
Political Interest	2.044***	.052	1.939***	.084	2.094***	.065
Female	-.335***	.022				

Model 1: chi^2: 4818.9*** df = 9, log likelihood = -25747.8, Pseudo R^2 = .106, N = 64,600
Model 2: chi^2: 1828.1*** df = 9, log likelihood = -12870.77, Pseudo R^2 = .078, N = 29,531
Model 3: chi^2: 3788.7*** df = 9, log likelihood = -12849.38, Pseudo R^2 = .112, N = 35,069
Subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Based on these results, I find that Hypothesis 3, which predicts when holding constant variables of resource and political interest, females are less likely than males to donate politically, is supported. This is based on Model 1, in which the intercept for the baseline model with gender accounted for is strongly negative (B = -.4.04, rse = .064, p <.001) indicating that overall, women are less likely than men to donate politically, even when accounting for resources and political interest. This finding is also supported by the constants when the resource and interest models are run with only male participants (B = -.3.769, rse = .095, p <.001) and female participants (B = -.4.571, rse = .084, p <.001).

The baseline model of resources (Model 1) finds that all predictive factors significantly affect likelihood of voting. Family income (B=.002, rse = .001, p<.001), increased education levels (B=.279, rse = .008, p<.001), being married (B=.227, rse = .027, p<.001), being widowed (B=.334, rse = .052, p<.001) or divorced (B=.178, rse = .038, p<.001), being a strong partisan of either party (B=.206, rse = .023, p<.001), and being interested in politics (B=2.044, rse = .052, p<.001) all make an individual more likely to donate. However, having children under the age of 18 in the household (B=-.547, rse = .029, p<.001), being female (B=-.334, rse = .021, p<.001), and employment status (B=.171, rse = .023, p<.001) all negatively affect likelihood of giving.

I find that in comparing Models 2 (only male respondents) and 3 (only female respondents), that for all variables, aside from employment status, that among female respondents, the same effects found in Model 2 are magnified. The largest magnified differences between the genders, outside of the baseline intercept, occur around the effects of having children in the household and being divorced. The presence of children in the house makes women (B= -.679, rse = .041, p<.001) far less likely to donate politically than men (B= -.394, rse = .041, p<.001), with a difference in effects of .285. Being divorced makes women (B= .252, rse

= .051, p<.001) significantly more likely to donate, while it has no significant effects for men (B=.078, rse = .057, p>.05). Counter to predictions, being married did not produce markedly different effects among and women. Instead. The effects were only slightly different, with marriage having a stronger effect in making women (B=.243, rse = .039, p<.001) only slightly more likely to give politically than it does within male respondents (B=.219, rse = .038, p<.001). This indicates that being married – and the additional resources that it might represent – does not drive most of the gendered differences in political giving, as much of the literature regarding division of household and childrearing indicates. However, these findings do indicate that the brunt of child raising falls to women, based on the relatively large differences in estimates between the genders based on the presence of children in a household. However, even holding these and all other resource and interest-related variables constant, there seems to be something inherent to being female that makes women less likely to donate politically.

My fourth hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) examines whether gender is related to support for the political giving when giving is framed as a civic duty. To test this hypothesis, I use a two-sample Mann-Whitney U test testing whether there are differences between the two independent populations. The test indicated that there was no statistical difference between men (mean= 2.598) and women's (mean= 2.579) support for political giving as a civic duty, U =3,727,000, p = .61. r = .002. The relationship is nowhere close to statistically significant, indicated by the high p value; thus, I fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between gender and support for political giving as a civic duty. Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

In this chapter, I examine four different elements about the relationship between gender and political giving. I find that three of my four hypotheses are supported. In line with past research, there is a significant gender gap within political giving (Hypothesis 1). Women are

significantly less likely than men to have donated to a political candidate, campaign or political organization. Marital status affects likelihood of having donated, and married women are more likely to have donated politically within the last year than single women, indicating that the availability of resources does affect likelihood of participation (supporting Hypothesis 2). One possible explanation for this is that when women get married, they have access to a wider variety of resources, giving them more discretionary financial resources with which they can donate. I also find that in modeling explanations for giving, resources play a large part of explaining the variance in whether people donate politically or not. However, in a head to head comparison of explanatory power, the model that includes demographic resources *and* gender (as, in line with Hypothesis 1, there is a statistically significant gender gap in political giving) has stronger explanatory power than the model that only takes into account demographic resources. This is consistent with my prediction in Hypothesis 3 even when holding constant all resource and interest variables, that females are still less likely than men to donate to political causes. I find that this is overwhelmingly the case. Furthermore, gender, conceptualized as either a female or male, has no effect on any other variables. Holding maleness and femaleness constant, there is no difference in effect for being married's effects on likelihood of giving; similarly, holding both conceptualizations of gender constant resulted in the same reduced likelihood of giving when there were children in the home for both men and women – undercutting many of the arguments that limited access to resources drives the gender gap. Finally, my fourth hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) examined whether gender affected levels of support for political giving when it is framed as a civic duty. I find no evidence of gender-based differences in support for giving as a civic duty. This indicates that female socialization does not impact reception or processing of duty-based appeals. I discuss the implications of these findings in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 4
DOES ASKING MATTER? TWO FIELD EXPERIMENTS IN CONTEXT

Research Questions and Hypotheses

What prompts individuals to donate to a political cause? It is simply the reminder of an organization, through a form of contact, or do people give when they are explicitly asked, and when they are provided an easy way to respond?

H1: Each email treatment will elicit different levels of giving.

H2: Treatments that explicitly ask for donations (Treatments C & D) will garner a higher number of donations than treatments that do not explicitly ask for donations (Treatments A & B).

H3: The email that explicitly asks for donations and then links to a donation page (Treatment D) will garner more donations than the treatment that asks for a donation and links to a homepage (Treatment C).

H4: The email that does not explicitly ask for a donation and links to the homepage page (Treatment A) will elicit a lower number of donations than an email that does not explicitly ask but links to a donate page (Treatment B).

Why experiments?

This chapter seeks to examine whether being prompted to donate actually has an effect on the rates of donations received by an organization. Using an experimental context to test these hypotheses is advantageous for several reasons. Field experiments are useful in parsing out direct causation, particularly around collective action problems of political behavior (de Rooij, Gerber & Green, 2009). While the previous chapter identified donors through observational data, this chapter is interested in the deployment of strategic appeals that ultimately influence an individual's decision to donate to a political cause. A field experiment presents the ideal context

within which to test these hypotheses for a variety of reasons. First, field experiments guarantee that a standard of temporal precedence is met, or that the treatment (email) directly precedes the measured outcome (giving). In partnering with a real, established political organization, I am guaranteeing that my treatments are deployed in a context as close to real life as possible, as opposed to within a lab or a controlled environment. This ultimately results in a greater level of external validity in my results, as there is no risk of perceived inauthenticity in the experimental context, or in the treatment. Additionally, the use of random assignment into treatment groups and a control allows for me to account for individual level differences. Any and all individual-level factors that affect likelihood of voting, such as education (Sondheimer & Green, 2009), personality factors (Gerber et. al., 2011), past turnout (Aldrich, Montgomery, & Wood, 2010), or even political knowledge (Knobloch-Westerwick & Johnson, 2014), partisanship (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002) and individual level preferences and information exposure (Jerit & Barabas, 2012). Each of these potentially confounding variables is distributed equally among the groups. Testing treatments through randomized experiments allows for the treatment and control groups to be indistinguishable at the start of the experiment, and ultimately, for the only uniformly causal difference between the groups post-experiment to be the exposure to a treatment (in the case of the treatment group) versus the control or to a generic placeholder treatment (for use of a generic placeholder, instead of no treatment at all, see parts of Gerber & Green, 2008; Green, McGrath & Aronow, 2013). Ultimately, while the rise of using field experiments in political research was initially approached with skepticism, experiments allow greater leverage to questions of causation (Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, & Lupia, 2006). Though experiments are certainly not the best form of research for all questions of inquiry, they are the ideal method for testing for causation with a timely electoral context.

Experiment 1 Design: Louisiana Victory Fund

This study uses a randomized field experiment to compare the efficacy of different strategic appeals for motivating people to participate in the political system by making a political donation. This study was conducted in partnership with the Louisiana Victory Fund (LVF) political action committee, a Louisiana-based PAC which endorses local and state candidates within the state. The treatments were deployed on October 5, 2017 during the lead-up to a state-wide jungle primary for the Treasurer seat vacated by John Kennedy after he won his U.S. Senate race in 2016. This is the fourth year in a row that Louisiana as held a fall election for either a state-wide or federal office. In addition to election fatigue, the race is drawing little attention (Deslatte, 2017). LVF has been active in local and state-level races in Louisiana since 2015; despite the limited publicity around the race, it is not unusual for LVF to send emails about a current race.

The study was conducted with 14,306 individual email addresses, which represents roughly 22% of the total LVF mailing list (65,024 individuals). These 14,306 emails were selected out of the total email list based on past behavior – in this instance, whether the individual has opened an email from LVF in the last three months of regularly sent emails. This is identical to process of recipient selection that occurs before every email send as a form of optimizing response rates for each of the emails. The selected emails were then randomized using version 6.0 of Alexander Coppock's 'randomizr' R package. Subjects were sorted in one of four groups using the "complete random assignment," in which a specified number of units (in this case, roughly one fourth of the sample) are assigned to each treatment condition. The command first assigns floor units to each of the specified conditions, then assigns remaining subjects using simple random assignment so that the probabilities of assignment are equal.

One assigned to a group, subjects received one of four different treatments (see Table 4.1 for a description of the treatments). The first group (Treatment A) received a touch email, meaning that it is a communicative email that re-expresses the PAC's mission statement, but does not include a direct request for donations. In this case, the email communicates the organization's commitment to vetting and supporting candidates that align with traditional conservative values. The bottom of the email includes a link that encourages supporters to "Click here to learn more about what we're doing." The hyperlink directs supporters to the LVF homepage. The second group (Treatment B) received a touch email identical to that used in Treatment A, but the link at the bottom of the email prompted supporters to "Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund." This hyperlink directed supporters directly to the LVF General Fund donation page, as opposed to simply directing supporters to the LVF homepage. The third group (Treatment C) received an ask email. The body of the email reminded recipients of the upcoming elections, mentioned the PAC's past successes, and ended with a prompt to "Click here to learn more about what we're doing" – the same hyperlink prompt as Treatment A. This link, just as in A, directed supporters to the PAC homepage. The final group (Treatment D) received an ask email identical to the one used for Treatment C. However, the email ends with a prompt to donate ("Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund"), just as in Treatment B. Full text of the treatments are included in Appendix A.

Table 4.1. Description of Contact Type and Link Direction

Treatment	Type of Contact	Link Direction
A	Touch	Home Page
B	Touch	Donation Page
C	Ask	Home Page
D	Ask	Donation Page

Each of these treatments is designed to test whether the mere act of asking for a particular behavior (in this case, giving a donation) is enough to prompt individuals to partake in the action, and whether the ease of access to the action (i.e. use of direct links to the donation page, versus links to the homepage) affects donation rates. In this instance, the dependent variable is a behavioral measure – whether or not someone donates to the political organization. Theoretically, the emails that explicitly ask for a donation should receive a higher volume of donations than those which do not explicitly ask (Hypothesis 2), based on the premise that simply asking for participation might be enough of a prompt for individuals to contribute. Beyond this basic assumption, an email treatment that explicitly asks for a donation, and then provides a direct means for an individual to make a donation – e.g. with a hyperlink that directs to a donation page – should elicit a higher volume of donations than an email treatment that explicitly asks for a donation, but which provides only an indirect, more cumbersome route to donation – e.g. a hyperlink that directs to the organization homepage (Hypothesis 3).

While the homepage link does contain a link to a donation page, this set-up forces would-be donors to navigate the homepage and both find and click on a donate button on the navigation bar, adding additional behavioral cost to the act of donating. In line with this, an email treatment that neither explicitly asks for a donation nor provides a direct link to a donation page (Treatment A) is predicted to elicit a lower volume of donations than a treatment that does not explicitly ask, but *does* provide a direct link to a donation page (Treatment B) (Hypothesis 4). Finally, there is little support in the literature for whether the touch email that includes a link to a donation page (ease of access to a means for donation, but without an explicit request) or the ask email with a link to the homepage will garner more donations. Thus, I hypothesize that these treatments (B and C) will simply elicit varying numbers of donations than treatments A and D (Hypothesis 1).

Experiment 1: Methods and Results from Louisiana Victory Fund

Louisiana Victory Fund uses the MessageGears email sending platform to send and monitor the open and click rates for its emails. Each version of the email was emailed out to 3,577 email addresses from the active LVF list. This subgroup of subjects, roughly one quarter of the total LVF email list, includes any individual who had opened a LVF email in the last three months of regular email sends (roughly fall 2016). The organization chose to test using the subset – versus the full list – for one primary reason: sending emails costs money. The organization used the email list sporadically following the 2016 election cycle, and as a result, there was drop-off on list interaction. To remedy this, LVF focused on mailing these treatments to individuals who were likely to respond, based on past behavior. This is a normal process of recipient selection used by the organization for all emails – not just experimental messages, and is a best practice for all practitioners for a few reasons. This theoretically allowed increased their return on investment (ROI) in mailing the emails in the first place, while also preventing their mass email send from being flagged by email service providers if they encounter a large number of bounced emails, or if a large number of people who no longer want to be on the list flag the email as spam. While this is a non-random subset of the total mailing list, it allows me to field the four treatments to a highly-engaged subgroup, making it even more likely that they will respond to the stimuli.

Using the MessageGears email sending platform and the Anedot fundraising platform, which LVF uses to collect and track donations, I matched the campaign donations made after the treatments were administered back to subjects in each group to assess whether the treatments resulted in different levels of donations. To begin, I calculated the open, click, and donation rates for each of the four treatment emails (see Table 4.2). Each of these is calculated in terms of

unique interactions, for instance, even if a single person opened the email multiple times, I count their actions as a single interaction. Each treatment email was sent with the same subject line ("Didn't want you to miss this, [recipient first name]"), at the same time (12:04pm on October 5, 2017), in order to hopefully yield indistinguishable open rates between treatment groups, and to ensure similar stimuli delivery rates.

Two weeks after the email delivery data, the email vendor provided me with data from the email mailing. While individuals on the email list were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups, there were varying rates of delivery success based on spam filters and other deliverability factors (see Table 4.2). For the rest of this discussion of results, I will reference only the number of total delivered emails, rather than the prescribed number of recipients designated through the random assignment process.

Table 4.2: Delivery and Open Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	Recipients	Delivered	Open
A	3576	3393 (94.88%)	654 (19.27%)
B	3577	3400 (95.05%)	617 (18.15%)
C	3577	3398 (94.16%)	656 (19.31%)
D	3576	3453 (96.56%)	717 (20.76%)

I ran an ANOVA test of variance to determine whether there was a relationship between the randomized treatment groups (A, B, C and D) and whether individuals ultimately opened the treatments. This test serves as a quasi-randomization check for the treatments. Through randomization of a sample size this large, the majority of the differences between email service providers, bad email addresses, and random bounces should be equally distributed between the

four groups. I found no evidence of significance differences in open rates between the treatment groups, F (3, 13640) = 2.528, P=.0555. This level of non-significance is not overwhelmingly definitive; the fact that the groups are close to significant is an indicator of close to significant differences in open rates between groups which could be the result of a variety of deliverability issues on the part of the email sending program. However, based on the 95% confidence interval cut-off, there is no distinctly significant difference between the groups.

Now that I have established the delivery rate for each stimuli –in this case, the quasi-randomization check – and traced the lack of impact on the overall treatment open rates, I proceed to hypothesis testing. However, my attempts to test the hypotheses were foiled by the simple fact that LVF received no donations as a result of these email treatments. Not one of the four email treatments managed to elicit any type of monetary contribution to the political action committee, resulting in null results for each of the prescribed hypotheses dealing with political giving. I attribute the lack of donations to two factors. First, motivating someone to donate through an email treatment is a high, costly action from both a temporal and financial perspective. Not only does it require the individual to take the time to navigate the website and enter in personal information to complete a donation, but it also requires a level of financial ability to make a donation in the first place. Second, the low salience of the election ultimately affected the levels of donations. Simply put, less money is donated during low-salience election cycles (Campaign finance reports, 2008).

However, while each treatment failed to garner even a single donation of any amount, the treatments did ultimately generate varied click rates. Going forward, I test the hypotheses with the click count subbed in for the giving – changing only the outcome measure within the hypotheses.

Table 4.3: Click Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	Appeal	Delivered	Unique Clicks
A	Touch	3393	15
B	Touch	3400	15
C	Ask	3398	3
D	Ask	3453	3

The first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) states that each email will elicit a different level of clicks. By using an ANOVA test, I find initial support that there are statistically significant differences in click rate by treatment group, $F\ (3, 13640) = 5.421$, $p = .001$. Therefor, I reject the null hypothesis and run a Tukey Post Hoc Analysis. Given that two of the treatments (A and B) have the exact same treatment rates, and that C and D likewise have identical click rates, the Post Hoc analysis should reveal statistical differences between A and C, A and D, B and C, and D, but no statistical differences between the A and B, and C and D pairings. I find that this is the case. The pairwise comparisons show significance between four pairings (see Table 4.4). The B Treatment (mean = .004, SD = .066), a touch appeal, is statistically different in click rates than both ask treatments, Treatment C (mean = .0008, SD = .030), adjusted p-value: .023, and D (mean = .0008, SD = .029), adjusted p-value: .022. Treatment A (mean = .004, SD = .066), the other touch treatment, is similarly statistically different from both ask treatments, Treatment C, adjusted p-value: .023, and D, adjusted p-value, .022. Ultimately, Hypothesis 1 is only partially supported. All but two of the six paired comparisons have significantly different click rates.

Table 4.4: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Click Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	**Difference**	**Adjusted P Value**
B-A	-9.102e-.06	.999
C-A	-3.538e-03	.023*
D-A	-3.552e-03	.022*
C-B	-3.529e-03	.024*
D-B	-3.543e-03	.022*
D-C	-1.406e-05	.999

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

The second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) states that treatments that explicitly ask for donations (Treatments C and D) will elicit higher numbers of clicks than then emails that do not (treatments A&B). To test this hypothesis, I create a simplified, binary variable for touch, grouping those in Treatments A and B – the treatments that use a donor touch email – with a positive indicator, with those subjects in Treatments C and D, the treatments that utilize a direct ask approach in the body of the email, receiving a 0. I utilize a simple logistic regression to test to investigate whether the touch style emails significantly predict whether subjects ultimately click on the links within the email. I find that the type of appeal a subject was exposed to significantly predicts whether that individual will click through the email to the organization webpage, X^2 *(2, N*=13,643) = 297.2, $p = 0.0$. Subjects who receive a touch email (B = -1.62, rse = .448, p < .001) are significantly more likely than those who receive an ask email to generate clicks. Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Instead, I find the inverse of the hypothesis. It is the treatments that use the touch appeal – which *does not* explicitly ask for donations – that ultimately drive far more traffic to their respective websites.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that the email that uses the ask approach and then links to a donation page directly (Treatment D) will garner more donations than Treatment C, which

explicitly asks for a donation, then sends clickers to the organization homepage. Hypothesis 4 predicts that Treatment B, which uses a touch approach then links to a donation page, will elicit more donations than A, which also uses touch but which then directly links to the organization homepage. Demonstrably, both of these hypotheses deal explicitly with whether the added barrier of link navigation to a donation page versus an organization's homepage affects giving rates. Due to the change in dependent variable, from donation to click, I am unable to test Hypothesis 3 or 4, as there is no indicator for clickers' behaviors once they have navigated to the organization website by clicking through the email treatments.

Overall, the findings from this experiment indicate that the approaches by which political organizations, or in this case, political action committees, interact with would-be donors by email, matter. Though the lack of donations prevents me from testing findings on the impact of an ask versus a cultivation email on donation rate, it does provide insight into how these approaches generate different interaction rates. Overwhelmingly, emails that use the touch approach, merely reminding the supporter of the organization mission but without explicitly asking for a donation, or even including a donation button, result in more individuals clicking on the embedded links within the email and navigating to the organization website. This indicates that electronic communication and the content of emails, in particular, should be crafted to the specific needs of an organization. General communication – without an explicit ask – ultimately drives more individuals to the organization website, which could ultimately be used to increase exposure and to build the reputation and identity of the organization. However, explicitly asking for a behavior seems to be the most effective way at prompting a particular outcome.

Experiment 2: Black Conservatives Fund

Experiment 1, conducted with the Louisiana Victory Fund, utilizes a state-specific sample of political engagers in a specific electoral context (a state-wide race for Treasurer). How representative is this sample, though? To address this, the same randomized field experiment was replicated with Black Conservatives Fund (BCF), a political action committee that focuses on funding and electing black conservative candidates across the country. This PAC has been active since the 2014 cycle and boasts a 75% success rate for endorsed and funded candidates over the last three years. Most importantly, it fundraises from a national base and funds candidates from all regions of the country, making its mailing list far more demographically diverse than that of Louisiana Victory Fund.

The treatments, similar to those deployed in Experiment 1, aside from state-specific references, were mailed out on November 2, 2017, five days before the 2017 general election which took place on November 7, 2017. Though an off-year election, this general election included open seat gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey, a slew of state-wide citizen initiatives and mayoral races in metropolitan areas.

This experiment was conducted with 32,782 individual email addresses, representing roughly 25% of the total Black Conservatives Fund mailing list. Similar to the sample used in Experiment 1, individuals were selected to be mailing recipients based on whether they had opened an email from Black Conservative Fund in the past three months of regularly sent emails. Similar to the process utilized in the previous experiment, this yields a more active subset when compared to the total mailing list, but using this selection process is the standard operating procedure for the PAC when setting up a normal email send. These 32,782 emails were then

randomized into four treatment groups using version 6.0 of Alexander Coppock's 'randomizr' R package using the "compete random assignment" function.

Just as in Experiment 1, subjects were assigned to receive one of four different treatments. Treatments were as close as possible to those deployed in the previous fielding, though specific references to Louisiana election-related events were replaced with more generalized references to holding Congress accountable. Treatment contents were roughly the same. Treatment A represented a touch or cultivation email that reminded the recipient of the PAC's political victories over the last two years, expresses the PAC's mission statement, but *did not* contain an explicit request for donations. The hyperlink at the bottom of the email prompted supporters to "Click here to learn more about what we're doing." All linked images throughout Treatment A, as well as the hyperlink prompt, directed supporters to the Black Conservatives Fund homepage. Treatment B was identical to A in content, but the links throughout the email directed supporters to a donation page.

The content of Treatments C and D were also identical. These emails represented ask emails, in which recipients were reminded of upcoming elections, the PAC's commitment to electing conservative candidates nationally, and then explicitly asked for donations with a hyperlink prompting supporters to "Donate here to support Black Conservatives Fund." These treatments also include a red donate button at the bottom of the email. All clickable images, the hyperlink, and the donate button all linked to the Black Conservatives Fund homepage in Treatment C, and to a donation page in Treatment D. Copies of Treatments A-D can be viewed in Appendix B. Just as in the previous experiment, this fielding is set up to test whether contact alone is enough to prompt action, or whether it is some combination of response to an explicit

request (i.e. whether asking matters) and ease of access to the action (i.e. direct versus indirect links to donation pages) affect click and donation rates.

Experiment 2: Methods and Results from Black Conservatives Fund

On November 2, 2017, Treatments A, B, C and D were collectively mailed out to 32,782 individuals, or roughly one quarter of the active Black Conservatives Fund email list. This represents a mailing sample roughly 2.3 times larger than the sample mailed in Experiment 1 to Louisiana Victory Fund supporters and is a far more active list than LVF. Emails were sent with the subject line: “Didn’t want you to miss this, [recipient first name OR Friend]”, identical to that used previously in order to attempt to garner similar deliverability and open rates. Individuals were selected based on whether they had opened a BCF email in the past three months of regular mailings, as per the standard operating procedure of the PAC and mail vendors. This is identical to the recipient selection criteria used when mailing to the Louisiana Victory Fund list, though BCF has regularly mailed to their donors over the last year.

Black Conservatives Fund uses the MessageGears email sending platform to send and track their email delivery, open, and click rates, and GiveWorks, a donation gathering platform developed and maintained by Active Engagement, BCF’s mail vendor. Roughly two weeks after the mail date, I received the delivery, open, click, and donation data from BCF and matched campaign donations back to each group to assess whether the treatments ultimately resulted in different levels of giving.

Upon receiving the data from the vendor, I performed the same quasi-randomization check used for the Louisiana Victory Fund experiment to ensure that the complete random assignment had worked and that assignment into a treatment group had resulted in any type of irregularity in delivery of the stimuli. To do this, I calculated the delivery and open rates for each

of the four treatment groups. Delivery rates between split-tested are rarely, if ever, identical simply because of the variation between spam filters and other deliverability factors. I include the delivery and open rates below (see Table 4.5). These delivery rates are much higher than those from the previous Louisiana Victory Fund mailing. This could be occurring for a variety of reasons. The greatest predictor of delivery rate for email lists is a factor that list brokers refer to as freshness. The older or farther from its last email send a list gets, the more likely there is to be movement on the email addresses. This can take the form of changed addresses, individuals making the decision to unsubscribe from the list, or updates to individual email hosting websites' spam blocker policies. Ultimately, I attribute the much higher delivery rate of these emails to the fact that Black Conservatives Fund has regularly used their email list, keeping it active, over the last year, while this is not the case with Louisiana Victory Fund. This reduces the number of bounces, spam alerts, and deliverability issues a list will face.

Table 4.5: Click Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	**Recipients**	**Delivered**	**Open**
A	8195	8195 (100%)	1077 (13.14%)
B	8196	8196 (100%)	1087 (13.26%)
C	8195	7027 (85.75)	1005 (14.30%)
D	8196	8196 (100%)	1268 (15.47%)

An important note is that while Treatment C has a drastically lower delivery rate from treatments A, B and D. This is because in transmitting the randomized designated send lists to the vendor, the vendor did not successfully designate Treatment C to the full 8,195 individual email addresses, to which they were assigned during the randomization process. Instead, the

vendor uploaded an incomplete list of Treatment C designees. Though this ultimately affects the delivery rate percentage, the open, click, and donation rates are calculated as percentages of the delivery rate – not designated recipient numbers. As seen in the open rates, this has no affect on the outcome activities' rates, in which Treatment C garners a comparable number of opens.

Next, I ran an ANOVA test of variance between the four groups to test whether there was a relationship between treatment group and open rate. I find strong, significant evidence of treatment group assignment affecting open rates between treatments, F (3, 31610) = 7.968, P=2.63e-05. Based on the significance of this ANOVA, I use a Tukey Post Hoc analysis to examine the pair-to-pair comparison, seen in Table 4.6. Of the six pair comparisons, two yielded significant differences when put head to head. The comparison of Treatments D (an ask email that navigates to a donation page; M = .15, SD = .36) and A (a touch email that navigates to the BCF homepage; M = .13, SD = .34) were strongly significant, p = .0001. The open rate for Treatment D was also significantly different from that of Treatment B (a touch email that navigates to a donation page; M = .13, SD = .34), p = .0002.

Table 4.6: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Open Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	**Difference**	**Adjusted P Value**
B-A	.0012	.996
C-A	.0116	.168
D-A	.0233	.0001***
C-B	.0104	.254
D-B	.0221	.0002***
C-D	.0117	.163

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = p < .05, **= p < .01, *** = p < .001

After examining the delivery and open rates for each treatment group, I proceed to hypothesis testing. Hypothesis 1 (H1) predicts that each email will elicit a different number of donations. Though examining the number of clicks per treatment group in Table 4.7 shows slight variation, these differences are not statistically significant, F (3, 31610) = .717, p = .542.

Table 4.7: Click Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	Appeal	Delivered	Clicks	Donations
A	Touch/Home	8195	33	2
B	Touch/Donation	8196	31	1
C	Ask/Home	7027	14	3
D	Ask/Donations	8196	17	4

Experiment 1 with LVF found that each treatment *did* elicit different levels of clicks; I find that in this replication, the treatments also elicit a statistically significant difference in click rate, F (3, 31610) = 3.095, p = .026, though unlike Experiment 1, none of the p-values of the pairwise comparisons yield significance at the .05 level, Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Click Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	Difference	Adjusted P Value
B-A	-2.445e-.04	.992
C-A	-2.035e-03	.101
D-A	-1.953e-03	.102
C-B	-1.790e-03	.184
D-B	-1.708e-03	.189
D-C	-1.406e-05	.999

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = p < .05, **= p < .01, *** = p < .001

The second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) predicts that emails that explicitly ask for donations (Treatments C and D) will elicit a greater numbers of donations than treatments that do not explicitly ask for donations (Treatments A and B). While Treatments C (3 donations) and D (4 donations) do elicit more donations at face value, there is no statistical significance in difference in donation rate between treatments that ask (mean = .0004, SD = .021), than those that do not explicitly ask (mean = .0002, SD = .014), *F (*3, 31612) = 1.912, p = .167. However, just as in Experiment 1, there is a significant difference in click rates based on whether the email is an ask. To test this, I conduct a simple logistic regression with a binary indicator for the treatments that explicitly ask for a donation (Treatments C and D), versus those that do not (Treatments A and B). I find that touch emails (B = .65, rse = .219, p < .001) are statistically more likely than ask emails to generate clicks, X^2 *(1, N*=31,6133) = 1187.1, *p* = 0.0).

Hypothesis 3, which I was previously not able to test in Experiment 1, predicts that Treatment D (ask email that directs to a donation page) will garner more donations than Treatment C (ask email that directs to the homepage) based on the limited barrier in following through with the action: as soon as the person clicks on the link in Treatment D, they are directed straight to a page on which they can complete a donation to the organization. At face value, Treatment D *does* garner more donations (4) than Treatment C (3), though this is not statistically significant, *F (*3, 31610) = .717, p = .542. A Tukey post hoc analysis similarly echoes that the donation rate difference between D and A is nowhere near significant, adjusted p-value = .816.

Hypothesis 4, which predicts that Treatment B (ask that directs to a donation page) will yield a higher donation rate than Treatment A (ask that directs to a homepage) likewise yielded insignificant findings, *F (*3, 31610) = .717, p = .542. Face value of the donation numbers finds

the inverse of the hypothesis' prediction – Treatment A elicits one more donation than Treatment B. Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

This replication study yields two particularly interesting findings. First: just as in Experiment 1, it finds that the touch approach emails are most effective at driving traffic to the organizations website. This is counter to many of the best practices in the online funding world, which use donation emails widely both in their own list development and in prospecting new lists. Instead, these initial findings suggest that the best way to drive traffic to a website is to forego the donation appeal, and instead reach out with a cultivation-style email that simply reiterates the organization's purpose and past successes, without the explicit donation ask. The second broader suggestion within these findings is that the landing page from the email does not seem to matter.

When the subjects are evaluated based on the destination link, either to the BCF homepage or to the donation page, I find that the donation rate for subjects who are directed to the homepage (Treatments A and C; mean = .0003, SD = .018, number of donations = 5) are indistinguishable from those who those who are directed to the Black Conservatives Fund donation page (Treatments B and D; mean = .0003, SD = .017, number of donations = 5), $F(3, 31612) = .014$, $p = .907$. Taken together, these findings from Experiment 2 suggest that the objective of the body of emails sent (a cultivation-type email versus direct ask) matters – different objectives drive different levels of conversion from the email to the embedded links, but that a misdirection to the organizations website and *not* a donation page has no affect on the rate of giving that these emails generate.

CHAPTER 5
STRATEGIC APPEALS FOR PROMPTING GIVING

Research Questions and Hypotheses

My research question focuses on identifying those strategies, previously used in motivating voter registration and turnout, that are most effective in prompting higher rates of donating. Specifically, I explore which appeal strategy most effectively elicit donations.

H1: All treatments will elicit a higher response rate than the control mailing.

H2: The urgency treatment will elicit a higher response rate (measured by quantity of donations) than any other treatment or control mailing.

H3: The gratitude treatment will elicit a lower response rate than the anxiety treatment.

Experimental Design

This experiment, like the previous study, was conducted in partnership with the Louisiana Victory Fund (LVF) political action committee, a Louisiana-based group that supports candidates for local and state offices. Just as the previous study, this experiment was fielded in fall 2017, during the lead-up to the October 14, 2017 election. Though it is a regularly scheduled open primary for local school board candidates, it was combined to also encompass the state-wide jungle primary for the open Louisiana Treasurer seat vacated by now-Senator John Kennedy. This was a particularly low-salience election for two reasons. First, local elections and those that do not include the election of a head of government (i.e. second-order elections) see a dramatic turnout decline (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). Second, this election comes on the heels of three years of competitive, major state-wide (governor) or federal (Senate and presidential) elections. The more frequently elections are held, the less likely it is that an individual will vote in the election (Boyd, 1981; Boyd, 1986).

LVF provided the most recently active subsection of their total email mailing list—14,306 email addresses – all of which were mailed to in the course of this study. Subjects were re-randomized, following the completion of the previous study, into new treatment groups. Randomization was conducted using the most recent version (6.0) of the 'randomizr' R package developed by Alexander Coppock, in which the specified number of units were again specified in the randomization process to ensure equal probability of assignment into a specific treatment group.

After random assignment into treatment groups, subjects received one of four different emails – three treatments and a placebo control email. Each treatment is designed to leverage a unique strategy from the voter mobilization literature, while the control acts as a placebo email that merely asks for money. Emails are deployed at the exact same time in order to directly compare the efficacy of each appeal at encouraging political giving. Beyond availability of resources, individuals make the decision to participate civically; individual-level participation varies between elections far more than is predicted through purely resource-based models that seek to explain participation. In this experiment, I turn to the use of emotional manipulation, seeking to identify their short term motivational effects. To that end, each treatment serves as an emotional appeal aimed at motivating increased rates of giving, which is, in this case, the outcome variable.

The first treatment focuses on a gratitude approach. Each individual on the mailing list explicitly opted into the list, meaning that they have undertaken some type of interaction with the PAC online in the past. While not all individuals on the mailing list have previously donated to the organization, I assume a basic level of political awareness on the part of the subjects, simply because they have consciously chosen to associate themselves with this political organization.

Given the correlation between political interest and voting behavior, I assume a level of support for the organization's goals. In this treatment, I express gratitude to the recipient for their previous acts of support for the organization. In doing so, I attempt to promote engagement, as psychologists often argue that even being on the receiving side of an expression of gratitude ultimately ends up motivating the recipient to repay the the expresser, and reinforces the behavior for which they are being thanked (Panagopoulos, 2011) – in this case, "supporting" the organization by making an additional donation. After thanking the individuals for their previous support of the organization and reminding then that these actions are an important part of their civic duty, the email asks for support, in the form of a monetary donation. The bottom of the body of the email contains a "contribute" button, which directly navigates clickers to the donation page on the organization's website, providing an expedient way for individuals to respond to the gratitude expression by reinforcing their action by making a donation.

The second treatment leverages the power of temporal pressure. In this treatment, I use references to the temporal closeness of an election to create pressure, under the knowledge that when faced with levels of time constraint, decision makers tend to rely more heavily on negative information (Wright, 1974). To begin, the email begins with a bolded line proclaiming that "Time is short and WE NEED YOUR HELP!", which immediately establishes a level of urgency implicit to the appeal. Though this email treatment does not directly impose a time restraint on the amount of time the person has to respond to the email, it does aim to apply the same time of temporally-focused pressured decision making by emphasizing that it is being sent only three days before an election. In focusing on the proximity to an upcoming election, the email suggests that there is a time *constraint* on the time within which the person is able to complete the task (Ordonez & Benson, 1997). This time constraint is designed to elicit temporal pressure,

ultimately driving individuals to respond to the entreaty by donating through the donation button embedded within the footer of the email.

The third treatment utilizes the induction of anxiety. In this treatment, I focus on highlighting policy threats that are incongruent to the assumed political stance of the PAC list. As the PAC is a right-of-center organization that has cultivated conservatives across the bayou state for the last four years, the assumption is that the list is overwhelmingly conservative. The body of this treatment focuses on the ongoing budget challenges at the state level, which have previously resulted in cuts to services and the introduction of new taxes. This particular email focuses on the current year's operating deficit, and threatens that the state legislature will likely be lobbying more taxes during its upcoming session. In this, the threat is that of individual-level tax increases by a governing body. Anxiety, as a generalized emotion, signals to individuals that there is a personally relevant threat near, and motivates them to regulate this anxiety through strategies that restore security, or mitigate the threat (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015). To that end, the LVF email ends with an appeal for donations to support the work of this organization as it serves as a watchdog organization over an out-of-control state legislature. In doing so, it provides an easy and immediate means by which individuals can assuage their policy-based anxiety.

To ensure that I am able to compare the results of strategy-based giving appeals to a standard appeal, I also deploy a control email. One quarter of the email list received a standard email ask for donations (with no psychological manipulation), which serves as the control email. This email is based on previous fundraising emails sent in past years by the organization, and does not utilize social pressure, policy-focused anxiety induction, gratitude, or a temporal pressure (giving deadlines, etc.) elements. Instead, it merely asks for donation and reiterates the organization's record of success in backing and electing conservative candidates within

Louisiana. The bottom of this email contains a donation button identical to that included in the three treatments, providing ample opportunities for recipients to donate from the email, if they so choose.

Methods and Results

Once they received the randomized lists, Louisiana Victory Fund used MessageGears to send out the emails and monitor and delivery and open rates. Upon receiving the delivery data from the email vendor, I calculated the open, click, and donation rates for each of the four treatment emails (see Table 5.1). Each of these is calculated in terms of unique interactions, for instance, even if a single person opened the email multiple times, I count their actions as a single interaction. Each treatment email was sent with the same subject line ("Didn't want you to miss this, [recipient first name]"), at the same time (11:20am on October 12, 2017). The open rate percentages were calculated based on the number of delivered emails, rather than the designated recipients within the original randomization.

Table 5.1: Delivery and Open Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	Recipients	Delivered	Open
A	3576	3348 (93.62%)	774 (23.11%)
B	3577	2973 (83.11%)	614 (20.65%)
C	3577	2886 (80.68%)	615 (21.31%)
D	3576	3311 (92.59%)	631 (19.06%)

I ran an ANOVA test of variance to determine whether there was a relationship between the number of delivered emails from each randomized treatment group (A, B, C and D) and whether individuals ultimately opened the treatments. I found evidence of significance differences in open rates, based on the treatment groups, F (3, 12514) = 5.649, p =.0007 (Table

5.2. Based on this statistically significant omnibus ANOVA test, I conduct a post hoc analysis to look at pair to pair comparison. Upon running a Tukey HSD post-hoc test, I found that of the four treatment groups, the only pair of groups were found to be significantly different ($p < .05$): Treatment A (the gratitude treatment; $M = .23$, $SD = .42$), and the control mailing (Treatment D; $M = .19$, $SD = .39$), p = .00028. No other pairings exhibited significance differences in means, as demonstrated in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Open Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	**Difference**	**Adjusted P Value**
B-A	-.025	.077
C-A	-.0181	.299
D-A	-.041	.0002***
C-B	-.068	.927
D-B	-.016	.408
C-D	-.023	.131

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Next, I move to hypothesis testing. However, just as in the previous experiment with Louisiana Victory Fund, all treatments failed to elicit any number of donations – the initially determined outcome variable. To mitigate this, and to ensure that the results of this experiment are still useful in providing insight into donor motivations, I again turn to rate of clicks per email as a form of engagement, albeit one far lower in both fiscal and actionable cost than the decision to make a donation. Click rates by treatment are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Click Rates by Treatment Group

Treatment	Strategy	Delivered	Unique Clicks
A	Gratitude	3348	3
B	Urgency	2973	6
C	Policy Anxiety	2886	2
D	Control	3311	3

Hypothesis 1 predicts that treatments A, B and C will each individually elicit a higher response rate than the control treatment (D), or that A, B, or C > D. To test this, I use an an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, and I find that there are no significant differences in click rate between treatments groups, $F\ (3, 12514) = .968$, p = .407. Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis. However, it is still worth looking at whether there are differences by treatment group, albeit non-statistically differences. I begin by browsing the mean rate of clicks by treatment group; Table 5.4 shows upon cursory glance that while Treatment B (urgency) has a higher mean than the control (Treatment D), the gratitude treatment (Treatment A) shares the same mean likelihood of clicking as the control (mean = .0009), and the anxiety email (Treatment C, mean =.0007) elicits less clicks than the generic control. I find that even in observing non-significant differences in means, that I fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5.4: Click Means and Standard Deviation by Treatment Group

Treatment	Mean	Standard Deviation
A	.0009	.0299
B	.0020	.0449
C	.0007	.0263
D	.0009	.0301

Hypothesis 2, which predicts that the urgency treatment (Treatment B) will elicit higher response rates than all others emails [B > A, C, D], had similarly disappointing (non-significant) results. The null hypothesis likewise failed to be rejected, F (3, 12514) = .968, p = .407. To look for whether there are any normative, though non-significant, directional signposts, I analyze the Tukey Post Hoc analysis on the ANOVA analysis from the previous hypothesis. I focus on the comparisons between Treatments B (urgency) versus A (gratitude), C (anxiety), and D (control), which are presented in Table 5.5. I find that the urgency treatment (Treatment B, mean = .0020, SD = .0449) is slightly (though not significantly) more likely to prompt clicking than the anxiety inducing treatment (Treatment C, mean = .0007, SD = .0263), adjusted p=.427. Though less significant, urgency also elicits more clicks than the gratitude treatment (A, mean = .0009, SD = .0299), adjusted p = .542. In a pairwise comparison, I also find that urgency (Treatment B, mean = .0020, SD = .0449) elicits more clicks than gratitude (Treatment D, mean= .0009, SD = .0301). Despite the fact that gratitude (A) and the control (D) have the same mean (.0009), this comparison is farther from significance than the control (D) has the least significance when compared to the urgency appeal, adjusted p = .542. This demonstrates that though discussed in entirely non-significant terms, the urgency treatment *does* in fact lead to more clicks than any other treatments, which supports Hypothesis 2.

Table 5.5: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Click Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	**Difference**	**Adjusted P Value**
C-B	-1.325	.427
B-A	1.122	.542
D-B	-.1.112	.552

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences:
* = $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

The final hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) predicts that the gratitude treatment (A) will elicit lower response rates than the anxiety (C) treatment. Otherwise stated, it predicts that C > A. Like all hypotheses within this experiment, none of the results near statistical significance. However, I proceed, assuming that there is some [merit/worth/use] in testing the hypothesis for any normatively informing usefulness. Using the same Tukey post-hoc results from the omnibus analysis (Table 5.6), I find that though grossly non-significant, the gratitude treatment, Treatment A, (mean = .0009, SD = .0299) actually elicits more clicks than the anxiety inducing treatment, Treatment C, (mean = .0007, SD = .0273), adjusted P value = .995. I normatively fail to reject the null, finding the inverse of my initially proposed hypothesis; the gratitude treatment is actually more effective in eliciting an outcome behavior than the anxiety inducing treatment.

Table 5.6: Tukey Post Hoc Comparisons of Click Rates by Treatment Group

Pairwise Comparison	**Difference**	**Adjusted P Value**
C-A	-2.031	.995

Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences: $* = p < .05$, $** = p < .01$, $*** = p < .001$

This chapter initially set out to examine which strategic appeals are best used to motivate increased rates of political donating. However, when each of the fielded treatments failed to yield even a single donation, I moved the outcome behavior from donating to the clicking of the link embedded within each email treatment. I find that just as I predicted, the urgency treatment (Treatment B) elicits the largest number of clicks of any treatment, though this is not statistically significant. Counter to predictions, however, I find that eliciting policy-related anxiety, instead of out-performing the control and gratitude emails, instead, elicited the lowest number of clicks, though, again, these were not statistically significant differences. I discuss the implications of these findings in depth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Who Gives?

Within political science, the act of participating civically is framed as a matter of available resources on the part of participant (Brady et al., 1995). Those who have participate have to first have the necessary resources with which to participate. In the case of giving politically, the person must have the financial resources available with which to make a donation. A person cannot make a donation to a political candidate unless they possess money to make a donation in the first place. Because resources play a significant role in the ability to participate in the first place, gender-based differences in resource availability ultimately end up leading to gender gaps within the participation levels of various civic engagement activities, including political contributing.

Gender-based differences within philanthropic giving trends, however, tell an alternative story. The decision to donate to nonprofits is not framed as a matter of the availability of resources necessary to giving, but is instead evaluated purely based to motivations to give. Philanthropic giving research finds that women tend to give more frequently than men-- the direct opposite of findings within the research on political giving (Piper & Schnepf, 2008). This literature also finds that that single women are more likely to give than married women, indicating that the decision to give, at least to non-profit organizations, is not about the availability of resources, as the political giving literature indicates. Rather, this indicates that the difference between nonprofit and political giving is not about resources, but about motivations to give, with women as more intrinsically moved to donate to philanthropic causes than to political causes (Hall, 2004; Malin et al., 2005; Mesch et al., 2011).

Within both of these literatures, the role of gender is central, though it is conceptualized differently. In relation to political giving, gender is a marker of resources, or in this case, is a marker of a lack of available resources, such as time and money, which are necessary to participate in political contributing. In the philanthropic literature, gender is a marker of differences in intrinsic motivations behind giving. My research findings substantiate the claim that gender matters in discussing political giving, and that the gender gap in giving is not merely an indicator of the resource gap, in which women have less access to the resources necessary for participation. Instead, my findings suggest, when expounded upon, indicates disparity in resources between genders, as well as that men and women give based on different intrinsic motivations.

I find that there is a significant gender-based gap in political giving, and that men are more likely to have donated to a political candidate, campaign or organization in the previous year than women. Taken alone, though, this does not provide a definitive answer about whether variance in participation is the result of a lack of available resources, or whether women give less frequently to political causes simply because they are not motivated to do so.

Next, I look at the role of marital status on political giving. Past research on civic engagement finds that marital status has a distinct effect on various forms on participatory acts. Methodologically, I was interested in looking at whether conceptualizing marriage as a married or not measurement, versus a degree of married-ness (three-leveled categorical variable denoting whether someone is married, single, or formerly married). I also examined whether marital status had an effect on likelihood of having given politically, predicting that married women were more likely to have given to a political candidate, campaign or organization than single women. In testing this hypothesis, I found two interesting things.

Methodologically, it makes far more sense, and yields greater significance, to conceptualize marriage as being married or not married. I found this to be true – marital status significantly predicts likelihood of giving. As it relates to political giving, marital state matters only so much as it is a signal of available financial resources, or the possession of money. Though women give at lower frequencies than men, when women are married (and have greater access to financial resources) they give more than comparable single women. This finding, combined with the previously supported hypothesis, seem to support the idea that gender-based differences in the giving are purely the result of available resources. When women have greater resources, they give more.

Hypothesis 3, however, undercuts this argument. If gender were merely a marker for available resources – specifically, of available financial resources, a model that accounts for availability of resources linked to civic participation – time and money – and levels of political interest and strong partisanship would aptly explain variance in giving. I compare three logit regression models for explaining political giving – Model 1, which includes resource, political interest and partisanship indicators and gender, Model 2, which contains all the same variables as Model 1, but is run only with the male survey respondents, and Model 3, which includes all the same variables, but is run with only the female survey respondents. I find that between Model 2 and 3, the only variables that demonstrate a difference in effects, for all but one variable, the effects found within the male-only sample (Model 2) are merely magnified with the all female sample (Model 3). The one exception to this is the role of employment status, in which positive employment status makes women slightly more likely than men to donate politically. Males are still far more likely than women to donate politically, even when holding constant the availability of resources, high political interest, and strength of partisanship identity. This

indicates that while resources play a significant role in predicting whether or not someone will make a political donation, gender itself also plays a distinct and significant role – and indicates a difference outside of simple availability of resources. Something about being male – or being female – in society dictates likelihood of donating to a political cause.

Possible explanations for this include the possibility that it is that gender is neither just an indicator of resource availability, as indicated by political giving research, or of implicit differences in motivations, as the philanthropic literature suggests. Instead, these findings indicate that gender represents both things, to a degree. Women give at different rates than men because they have fewer financial resources to do so – but that does not seem to be the entire story. Women, despite possessing fewer financial resources than men, donate to nonprofits at higher rates (Piper & Schnepf, 2008). This disparity – combined with the isolated effects of gender, points to the existence of non-resource based differences between men and women that ultimately lead to differing rates of giving.

My final hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) examined whether there were gender-based differences in support for political giving when it is framed as a civic duty. This hypothesis was based on two things. First, women are socialized differently than men, and tend to be raised with more of an emphasis on rule-following behaviors (Brownmiller, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This hypothesis is based on the comparability of rule-following and social norm adherence, in which behaviors that are framed as civic duties ultimately elicit greater support among women, who are socialized to be more rule-following. However, I find no evidence of gender-based differences in support for political giving when it is framed as a civic duty, indicating that the socialization is not overt enough to lead to greater adherence and support for duty-based activities.

What do these findings ultimately mean? Gender is not the only determinant of whether or not someone will give politically. Gender does not perfectly represent the variance in resource-availability, nor does it only represent the results of socialization and variance in intrinsic motivations for giving between men and women. Instead, gender is an imperfect marker of a combination of variables. Both the philanthropic and political giving literatures are correct – to a degree. Females are different from males in terms of the resources available to them, but also in terms of their intrinsic desires to participate politically by making a donation to a political organization. However, these differences, which may be the result of socialization, do not lead to women being more susceptible to particular appeals to participate, or specific priming effects.

Does Asking Matter?

What is the added value of an explicit email appeal? Otherwise stated, does the ask matter? Entire industries of fundraising professionals, both in the philanthropic world and in the political, are devoted to finding the best and highest grossing methods for separating willing individuals from their money in the name of a cause. Is this warranted?

Two experiments, initially conducted with the Louisiana Victory Fund PAC and replicated with the national Black Conservatives Fund PAC, seek to find whether the act of asking for a donation actually elicits more donations than a simpler and less direct contact with an individual – frequently referred to as a donor touch or cultivation. While only the replicated experiment produced donations upon which to test the hypotheses, the experiments yielded identical findings regarding the treatments that are most effective at driving clicks – traffic to the organization website. Overwhelmingly, the touch emails, which contain no mention on donations and no explicit ask for support, outperformed explicit asks in their click rates. These (replicated) findings indicate that while sending ask emails does generate a greater number of donations, it is

touch emails that generate the highest number of conversions – or clicks – from the emails to the organization websites. Additionally, the BCF email suggests, though with no statistical significance, that added barriers (added cost) do not, in fact, deter donation behaviors. Half of the subjects, after clicking on the link in their respective emails, were navigated to the BCF homepage rather than to a donation webpage. Those that were sent to the homepage, rather than the donation page, were just as likely as those who went straight to the donation page to ultimately make a donation to the organization.

The implications of these findings have the potential to impact both how practitioners use emails for list-building and fundraising, as well as in expanding our understanding of how people process the decision to proceed in making a decision to undertake a costly form of participation. Political organizations often use email lists to reach multiple goals simultaneously, including list-building and donation gathering. Though a single email might be sent out with the primary goal of raising money, driving or increasing web traffic to the website is also considered a major strategic objective. Through these experiments, I found that the act of explicitly asking for donations *does* matter – but only when the goal is to garner donations. If, as is the case in many situations, the goal of the organization is to brand-build or to drive more traffic to specific landing pages or websites, the organizations are best sold to

Perhaps the most interesting finding within this chapter is that the idea of added barriers to costly behaviors do not serve as a deterrent to the barrier. Ultimately, this has implications for our understanding of what barriers are, in terms of the individual-level cost calculations for particular actions. Though giving is already a high-cost undertaking, the fact that adding even more costs – in the form of making the action more difficult and challenging to complete – does not seem to deter individuals from giving implies two things. First, it implies that the location or

context of the communication and the desired outcome behavior might matter. In this case, subjects were communicated to online via email and prompted to complete an action (giving) through a website linked through embedded URLs within that same email. Though giving is a costly action in that it requires financial resources, the burden of completing the activity is relatively low: would-be donors need only click through pages on their computer, phone, or tablet. There is no off-line activity necessary, and no need to go to a new location or complete a multi-step off-line process, as is the case in offline voter registration efforts. Second, in line with this idea, once an individual has made the decision to make a donation to the organization, the added navigational task of clicking through an additional webpage before reaching the donation form does not deter the donation behavior. This is counter to much of the literature on costly behavior in which people are less likely to participate in costly actions. Instead, this indicates that even though only smaller numbers of individuals choose to donate, once those people make the decision, they are far more likely to follow through in completing that behavior. The "heavy lifting" is not in making the sequence for behavior completion easier or simpler, but rather, in expanding the number of people who commit to the behavior in the first place.

Strategic Appeals for Increasing Giving

Can the same strategies that effectively increase rates of voting be applied as methods for increasing other forms of civic participation? This chapter tested how three specific appeals – expression of gratitude, urgency, and policy based anxiety-induction – stacked up against a generic appeal to donate money to a political organization.

When initially laying out the hypotheses, I predicted that all strategy-based treatments would out-perform a control email that merely asked for money. As in the previous experiments, due to a lack of elicited donations, I was forced to evaluate a lower and less costly form of

outcome variable: the click rates from email treatments rather than the number of donations made. I found, overwhelmingly, that not all deployed appeals outperformed a basic, explicit ask for donations. Rather, the control email outperformed the policy-based anxiety inducing email treatment, and was more effective at generating action. My second hypothesis, which predicted that the temporal urgency treatment would outperform the control and gratitude and policy-based anxiety treatments was supported. I find that of the three treatments and control mailed, the temporal urgency appeal, which discusses the political action committee's need for funding while emphasizing the temporal proximity to a competitive election, is the most effective at eliciting click-throughs through the email to the website. The gratitude treatment, which expresses thanks for past behaviors before asking supporters to continue that action, performed exactly as well as the control mailing – a generic email donation solicitation.

What do these findings mean? The outperformance of all treatments by the temporal urgency appeal indicates that when people are aware of a deadline, they respond promptly to alleviate the time pressure being applied. Unlike within past research, the gratitude did not statistically outperform the control – instead, they each prompted the same levels of behavior. Inducing policy-related anxiety is generally found to have small but statistically significant effects on information-seeking behaviors (Albertson & Gardarian, 2015), but not necessarily high-cost activist-type behaviors (Valentino et al., 2011). I find this to be only partially true. While the policy-related anxiety should not have resulted in tremendously high gift-giving numbers, the anxiety should have prompted greater information seeking. The most obvious direction for this information seeking to go to is in navigating the embedded links within the email to find out more about the threat, in an attempt to ultimately mitigate this. Instead, this

treatment had the weakest comparative performance, eliciting fewer clicks than even the generic, control mailing.

These findings have implications for understanding how findings in one form of civic participation can possibly be applied to new and alternative forms of engagement. The strategies used to trigger significant increases in voter registration and turnout rates did not, in this context, transfer seamlessly to prompting political giving. This indicates that the calculus of the cost for each participatory action differs – an obvious deduction. Depending on the costliness of the action, particular strategic appeals which produced substantively small, though statistically significant results in voting might not be as useful in prompting types of engagement with less of a deeply-established civic duty aspect. Prompts for people to register to vote include reminders about the importance of voting and in being an active citizen. These arguments certainly hold when attempting to prompt political giving. Previous literature indicates that social power is a powerful catalyst for increasing registration and turnout rates (Gerber et al., 2008; Panagopoulos, 2010). However, while contributing money to actors within the political system *is* a form of civic participation, the social pressures implicit to voting do not extend to alternative forms of participation like giving. A more nuanced treatment that explicitly frames political giving as a form of civic participation and as critical to working democracy might be able to leverage social pressure motivations. However, the treatments in their fielded form seemed to fall short of this.

Theoretical and Practical Limitations

Practically, there are two major limitations to the experimental chapters. First, two experiments were conducted within the context of Louisiana Victory Fund, a state-based political action committee that endorses candidates exclusively in Louisiana, and a replication experiment was conducted with Black Conservatives Fund – a niche advocacy fund focused on supporting

African American conservatives. The major limitation in this approach – and in these experiments – is that I focus on quantifying the effects of contact for a niche, specific population under a specific electoral context. However, this research was conducted in a real electoral context (albeit a low-salience election cycle), with a partner organization that regularly fields communications efforts similar to this one in the course of its normal work. While the scope is limited, these experiments provide a baseline on which to build future projects. Will these findings hold when applied to a candidate-based campaign, or other larger and better-known PACs or advocacy organizations? Do these findings hold or do they drastically shift when the outcome measure is evaluated on giving rate, as opposed to click rate? In order to determine whether these findings hold, these experiments should be fielded to a national sample, ideally during a nationally salient election cycle. Further research is needed to apply this work to different contexts.

Additionally, the response rates to these emails are particularly low. I attribute this to the low salience of the state treasurer's race in Louisiana (for Louisiana Victory Fund), and in the low national salience of the 2017 off-year elections, which were ultimately just the New Jersey and Virginia statehouse elections, and a handful of major metropolitan mayoral races. For Louisiana, this election season came on the heels of three back-to-back, major elections (2014 senate race, 2015 governor's race, and 2016 presidential election). In terms of the experiment fielded with Black Conservatives Fund, a national PAC, turnout in off-year elections is abysmally low, the 2017 special election in Alabama notwithstanding. Despite these limitations, we know, based on these experiments, that the act of asking for a donation might not bring that much more traffic to a website. In fact, a cultivation email that does not utilize an explicit ask for funds is more effective at driving web traffic to a website, though a direct ask does generate

more donations, as expected. I also found that the most effective treatment for eliciting interactions from would-be donors is by creating a sense of urgency, characterized in this study by emphasizing the temporal proximity to a major fundraising deadline. The urgency treatment should theoretically be even more effective in eliciting donations in a higher-salience election cycle, in which there is perceived to be more at stake in the election, though replication is needed to confirm this.

How effective are these strategies, which mobilize giving based on specific strategies, though, when they are deployed in more crowded media environments? In a more competitive election year, these treatments would compete against a wide swath of campaign communications for would-be donors' attentions. Additionally, how effective are these strategies when deployed over time? Political giving is a form of activism that, unlike voting, can take place over a long, sustained period of time. Can these appeals be effectively used to mobilize people to give not only one-time, but on a monthly or recurring basis, or is their effectiveness limited to one-off exposure periods? Further studies should test the possibility of encouraging more habitual giving behaviors, rather than one-time-only donations.

Future Research

Who Gives?

Much of the previous work that examines donor motivations for political giving centers on donor-specific surveys. My chapter on identifying donors is in this same vein. In this chapter, I use the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey to test various aspects of the relationship between gender and political giving. I test not only for the existence of a gendered gap in participation in the form of political giving, but also whether a woman's marital status exacerbates or reduces this gap. Most importantly, though, I attempt to answer whether gender merely represents that women have access to fewer resources for participating civically, or

whether their reasons for participating are implicitly different than men's. There are two major directions in which this research can and should be built upon.

One of the foremost questions that comes from this research is in whether there are methodological limitations inherent within this research. Are the rates of female giving in this self-reported survey data comparable to other measurements of female giving? Researchers have documented the nefarious role of social desirability bias in survey responses. Generally, these biases are found in responses to questions about vote history and likelihood of voting in the future as regular participation in the political process through voting is an established social norm. Does this same bias exist in questions about giving? Political giving is infrequently framed as a civic participatory action with a strong social norm imperative. However, affirmative female responses to the question of whether or not they had given to a political entity within the past year were remarkably high; roughly 46% of respondents who had given politically were female. A basic but novel research project could check for whether the question of giving is susceptible to the same social desirability pitfalls as voting. This could be done by simply by either validating the responses to giving, if over $200, with Federal Election Commission (FEC) contribution report data. Alternatively, this could be done by running either a FEC contribution report for a campaign or the financial contribution report for a candidate in a state with full-reporting requirements through the 'gender' package in R, assigning gender based on historical datasets to assign gender of a name based on probability, and examining whether the proportion of female donors is comparable to the proportion of female donors within this survey data.

Despite the fact that females are socialized to be more stringent rule-followers (Brownmiller, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987), there was no relationship between gender and support for political giving when framed as a civic duty. However, there are alternative variables

that might very well predict support for actions when the action is framed as a civic duty. Civic duty frames have been used to successfully mobilized subjects to register to vote and to turnout to vote (Gerber et al., 2003; Green & Gerber, 2008; Panagopoulous, 2010). Is there a correlation between measures of conscientiousness and susceptibility to appeals to donate, as framed as a civic duty? Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling and Panagopoulos (2013) examine the relationship between the big give personality traits and responses to persuasive appeals, but use social pressure treatments that explicitly mention that they will publicly report subjects' voting records – an intrusive and threat-laden treatment. Alternatively, experimental appeals that reframe political giving not as punitive, but as a civic duty should elicit positive responses, particularly from those individuals who are high on conscientiousness who are likely to complete goal-directed behaviors (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008).

Does asking Matter?

Overwhelmingly, the act of explicitly asking for money does matter – and generates more donations than appeals that do not explicitly ask. This finding is in line with much of the mobilization and ballot chasing literature which finds that outreach matters. However, by far the more interesting finding in this chapter is that added barriers to giving do not hamper or dissuade individuals from giving. This is counter to the economic calculus of weighing the costs and benefits of an action before undertaking it (Downs, 1957). Instead, I find that the added task of navigating through an additional webpage before finally arriving at the donation page does not deter giving. Rather, individuals who faced the barrier were just as likely to donate as those who did not undergo the additional navigational task. This prompts questions as to how the decisiveness of the individual plays into ultimate completion rate for the task. The findings indicate that once a person has decided to make a donation and clicked on the link, that they are

willing to put up with extra amounts of work or challenges to complete the task. Just how determined are they to complete the task and make the donation, though?

Fundraising practitioners have, in recent years, introduced multi-stage donation pages. When donating through these multi-stage donation processing webpages, would-be donors first select an amount of money they would like to donate before being navigated to a basic donation form with their contact information. Then, finally, donors enter their payment information on a third page before the donation is processed. While my findings support the idea that the multi-stage pages for donations (or at least a single added page navigation) does not deter donations, in a head-to-head comparison, do these findings hold? Future research should determine whether the added barriers to donating have negligible effects across the board, or whether there is a number of pages in which the task of making a donation is perceived to be too difficult, where participation drops off.

Strategic Appeals for Increasing Giving

The strength of this experiment is reflected within its main limitation. While this experiment was deployed with a partner organization within a political election context, and does contain a behavioral measure as its outcome measurement, it is hindered by its deployed context. The main limitations to the research testing head-to-head comparisons of various strategy-based appeals for encouraging political giving is the singular context within which the appeals are tested – it is representative only of how these appeals perform when mailed by a non-prominent PAC in a low-salience electoral cycle. The immediate next step for the final chapter, "Strategic Appeals for Encouraging Giving," would be to test these three strategies – gratitude, temporal pressure, and policy-based anxiety within various, alternate electoral contexts.

Economists often use simulated situational experiments in a lab setting, or within a survey experiment, in which they ask subjects to pretend that they possess a designated amount of resources that they are then asked to allocate. Given the inherent limitations in attempting to motivate high-stakes actions like donating money, a simulation in which all participant individual-level demographic information was captured, and where subjects were prompted to interact with similar treatments, but with fake money, would be inherently useful. This would allow for a comparative replication, but would also allow for a deeper dive, in which individual-level factors – such as resources, gender, and strength of ideology were analyzed. This should also offer a higher conversion rate than field experiments, in which there are significant drop off rates between opening an email, clicking on links within an email, and actually completing a donation.

More directly, an obvious step in continuing along this line of research is in replicating these experiments – both the measurement of the value of an ask and pitting different commonly used strategies for encouraging giving – in a broader variety of field experimental contexts. This is something that I am in the process of doing even now through contacts at other political, right of center organizations. Future testing of these appeals will focus on answering a few specific questions. First: what is the value of sending a cultivation versus an ask email if the organization, unlike Louisiana Victory Fund and Black Conservatives Fund, is well-known? Ideally, replication with the Heritage or Cato Institutes, to name but two well-known organizations on the right, would be the litmus test of whether the results of the first experimental chapter, testing cultivations versus asks, hold when the organization in question is not in need of brand-building capabilities. However, even though this experiment was fielded and then re-fielded with two smaller and lesser-known political organizations, there are far more of these smaller and lesser-

known organizations within the political arena than there are behemoths like the Heritage Foundation, making these findings relevant in and of themselves, to political practitioners and to scholars of political organizations, alike.

Additionally, both “Does asking Matter?” and “Strategic Appeals for Increasing Giving” could be improved upon by being examined in a comparative perspective against other forms of civic participation – particularly those that are less costly than making a financial contribution. Using the act of giving as an outcome variable for strategy testing was simultaneously ambitious and limiting. It all but ensured an incredibly low response rates across all fielded appeals. It is likely that asking for donations, and doing so through certain types of appeals, works better for particular forms of engagement – such as in volunteer recruitment, petition signing, or in soliciting online advocacy efforts – than more costly offline actions.

Giving: Exploring Explanations and Motivating Future Behavior

This dissertation focuses on broadening existing knowledge about two things: first, in better understanding whether gender-based differences in giving are the result of a resource or interest gap, and second, in understanding how to effectively motivate giving. It starts by building a theoretical framework for understanding the resource-based models of participation, largely grounded in political science research, before contrasting it to the arguments for implicit motivational differences in donating, spear-headed within philanthropic research literatures. One of this project’s greatest strengths is its combination of secondary data analysis with three original field experiments, fielded with two different political partner organizations, using behavioral measures for outcomes, rather than just preference expressions. The access to political practitioners and ability to influence or shape their tactics is a huge gain for political communication research – and indicative of the future projects for which this dissertation will

serve as the foundation. Ultimately, this work seeks to understanding motivations for giving and to effectively turn these motivations into proven tactics that can be deployed by organizations to increase rates of political giving.

Money is an essential part of the U.S. political process. To date, Americans spend more on Halloween candy per year than they do elections, and less than 1% of the US population donates more than $200 to political causes per election cycle (Fuljenz, 2014). Understanding why these people give and how to motivate this type of participation has two major implications. First, it broadens the influence and efficacy of everyday citizens in the political sphere, limiting the impact of interest group money on electoral politics. Second, it expands our understanding of how to motivate alternative and costlier forms of civic participation, outside of voting. Just as with most other studies, these findings raise as many questions as they answer. Are other gaps in participation likewise the symptom of gaps in motivation versus resources? Can temporal pressure and anxiety-based appeals effectively motivate alternative forms of civic participation, or are they limited to giving and voter turnout in specific electoral contexts? Future research will hopefully build upon these findings to ultimately come to a more precise understanding of how electoral contexts and types of behaviors affect the effectiveness of strategy-based appeals.

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APPENDIX

A. ADDITIVE GIVING EXPERIMENT TREATMENTS: EXPERIMENT 1, LOUISIANA VICTORY FUND

Treatment A: Touch email with website link

Dear [fname],

I’m reaching out to give you an update on what Louisiana Victory Fund is focused on this year.

You know we have a strong record of supporting conservative candidates right here in Louisiana.

In 2015, we won three of our four endorsed races. In 2016, we were a watchdog force, holding our elected officials accountable for their response to our budget crisis.

Louisiana Victory Fund is the only Louisiana-based PAC that is *making the difference* for dedicated conservatives.

Moving forward, we’ll be watching the Legislature closely as they grapple with this year’s budgeting challenges. Rest assured that we will continue to oversee the proposed policies, and make sure they’re adhering to the promises they’ve made us: their constituents.

<u>Click here to learn more about what we’re doing.</u>

Jordan
Louisiana Victory Fund

Treatment B: Touch email with donation link

Dear [fname],

I’m reaching out to give you an update on what Louisiana Victory Fund is focused on this year.

You know we have a strong record of supporting conservative candidates right here in Louisiana.

In 2015, we won three of our four endorsed races. In 2016, we were a watchdog force, holding our elected officials accountable for their response to our budget crisis.

Louisiana Victory Fund is the only Louisiana-based PAC that is *making the difference* for dedicated conservatives.

Moving forward, we'll be watching the Legislature closely as they grapple with this year's budgeting challenges. Rest assured that we will continue to oversee the proposed policies, and make sure they're adhering to the promises they've made us: their constituents.

Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund.

Jordan
Louisiana Victory Fund

Treatment C: Ask email with website link

Dear [fname],

LVF has proven that it delivers – with a 75% endorsed success rate in our two years. Now, though, we're facing a big challenge.

I know it seems like the 2018 cycle is in the far future, it is really *just around the corner*.

Historically, the out-party normally dominates the midterms – that means that Democrats are primed for major victories.

That includes all six Congressional districts in the state, and dozens of municipal offices.

But if we start today, we can prevent them from taking over.

Click here to learn more about what we're doing.

Together, we can keep Louisiana red.

Jordan

CONTRIBUTE HERE

Treatment D: Ask with donation link (LVF)

Dear [fname],

LVF has proven that it delivers – with a 75% endorsed success rate in our two years. Now, though, we're facing a big challenge.

I know it seems like the 2018 cycle is in the far future, it is really *just around the corner*.

Historically, the out-party normally dominates the midterms – that means that Democrats are primed for major victories.

That includes all <u>six</u> Congressional districts in the state, and dozens of municipal offices.

But if we start today, we can prevent them from taking over.

<u>Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund.</u>

Together, we can keep Louisiana red.

Jordan

CONTRIBUTE HERE

B. ADDITIVE GIVING EXPERIMENT TREATMENTS: EXPERIMENT 2, BLACK CONSERVATIVES FUND

Treatment A: Touch w/ website link (BCF)

Dear [fname],

I'm reaching out to give you an update on what Black Conservatives Fund is focused on this year.

You know we have a strong record of supporting black conservative candidates across the country.

Over the last two years, we've sponsored events across the country to train conservative African American activists. In 2016, we ran two major, targeted television and digital campaigns targeting African American voters, affecting the presidential vote in seven major metropolitan areas.

Black Conservatives Fund is the only major PAC that is *making the difference* in electing dedicated black conservatives.

Moving forward, we'll be watching Congress closely as they grapple with budget challenges and other major campaign promises. Rest assured that we will continue to oversee the proposed policies, and make sure they're adhering to the promises they've made us: their constituents.

Click here to learn more about what we're doing.

Jordan
Black Conservatives Fund

Treatment B: Touch w/ donation link (BCF)

Dear [fname],

I'm reaching out to give you an update on what Black Conservatives Fund is focused on this year.

You know we have a strong record of supporting black conservative candidates across the country.

Over the last two years, we've sponsored events across the country to train conservative African American activists. In 2016, we ran two major, targeted television and digital campaigns targeting African American voters, affecting the presidential vote in seven major metropolitan areas.

Black Conservatives Fund is the only major PAC that is *making the difference* in electing dedicated black conservatives.

Moving forward, we'll be watching Congress closely as they grapple with budget challenges and other major campaign promises. Rest assured that we will continue to oversee the proposed policies, and make sure they're adhering to the promises they've made us: their constituents.

Click here to learn more about what we're doing.

Jordan
Black Conservatives Fund

Treatment C: Ask w/ website link (BCF)

Dear [fname],

Black Conservatives Fund has proven that it delivers – with a proven 75% endorsed success rate in the last four years. Now, though, we're facing big challenges.

I know it seems like the 2018 cycle is in the far future, it is really *just around the corner*.

Historically, the out-party normally dominates the midterms – that means that Democrats are primed for major victories.

This means that we could lose the House, and maybe even the Senate.

But if we start today, we can prevent the Democrats from taking over.

Together, we can keep Congress red.

Donate here to support Black Conservatives Fund.

Jordan
Black Conservatives Fund

DONATE

Treatment D: Ask w/ donation link (BCF)

Dear [fname],

Black Conservatives Fund has proven that it delivers – with a proven 75% endorsement success rate in the last four years. Now, though, we're facing big challenges.

I know it seems like the 2018 cycle is in the far future, it is really *just around the corner*.

Historically, the out-party normally dominates the midterms – that means that Democrats are primed for major victories.

This means that we could lose the House, and maybe even the Senate.

But if we start today, we can prevent the Democrats from taking over.

Together, we can keep Congress red.

Donate here to support Black Conservatives Fund.

Jordan
Black Conservatives Fund

DONATE

C. STRATEGY-BASED GIVING EXPERIMENT TREATMENTS: LOUISIANA VICTORY FUND

Treatment A: Gratitude (LVF)

Dear [fname],

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAST SUPPORT!

We realize supporting conservative candidates takes time and effort – and often, money.

You have backed numerous conservative candidates here in Louisiana by supporting Louisiana Victory Fund, and **we just wanted to say "thank you."**

Our democracy depends on all of us engaging in the political process. We appreciate the fact that you have made it a priority to **do your civic duty**.

We also remind you that the midterm elections will include numerous competitive state Assembly and Senate seats.

We are already starting to put our war chest together.

Please, support us by donating today.

Jordan
Louisiana Victory Fund

Contribute

Treatment B: Urgency (B)

Dear [fname],

Time is short and WE NEED YOUR HELP!

No doubt, you know that we're hours away from the Treasurer's race, and **this is an important one.**

You've watched as our state grapples with its seemingly never-ending budget problems. We are getting much closer to Election Day and **we need your support**.

Your donation right now will allow us to back candidates' Get Out The Message effort – it allows candidates make one last push. It pays for the literature, yard signs and even keeps the lights on in campaign headquarters.

It allows us to mobilize supporters, to convince undecided voters, and to **win this election** for conservative candidates.

Your financial support is what will propel us through the next 3 days.

Please, support us by donating today.

Jordan
Louisiana Victory Fund

Contribute

Treatment C: Policy Anxiety (LVF)

Dear [fname],

By this point, you have heard all about our perpetual state budget problems.

The Louisiana legislature constantly struggles to balance our $23 billion yearly state operating budget. While they finally did pass a budget, our state budget problems are far from solved. This year's budget is only a band aid solution – **what about next year**?

With one vote from them, **you'll lose more of your paycheck**, because the Democratic Governor and Republican State Legislature couldn't manage to balance their budget.

Every family in this state—including yours and mine—knows that when we overspend in one area, we have to cut spending in other areas. Why don't these politicians understand that?

Don't let our legislature seize more of your paycheck. LVF will watch the legislature – and will make sure they're held responsible. Help us elect fiscally responsible representatives at every level of government.

Please, support us by donating today.

Jordan

Contribute

Treatment D: Generic Control (LVF)

Dear [fname],

LVF has proven that it delivers – with a 75% endorsed success rate in our two years. Now, though, we're facing a big challenge.

I know it seems like the 2018 cycle is in the far future, it is really *just around the corner*.

Historically, the out-party normally dominates the midterms – that means that Democrats are primed for major victories.

That includes all six Congressional districts in the state, and dozens of municipal offices.

But if we start today, we can prevent them from taking over.

Donate here to support Louisiana Victory Fund.

Together, we can keep Louisiana red.

Jordan

Contribute

D. IRB APPROVAL FOR EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

IRB: E10497
Title: Field Experiments and Political Giving

Review Date: 5/24/17
Approval Date: 5/24/17
Approval Expiration Date: 5/23/2020
Exemption Category/Paragraph: 4b
Signed Consent Waived?: n/a

VITA

Robyn Stiles is from Woodland, California. She received a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley, California) in 2011, followed by a master's degree in Political Management from the George Washington University (Washington, DC) in 2013. She previously worked as a political practitioner in California, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Louisiana, specializing in digital fundraising and campaign management. She plans to complete her Ph.D. in Mass Communication and Public Affairs from Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication in May 2018.