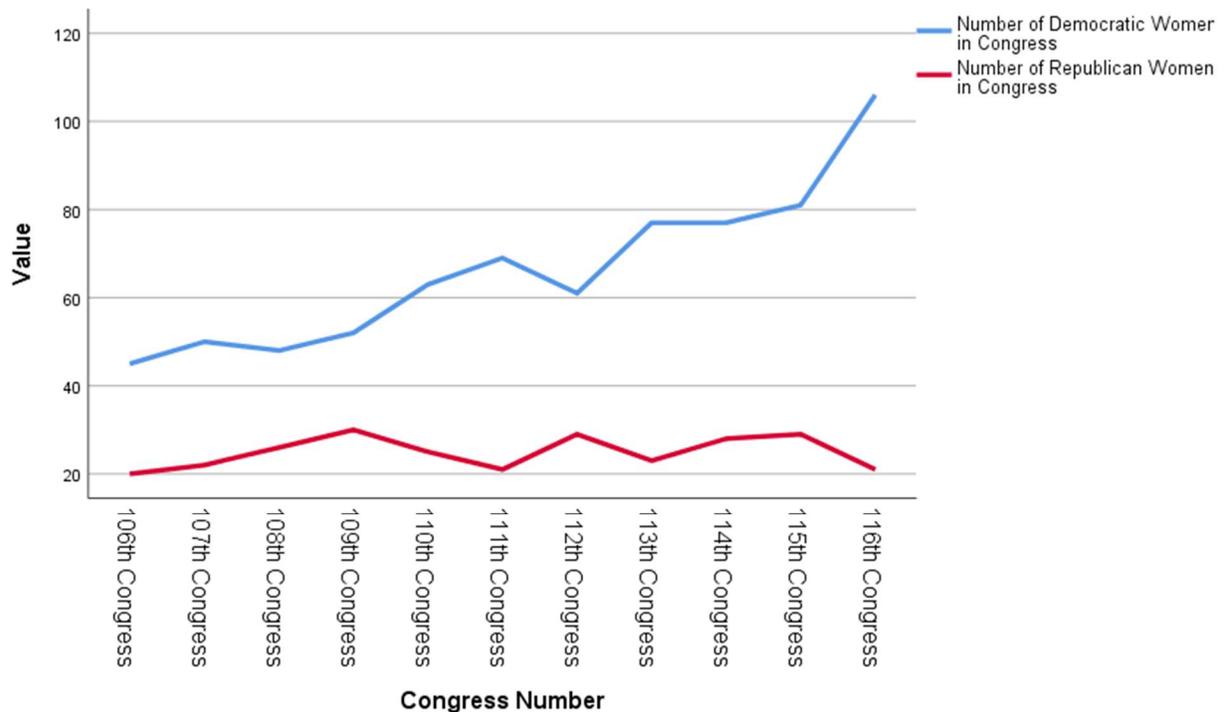


Let's Talk About the Elephants (Not) in the Room: The Causes Behind the Growing Gender Partisan Gap in Congress

Over the past few decades, women's representation in elected offices has become an increasingly prevalent topic within both academic and colloquial political discussions. Today, politics continues to be a traditionally male-dominated field, with the majority of elective offices being primarily made up of men. Though still a minority, recent years have seen an increase in women's representation in the political realm at the national level, with a record number of women being elected into the 116th Congress in the 2018 midterm elections. In the 115th Congress (2016-2018), women made up 20.6% of the membership; about 110 women. Following the 2018 elections, this number rose to 127 women, or 23.7% of Congress (Center for American Women in Politics). While these numbers continue to be a long way from gender parity in Congress, it demonstrates the beginning of steps forward and progress in women's representation and equality in politics.

Moreover, the narrative of the 2018 midterm election, dubbed the "Year of the Women", consisted of a wave of new, younger women getting involved in politics, representing a positive trend towards improved gender representation within the United States House and Senate. While there is an overall increase in the number of women in Congress, however, this trend is not a bipartisan phenomenon. Democratic women made significant gains in the 116th Congress, holding 106 seats compared to the 81 seats held by Democratic Congresswomen in the 115th Congress. In comparison, Republican women went from 29 to 21 representatives. Figure 1 demonstrates this contrast, showing how the number of Republican women has remained steady with a decrease in recent years, compared to the significant increase of Democratic women in the 116th Congress.

Figure 1. Number of Democratic and Republican Women in Congress



The contrast between the numbers of Democratic and Republican women in the U.S. House and Senate demonstrates the significant gender partisan gap that exists in Congress. While Democratic women continue to make strides in elective offices, resulting in an overall increase in gender representation, Republican women have not experienced the same growth. Until the growth of women in Congress extends to a bipartisan trend, women will continue to struggle to achieve full equality in politics. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the potential factors and aspects of the Republican party that limit GOP women and prevent them from achieving the same success in elections as Democratic women.

There are various potential factors that impact the overall representation of women in elective offices and party differences in gender representation. These key influences include

ideological factors such as party fit, the role of finances in elections, and the recruitment strategies within political parties. While these factors on their own likely play a role in the partisan gap, the present study aims to examine the interaction of these factors and how differences in these elements between the Democratic and Republican party contribute to the growing gender partisan gap and place Republican women at a disadvantage by limiting their opportunities in politics. Specifically, this research will focus on fundraising/donations and ideology within elections, and will examine how the differences in these factors between parties contribute to the lack of women representatives in the Republican party. While the impact of donations may differ between parties, the role of finances along with the ideology of the Republican party in comparison to the Democratic party play a key role in contributing to the increasing gender partisan gap in Congress.

Literature Review

With the recency of the election of the 116th Congress, there is little research focusing specifically on the decline of Republican women from 2016 to 2018. However, this gender partisan gap is not a new phenomenon, and existing research shows some of the factors that have a significant impact on the underrepresentation of Republican women in politics. Many researchers have looked into the extent of this gender gap, examining the factors that influence these partisan differences and the overall impact of the underrepresentation of GOP women.

In order to understand the lack of opportunities for women in the Republican party, it is necessary to understand the underlying reasons behind women's overall underrepresentation in politics and how these factors may disproportionately influence Republican women. One important conclusion of the research on this topic is the fact that when women do run for office, they have an equal chance at success as their male counterparts. Fox and Lawless (2004)

acknowledge this fact in “Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office”. While women who do run for office and participate in the general election often see equal chances of success, the continued gender gap in elective offices points to other factors that influence women’s underrepresentation in politics. While the political system itself may not be directly biased, as women who do make the decision to run are able to achieve electoral success, this study points to two causes of the gender gap: women are far less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office, and women are significantly less likely than men to see themselves as qualified to run for political office (Fox and Lawless 2004: 264). Similarly, in “Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition” (2014), these two researchers analyze political socialization to uncover some of the factors that deter women from running for political office. This study found that “parental encouragement, politicized educational and peer experiences, participation in competitive activities, and a sense of self-confidence influence young people’s interest in running for office. But on each of these dimensions, women, particularly once they are in college, are at a disadvantage” (Fox & Lawless 2014: 500). Knowing these factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women creates a basis of understanding for what aspects of the Republican party should be analyzed, and why Republican women are disproportionately impacted by factors that prohibit gender equality.

The existing research on women in politics also helps point to some of the reasons for the overall growth of Democratic women in Congress in contrast to Republican women. Since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, various researchers have examined the impact of this election on the political ambition and representation of women in office. Lawless and Fox (2018) analyze this concept, which they refer to as “The Trump Effect” in order to gain insight into how Trump’s election has led to the varying levels of growth among Democratic and Republican

women. In this article, Lawless and Fox explore the motivation behind Democratic women's increase in political ambition, looking specifically at political engagement and activism stemming directly from Trump's electoral victory. Their analysis found that Democratic women overall held very negative feelings towards Trump, which were responsible for generating political interest in the 2018 election. Their research concluded that "when Democrats have a good year-as happened in 2018- so do female candidates. But when the political environment favors Republicans- as was the case in 2010 and 2016- the gains for women tend to be much smaller (if there are any gains at all)" (Lawless and Fox 2018: 681). This research helps demonstrate the extent of the partisan gender gap, showing that when Republicans take a majority of seats in Congress, women struggle to gain seats and improve their representation. Lawless and Fox provide background to the issue of the partisan gap, analyzing attitudes towards Trump and political ambition among women to understand "the Trump Effect" and how it contributes to the partisan differences in gender representation.

As this partisan gap has grown in recent years, many researchers have aimed to explain why Republican women struggle to reach the same levels of representation as Democratic women. While the Trump Effect provides an explanation for increased political ambition among Democratic women, it primarily provides an understanding for the increase in ambition among Democratic women and their desire for office, and therefore cannot explain the complete extent of the partisan gap. Another existing potential explanation for this growing partisan gap is the differing ideology of the two major parties. This concept is discussed in "Why so Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress" (Thomsen 2015). In this article, Thomsen focuses on party fit, or the idea that a candidate's ideology and the reputation of the party affects one's decision to run for office. This concept

disproportionately impacts Republican women, who are more likely to be ideologically moderate compared to male counterparts, or are often perceived as more liberal than they actually are. So, party fit framework and an emphasis on ideology can help explain the growing partisan disparity of women in Congress. Barnes and Cassese focus on a similar concept in “American Party Women: A Look at the Gender Gap within Parties” (2016). In this article, researchers focus not only on differences between men and women, but on the differences between women that exist at the intersection of gender and political party. Barnes and Cassese discuss potential origins for the gender gap within parties, including the ‘social role theory’ and how the reinforcement of gendered roles and expectations shape political behaviors and concerns. This research shows that “gender gaps in the GOP occur not only in policy areas that are commonly considered ‘women’s issues’-abortion, subsidized child care, education, and health care-but also for other issues, such as gay rights, the millionaire tax, and gun control” (Barnes & Cassese 2016: 136). Women in the Republican party are often perceived as more moderate than their male counterparts, and this study shows that in various issues, there is a divide within parties that contributes to the perception of GOP women as more moderate. This deviation from traditional conservative values demonstrates the importance of ideology, as women’s policy preferences and ideological beliefs may be seen as going against Republican ideals and lead to hesitation within the party to support these women in their runs for elective offices. A similar point is made in, “The Impact of Candidate Sex on Evaluations of Candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives” (2004). This study found that in an analysis of 6 elections, Democratic men and women were evaluated differently based on ideology. Republican women, however “offer conflicting cues: Those based on sex, which would lead people toward ideology and issue stereotypes in a liberal/female direction, and those based on party, which would lead people toward conservative/male

impressions” (Dolan 2004:215). The article “Do Gender Stereotypes Transcend Party” (2009) creates additional support for this concept, arguing that there is a notion that women and men who run for office are viewed through multiple lenses by a public employing a range of stereotypes. This creates a conflicting view for Republican women, whose stereotypes based on gender and party are seen as contradicting, placing them at a disadvantage compared to male politicians (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan 2009). These conflicting views lead to negative consequences and confusion for the evaluation of GOP women, creating issues with ideology in elections that disproportionately impact women in the Republican party and hurt their chances among voters and those evaluating their position.

The issues that ideology pose for Republican women can also be seen through the differences in Democratic and Republican women’s approaches to running for office within their party. In “Mama Grizzlies Compete for Office” (2012) researchers found that “Democratic women are more likely to embrace their gendered identities, suggesting that Republican women may consider it a liability in their quest for office” (Schreiber 2012: 561). This reluctance among Republican women to embrace gender identity demonstrates that both the ideology of Republican women and the Republican party threaten women’s opportunities for success in elections. Women are generally seen as more liberal than their male counterparts, so by embracing gender identities while running for office, Republican women would be bringing attention to these stereotypes that would harm their chances in a conservative, primarily male party.

While this research will focus primarily on fundraising and ideology, previous research has also demonstrated that recruitment strategies among party leaders may play a significant role in the gender partisan gap. Various researchers point to recruitment as playing a key role in

shaping the underrepresentation of women in political office. Preece and Butler (2016) provide an understanding of the importance of political recruitment in women's decision to run for office, showing through two survey experiment studies that even when women are recruited by party elites at the same level as men, they are less likely to show interest in seeking office (Preece & Butler 2016). Female respondents in this study believed that women being recruited for political office would experience significant bias from political elites. This belief and skepticism of party elites contributes to the higher likelihood of women to be hesitant towards recruitment attempts from those same party elites, as recruitment of women is often not seen as a promise of concrete support and backing from the party in contrast to the recruitment of men. Similarly, the article "Run, Jane, Run! Gendered Response to Political Recruitment" (2016) concluded through two studies that Republican men were significantly more likely than Republican women to have a positive response to political party recruitment. This pattern was not found among Democrats, with results showing that Democratic men were not significantly more likely than Democratic women to respond positively to recruitment (Preece, Stoddard & Fisher 2016). This finding points to the contribution of both party elites and ideology to the lack of women's representation in the Republican party. While participation among Democratic women improves through encouragement from party elites, Republican women are more skeptical of the support they would receive from the leaders of their party, demonstrating how recruitment strategies in the Republican party may play a part in deterring women and creating a lack of support and opportunities for them in the GOP.

Other researchers have focused both on the issue of recruitment from party elites as well as fundraising and donations while examining Republican women's underrepresentation in political offices. Bucchianeri examines these factors in "Is Running Enough? Reconsidering the

conventional wisdom about women candidates” (2017). An analysis of congressional elections between 1972 and 2010 conclude that while Democratic women may have an equal chance of success in elections once overcoming initial barriers to running in the primaries, Republican women lose general elections at higher rates than Republican men, and continue to face challenges within their party even after deciding to run for office. One explanation for these challenges described in this article is a lack of support from party leaders and elites due to perceptions about the ideology of women in the Republican party and party fit. This research also shows that Republican women receive a lower share of campaign contributions and support in general elections from both party elites and individual donors compared to Republican men. While PACs such as EMILY’s List often contribute financial support to Democratic women, large donors in the Republican party are often driven by party fit or electoral viability, decreasing the likelihood of donating to a Republican woman. The lack of overall support and financial backing for Republican women creates added barriers in general elections that hurts their chances of winning in comparison to Democratic women. The role of financial support is also examined in Dittmar’s “Encouragement is not Enough: Addressing Social and Structural Barriers to Female Recruitment” (2015). This article examines the role of PACs such as Emily’s list, and how they have positively impacted the growth in representation among Democratic women. In just over two decades, “EMILY’s List has gone from struggling to gain access to party leadership to becoming a party adjunct of sorts, with Democratic party leaders motivated to support their endorsed candidates due to the guarantee of financial support that would not otherwise go to a male candidate” (Dittmar 2015: 762). EMILY’s List and other financial organizations that focus on women’s representation support qualities in candidates that are more prevalent in Democratic women, including only providing support for pro-choice women

candidates, a key issue in the Democratic party platform. In contrast to these Democratic organizations, the Republican party does not have any organizations with the same amount of influence that offers financial assistance to women within the party. This partisan difference in organizations and financial support demonstrate differing priorities within the parties that shape the disadvantages Republican women face in comparison to Democratic men and women, as well as their Republican counterparts.

Crespin and Dietz (2010) contribute to this research by studying the gender gap in individual donations, and how this negatively impacts Republican women in comparison to Democratic women. While this study found an advantage for women candidates in individual donations due to the female donor networks, a bias exists for Democratic women within these donor networks. Crespin and Dietz found that women supported by these networks, which includes primarily Democratic women, “receive a boost in campaign fund raising compared to their male counterparts, whereas women not supported by these networks receive significantly less” (Crespin & Dietz 2010: 581). Given what previous research has demonstrated regarding party fit of women and the perception of women as more liberal or moderate, it is not surprising that large female donor networks with traditionally Democratic ideals disproportionately advantage Democratic women. Kitchens and Swers (2016) similarly found that in contrast to Democratic women, Republican women’s ability to gain donors and fundraise while running for office is negatively impacted by their gender within their party. The researchers point to the issue of major donor groups, “as the Republican Party has only recently focused more attention on recruitment of female candidates, and allied party groups looking to elect more conservative women such as Maggie’s List and the Susan B. Anthony List have not developed their female donor networks to the level of Democratic-aligned groups like EMILY’s List” (Kitchens & Swers 2016: 674). This research

on fundraising continuously demonstrates that Republican women are at a disadvantage compared to both Democratic men and women, as well as men within their own party. This poses many challenges for Republican women running for office, potentially contributing to their continued underrepresentation in elected offices and a lack of success in primary and general elections.

The existing research regarding both the overall representation of women in politics as well as the differences between Republican women and other groups of candidates demonstrates some of the potential contributing factors to the decline of Republican women in Congress. Ideology, recruitment, and access to financial resources in elections all represent various areas of inequality Republican women face within their party, showing some of the main reasons for the lack of women in the GOP. The current study will contribute to this research by examining the interaction of these factors, looking at how they work together to cause the current decline of Republican women in the political field. This study will also focus specifically on how these factors played a role in the 2018 midterm election, resulting in the significant partisan gender gap in the 116th Congress. The results will provide a greater understanding into how the Republican party can improve gender representation in elected offices, as well as offer greater insight into why, even in a record year for women in Congress, the GOP did not experience the same growth as the Democratic party.

Methods

In order to understand the impact of party differences on the gender partisan gap, this study will utilize a comparative analysis of finances and ideology to gain better insight into the aspects of the Republican and Democratic party that influence the representation of women within each party over time and in the 116th Congress specifically.

Campaign Finances

To better understand the role of finances in the gender partisan gap, this study will delve into the differences in donations to women in the Republican party and women in the Democratic party. Research on campaign finance shows the importance of fundraising in successful elections, and proves that as “women in elective office become better fundraisers, they increase their chances of gaining access to positions of leadership” (Crespin & Dietz 2010: 591). The importance of finances in running a successful campaign demonstrates how comparing donations to Democratic women candidates and Republican women candidates may reveal a source of inequality that contributes to the partisan gender gap.

This study will analyze and compare both the individual donations from women, as well as donations from women’s networks and PAC’s such as Emily’s list, to better understand how these financial aspects of campaigns and congressional elections impact women candidates from each party. Data regarding individual donations from women, as well as the yearly contributions from women’s PACs such as EMILY’s List, Winning for Women, RightNowWomen, Maggie’s List, and the Susan B. Anthony List will be collected from the Center for Responsive Politics, an organization that tracks money and lobbying within elections. Information regarding the numbers of Republican and Democratic women in past Congresses will be collected through the Center for American Women and Politics. This data will be entered into SPSS, which will be used to analyze descriptive statistics and run standard regression analysis to understand the relationship between donations within a campaign and the success of women candidates, and how the trends of donations from women as well as networks and PACs may play a significant role in the partisan gender gap.

Ideology

While fundraising may play a role in the lack of Republican women in office, there is also evidence that donations alone are not the only contribution to this gender partisan gap, and the ideology of the Republican party in contrast to the Democratic party may prevent Republican women from increasing their representation in Congress. This study will rely on case studies pertaining to the 2018 midterm elections to demonstrate the role of ideology in the partisan gender gap.

Following the decline of Republican women in the 116th Congress, Representative Elise Stefanik from New York aimed to make it a priority to improve the representation of GOP women in elective offices. These efforts following the 2018 midterms resulted in an increased emphasis on fundraising for Republican women, and many super PACs for Republican women were formed to help close these fundraising gaps and create equal opportunities for women across party lines. The impact of these efforts does have some early data points to evaluate: the primary race between Joan Perry and Greg Murphy in the 2019 North Carolina special elections for the House of Representatives. In this race between two seemingly similar candidates, Perry received an endorsement from all thirteen female Republicans in the House of Representatives, as well as 2 female senators. Outside interest groups also contributed to her campaign, dropping “more than \$1 million into the race to boost Perry in the hopes that they could add another female Republican to the House Ranks” (Barron-Lopez 2019). Despite this financial backing and endorsement from well-known Republican women, Perry lost the primary election to her opponent by an almost 20-point margin. This study will analyze the policies and ideology of Perry and Murphy based on their campaign platform and stance on issues found on their website, as well as responses and attitude from the Republican party towards their two campaigns, in

order to understand how ideology plays a role in preventing Republican women from gaining congressional seats even when female candidates are backed by PACs. Understanding the similarities and differences between Perry and Murphy's ideology and political beliefs, and how they are perceived within the Republican party, will help isolate the role of ideological aspects such as party fit and misconceptions about GOP women in contributing to the partisan gender gap. Previous research demonstrates that overall, "gender stereotypes appear to be more detrimental to the electoral chances of Republican women than Republican women" (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan 2009: 491). A recent Gallup poll found that the top political issues among voters include topics such as health care, taxes, immigration, and gun policies, making policies and platforms regarding these issues significant within close primary and general elections (Newport 2018). Policies and statements towards these issues, along with abortion, which is traditionally considered a women's issues, will be collected from Perry and Murphy's campaign websites to understand if there are significant ideological differences between the two candidates, or if gender plays a role in the perception of Perry in contrast to her opponent. This research will contribute to the understanding of the impact of gender in campaigns by using case studies to analyze the extent to which gender roles and the ideology of the Republican party contribute to the existing attitude towards GOP women and their continued lack of growth in numbers within their party.

Results:

Donations to Women Candidates

In order to understand the role of the financial component of campaigns on the partisan gender gap, a Pearson correlation analysis was used to find if donations from individual donors and PACs played a significant role in Republican and Democratic women's prevalence in past

Congresses. Figure 2 demonstrates this correlation analysis between donations from overall donations from PACs, primarily EMILY's List, to Democratic women.

Figure 2. Correlation Between PAC Donations and Democratic Women in Congress

		Number of Democratic Women in Congress	Donations from PACs to Democratic Women
Number of Democratic Women in Congress	Pearson Correlation	1	.882**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	11	11
Donations from PACs to Democratic Women	Pearson Correlation	.882**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	11	11

In this correlation, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was .882, which is a positive correlation significant at the .01 level. Figure 3 shows another statistically significant correlation coefficient.

Figure 3. Correlation Between Individual Donations from Women and Democratic Women in Office

		Number of Democratic Women in Congress	Donations from women to Democratic women
Number of Democratic Women in Congress	Pearson Correlation	1	.898**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	11	11
Donations from women to Democratic women	Pearson Correlation	.898**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	11	11

In a Pearson Correlation analysis for the number of Democratic women in Congress and individual donations from women to Democratic women, there is a statistically significant correlation coefficient of .898. Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate these correlation analyses for Republican women in Congress

Figure 4. Correlation of PAC donations to Republican Women and Number of Republican Women in Congress

		Number of Republican Women in Congress	Donations from PACs to Republican women
Number of Republican Women in Congress	Pearson Correlation	1	-.116
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.367
	N	11	11
Donations from PACs to Republican women	Pearson Correlation	-.116	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.367	
	N	11	11

Figure 5. Correlation of Individual Donations from Women to Republican Women in Office

		Number of Republican Women in Congress	Donations from women to Republican women
Number of Republican Women in Congress	Pearson Correlation	1	.132
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.349
	N	11	11
Donations from women to Republican women	Pearson Correlation	.132	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.349	
	N	11	11

Figure 4 shows the correlation between the PAC donations to Republican women, a combined total from primarily Republican women PACs such as Winning for Women, RightNowWomen, Maggie's List, and the Susan B. Anthony List, and the infrequent and smaller donations to Republican women from EMILY's List. While looking at these numbers compared to the number of Republican women in past Congresses, the correlation coefficient is $-.116$, which is not a significant figure at the $.01$ level. The correlation coefficient for individual donations from women to Republican women and number of Republican women in Congress, $.132$, is also not significant at the $.01$ level, demonstrating no significant correlation between number of PAC and individual donations and the number of Republican women in Congress.

Ideology

This lack of statistical significance while examining a potential correlation between Republican women shows that the decline of Republican women in Congress in the year of the women cannot be explained by financial factors alone. The idea that other aspects play a role in this partisan trend is further reinforced by the 2019 North Carolina special election between Joan Perry and Greg Murphy. In this primary run-off election, Republicans Perry and Murphy ran against each other for Congressman Walter Jones's North Carolina congressional seat. Following the poor election results for Republican women in the 2018 mid-term election, many Republican women saw this first election of 2019 as a chance to take steps towards increasing their representation and improve the strategies they use to support women during elections and get more women elected into office. In response to the results of the 2018 election, many PACs and organizations for Republican women were formed, and these groups played a major role in fundraising for Perry in this special election. During this election, Perry "raised \$152,245 through March but also received support from several outside groups. Anti-abortion group Susan

B. Anthony List made \$86,853 in independent expenditures supporting Perry through its Women Speak Out Pac. Winning for Women Action Fund made its first appearance, adding another \$201,351 in support of Perry” (Evers-Hillstrom 2019). However, despite this increase in financial backing from outside groups and the endorsement of all 13 Republican women in the house, Perry lost the party election to Murphy, demonstrating that the perception of their ideology may play a role in the obstacles Republican women face. Research demonstrates that “for Republicans evaluating a female Republican, gender appears to send a signal that the candidate is more liberal than a comparable Republican male. This may lead to Republican women having a harder time winning the party’s nomination” (Matland & King 2002: 138). This concept can be seen in the perception of Joan Perry in her campaign against Greg Murphy, particularly in her views on issues and policies that are traditionally considered women’s issues. Throughout this election, both top candidates aimed to create the perception that their opponents were more moderate than far right, a perception that could be harmful in this traditionally red district. Perry used this tactic throughout her campaign. For example, Winning for Women, an outside group backing Perry, released an ad accusing Murphy of “praising ‘Obamacare’, and stating, ‘we can’t trust him to support Trump’. The ad cites a 2017 interview with WENCT-TV 9 that reported that Murphy didn’t necessarily believe in a full repeal of the 2010 health care law” (Pathe 2019). Murphy and the outside organizations and PACs backing his candidacy took a similar approach, creating ads and mailers referring to Perry as a “Democrat in Disguise” and “Liberal Joan Perry” (Pathe 2019). In a consistently Republican district such as North Carolina’s third district, the perception of a candidate as liberal or more centrist as opposed to conservative creates a major obstacle in receiving votes. This spread of the idea that Perry is liberal compared to the rest of the Republican party, along with the overall perception that women tend to be more

liberal or centrist than other parties, places Perry at a disadvantage. Despite the similarities between the two candidates' beliefs, backgrounds, and ideologies, Murphy continued to be endorsed by extreme conservative groups such as the House Freedom Caucus. Murphy's campaign manager Doug Raymond stated that the involvement of outside groups that promote gender representation and aim to elect more women into office was a "polarizing factor" in the campaign. His point was that voters grouped Perry with these groups, and assumed her primary goal was to work with these liberal-leaning women to increase the number of women in office (Davis 2019). These assumptions about Perry's goals and priorities as a GOP woman demonstrate some of the ideological factors and stereotypes within the Republican party that may play a role in the limited success of Republican women running for office. Comparing Murphy's and Perry's statements and positions on significant and divisive political issues reveals whether there are significant ideological differences that contributed the perception of Perry as more liberal, or if the negative views of identity politics and overall culture of the Republican party hurt Perry's chances of success as a conservative GOP woman.

Healthcare

Both Perry and Murphy cite their experience as doctors and their work in the healthcare system in their understanding of healthcare and the changes they believe should be implemented. Both candidates argued against Obamacare, with Perry stating that Obamacare "resulted in escalating costs and expanded bureaucracy, and Murphy arguing that "Obamacare was one of the worst pieces of legislation ever passed, and we must do everything possible to dismantle any remnants of that failed policy" (Dr. Murphy for Congress, 2018). In their statements regarding healthcare, both Perry and Murphy address the idea of a free market system, prioritizing cutting taxes and placing decision making in the hands of doctors and patients as opposed to government. Their

two statements both demonstrate a conservative attitude towards the healthcare system, supporting the Republican platform's priority of repealing the Affordable Care Act and replacing it with a system that prioritizes taxpayers and allows for greater individual freedom among doctors and hospitals.

Taxes

The Republican party platform places great value on reducing taxes and spending for American citizens, and both Perry and Murphy support this Republican ideal through their statements and beliefs towards spending and taxes throughout the United States. Perry and Murphy state that they support limiting the power and authority of the Federal government, with Perry supporting the Republican-sponsored Balanced Budget Act and the No New Taxes Pledge. Similarly, Murphy's statement on national spending addresses his support of the Balanced Budget Act and his priority in cutting government spending, with his campaign slogan emphasizing his platform of lower taxes.

Immigration

Perry and Murphy also share similarities in their stance on legal and illegal immigration. Both statements recognize legal immigration as an important part of the United State's history, but have conservative standpoints regarding illegal immigration and an increase in border security. In her statement regarding immigration, Perry gives her support to Trump and his plan for a border wall, as well as increased technology and manpower at the border. Murphy shares this ideology, aiming for more secure borders and strongly enforce immigration laws that match the Republican party's platform on this issue.

Gun Policies

Both candidates address protection of the Second Amendment in their key issues listed in their platform. Perry and Murphy see enforcing the Second Amendment and ensuring that citizens can buy guns with no added background checks and burdens as necessary protection of people's constitutional rights. Gun control is a divisive issue between Democrats and Republicans, and both top candidates in this special election held strong conservative beliefs on this political issue.

Abortion

One of the primary causes behind the more liberal perception of women candidates is the idea that even strong conservative women will tend to be more liberal on traditionally women's issues such as abortion. However, in this special election, Perry demonstrates that women can be ideologically diverse. Perry stated throughout her campaign that she is strongly pro-life and believes that life begins at conception. She has also expressed support for defunding Planned Parenthood, and believes that her experience as a pediatrician brings an important voice to the House and in pushing for pro-life legislation. Murphy shares a similar belief on the topic, stating that he is "solidly prolife and will do all within my power to protect the innocent unborn" (Greg Murphy for Congress 2019).

Overall, these two candidates do not display any significant differences between their statements and policy preferences on these major issues for voters, and both side with the Republican party's platform, even on issues such as abortion where women are believed to be more left-leaning. The similar ideologies of Murphy and Perry despite their perceptions among voters and party leaders, as well as the similarities of their life experience, help control for the impact of gender within this special election and reveal some of the key differences between Democrats and Republicans in regards to gender representation and the use of identity politics in elections. While the Democratic party often discusses the necessity to increase the number of

women within their party, the culture within the Republican party and the perception and ultimate loss of Joan Perry in the North Carolina election helps reveal the impact ideology can have in creating barriers for Republican women and therefore increasing the partisan gender gap.

Discussion

The correlation analysis between individual women donors, PAC donations to female candidates, and the number of Republican and Democratic women in Congress throughout the years helps demonstrate the significance and potential impact of fundraising on the success of women running for elected offices. In both individual donations and PAC donations, there is a significant positive correlation between the amount raised for Democratic women candidates each year and the number of Democratic women represented in the Congress that year. This demonstrates that in the Democratic party, there is evidence that fundraising and donations to women play a significant role in increasing representation. EMILY's list, the primary PAC donor to pro-choice Democratic women, therefore may have significant influence and potential to increase the number of women represented in Congress, as increasing their donations and support for women candidates has the potential to continue to help them improve their representation and reach gender parity within the Democratic party. A similar trend is seen in individual donations, as there is a significant correlation found between donations from women to Democratic women candidates and the number of Democratic women in Congress following that election cycle.

Despite this trend among Democratic women, there was no significant correlation found between donations to Republican women and gender representation of these women. This partisan difference demonstrates evidence for fundraising as a potential factor for the increasing gender partisan gap in recent years. As fundraising increases for Democratic women, it creates

greater potential for numbers and representation to increase that election cycle, as seen in the large growth in Democratic women in the 116th cycle. However, while the Democratic party increases their gender representation, increased fundraising and PACs for women in the Republican party does not correlate with this same level of growth. Therefore, while the number of Democratic women spiked along with the level of fundraising in recent years, the number of Republican women in Congress has remained steady or experienced a decline, as fundraising fails to create the same level of growth towards gender parity as seen among women in the Democratic party.

This concept can be seen in the special election in North Carolina between Joan Perry and Greg Murphy. While outside organizations were formed to help create better financial support for Republican women, Perry still lost by a large percentage to Murphy, despite receiving a large amount of financial assistance from outside groups aimed at increasing the representation of pro-life Republican women. This loss to a seemingly equal opponent, along with the lack of significant correlation between fundraising and representation for women within the Republican party, demonstrates that there are other factors playing a role in Republican women's lack of success in elections. Analyzing the policy position between two candidates with similar backgrounds, experiences, and policy preferences, it is evident that in a race between two similarly qualified and ideological candidates, gender plays a role in shaping the perception of candidates in the Republican party, as Murphy received backing from conservative organizations and was generally perceived as more conservative among party leaders and other members of the Republican party. In comparison, the endorsement of Perry from other Republican women in the house and GOP leaders, as well as the support of organizations centered around Republican women, created the perception of the involvement of identity politics and the prioritization of

gender over conservative values in this election. Despite Perry's similar record and beliefs in comparison to her opponent, the perception of her as liberal created further barriers for her in a strong Republican district. Overall, this provides an understanding of some of the way the culture and ideology within the Republican party form stereotypes that limit women's abilities to succeed and win elected offices, despite their conservative views and similar qualifications as their opponents.

This research demonstrates that money within elections can often provide a means for Democratic women to increase their representation, and an increase in donations from PACs and individual donors creates a significant increase in Democratic women's representation. However, this trend is not found between individual and PAC donations and women within the Republican party. This lack of significant evidence regarding the role of fundraising for Republican women reveals a potential barrier for GOP women running for offices. While Democratic women receive greater advantages from increases in financial assistance, Republican women do not have this advantage that comes from raising money and increasing their financial backing and support. The lack of significance in this correlation analysis for Republican women shows that even when there is a greater focus on donations and raising money for Republican women running for office, it will not necessarily help create an increase in representation, and there are factors outside of money that contribute to the increasing gender partisan gap.

While financial aspects of campaigns provide a path towards representation for Democratic women as opposed to Republican women, this factor alone does not explain the persistence of the gender partisan gap. The use of Republican PACs for women in the North Carolina election demonstrates that focusing primarily on funding will not close the gap. The growth of the partisan gap is a result of many factors that interact to create barriers for

Republican women, including party ideology and donations. A report from Political Parity examines how these factors work together to create barriers that continue to prevent Republican women from reaching gender parity across all levels and throughout various stages in the election process. They find that members of the Republican party are not familiar with many pro-life and conservative women's PACs, or party efforts to recruit women to the Republican party. The PAC "Susan B. Anthony List, which endorses pro-life congressional candidates, is most familiar to GOP donors. Yet nearly 4 in 10 donors (37 percent) have never heard of the group. Conservative women's PACs are nearly unknown; more than 90 percent of Republican Party donors have never heard of either ShePAC (91 percent) or VIEW PAC (95 percent), and 3 in 4 donors didn't know of Maggie's List (77 percent)" (Healey et. al. 2015:22). While EMILY's List provides necessary donations to Democratic women that help improve their congressional representation, it is also well known throughout both parties and among party leaders, and therefore has significant influence and ability to help women increase their political ambition and success. However, when Republican party leaders and donors are unaware of efforts to improve representation and the importance of recruitment and representation for GOP women, it limits the influence of organizations that promote gender parity. A lack of support among leaders creates less understanding throughout the party of the diverse ideology of women and how they can fit within the culture of a conservative party. Until there is an overall shift in understanding and recognition of the importance of increasing gender equality, the impact of donations and outside organizations will continue to be limited and unable to have a significant influence in increasing support of qualified women candidates.

Limitations

There are various factors outside of donations and ideology that create barriers for Republican women in Congress. While this study focused primarily on the role of individual and PAC donations and ideological aspects during campaigns, other researchers have pointed to aspects such as recruitment strategy and party leader support as limitations for Republican women seeking office. While these factors may contribute to the gender partisan gap, and require further research in order to fully understand their role and impact in Congress, there is a limited amount of existing quantitative data regarding recruitment strategies and party leader support for women in the Democratic and Republican party. As there continues to be a focus on women's representation in politics, more data and research will be required in order to fully understand the causes behind the partisan gender gap, and how they contribute to the persisting decline of Republican women in Congress and political offices across all levels.

Conclusion

With the recency of the 2018 election and the success of Democratic women in office, it is necessary to continue this research to gain a better understanding of the partisan gender gap and the factors that prevent gender equality for women in the Republican party. Greater amounts of time and resources in future studies can contribute to these results by analyzing future elections following the changes made by the Republican party since the 2018 midterm election, and examine how the increased focus on representation for Republican women and the role of PACs that benefit these GOP women will factor into future elections. While this study did not address an intersectionality approach, further contributions can also be made to this topic by focusing on women of color and other minorities in the GOP, and understanding how the interaction between these factors play a role in party fit and the culture and perception of

members of the Republican party that may place Republican women at a disadvantage. Continuing to examine these factors in future elections can help provide a basis to understand how the Republican party can improve women's representation and experience comparable growth to Democratic women that will help close the overall existing gender gap in Congress.

In political offices today, there are various factors that shape the continuous and increasing gender gap between the Democratic and Republican party. This research highlights two potential factors-funding and ideology-and examines how they work together to create barriers for Republican women running for Congress. Understanding the causes of this gender gap is a necessary step in achieving complete gender parity in Congress. Even with the record number of women in the 116th Congress, women continue to be underrepresented as a whole, as the Republican party has failed to address the need for equal representation and opportunity for women within their party. Until there are equal opportunities for women across the political spectrum, Congress will be unable to grow and improve to reach complete gender equality.

Along with the negative impact on women in Congress as a whole, Republican women also face negative consequences as a result of the barriers they face within their party. They experience misconceptions while running for office despite their ideologies and beliefs, and receive unfair treatment and lack of support from party leaders and other members of the Republican party. This decline of Republican women in Congress also continues to discourage other women from office, leading to a cycle of underrepresentation that limits women's ambition and opportunities to run for office.

Overall, since the 2018 midterms, Republican women have made many changes that aim to address this issue and increase their representation. Elise Stefanik has prioritized the increase of GOP women's representation following the results of the midterm and special election in

North Carolina. The creation of PACs and a greater emphasis on training for campaigns provides Republican women the financial backing to run for office, and as these PACs grow and increase, greater influence and resources will help provide candidates a better understanding of how to work around barriers and gain opportunities in politics. Further steps are still needed to increase gender equality in Congress and throughout the Republican party. However, an increase in research and the various factors that result in the gender partisan gap will provide a basis of understanding how to address these issues and enact change that will help Republican women overcome obstacles and achieve gender equality.

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