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## The Influence of Campaign Contributions on Proportionality of Representation in the United States Congress

Jamesha Cox  
*University of Central Florida*

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THE INFLUENCE OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS ON  
PROPORTIONALITY OF REPRESENTATION IN THE UNITED STATES  
CONGRESS

by

JAMESHA L. COX

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science (Pre-Law Track)  
in the College of Sciences  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term 2013

Thesis Chair: Dr. Aubrey Jewett

## **ABSTRACT**

There are proportionally fewer Hispanic Americans, African Americans and women in Congress than in the United States population. Existing literature prescribes a variety of explanations for this disparity including skewed nominations procedures, differing participation rates, racial gerrymandering, voting biases, and funding inequities.

This study revisits one aspect of the underrepresentation issue: campaign contributions. Money has been an integral component of the electoral process since before the American Revolution and its impact on the current composition of Congress ought to be explored to a greater extent.

Previous research shows that contributors rarely, if at all, discriminate on the basis of gender. This study intends to further investigate the congressional campaign funding of African Americans and provide some much needed insight regarding the campaign financing of Hispanic American candidates. Using financial and biographical data from each candidate within the 2004 and 2008 election cycles, a multiple regression model will be employed to evaluate the extent to which gender and minority status determine the distribution of congressional campaign funds independent of other electability traits considered influential by contributors (the percentage of vote received in the last election, incumbency, and the leadership position held are indications of candidate strength that affect campaign contributions). The magnitude and statistical significance of these coefficients provides further understanding into funding inequities.

## **DEDICATION**

To God who has been my rock of refuge and source of strength, and for His word in Romans 5:3-4 that kept me through the journey of completing this work. I also dedicate this thesis project to my parents, James and Shevelle Cox, for their enduring support and encouragement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Thesis Chair, Dr. Aubrey Jewett, for his continuous and unfailing support throughout the lengthy time period it took to finalize this research. To Dr. Barbara Kinsey, thank you for your words of encouragement, invaluable assistance with data analysis, and for contributing your expertise to better my work. Your facilitation of the Scope and Methods of Political Science course nurtured my interest in political research and analysis. To Dr. Amanda Koontz-Anthony, thank you for serving on my thesis committee and providing your valuable insight. To Kelly Astro and Denise Crisafi, thank you for your support and guidance throughout the process.

Finally, I want to give my deepest gratitude to my family, particularly my parents, without whose emotional support the completion of my thesis would be purely impossible.

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## INTRODUCTION

While Hispanic Americans make up sixteen percent of the United States population, members of this ethnic-minority group constitute less than six percent of congressional seats (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Thirteen percent of the country’s population is comprised of African Americans, but this group occupies only about eight percent of the national legislative body. Although women account for more than half of the nation’s populations, they only represent about seventeen percent of Congress (Manning, 2011). Existing literature prescribes a variety of explanations for this disparity including skewed nominations procedures (Rule, 1981), differing participation rates (Shingles, 1981), racial gerrymandering (Engstrom and Wildgen, 1977), voting biases (Eckstrand and Eckert, 1981), and funding inequities (Wilhite and Theilmann, 1991).

Table 1. Racial and Gender Composition of the 112th Congress

Racial and Gender Composition of the 112th Congress (including Delegates and Resident Commissioner)			
	Male	Female	Total
White	386 (86%)	65 (71.4%)	451 (83.5%)
African American	29 (6.5%)	15 (16.5%)	44 (8%)
Hispanic American	24 (5.3%)	7 (7.7%)	31 (6%)
Asian American	9 (2%)	4 (4.4%)	13 (2.4%)
American Indian	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%)
Total	449 (82.8%)	91 (16.8%)	540 <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. House membership usually consists of 435 members, 5 Delegates, and 1 Resident Commissioner. The office of the First Congressional District of Oregon is currently vacant due to the resignation of Representative David Wu on August 3, 2011.



Since before the American Revolution<sup>2</sup>, money has been an integral component of the electoral process and its impact on the current composition of Congress ought to be examined. The influence of money on Capitol Hill has been scrutinized consistently, and there appears to be an enduring policy debate surrounding campaign finance reform (Goidel, Gross, Shields 1999, Baik 2004).

Would the diminution of the role of money in the electoral process revamp the makeup of Congress and subsequently the position of historically underrepresented groups? To what extent does the gender and racial minority status of House candidates<sup>3</sup> affect the distribution of congressional campaign contributions? If contributor bias exists, can funding shortfalls be attributed to electability differences or prejudice on the basis of gender/race?

Using financial and biographical data from each candidate within the 2004 and 2008 election cycles, a multiple regression model will be employed to evaluate the extent to which gender and minority status determine the distribution of congressional campaign funds independent of other electability traits considered influential by contributors.

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<sup>2</sup> According to scholars John Theilmann and Al Wilhite (1991), “[e]ven in the colonial era, candidates were expected to stand drinks for the crowd” while campaigning (35).

<sup>3</sup> The very small number of Hispanic American, African American and women candidates for the Senate causes statistical analysis to be impossible, thus explaining my choice to analyze solely the House.

## **GENDER AND MINORITY REPRESENTATION: 2004 AND 2008 ELECTION CYCLES**

### Representation in 2004 Election Cycle

#### *Hispanic American Candidates*

The 2010 census indicates that Hispanic Americans are now considered the largest ethnic-racial minority group in the United States. Furthermore, the forty-three percent increase of the Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010 accounted for more than half of overall growth (ten percent) in the total U.S. population. Given these facts, the disconsolate representation level of Hispanics has become more evident.

Although two new Hispanic members joined the U.S. House of Representatives, the 2004 election culminated in a net increase of just one Hispanic member (De la Garza, Desipio, and Leal, 2010). Hispanic Democrat and incumbent congressman Ciro Rodriguez was defeated by fellow Hispanic Henry Cuellar in the 2004 Primary Election in Texas. Republican Greg Walcher was defeated by Hispanic candidate John Salazar in a Colorado open-seat race.

With the election of Florida Republican Melquiades Martinez and Colorado Democrat Ken Salazar (brother of John Salazar), the 2004 election marked the first time more than one Hispanic American served simultaneously in the United States Senate and represented a state besides New Mexico (De la Garza, Desipio, and Leal, 2010). Considering the fact that no Hispanic Senators had served since 1977, the 2004 election designated an inspiring change in Hispanic American representation.

Despite signs of progression in the 2004 election cycle, Hispanic Americans occupied less than 5 percent of congressional seats within the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### *African American Candidates*

According to Bositis (2005), sixty-two major-party nominees for United States Congress in 2004 were African American. The number of forty-seven Democratic nominees and the number of four African American major-party nominees for the Senate body set record highs. Fifteen of the major-party nominees were Republican – nine less nominees than in 1994 and 2000. The 2004 election marked the first time both of a state’s (Illinois, in this case) majority-party nominees were African American.

Following the 2004 election, an increase of four African American members (Al Green from Texas, Emmanuel Cleaver from Missouri, Gwen Moore from Wisconsin and Representative Cynthia McKinney returning from Georgia<sup>4</sup>) were present in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress compared to the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Out of forty-seven Democratic nominees, forty-three won a congressional seat (sixteen incumbents within the U.S. House ran unopposed). All of the African American Republican nominees were unsuccessful in their respective races.

Overall, the 2004 election concluded with forty African American Democratic representatives within the House and one African American senator (Barack Obama from Illinois), and two black Democratic delegates.

### *Female Candidates*

As reported by the Center for American Women and Politics, sixty-five women served in the U.S. House following the 2004 election. Among the one hundred forty-one general election candidates for the House (a new record high exceeding the one hundred twenty-four candidates in 2002), fifty-

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<sup>4</sup> Representative Cynthia McKinney, of Georgia, regained the congressional seat she lost following the 2002 election cycle.

seven incumbents were seeking re-election (37 Democrats, 20 Republicans), sixty-five challengers opposing incumbents (41 Democrats, 24 Republicans), and nineteen candidates for open seat races (10 Democrats, 9 Republicans). The 2004 election yielded a net gain of five female candidates (eight women were newly elected to the U.S. House and three women vacated their congressional seats). All fifty-seven incumbents were re-elected.

In regards to the United States Senate, ten female candidates (9 Democrats, 1 Republican) were victorious in gaining their respective parties' nomination in 2004. Among the ten candidates, five were incumbents (4 Democrats, 1 Republican) seeking to be re-elected, two were challengers (2 Democrats), and three female candidates (3 Democrats) sought open seats. Even though all five of the incumbents won re-election, the U.S. Senate did not gain any new female senators.

### Representation in 2008 Election Cycle

#### *Hispanic American Candidates*

With the election of New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner Ben R. Lujan, there were a total of twenty-four voting Hispanic Americans serving within the U.S. House following the 2008 election cycle. All twenty-three Hispanic American incumbents reclaimed their respective congressional seats. The three Hispanic senators were not up for re-election in 2008 (NALEO Education Fund).

#### *African American Candidates*

Considering the fact that 2008 resulted in the election of the first African American President, Barack Obama, the election year signaled some progression for this minority group. Fifty-six major-party nominees were African American. There were forty-seven Democratic nominees and nine Republican nominees.

Forty-two of the forty-seven Democratic nominees won congressional seats (fifteen incumbents ran opposed for the U.S. House). The nine African American Republican nominees lost their respective races.

The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress was made up of forty African American Democratic representatives, one African American senator (Roland Burris was appointed to replace President-Elect Barack Obama as then-junior senator from Illinois) and two African American Democratic delegates. Following the 2008 election, there was just one newly elected African American member to the U.S. House of Representatives, Marcia Fudge (Democrat from Ohio), “who was elected to the seat held by the late Stephanie Tubbs Jones” (Bositis, 2008). There were two African American nominees for the United States Senate in Mississippi and Alabama who were not elected<sup>5</sup>.

### *Female Candidates*

Throughout thirty-eight states, approximately one hundred thirty-three female major-party candidates sought congressional seats. Amongst these one hundred thirty-three female candidates, sixty-seven (50 Democrats, 17 Republicans) incumbents were seeking re-election, fifty-five (37 Democrats, 18 Republicans) were challengers, and eleven female candidates were campaigning to win open-seat races (throughout ten districts).

Following the 2008 election, a record-setting<sup>6</sup> total of seventy-five women served in the U.S. House. Eleven newly elected women (9 Democrats, 2 Republicans) accompanied the sixty-four incumbents (49 Democrats, 15 Republicans) who won re-election. The newly elected female candidates were

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<sup>5</sup> Of the 1,931 men and women who have held the distinction of being an U.S. Senator, only six African Americans and seven Hispanic Americans have served, according to the Senate Historical Office.

<sup>6</sup> The record of 71 congresswomen serving in the United States House of Representatives was set in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

comprised of six victors who won open seat races (5 Democrats, 1 Republican) and 5 challengers (4 Democrats, 1 Republican) who successfully unseated incumbents.

In the 2008 election cycle, U.S. Senate races were conducted in thirty-three states (in six of those states, seven women received major-party nominations). Following the 2008 election, a new record of seventeen female senators (13 Democrat, 4 Republicans) served in the United States Senate. A total of four women (3 Democrats, 1 Republican) won their respective Senate elections. Newly elected Jeanne Shaheen (Democrat from New Hampshire) and Kay Hagan (Democrat from North Carolina who defeated Republican incumbent Elizabeth Dole) assembled alongside re-elected incumbents Mary Landrieu (Democrat from Louisiana) and Susan Collins (Republican from Maine). According to the CAWP, “[t]hirteen incumbent women did not face re-election”.

### Descriptive Representation

Scholars (e.g. Griffiths & Wollheim, 1960; Pitkin, 1967) define the concept of descriptive representation as the idea in which the representative exemplifies a group within their constituency by virtue of sharing comparative attributes such as race, gender, ethnicity, or residence. Although the level of gender and minority representation has undoubtedly progressed over time, these underrepresented groups have yet to establish a degree of parity in descriptive representation. According to previous researchers (e.g., see Hero, 1998; King-Meadows & Schaller, 2006), a group will be considered to have accomplished parity “when the percentage is approximately equivalent between a constituency and a corresponding government body” (Villalobos, 2011). As displayed in Table 1, when one compares the current demography of today's American electorate with that of the United States Congress, large disparities in descriptive representation prevail.

## **INEQUITIES IN DISTRIBUTION OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Campaigning costs can amass rapidly due to the fact that congressional candidates in the United States are tasked with the complex assignment of gaining name recognition and broadcasting their political agenda, while simultaneously securing and mobilizing individuals within the voting populace. The significant influence of money on congressional campaigns has been investigated (e.g., Jacobson 1980, 1985, Sabato 1984, Sorauf 1988, Magleby and Nelson 1990). Additionally, other researchers (Welch 1981 and Malbin 1984) have identified that a strong relationship exists between campaign finances and votes received. The perception is that the candidate that has the most funds will emerge as a winner in most congressional elections. Further, if women and members of minority groups cannot acquire proportionate funds to coordinate an effective campaign, then they will undoubtedly face adversity in their respective races.

Studies regarding the impact of gender and/or minority status<sup>7</sup> on the distribution of congressional campaign funds are limited to a handful (e.g., Uhlaner and Schlozman 1986, Burrell 1986, Wilhite and Theilmann 1986, and Theilmann and Wilhite 1991).

In their 1986 study, *Candidate Gender and Congressional Campaign Receipts*, Carole Jean Uhlaner and Kay Lehman Schlozman explored the notion that female candidates are disadvantaged in regards to raising campaign funds when compared to male candidates. In conducting their analysis of whether gender had an independent effect on campaign financing, the researchers examined gender status independent of other variables. Citing several studies of premier scholar Gary Jacobson, the

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<sup>7</sup> While there is literature available (e.g. Radelat 1998) that explores the underrepresentation of Hispanic Americans in state and local offices—one could not acquire any outstanding research relevant to the intended focus of this study on congressional campaign funding inequities. The absence of literature available that effectively explores the apparent disparity between the number of Hispanic American representatives and the growing Hispanic population in the United States warrants further research.

researchers implemented control variables including incumbency status, party affiliation, the receipts of opponents, political experience prior to election, and percentage of vote received in the previous election. Uhlaner and Schlozman discovered that “female candidates do not receive less money than male candidates having similar attributes” (33). Furthermore, they noted a statistically insignificant relationship between gender and campaign financing. Uhlaner and Schlozman concluded that challenger status was the major determinant of the amount of receipts acquired by a candidate. Ashley Baker, author of *Reexamining the Gender Implications of Campaign Finance Reform: How Higher Ceilings on Individual Donations Disproportionately Impact Female Candidates*, is critical of the conclusions that Uhlaner and Schlozman drew from their findings. Baker (2006) argues that the researchers were inaccurate in their conclusion that no statistically significant relationship existed between gender status and the distribution of campaign contributions:

When fundraising is disaggregated to consider the sources and amounts given to women, a clear difference emerges in the capacity of women to raise money from PACs and to collect large individual contributions. Similarly, when women are further differentiated into successful and unsuccessful candidates, women who win have demonstrably more money than either other female candidates or their victorious male counterparts (19).

Baker’s critical review of Uhlaner and Schlozman’s work establishes the need for this study to disaggregate campaign funding to examine the sources of contributions received by candidates. Within their much-cited work, *Discrimination and Congressional Contributions*, John Thielmann and Al Wilhite (1991) detected the presence of racial funding differentials when examining aggregate campaign contributions independent of other electability traits rewarded by contributors. While their results revealed that African American candidates receive less aggregate funding than White candidates, Thielmann and White found that contributors rarely if at all discriminated on the basis of gender:



The coefficient on the black variable was negative in all elections and significantly so in four of the five cases. The size of the shortfall ranged from a low of \$7,000 to a high of nearly \$30,000. Apparently, being a black candidate in 1988 reduced a candidate's campaign contributions by nearly \$30,000.

After controlling for attributes such as candidate strength, opposition strength, party affiliation, and the incumbency advantage, black candidates received substantially lower level of funds than did nonblack candidates. Because the primary determinants of candidates' fund-raising abilities are included in the analysis, the differential appears to be racially motivated. Results for female candidates were less dramatic. In all five election cycles there was no discernible funding differential between male and female candidates (76-77).

Throughout their analysis, Thielmann and Wilhite held that contributors are motivated by various factors (formulated from candidate characteristics) when making their decision to financially support a specific candidate. For example, one may argue that one of several motives for contributions is to gain access to representatives. Due to the fact that a losing candidate cannot provide access, contributors are strongly focused on the probability of victory. According to Theilmann and Wilhite, contributors are more likely to financially support candidates they view as strong (i.e., high vote percentage received in preceding election or high percentage of the vote garnered by the party's candidate in the previous election for nonincumbents) and influential (i.e., incumbency status and occupancy of a congressional leadership position) in the hopes of receiving a political benefit.

The factors indicative of candidate strength and influence, identified by researchers (Jacobson 1978, 1980; Uhlaner and Schlozman 1986; Theilmann and Wilhite 1991), that contributors are expected to reward will be included in this study.

## METHODOLOGY

Using financial and biographical data from each candidate within the 2004 and 2008 election cycles, I intend to evaluate the extent to which gender and minority status determine the distribution of congressional campaign funds independent of other electability traits considered influential by contributors. I will employ a multiple regression model that includes the various factors that have been found to affect campaign receipts.

According to Theilmann and Wilhite, examining aggregate campaign contributions has its limitations and conclusions regarding direct discrimination<sup>8</sup> should not be hastily drawn (58). In general, candidates who are viewed as strong and influential by contributors prove to be more successful in acquiring campaign funds. The explanations, cited earlier, for the disproportionate gender and minority representation within the United States Congress may also explain funding inequities. If female and minority candidates have a decreased probability of winning elections than do White male candidates, their ability to collect campaign funding will also be impaired. If skewed nomination procedures, inferior participation rates (which leads to weaker female and minority candidates), racial gerrymandering, and voting biases hinder the success of female and minority candidates, then these underrepresented groups will also obtain less campaign financing from contributors even if contributors are not discriminating on the basis of gender or minority status. Considering the perspective that “[f]unding shortfalls may follow electability differences instead of signaling a racial or sexual prejudice”, the inclusion of several control variables are required to

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<sup>8</sup> Theilmann and Wilhite (1991) state that direct discrimination “entails contributors who are culturally biased and who therefore reduce or eliminate contributions” to female and minority candidates because of their gender and/or race. On the other hand, indirect discrimination “may occur if contributions are based on a candidate's political attributes such as perceived chances of winning or political clout” (59-60).

differentiate between definite funding inequities produced by contributor bias and determinants impacting candidate support (58).

Previous research suggests that the percentage of the vote received in the last election (Previous Election Percentage), incumbency (Incumbent Challenger Status) and the leadership position held (Leadership Ranking) are all indications of candidate strength that affect campaign contributions (Theilmann and Wilhite 1991). In both election cycles, I expect all three of these variables to be statistically significant and yield positive coefficients. Incumbents are expected to receive more financial support simply because of seniority and greater probability to obtain congressional leadership positions in comparison to freshman representatives. Furthermore, the distinguished members of House committees and the Speaker, majority and minority leaders, and whips<sup>9</sup> are expected to receive more funding. The Democratic dummy variable, Party Affiliation, exhibits the intrinsic funding differentials of the two major political parties. According to Theilmann and Wilhite, it is vital to consider party affiliation because African Americans are disproportionately members of the Democratic Party. The exclusion of this variable would “confuse party effects with race and sex differentials” (Thielmann and Wilhite 70).

The coefficients on the race and gender dummy variables (African American, Hispanic American and Female) should estimate the extent to which gender and race affects campaign funding independent of other control variables. The coefficients on these race and gender dummy variables may indicate discrimination as a factor that contributors employ during the distribution of campaign funds, which in turn could seek to explain the incommensurate composition of the United States

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Office of the Historian within the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressional Whips (elected by their respective party conferences) serve as assistants to the floor leaders by “managing the party’s legislative program on the House floor”. Further, the Whip tracks all legislation and ensures that “all party members are present when important measures are to be voted upon”.

Congress. The magnitude and statistical significance of these coefficients will provide further understanding into funding inequities.

I expect the Party Affiliation variable will produce a negative coefficient, based on the well-documented idea that Republican candidates generally collect more campaign funds than Democratic candidates (Theilmann and Wilhite 1991). I anticipate that the Hispanic American and African American candidates received less campaign financing than White candidates in both election cycles. For this reason, I foresee the two race dummy variables yielding negative effects and being statistically significant in both cases. Considering previous studies show that contributors rarely (if at all) discriminate on the basis of gender, I expect that the gender dummy variable (Female) will produce positive coefficients in both the 2004 and 2008 election cycles.

Although the main scope of this study is to examine the distribution of aggregate contributions, I will also consider the sources (individuals, party committees, and other political committees) and amount of campaign funding provided to women and minority candidates. I figure that this additional approach to data analysis will provide a more detailed examination of the ability of these underrepresented groups to raise campaign funds. Even though I will be disaggregating campaign contributions to consider specific sources of funds, my hypotheses remains the same regarding the independent and racial/gender dummy variables (i.e., I expect minority candidates will receive less campaign funding than non-minority candidates regardless of the source).

## RESULTS

### Distribution of Aggregate Contributions

The results (shown in Table 2) of my multiple regression are consistent with the findings of Theilmann and Wilhite (1991), whom discovered no contributor bias on the basis of gender but exposed racial funding inequities. The coefficient on the African American variable was significantly negative in both elections at the .001 level. The size of the shortfall ranged from nearly \$275,000 to \$350,000. As can be seen in Table 2, African American candidates in 2004 encountered a campaign funding shortfall of approximately \$350,000. Although African American candidates received more funding in 2008 than they acquired in the 2004 election cycle, a funding differential still exists. The Hispanic American variable yielded negative coefficients in both elections and proved to be statistically significant at the .05  $\alpha$  level in the 2008 election. Thirty-six of the sixty-three Hispanic candidates in the 2008 election were challengers. As discussed earlier, challengers tend to receive less campaign financing than incumbents. The magnitude of the shortfall of campaign funding ranged from nearly \$86,500 in 2004 to \$188,000 in 2008. Female candidates prospered within the 2004 and 2008 House elections. The coefficients produced by the Female variable were positive (not statistically significant) in both cycles. These differentials, or lack thereof in the case for female candidates, remain after controlling for the principal candidate quality features.

Incumbency status and the percentage of the vote garnered in the last election are both determinants contributors viewed as strengths, according to previous studies. These variables have the expected positive coefficients and are significant in both election cycles. Leadership ranking of House candidates produced fluctuating results, with coefficients being statistically significant only in the 2004 election. In general, contributors were generous to congressional candidates with leadership ranking within the U.S. House.

The Democrat dummy variable yielded the expected negative coefficient in one of the two election cycles and affirmed the usual partisan financing differential. Democratic candidates experienced a statistically insignificant shortfall of contributions close to \$50,000 in the 2004 election cycle. On the other hand, Democrats acquired more funds (not statistically significant) than non-Democrats in the 2008 election. Considering that the Democratic deficit of funding occurred during the U.S. presidential election of 2004, one may ascertain that this relationship exhibits the strength at the top of the ticket because Republican Party candidate and incumbent President George W. Bush defeated then-Senator John Kerry (Democrat from Massachusetts). Likewise, the Democrats' surplus of campaign contributions in 2008 is indicative of the strength displayed by then-Senator Barack Obama (Democrat from Illinois) when he defeated Arizona Senator John McCain.

Table 2. Parameters for the Distribution of Total Campaign Contributions in U.S. House Election Cycles of 2004 and 2008

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Female	71554.153 (52066.007)	92600.519 (51776.532)
African American	-344852.220*** (83910.764)	-274903.280*** (77179.950)
Hispanic American	-86485.720 (80618.447)	-187744.248* (89866.859)
Previous Election Percentage	645898.218*** (80709.501)	1133867.656*** (85992.665)
Incumbent Challenger Status	497559.907*** (52097.320)	455008.872*** (54791.276)
Leadership Ranking	279189.757** (98368.780)	187440.415 (100988.363)
Party Affiliation	-49371.590 (38332.961)	50072.649 (38293.706)
Intercept	178552.636*** (31331.908)	152055.545*** (29618.207)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.280	.354
Number of cases	1267	1428

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors within the parentheses. Significance less than or equal to the .05  $\alpha$  level is indicated by \*, significance less than or equal to .01 is represented by \*\*, significance less than or equal to the level of significance of .001 is denoted by \*\*\*.

### Distribution of Individual Campaign Contributions

Accordant with the findings of Baker (2006), I found that female candidates collected a considerable amount of campaign contribution from individuals. As Table 3 shows, the Female variable produced positive coefficients in both election cycles, and significantly so, in 2008 (at the .05  $\sigma$  level). This result could be exhibitivive of the ‘Hillary Effect’<sup>10</sup> considering then-Senator Hilary Clinton was a popular candidate vying for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

As I expected, minorities received less campaign contributions from individuals in the 2004 and 2008 elections. The African American variable yielded significant negative effects in both election cycles (at the .001  $\sigma$  level). African Americans encountered individual contribution shortfalls ranging from approximately \$200, 000 to \$256,000. Hispanic Americans also received limited funding (funding differentials ranged from \$46,000 to \$135,009) from individual contributors. The large funding deficit evident in 2008 may be attributed to the fact that the majority (57 percent) of Hispanic candidates ran as challengers during the year’s election cycle.

The Previous Election Percentage produced the expected positive effects in both elections (statistically significant at the .001 level). Apparently, individuals contributed more campaign funds to candidates with a high probability of winning their respective races. The output of the Incumbency Challenger status variable was positive in both election cycles and significantly so in the 2004 election. Surprisingly, holding a leadership position in the U.S. House was less significant to individual contributors in 2008 than in the 2004 election. Candidates with leadership ranking experienced a funding shortfall of \$69,200 in 2008. Although not statistically significant, Democrats received less campaign contributions from individuals in both election cycles as anticipated.

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<sup>10</sup> A 2009 study (Taylor, C. et al.) discovered that women consider Hilary Clinton a role model “that inspires them in difficult situations.”



Table 3. Parameters for the Distribution of Individual Campaign Contributions in U.S. House Election Cycles of 2004 and 2008

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Female	61915.524 (39651.417)	103326.622* (41538.266)
African American	-255509.677*** (63903.129)	-199345.266*** (61918.425)
Hispanic American	-45854.871 (61395.830)	-135009.610 (72096.631)
Previous Election Percentage	449420.067*** (61465.173)	802681.790*** (68988.517)
Incumbent Challenger Status	197843.367*** (39675.264)	77549.734 (43956.876)
Leadership Ranking	66261.573 (74913.783)	-69190.331 (81018.974)
Party Affiliation	-22199.613 (29192.872)	-2661.642 (30721.527)
Intercept	141161.972*** (23861.145)	158187.115*** (23761.517)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.153	.179
Number of cases	1267	1428

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors within the parentheses. Significance less than or equal to the .05  $\alpha$  level is indicated by \*, significance less than or equal to .01 is represented by \*\*, significance less than or equal to the level of significance of .001 is denoted by \*\*\*.

### Distribution of Campaign Contributions from Party Committees

From the data in Table 4, it is apparent that a funding differential of campaign contributions from party committees does not exist in reference to female candidates. As anticipated, the Female variable produced positive effects (not statistically significant) in both election cycles.

Although statistically insignificant, African Americans received more financing from party committees in the 2008 election than in 2004. This unexpected positive effect may be reflective of the success of Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama, who was elected as the first African American President of the United States following the 2008 election. Although the results were not statistically significant, Hispanic Americans received less campaign funding from party committees. The Previous Election Percentage variable generated the expected positive effects. Like individual contributors, party committees invested in candidates with a high chance of winning congressional seats. The most striking result to emerge from the data, within Table 4, is that Leadership Ranking produced negative coefficients in both election cycles. Evidently, a candidate's occupancy of a leadership position in the U.S. House of Representatives did not motivate party committees to contribute more funds. Incumbents received significantly (at the .05  $\alpha$  level) less funding from party committees in the 2008 election than in 2004. As expected, Democrats acquired less campaign funds from party committees and significantly so in 2008 (at the .001 level).

Table 4. Parameters for the Distribution of Campaign Contributions from Party Committees in U.S. House Election Cycles of 2004 and 2008

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Female	118.389 (948.818)	97.735 (420.281)
African American	-482.323 (1529.137)	503.919 (626.487)
Hispanic American	-1947.430 (1469.140)	-855.784 (729.469)
Previous Election Percentage	4170.482** (1470.799)	5833.547*** (698.021)
Incumbent Challenger Status	1024.101 (949.389)	-1300.925** (444.753)
Leadership Ranking	-2547.851 (1792.610)	-924.272 (819.745)
Party Affiliation	-730.980 (698.556)	-1010.636*** (310.838)
Intercept	1827.355*** (570.973)	1326.977*** (240.417)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.013	.052
Number of cases	1267	1428

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors within the parentheses. Significance less than or equal to the .05  $\alpha$  level is indicated by \*, significance less than or equal to .01 is represented by \*\*, significance less than or equal to the level of significance of .001 is denoted by \*\*\*.

### Distribution of Campaign Contributions from Other Political Committees

The single most striking observation to appear from the data, shown in Table 5, is that female candidates received less funding (statistically insignificant shortfall of nearly \$11,000) from other political committees in 2008. The expected positive effect was generated in the 2004 election cycle. As I expected, the African American variable yielded a statistically significant negative effect in both election cycles (at the .001 level in 2004 and .01 level in 2008). African American candidates experienced a funding deficit of campaign contributions from other political committees ranging from \$76,000 to \$89,000. Although statistically insignificant, Hispanic American candidates collected limited funds from other political committees in the election cycles of 2004 and 2008 (funding shortfalls ranging from \$39,000 to \$52,000 can be observed in Table 5).

The Previous Election Percentage, Incumbent Challenger Status, and Leadership Ranking variable produced the anticipated significant positive affects in both election cycles (at the .001 level). Seemingly, other political committees responded most favorably to strong incumbents in U.S. House leadership positions.

Although Democrats encountered a campaign funding shortfall of nearly \$26,500 in 2004 (statistically significant at the .05  $\alpha$  level), candidates affiliated with the Democratic Party surprisingly fared better in regards to receiving more (statistically significant at the .001 level) campaign contributions from other political committees in the 2008 election. As noted earlier, this may be indicative of the 'Obama Effect'.

Table 5. Parameters for the Distribution of Campaign Contributions from Other Political Committees in U.S. House Election Cycles of 2004 and 2008

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Female	9520.240 (17067.306)	-10823.838 (17657.737)
African American	-88860.220*** (27506.060)	-76061.934** (26321.254)
Hispanic American	-38683.419 (26426.834)	-51878.854 (30647.965)
Previous Election Percentage	192307.669*** (26456.682)	325352.319*** (29326.719)
Incumbent Challenger Status	298692.439*** (17077.571)	378760.064*** (18685.877)
Leadership Ranking	215476.035*** (32245.417)	257555.018*** (34440.814)
Party Affiliation	-26440.997* (12565.596)	53744.928*** (13059.588)
Intercept	35563.309*** (10270.641)	-7458.547 (10100.918)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.465	.567
Number of cases	1267	1428

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors within the parentheses. Significance less than or equal to the .05  $\alpha$  level is indicated by \*, significance less than or equal to .01 is represented by \*\*, significance less than or equal to the level of significance of .001 is denoted by \*\*\*.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to evaluate the extent to which gender and minority status determine the distribution of congressional campaign funds, independent of other electability traits considered influential by contributors. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that there is no significant funding disparity between female and male candidates. Further, women have the ability to collect significantly (at the .05  $\alpha$  level in 2008) large individual contributions and campaign funds from party committees.

The evidence from this study suggests that racial discrimination in the distribution of campaign contributions to African American candidates existed in the election cycles of 2004 and 2008. African American candidates collected significantly low amounts of campaign financing in comparison to non-African Americans in both election cycles, even after the inclusion of control variables including Party Affiliation, Previous Election Percentage, Incumbent Challenger Status, and Leadership Ranking. The apparent funding inequity seems to be influenced by race due to the fact that the major factors of candidates' strength and ability to raise campaign funds were incorporated within the analysis. Further analysis showed that African American candidates' funding differentials largely remained in spite of considering sources of campaign financing separate from aggregate contributions. Throughout the course of data analysis, the only positive development for African American candidates was that members of this minority group received more (statistically insignificant) funding of about \$500 from party committees in the 2008 election.

It was also shown that the Hispanic Americans encountered funding differentials in both elections, and proved to be significantly so in the 2008 election. The funding disadvantage (significant at .05  $\alpha$  level) in 2008 amounted to approximately \$188,000. In 2008, more than half (57 percent) of

Hispanic candidates were challengers; because challengers are viewed as weaker by contributors, one can ascertain that this is the primary reason for the significant funding disparity. When total campaign contributions were disaggregated to consider sources of funding, Hispanic American candidates were still found to be at a disadvantage (compared to non-Hispanics) in their pursuit to raise funds in both election cycles. However, none of these funding differentials were statistically significant.

The percentage of the vote received in the previous election (Previous Election Percentage) and incumbency status (Incumbency Challenger Status) emerged as the most reliable predictors of candidate strength and significantly affected a candidate's ability to collect campaign contributions in both elections.

The multiple regression analysis confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests when contributors (whether an individual or Political Action Committee) compare like candidates, minority status matters.

Further work needs to be done to establish whether other factors such as age, level of education, occupation, or religion play a role in contributor biases. A further study comparing campaign contributions received during U.S. presidential and mid-term elections would be very interesting. Additionally, an intersectional analysis would be important to see the interactions between gender and race (e.g. African American women).

## **APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES AND VARIABLE DEFINITIONS**



## DATA SOURCES AND VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

### DATA SOURCES

Each candidate's financial data used within this study was derived from the Candidate Financial Summaries arranged by the Federal Election Commission. These files contained information on total campaign contributions for every candidate for the House and Senate. Additionally, the files included subcategories such as total individual contributions, contributions from party committees, and contributions from other political committees. Geographical (state and district of the candidates) and election data (such as vote percentages) were also provided within the FEC files.

In reference to obtaining biographical data, the gender and minority status of the candidates were determined by reviewing various reports prepared by the Center for American Women and Politics (Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey), the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. Most of this data was also obtained from the United States Election 2004 and 2008 Library of Congress Web Archives. The Election Web Archives are a selective collection of thousands of Web sites affiliated with the United States Presidential, Congressional, and gubernatorial elections.

### VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

**African American:** A dummy variable coded as one for African American candidates and zero for non-African American candidates.

**Contributions from Other Political Committees:** Consists of all Political Action Committees (PAC) contributions, but may also contain contributions from other candidates, and some other types of committees the FEC does not necessarily deem as PACs.

**Contributions from Party Committees:** Campaign contributions to candidates from party committees.

**Female:** A dummy variable coded as one for female candidates and zero for male candidates.

**Hispanic American:** A dummy variable coded as one for Hispanic candidates and zero for non-Hispanics. The United States Census Bureau defines "Hispanic" as an individual who is of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture of origin regardless of race.

**Incumbent Challenger Status:** A dummy variable coded as one for incumbents and zero for non-incumbents (challengers).

**Individual Contributions:** Contributions from individuals to candidates. The FEC includes a candidate's own contributions to his or her own campaign in this category.

**Leadership Ranking:** A dummy variable coded as one for representatives who are considered leaders of the House –Speaker of the House, Republican and Democratic Whips, and majority and minority leaders. House standing committee chairs and ranking minority members are also coded as one. According to scholars John Theilmann and Al Wilhite, these particular representative are viewed as the most influential members of the House.

**Party Affiliation:** A dummy variable coded as one for candidates who identify as members of the Democratic Party. All other candidates are coded as zero.

**Previous Election Percentage:** Indicated as a decimal, this variable exhibits the percentage of the vote acquired by the candidate in the previous election. Due to the fact that candidates for open seats and challengers do not have a previous election vote percentage, a proxy must be entered. In this case, the vote percentage obtained by the candidate's party in the previous election is utilized. Albeit a fragment, this proxy captures the strength of the candidate. The strength of party affiliation within the district is also gathered by this variable.

**Total Contributions:** The sum of campaign contributions from all sources. This variable, measured in dollars, consists of total contributions collected by a candidate within the election cycle.

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