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Keywords

Politics, policy, wealth redistribution, inequality, money, polarization

Cover Page Footnote

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ABSTRACT

Both Democrats and Republicans have taken strong positions on wealth redistribution. But is there variance within the parties? I hypothesize that while moderate non-donors and moderate donors will favor increases in federal spending for such policies at similar rates, both liberal and conservative donors will be less likely to favor spending due to attachment to their personal wealth. This paper analyzes the differences in support for increasing the budgets of five wealth redistributive policies while controlling for political donations: public schools, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security. The research finds that moderates and moderate donors support do not differ. Liberal non-donors are more likely to favor increases in spending for public school and Social Security, while their donor counterparts favor childcare. Conservative donors are consistently less likely than non-donors to favor increases in spending on wealth redistributive policies. These findings expose a clear class split amongst conservatives and indicates a concerning divide between the Republican political elite and the constituents they are supposed to represent.

As political parties have become increasingly polarized, so too have many politicians' stances on individual issues. The Republican Party has made it clear that they are staunchly against large-scale wealth redistribution, while the Democratic Party has made this idea part of the fabric of their party's platform. Is there a clear split only between the parties, or do divisions exist within them? Donors tend to be wealthier than the average voter and therefore may have different values when it comes to wealth redistributive policies. While it may be obvious to assume that liberals will be in favor of wealth redistribution and conservatives against it, is there a difference in the level of support for such policies between donors and non-donors?

This distinction is important because it may reveal that elected officials favor the views of their donating constituents over those of non-donating constituents. In a political era dominated by campaign contributions, it is critical to understand how money affects the policies politicians choose to pursue and support. Additionally, wealthier donors may not understand the importance of wealth redistributive policies such as aid to the poor, welfare, and Social Security because they have never had to rely on it. On a more egalitarian note, it is important that all voices are represented in politics in order to ensure that its outcomes are representative of its people.

This research seeks to identify disparities within political ideologies as they pertain to wealth redistributive policies. I hypothesize that while moderate

non-donors and moderate donors will favor increases in federal spending for such policies at similar rates, both liberal donors and conservative donors will be less likely to favor spending than liberal non-donors and conservative non-donors due to attachment to their personal wealth. This paper analyzes the differences in support for increasing the budgets of five wealth redistributive policies while controlling for political donations: public schools, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security. The research finds that moderates' and moderate donors' levels of support do not differ. Liberal non-donors are more likely to favor increases in spending for public school and Social Security, while their donor counterparts are more likely to favor an increase in spending for childcare. Conservative donors are consistently less likely than non-donors to favor increases in spending on wealth redistributive policies. These findings expose slight differences between liberals non-donors and liberal donors, but more significantly, a glaring class split amongst conservatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wealth redistribution was one of the most salient topics of the 2016 presidential election. From the left, Senator Bernie Sanders championed redistribution from the top 1% to the rest of the country, whose income had largely stagnated. From the right, Donald Trump campaigned on tax cuts that would redistribute wealth back to middle-class voters. While the issue was addressed from both the

Democratic and Republican parties, the two sides of the aisle spoke about the issue with different targets for the redistributive efforts and different means by which to achieve these goals. Schlozman, Verba and Brady argue that policy outcomes are more responsive to high-income voters, who make up the majority of political donors (2012). This literature review seeks to reconcile scholarly research on wealth redistribution and party polarization to identify the effects, if any, of donors on such policy outcomes leading up to the 2016 presidential election.

Low-income voters are traditionally more likely to have a left-leaning political ideology around the world. However, they are less likely to align themselves with the left if non-economic party polarization is high. Even if it is against their economic interests, low-income voters are often pulled towards the right by moral polarization (Finseraas 2009, 296). Henning Finseraas notes that “anti-redistributive rightist parties wishing to reduce the extent of redistribution” may find distancing themselves from the left on social issues to be an efficient strategy in gaining votes (2009, 298). Recently, there has been a global conservative shift when it comes to wealth redistribution. Matthew Luttig analyzes data presented by Lupu and Pontusson and finds that changes in the structure of inequality results in more conservative ideological positions on wealth redistribution (Luttig 2013, 817). However, this shift was not consistent across all income quintiles. When the ratio between lower quintiles is increased,

that quintile becomes more supportive of redistribution. When the ratio between higher income quintiles is increased, the highest income quintile becomes three times less supportive of redistribution than the lowest income is supportive of it (Luttig 2013, 817). That being said, this study was conducted on 14 developed countries; the United States was found to be the only outlier. This could be because of the U.S.'s exceptionally high concentration of racial minorities in the bottom income quintile (Lupu and Pontusson 2011, 329).

The U.S could be the outlier because its citizens generally have a positive view of people at the low end of this inequality. Bartels finds that, overall, Americans give “poor people” an average favorability rating of 73% over “rich people”, who score an average of 60% (2008, 36). It should be noted that while Americans have a positive view of poor people in general, this view is racially charged and tied to an idea of “deserving” versus “undeserving” poor people (Gilens 2009). Schneider and Ingram explain that these two categories of people have been placed into two socially constructed groups. The “deserving” poor are placed in a category that has a positive social construction, but weak political power. The “undeserving” poor share weak political power due to a negative social construction (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 335-337). This makes it difficult for either group to have any effect on policy outcome, and furthermore makes poor people rely on more powerful groups to craft the policy surrounding their group.

Ideals of political and economic equality have long differed in the American psyche. Jennifer Hochschild finds that Americans believe in strict equality in a political sense, but view “economic freedom as an equal chance to become unequal” (Bartels 2008, 28). This results in conflict between firmly held egalitarian beliefs and support for policies that exacerbate inequality (Bartels 2008, 29). Norton and Ariely find that while Americans prefer some degree of inequality to perfect economic equality, most Americans vastly underestimate the level of existing wealth inequality and construct far more equitable wealth distributions in their ideal country (2011, 10). In their survey, Norton and Ariely find that citizens who voted for Senator John Kerry in the 2004 election were more likely than former President George W. Bush voters to report a higher percentage of wealth held by the top 20%. Moreover, when Kerry voters were asked to construct an ideal wealth distribution, they gave the top 20% of wealth holders less than Bush voters did. Bush voters estimated that the top 20% holds less wealth than they actually do, and in their ideal wealth distribution, would hold more (2011, 11). These findings indicate that while egalitarian beliefs are strong in most Americans, disagreements about the causes of inequality may hinder chances for consensus (Norton and Ariely 2011, 12).

Regardless of the causes of inequality, the existing disparity significantly favors the rich when it comes to political representation. Martin Gilens provides evidence that policy outcomes of the United States government are more

responsive to high-income voters “especially in policy domains where the opinions of rich and poor diverge” (Bonica et al. 2012, 118). This is significant when considering that Republicans are more sympathetic to tax burdens on the rich while Democrats are more sympathetic to tax relief for the poor (Bartels 2008, 41). Such a split could lead to significant tax cuts for the rich when Republicans are in power, followed by increases in the budget for social safety net programs when Democrats are in power due to fundamental beliefs held by each party.

The Republican Party values individualism above all else, while the Democratic Party values both individualism and egalitarianism, creating potential incongruity not present in the Republican Party’s message (Ura and Ellis 2012, 280). However, both parties have been found to become more liberal in response to growing income inequality (Ura and Ellis 2012, 285). The reaction of the two parties is not the same; Ura and Ellis find an asymmetric party polarization driven predominantly by the preferences of the Republican Party (2012, 288). While the authors note that they implicitly neglected the role of political elites in shaping polarization, other authors attempt to fill the gaps in information (Ura and Ellis 2012, 289). Bonica et al. note that rich Americans have been able to influence “electoral, legislative, and regulatory processes through campaign contributions, lobbying, and revolving door employment of politicians and bureaucrats.” (2013, 105) The authors note that it is difficult to gauge the effect of monetary

contributions to Democrats on their positions on wealth redistribution, largely because the party's donating base has recently shifted from the traditional small number of large donors to a more grassroots system of fundraising (Bonica et al. 2013, 113).

Grossman and Hopkins argue that while the parties have clear differences on policy issues regarding wealth redistribution, most individual Americans are symbolic conservatives but operational liberals (2016). In the context of favorability towards poor people, this could mean that Americans are symbolically against spending to the poor, yet when presented with a specific policy (such as an increase in public school spending), they indicate that they are in favor of such a policy. While political ideology is a critical factor in understanding the support of wealth redistribution, education levels also play a role. When broken down by education levels, those with the lowest levels of education were more sympathetic toward the tax burden on rich people and unsympathetic toward the tax burden on poor people (Bartels 2008, 41). This could be because people with low education levels are less aware of how large the wealth disparity is.

Bonica et al. theorize that either party could implement policies to ameliorate the recent sharp rise in inequality, but do not due to extreme polarization between the parties, lack of voter participation, feedback from high-income campaign contributors and the nature of political institutions (2013, 121).

This is underlined by an embrace of free market capitalism from both major parties in the U.S., which results in lower support for social safety nets that rely on wealth redistribution. The parties differ, however, in their general ideological drifts. Republicans have become “sharply” more conservative while Democrats have shifted only slightly left (Bonica et al. 2013, 106). Even with the shift to the left in the Democratic Party, the party has shifted away from social welfare policies and towards policies that “target ascriptive identities of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.” (Bonica et al. 2013, 107) These factors are not mutually exclusive with wealth redistribution. In fact, racial minorities are often the groups that would benefit most from social welfare policies as they make up the largest percentages of the lowest income quintiles.

The Great Recession of 2008 provided ample political movement on the issue of wealth inequality that was ultimately unrealized. As the inequality increases, the real value of the minimum wage, taxes on income from capital, the top marginal income tax rates, and estate taxes have all fallen (McCarty, Poole, Rosenthal 2006, 118). Additionally, there has been little to no political support for reforms of the financial sector, substantial reduction of mortgage foreclosures, or expansion of investment in human capital of children from low-income households (Bonica et al. 2013, 108). Luttig argues that as economic inequality increases, support for wealth redistribution policies decreases as those who are in a position to influence policy stand to lose as a result of welfare-enhancing

policies (2013, 812). This would imply that as contributors to politics become richer, their incentive to give to candidates who support wealth redistribution declines, making lower-income voters' voices muffled below the money.

As party leaders have moved towards extremes, parties as a whole have cued voters to vote based on their income (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, 92). Relative income is a statistically significant factor in Republican partisanship. The Republican Party has increased the size of its base by moving away from redistributive policies as income stratification of voters intensifies (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, 82, 108). McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal write in 2006 that increases in net worth, wealth, home ownership, and securities ownership could be explanatory factors in the diminished desire for social insurance and the growth in size of the Republican Party (108). This growth was accompanied by a decrease in the party's favorability outlook on wealth redistribution efforts. Despite the right's distinguished position on social issues, from the 1960s to the early 2000s, partisanship by income led to a "rich-poor cleavage" between the parties (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, 74). While every policy issue could be considered from an economic perspective, recent elections have focused more on social and moral aspects of myriad issues, such as the social issue of increased immigration and the moral issue of legalizing gay marriage. Hacker and Pierson highlight the decline of labor unions as a means of shaping public opinion among working class voters. They also cite the

Democratic Party's shift from populist elements in order to appeal to affluent social liberals, leaving the Republican Party a clear opportunity to recruit those voters with promises of "individual gains" from low taxes and small government (Nagel and Smith 2013, 162). This may cause low-income voters to vote against economic policies that may benefit them, like wealth redistribution (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, 96).

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to sponsor bills such as student loan forgiveness or increases in the minimum wage that are aimed at addressing economic inequality (Kraus and Callaghan 2014, 4-5). Non-white members of both parties in Congress are more likely to sponsor legislation that addresses economic inequality (Kraus and Callaghan 2014, 4). When deconstructed, Kraus and Callaghan discover that while Republicans tend not to sponsor legislation that addresses wealth redistribution regardless of their personal wealth, Democrats are more likely to sponsor the same legislation if they are personally of lower wealth (2014, 4). While there was no significant effect for gender in Congress as a whole, Democratic women are more likely to sponsor legislation addressing economic inequality than their male counterparts (Kraus and Callaghan 2014, 4). However, as Congress has continued to be dominated by wealthy white men, the legislative branch has "punched the gas pedal" to accelerate inequality (Carnes 2016, 107).

Despite efforts by the Democratic Party, low-income Americans have steadily been shifting right in their political views. Katherine J. Cramer finds that this is a result of the increase in national economic inequality. Part of this stems from what Cramer labels “rural consciousness,” a mindset adopted by many rural dwellers who feel ignored by politics and deprived of the resources they feel they deserve (2016, 5). She also points out that the Republican Party was built upon anti-New Deal, and therefore anti-wealth redistributive, policies. It is in the interest of the party that “attention to class to be diverted to attention to race” (Cramer 2016, 16). Most importantly, Cramer argues, is the composition of the poor in the United States, who are predominantly racial minorities. This means that middle-income voters lack a psychological connection to the poor and are therefore less likely to support a redistribution of resources to them (Cramer 2016, 17).

Regardless of where low-income citizens lie on the political spectrum, they historically do not turn out to vote in large numbers (Bonica et al. 2013, 110). Perhaps as a result of this, vote-seeking candidates are more responsive to political activists than to the median voter (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, 261). This is important because on average, political activists are wealthier and less likely to support wealth redistribution policies than the average citizen. Many of these political activists donate money to their party and candidates of that party, although the income of these donors differs greatly between parties; there is

a party split between Democrats and Republicans of \$76,000 to \$118,000, respectively (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, 256).

This gap has a compelling connection to Schlozman, Verba, and Brady's observations on perspectives of economic inequality and political polarization. The authors note that "the ideological shift among Democrats derives from the increasing liberalism of the most affluent Democrats" (2012, 259). It would then seem to follow that party activists, who tend to be wealthier than the average party member, would drive the ideological positions of party members as a whole to the left. Bonica et al. note that contributions from party activists may have a significant impact on legislation that would address economic inequality, such as a higher tax rate on carried interest income received by private equity investors (2013, 118). Because Republican policies are typically more sympathetic towards tax burdens on the rich while Democratic policies are more sympathetic towards poor people, their responses to economic inequality will differ significantly (Bartels 2008, 41).

Partisans do not always follow the lead of party activists, however. In 2012, Republican voters supported tax increases on the wealthy while party leaders publicly opposed such legislation (Hershey 2014, 252). However, historically speaking, the official party position reflects the view of the majority of partisans in the electorate. Party positions can go so far as to obfuscate objective conditions, like inflation, that surround economic inequality (Hershey

2014, 253-255). Logan Hershey finds that “on a range of issues, scholars find that awareness of elite-level differences and the presence of elite debate on an issue are the drivers of opinion change in the mass public.” He continues, saying that a “major reshuffling of the political environment” could “disrupt the relatively stable party attachments in the electorate.” (Hershey 2014, 256) It could be argued that in the past few decades, a rise of extremes within each party indicates a future such reshuffling. This is caused in part by competitive primaries, in which incumbents must become more extreme in order to capture the maximum number of votes.

This shift to extremes manifested in the 2016 presidential election. This election cycle was revolutionary in the rhetoric utilized to mobilize voters. On the Republican side, Donald Trump campaigned on bringing back American jobs from abroad in order to address the sentiments of economic insecurity in the middle class. The Democratic response to rising economic inequality was to address equal pay across genders, the stagnant minimum wage, universal healthcare, and campaign finance reform. Before the 2016 presidential election, the Republican Party was characterized, and perhaps caricatured, for being supported by predominantly rich, white men, but Donald Trump enfranchised low-income voters with many of his stances on social issues. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, disenfranchised many low-income voters with her connections to high-income institutions like Goldman Sachs. This

upended the traditional alignment of low-income voters with the Democratic Party. However, it is improbable that this shift was sudden or a one-time fluke. Rather, it seems more likely that low-income voters have gradually been shifting right, a trend that was overlooked by elites as they continued to favor the voices of their wealthier constituents.

Neither the Republican nor the Democratic parties have made significant efforts to craft policy aimed at a significant redistribution of wealth. Political inaction could be due to extreme party polarization, contributions from wealthy donors who do not support redistributive efforts, or a combination of the two in which donors cause polarized gridlock on this issue (Finseraas 2009; Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012). Although factors of gender, race, and ethnicity on ideological positions regarding wealth redistribution efforts is outside the scope of this paper, it is important to note that white, wealthy men in Congress are the least likely to support redistribution efforts (Kraus and Callaghan 2014). There appears to be a gap in literature that directly addresses the influence that party elites exert to steer conversation and policy outcomes on wealth redistribution. In light of the historic 2016 presidential election, it is necessary to analyze who steers the conversation on redistributive policies in order to assess whether or not the elite stance is truly representative of the American people.

HYPOTHESIS AND THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

This paper seeks to answer the question: is there a difference in levels of support for wealth redistributive policies between donors and non-donors of similar ideologies? Because donors tend to be wealthier than the average voter, it is logical to assume that they may be more conservative in their beliefs on wealth redistribution. This is because many wealthy donors believe that they stand to lose some of their personal wealth by supporting such policies. Additionally, many donors have never benefitted directly from programs that redistribute wealth and therefore cannot attest to their ability to help. I posit that donors will generally be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies than non-donors. However, I predict that the differences will vary within each ideological category. For this reason, I propose three hypotheses regarding the three political ideology categories utilized in this study.

Hypothesis 1: *Liberal donors will be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies than liberal non-donors.*

Because liberal donors are typically wealthier than their non-donor counterparts, I predict that the donors will be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies. While donors will preach redistributive policies and practices as a part of the larger party platform, they will de facto favor them at lower rates than the rest of their party. While Schlozman, Verba, and Brady found that Democratic elites are driving the party to the left, I predict that this shift will manifest in issues other than wealth redistribution (2012, 259). These findings

have the potential to expose a symbolic liberalism within elites in the Democratic Party that breaks down to more moderate views when individual items in the federal budget are considered.

Hypothesis 2: *Moderate donors will be just as likely to favor wealth redistributive policies as moderate non-donors.*

As the American political party system becomes more polarized, so too do donors. This leaves very few donors in the middle of the two parties. Moreover, donors often give money to certain candidates and causes because they believe strongly in one side or another. Donors also tend to give money in the hopes of winning, which leads them to candidates from the two established parties that stand a chance at winning national elections. I predict that because many moderates do not have strong feelings regarding wealth redistributive policies, they and the donors in their category will not have significantly different views.

Hypothesis 3: *Conservative donors will be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies than non-donor conservatives.*

Conservatives and the Republican Party have positioned themselves staunchly against wealth redistributive policies. While most conservative donors have never benefitted directly from these policies, many of their constituents have. For this reason, I believe that conservative non-donors will be more likely to favor wealth redistributive policies when they are framed as individual programs (for example, Social Security, childcare, welfare) as opposed to a

progressive tax shifting wealth because they are personally familiar with the programs. Conservative donors, on the other hand, have the privilege to take a strict ideological stance against these programs because they do not rely on any of them. Strict conservatism is a “system-justifying ideology, in that it preserves the status quo and provides intellectual and moral justification for maintaining inequality in society.” (Jost et al. 2003, 63) I therefore predict that conservative donors will be strong advocates for the status quo when it comes to wealth redistribution policies.

DATA AND METHODS

The data in this paper comes from the 2012 American National Elections Study (ANES) Time Series Study. The unit of analysis in this study is individuals and the cases are respondents to the survey. 5,916 respondents were surveyed, so N=5,916. The dependent variable for this survey was ideological placement, for which survey respondents were sorted into the following categories: liberal, moderate, and conservative. These categories came from the NES 7-point liberal-conservative scale. While this does not measure Democrats, Independents, and Republicans exactly, we can assume that most liberal donors will give to Democrats and conservative donors to Republicans. Measuring ideological positioning is a more helpful variable than party identification because it allows

for an analysis of personal symbolic ideological placement that can then be compared to operational ideology.

There are five distinct independent variables. Because the term “wealth redistribution” is politically charged, a direct question regarding favorability towards relevant policies would most likely illustrate a clear partisan split. Instead, I decided to measure five policies that redistribute wealth in various, concrete ways. These variables include government funding for public schools, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security. In the survey, all respondents were asked whether they thought the federal budget for this program should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same. Each response received a score of zero if the respondent answered “decreased” or “kept about the same.” A score of one was applied to respondents that answered “increased.” This scoring system is employed because keeping federal aid of these programs the same decreases the real value of the budget with inflation, thereby decreasing the funding over the long term. These five variables were then compiled into a variable henceforth referred to as “social welfare.” Each response to the question (should federal spending on [welfare variable] be decreased, kept the same, or increased?) received a score of zero, one, or two, respectively. The social welfare gives respondents a score from zero to ten based on the sum of their answers to the five aforementioned variables, measuring their overall favorability towards wealth redistributive policies.

This study controlled for political donations. If an individual responded yes to giving to individual political candidates, political parties, or both, they were considered political donors. This allows for a deeper analysis that goes beyond partisan differences in support for wealth redistributive policies. Controlling for political donations also allows for a separation of the party elites' ideology from non-donating party members, who may have different stances on the same issues. Identifying any differences will give credit to the argument that party elites manipulate candidates they donate to while the average voter must adapt to the changing party (Hershey 2014, 256).

The analysis will begin with an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression of social welfare in order to analyze the difference between parties and their donors on a general level. From there, each individual contributing variable to the social welfare category (Social Security, welfare, childcare, public school, and aid to the poor) will be analyzed via logistic regressions. One general logistic regression will be done for all six categories of survey respondents: liberal, liberal donor, moderate, moderate donor, conservative, and conservative donor. From there, a logistic regression will be performed to analyze the differences between the donors and non-donors of each specified ideology.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

General

Table A (see Appendix) illustrates the frequency of liberals, liberal donors, moderates, moderate donors, conservatives, and conservative donors. For each ideological affiliation, there were significantly lower numbers of donors than there were non-donors. **Table 1** demonstrates the average social welfare score of each of the six groups. Each survey respondent received a score of zero, one, or two based on their support for a decrease, maintenance of the same, or increase, respectively, in the federal budget for each separate category included in the social welfare scale (public school, welfare, childcare, aid to the poor, and Social Security). A mean score of zero indicates that the group wants to decrease the federal budget in all measured aspects of social welfare and ten means the group wants to increase the budget for all five categories.

Table 1: Mean score of the six categories of respondents on the social welfare scale.

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	6.952584	1460	1.926986
Liberal Donors	7.118597	268	2.005978
Moderate	6.231209	932	2.088464
Moderate Donors	5.982533	77	2.041533
Conservative	5.117015	2209	2.434877
Conservative Donor	3.832257	277	2.537898
Total	5.876123	5221	2.412499

Based on Table 1, it is possible to see the polarization in the liberal and conservative donor groups. Liberal donors receive the highest average score of 7.12 while their non-donor counterparts receive a 6.95. On the other side, conservative donors receive the lowest mean score of 3.83, which is lower than their non-donor counterparts' score of 5.11. Moderate non-donors received a mean score of 6.23, while moderate donors averaged a more conservative score of 5.98. When an OLS regression is performed, it is possible to see the significant difference between these means (**Table B**). Liberals vary significantly from moderates, conservatives, and conservative donors. However, they do not vary significantly from their donor counterparts (**Table C**). **Table D** illustrates a lack

of significant difference between moderates and moderate donors. **Table E**, on the other hand, shows a significant difference between conservatives and conservative donors, with conservative donors scoring lower on the social welfare scale.

Public School

When broken down into individual categories, the differences between ideologies and the donors that adhere to them becomes clearer. Respondents were asked if they thought federal spending on public schools should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same. If the response was “decreased” or “kept about the same,” the answer was assigned a zero. If the response was “increased,” the answer was assigned a one. **Table F** illustrates the odds ratio of each of the six categories of respondents’ views to changes in federal spending on public schools. An odds ratio conveys “by how much the odds of the outcome of interest occurring change for each unit change in the independent variable” (Pollock and Edwards 2018, 168). **Table 2** makes clear that liberals (with an odds ratio of 4.115, as seen in Table F) are much more likely to support increasing the federal budget for public schools than any other group.

Table 2: *Mean values of responses to an increase in the federal budget for public schools.*

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	0.8045086	1480	0.3967125
Liberal donor	0.7431517	270	0.4377072
Moderate	0.6287281	942	0.4834016
Moderate donor	0.6947676	84	0.4632562
Conservative	0.5335028	2281	0.4989857
Conservative donor	0.2971352	286	0.4577970
Total	0.6258352	5344	0.4839518

Moderate donors (with a score of 1.344) are the only other group to favor an increase. Liberal donors, moderates, conservatives, and conservative donors favored either maintenance of the status quo or decrease in the federal budget.

Table G gives the results from a logistic regression that considers all six categories of respondents with “liberal” serving as the intercept. It is clear from the P-values (“Pr(>|t)”) on the table) that there is a significant difference between liberals, moderates, and conservatives. Does this mean that donors do not hold significantly different opinions on federal spending on public schools from liberals? This seems improbable. It more likely means that being a donor does not make an individual hold significantly different opinions than their non-donating

counterparts. In order to ensure that this interpretation was correct, the data from Table G was broken down into three separate logistic regressions (Table H, Table I, Table J) to measure the significance in difference between liberals and liberal donors, moderates and moderate donors, and conservative and conservative donors, respectively. Liberals and liberal donors vary with a p-value of 0.1 (a value just short of conventional levels of statistical significance), with liberal non-donors being less likely to favor an increase in the federal budget for public schools (**Table H**). **Table I** illustrates a lack of significant difference between moderates and moderate non-donors. In **Table J**, it is possible to see that conservatives and conservative donors differ significantly in their opinions on federal spending on public schools. Conservative donors are significantly more likely to favor keeping the federal budget about the same or decreasing it than their non-donor counterparts.

Welfare

Interestingly, all groups scored below 0.26 (on a scale of zero to one) when asked about an increase in the federal budget for welfare (Table 3). This ranged from a 0.252 from liberal donors to a 0.056 from conservative donors, an illustration of the argument that donors tend to be more extreme in their views than their non-donor counterparts. This implies a general lack of support for welfare spending or dissatisfaction with the program as a whole. **Table 3** shows a comparison of the means across the six groups of respondents.

Table 3: *Mean values of responses to an increase in the federal budget for welfare.*

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	0.21592363	1473	0.4116013
Liberal donor	0.25187830	270	0.4348984
Moderate	0.13303709	942	0.3397952
Moderate donor	0.09268711	83	0.2917518
Conservative	0.07599589	2267	0.2650500
Conservative donor	0.05636867	286	0.2310367
Total	0.13294683	5321	0.3395492

The odds ratio for responses to welfare spending illustrate that liberal donors have the most positive response to an increase in spending, although their score is still low (**Table K**). Similar to the response for federal spending on public schools, **Table L** shows a highly significant difference between liberals, moderates, and conservatives when it comes to welfare. **Tables M, N, and O** illustrate that there is no significant difference between liberals and liberal donors, moderates and moderate donors, and conservatives and conservative donors, respectively. However, it is interesting to note that not a single category of donors received a significantly different score than their non-donating counterparts. This could be because of effectiveness in messaging from the parties that represent

liberals and conservatives. More likely, it is indicative of an overall lack of support for the program.

The results from the logistic regression on welfare seem to tie back into the argument posed by Gilens that poor people can either be “deserving” or “undeserving” (1999). The hoops that people must jump through to obtain welfare benefits (for example, drug testing) seem to imply that they are not trusted to use the system properly and therefore “undeserving” of such wealth redistribution efforts. Alternatively, Schneider and Ingram would argue that welfare recipients have been placed in a socially constructed group that is both viewed negatively and given weak political power, leading those with power to not support the program as a whole (1993).

Aid to the Poor

Similar to the results for welfare spending, liberal donors and conservative donors represented the extremes on the mean scores scale in regard to the federal budget for aid to the poor (**Table 4**).

Table 4: *Mean values of responses to an increase in the federal budget for aid to the poor.*

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	0.4953054	1480	0.5001469
Liberal donor	0.5307258	271	0.4999786
Moderate	0.4008793	943	0.4903366
Moderate donor	0.3815680	84	0.4886966
Conservative	0.2499604	2259	0.4330857
Conservative donor	0.1541460	287	0.3617192
Total	0.3561007	5325	0.4788905

The odds ratio for this data indicates that the odds of favoring an increase in spending on the poor for liberal donors was 15% higher than that of a non-liberal donor, while the odds of a conservative donor were 85% lower than a non-conservative donor (**Table P**). **Table Q** illustrates significant differences between liberals, moderates, and conservatives. When broken down by ideology, logistic regressions yielded no significant difference between liberals and liberal donors, nor between moderates and moderate donors (**Table R**, **Table S**). There was a strong significant difference between conservatives and conservative donors (with a P-value below 0.01), in which conservative donors were less likely to favor an increase in the federal budget for aid to the poor (**Table T**).

Childcare

When asked about federal spending on childcare, the groups again illustrated significant differences in their values. Once again, liberal donors had the highest means score while conservative donors had the lowest mean score (**Table 5**).

Table 5: *Mean values of responses to an increase in the federal budget for childcare.*

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	0.4628661	1481	0.4987876
Liberal donor	0.5404033	270	0.4992918
Moderate	0.3250649	944	0.4686474
Moderate donor	0.2300255	77	0.4236041
Conservative	0.2494619	2261	0.4327974
Conservative donor	0.1507043	286	0.3583885
Total	0.3314778	5317	0.4707887

The odds ratio for federal spending on child care reinforces this information, illustrating that liberal donors are the only group that are more likely to favor an increase in spending than not (**Table U**). **Table V** illustrates strong differences between most of the groups. When broken down by ideology, it is shown that liberal donors are more likely to favor an increase in federal spending on

childcare than their non-donor counterparts, although the P-value falls just short of conventional levels of statistical significance (**Table W**). As with the previous variables, there was no difference between moderates and moderate donors on the issue of child care (**Table X**). However, there was a highly significant difference between conservatives and conservative donors, with conservative donors being less likely to favor an increase in federal spending on child care (**Table Y**).

Social Security

Interestingly, liberal donors did not score the highest when it came to federal spending on Social Security (**Table 6**). In fact, liberals were the only group to have an odds ratio above a value of one, meaning that the odds of a liberal respondent supporting an increase in the budget for Social Security were 16.8% higher than a non-liberal (**Table Z**). Unlike welfare, Social Security is not a means-tested program and as such, it not typically viewed as a program for the poor. Unlike welfare, the beneficiaries of Social Security are not a part of a negatively viewed social group. Therefore, the program as a whole receives higher favorability ratings.

Table 6: *Mean values of responses to an increase in the federal budget for Social Security.*

	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Liberal	0.5387621	1474	0.4986645
Liberal donor	0.4629038	269	0.4995501
Moderate	0.5311211	943	0.4992955
Moderate donor	0.4232112	84	0.4970192
Conservative	0.4491807	2269	0.4975204
Conservative donor	0.2531787	284	0.4356008
Total	0.4783288	5322	0.4995771

While most groups responded close to the mean of 0.478, there was significant variance among ideological categories (**Table AA**). For liberals, non-donors were slightly less likely to support an increase in the federal budget for Social Security (**Table AB**). For moderate donors and non-donors, there was no significant difference (**Table AC**). Conservatives had the largest and most significant differences. Conservative non-donors hovered just slightly below the mean of 0.478, but conservative donors were significantly less likely to favor an increase in spending on Social Security at 0.253 (**Table AD**).

DISCUSSION

When analyzed by variable (public school, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security), it is simple to see that there are significant differences in ideology between liberals, moderates, and conservatives. However, do the differences persist when controlling for political donations? The answer for moderates is a resounding no. There was not a single category in which moderates held significantly different beliefs from their donating counterparts. It is important to note that the number of “moderate donor” responses was always the lowest of the six categories. This could be because donors tend to give money because of strongly held beliefs that generally represent strong, polarized views (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). This results in the donors picking a party that will champion their strongly held beliefs, which generally leads them to the Democratic or Republican Parties. These results strongly support Hypothesis 2, which predicted that moderate donors would be just as likely to favor wealth redistributive policies as moderate non-donors.

The differences between liberals and liberal donors are more pronounced. There were no significant differences between liberals and liberal donors in regard to support for an increase in federal spending on welfare or aid to the poor. In two categories (public school and Social Security), liberal donors were less likely (with a P-value of 0.1, which falls short of conventional standards of significance) to favor an increase in federal spending when compared to their non-

donor counterparts. This could be because there are fewer donors than non-donors who directly benefit from these services. Wealthy donors may have gone to or have children in private schools. Additionally, they may not need to rely on Social Security. However, donors were more likely to favor an increase in federal spending on childcare (again at the 0.1 level). This could be because wealthier donors with children would directly benefit from such a service. These findings do not support Hypothesis 1, which predicted that liberal donors would be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies than liberal non-donors. While this was true for public school and Social Security, it did not hold true across all five categories.

Conservatives, however, had statistically significant differences in levels of support for social welfare spending than their donating counterparts. There was only one category in which conservatives and conservative donors did not have significantly different values: welfare spending. In the categories of federal spending on public school, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security, conservative donors were *consistently* less likely to favor an increase in spending. This strongly supports Hypothesis 3, which posited that conservative donors would be less likely to favor wealth redistributive policies than non-donor conservatives. The implications of these findings are important in understanding how the Republican Party has shifted dramatically right over the past few decades while the Democratic Party has only gradually shifted left (Grossman and

Hopkins 2016). These findings indicate that conservative donors are controlling the direction of the party while non-donors' more moderate views are being drowned out by party elites. This should be important to political scientists in understanding ideological trends on wealth redistributive policies and to elected officials who may not be representing their average constituents' views on wealth redistributive policies.

CONCLUSION

This research asked if there was a significant difference between donors and non-donors when it came to support for wealth redistributive policies. By scoring responses to the 2012 ANES Time Series Study for support of increased funding for public schools, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and Social Security, it was possible to run logistic regressions to determine whether such a significant difference exists. Because donors tend to be high-income voters, I posited that liberal donors and conservative donors would be less likely to support wealth redistributive policies than their non-donating counterparts due to an attachment to their personal wealth. That being said, because there are few causes that court moderate donors, I hypothesized that moderate donors and non-donors would not differ significantly in their views. I found that moderates and just as likely to favor wealth redistributive policies as moderate non-donors. Liberal donors are more likely to favor an increase in spending for childcare than liberal non-donors,

who are more likely to favor an increase in public school and Social Security spending. In every category but welfare spending, conservative donors were less likely to favor an increase in spending on wealth redistributive policies.

These findings support McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal's observation that the Republican Party has increased its base by moving away from redistributive policies (2006, 82, 108). This could be because, as Cramer argues, the composition of the poor in the United States results in a lack of connection between them and middle- and high-income voters (2016, 17). If middle- and high-income voters are the majority of party activists, and vote-seeking candidates are more responsive to party activists than the median voter, how do activists shape the policy outcomes regarding wealth redistribution (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, 261)? This paper adds to existing literature by offering evidence that Republican elites want to shape these policies to be far more conservative than even conservative non-donors. Because Republicans are currently in control of the executive and legislative branches, they could use their power to make dramatic slashes to social safety net programs. Just as important is the contribution of further evidence of the class divide within the Republican Party that Democrats could exploit or—without external intervention—could cause a split between conservatives.

Future research should consider utilizing additional dependent variables to federal budget spending on public schools, welfare, aid to the poor, childcare, and

Social Security. Alternatively, a further analysis of the amount of money donated (as opposed to a binary “yes” or “no”) and the scaled effects on candidates’ positions on wealth redistribution could prove to be illuminating. Holding these findings to data from the 2016 presidential election could establish a trend in wealth redistribution policies as the issues become increasingly salient. The sheer amount of money in politics implies that political elites are out of touch with their poor constituents that would benefit the most from these policies. More importantly, the country as a whole would benefit if concrete steps were made to lift America’s lowest classes.

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APPENDIX

Table A: Frequency of the six categories of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Liberal	1525	25.778	28.362
Liberal Donor	321	5.426	5.970
Moderate	963	16.278	17.910
Moderate donor	113	1.910	2.102
Conservative	2143	36.224	39.855
Conservative donor	312	5.274	5.802
NA's	539	9.111	
Total	5916	100.000	100.000

Social Welfare Tables

Table B: OLS regression results for social welfare by category of respondent.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	6.95258	0.06740	103.157	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal donor	0.16601	0.18056	0.919	0.358
Moderate	-0.72137	0.11229	-6.424	1.44e-10 ***
Moderate donor	-0.24868	0.26684	-0.932	0.351
Conservative	-1.83557	0.09663	-18.996	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative donor	-1.28476	0.19820	-6.482	9.88e-11 ***
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table C: OLS regression results for social welfare between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	6.95258	0.06740	103.157	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal donor	0.16601	0.18056	0.919	0.358

Table D: OLS regression results for social welfare between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderate	6.23121	0.08981	69.384	< 2e-16 ***
Moderate donor	-0.24868	0.26684	-0.932	0.351

Table E: OLS regression results for social welfare between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservative	5.11701	0.06924	73.901	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative donor	-1.28476	0.19820	-6.482	9.88e-11 ***

Public School Tables

Table F: Odds ratio results of responses to an increase in federal spending on public schools.

	Odds Ratio	2.5%	97.5%
Intercept (liberal)	4.115	3.469	4.882
Liberal donor	0.703	0.475	1.040
Moderate	0.411	0.322	0.526
Moderate donor	1.344	0.736	2.454
Conservative	0.278	0.227	0.341
Conservative donor	0.370	0.265	0.516

Table G: Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on public schools.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	1.4147	0.0872	16.223	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal donor	-0.3523	0.1996	-1.765	0.0776 .
Moderate	-0.8880	0.1256	-7.071	1.74e-12 ***
Moderate donor	0.2957	0.3072	0.963	0.3357
Conservative	-1.2805	0.1043	-12.277	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative donor	-0.9952	0.1702	-5.847	5.31e-09 ***
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table H: Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on public schools between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	1.4147	0.0872	16.223	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal Donors	-0.3523	0.1996	-1.765	0.0776 .

Table I: Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on public schools between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderates	0.52676	0.09037	5.829	5.90e-09 ***
Moderate Donors	0.29574	0.30717	0.963	0.335699

Table J: Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on public schools between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservatives	0.13421	0.05722	2.346	0.019030*
Conservative Donors	-0.99519	0.17021	-5.847	5.31e-09***

Welfare Tables

Table K: Odds ratio results of responses to an increase in federal spending on welfare.

	Odds Ratio	2.5%	97.5%
Intercept (liberal)	0.275	0.234	0.324
Liberal donor	1.223	0.829	1.804
Moderate	0.557	0.411	0.755
Moderate donor	0.666	0.277	1.600
Conservative	0.299	0.230	0.389
Conservative donor	0.726	0.361	1.462

Table L: Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on welfare.

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	-1.28958	0.08277	-15.580	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal Donor	0.20096	0.19843	1.013	0.311211
Moderate	-0.58479	0.15497	-3.773	0.000163 ***
Moderate Donor	-0.40689	0.44731	-0.910	0.363058
Conservative	-1.20846	0.13425	-9.002	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative Donor	-0.31978	0.35679	-0.896	0.370144
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table M: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on welfare between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	-1.28958	0.08277	-15.580	< 2e-16 ***
Liberal Donors	0.20096	0.19843	1.013	0.311211

Table N: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on welfare between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderates	-1.8744	0.1310	-14.306	< 2e-16 ***
Moderate Donors	-0.4069	0.4473	-0.910	0.363058

Table O: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on welfare between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservatives	-2.4980	0.1057	-23.635	< 2e-16 ***
Conservatives Donors	-0.3198	0.3568	-0.896	0.370144

Aid to the Poor Tables

Table P: *Odds ratio results of responses to an increase in federal spending on aid to the poor.*

	Odds Ratio	2.5%	97.5%
Intercept (liberal)	0.981	0.855	1.127
Liberal donor	1.152	0.828	1.603
Moderate	0.682	0.545	0.853
Moderate donor	0.922	0.516	1.648
Conservative	0.340	0.281	0.410
Conservative donor	0.547	0.367	0.816

Table Q: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on aid to the poor.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	-0.01878	0.07045	-0.267	0.789830
Liberal donor	0.14184	0.16841	0.842	0.399692
Moderate	-0.38302	0.11448	-3.346	0.000826 ***
Moderate donor	-0.08110	0.29641	-0.274	0.784408
Conservative	-1.08004	0.09641	-11.203	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative donor	-0.60362	0.20400	-2.959	0.003101 **
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table R: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on aid to the poor between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	-0.01878	0.07045	-0.267	0.789830
Liberal donor	0.14184	0.16841	0.842	0.399692

Table S: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on aid to the poor between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderates	-0.40180	0.09023	-4.453	8.63e-06 ***
Moderate Donors	-0.08110	0.29641	-0.274	0.784408

Table T: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on aid to the poor between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservatives	-1.09882	0.06581	-16.696	< 2e-16 ***
Conservatives Donors	-0.60362	0.20400	-2.959	0.0031 **

Childcare Tables

Table U: *Odds ratio results of responses to an increase in federal spending on childcare.*

	Odds Ratio	2.5%	97.5%
Intercept (liberal)	0.862	0.751	0.989
Liberal donor	1.364	0.981	1.899
Moderate	0.559	0.445	0.702
Moderate donor	0.620	0.345	1.115
Conservative	0.386	0.319	0.466
Conservative donor	0.534	0.353	0.806

Table V: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on childcare.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	-0.14881	0.07045	-2.112	0.03472 *
Liberal donor	0.31078	0.16861	1.843	0.06535 .
Moderate	-0.58178	0.11636	-5.000	5.92e-07 ***
Moderate donor	-0.47758	0.29920	-1.596	0.11050
Conservative	-0.95267	0.09640	-9.882	< 2e-16 ***
Conservative donor	-0.62760	0.21035	-2.984	0.00286 **
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table W: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on childcare between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	-0.14881	0.07045	-2.112	0.03472 *
Liberal Donors	0.31078	0.16861	1.843	0.06535 .

Table X: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on childcare between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderates	-0.7306	0.0926	-7.889	3.66e-15 ***
Moderate Donors	-0.4776	0.2992	-1.596	0.11050

Table Y: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on childcare between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservatives	-1.1015	0.0658	-16.740	< 2e-16 ***
Conservatives Donors	-0.6276	0.2104	-2.984	0.00286 **

Social Security Tables

Table Z: *Odds ratio results of responses to an increase in federal spending on Social Security.*

	Odds Ratio	2.5%	97.5%
Intercept (liberal)	1.168	1.016	1.343
Liberal donor	0.738	0.529	1.029
Moderate	0.970	0.778	1.209
Moderate donor	0.648	0.374	1.122
Conservative	0.698	0.583	0.835
Conservative donor	0.416	0.295	0.585

Table AA: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on Social Security.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Intercept (liberal)	0.15536	0.07116	2.183	0.0291 *
Liberal donor	-0.30402	0.16952	-1.793	0.0730 .
Moderate	-0.03071	0.11236	-0.273	0.7846
Moderate donor	-0.43425	0.28049	-1.548	0.1216
Conservative	-0.35934	0.09157	-3.924	8.82e-05 ***
Conservative donor	-0.87775	0.17416	-5.040	4.81e-07 ***
Significance codes: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.1 '.'				

Table AB: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on Social Security between liberal non-donors and liberal donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Liberal	0.15536	0.07116	2.183	0.0291 *
Liberal Donors	-0.30402	.16952	-1.793	0.0730 .

Table AC: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on Social Security between moderate non-donors and moderate donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Moderates	0.12465	0.08696	1.433	0.15181
Moderate Donors	-0.43425	0.28049	-1.548	0.12164

Table AD: *Logistic regression results for responses to an increase in federal spending on Social Security between conservative non-donors and conservative donors.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr(> t)
Conservatives	-0.20398	0.05764	-3.539	0.000405 ***
Conservatives Donors	-0.87775	0.17416	-5.040	4.81e-07 ***