

The Political Geography of Campaign Finance: Fundraising and Contribution Patterns in the Presidential Elections, 2004-2012. Joshua L. Mitchell, Karen Sebold, Andrew Dowdle, Scott Limbocker, & Patrick A. Stewart. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 2015

Scholars have argued that increases in the amount of funds necessary to wage a successful primary campaign may lead to concentrated influence on the policy issues, and thus bias. The authors raise an interesting question about the where donations come from. If there are spatial patterns to preprimary fundraising, are their geographical biases in policy positions?

Despite a title indicating a comprehensive review of the fundraising process, the authors focus on a key part of the fundraising process, the preprimary period before the first primaries are held, when powerful elites back presidential hopefuls seeking to gain traction in the fundraising game. Citing literature showing the preprimary fundraising results is a solid predictor of success in garnering a party's nomination, the authors lay out a case for the research at a time in which the costs of campaigns have skyrocketed, and the need for financing early on is quite clear. The data comes from the Federal Election Commission for the 2004, 2008 and 2012 elections.

Engaging the idea of political geography, the authors pose a simple and yet interesting question in chapter 1, where do the funds come from during the preprimary period? Providing the reader a solid literature review, the authors demonstrate through previous analysis that there are spatial patterns apparent, including the idea of certain areas becoming "political ATMs" which, perhaps not a surprise, happen to correspond with highly urbanized areas and megalopolises. Other research has hinted at red state/blue state divides (Mitchell, et al, 2015, p. 11). Both concepts are exploited by campaigns in their efforts to fundraise. Examining the 2012 preprimary period it becomes clear that there are locations that are major sources for an incumbent (Obama) and yet scattered concentrations of support elsewhere. Raising the idea of policy drift, the notion that a select group of donors could influence policy implies that specific regions of the country would have outsized influence on policy preferences.

The issue of precisely when and where (at the state level) in the preprimary period is most money raised is the focus of the second chapter. Arguing that successful preprimary fundraising can discourage rivals from joining the race, it makes such efforts necessary for a candidate to have a chance (but it does not guarantee a successful nomination bid). So where does a hopeful go to raise funds? The authors demonstrate that candidates do rely on their home states and if they are able to do so, can tap into different social networks to expand the spatial scale of fundraising. That said, the scale of analysis, the state, does not allow for good resolution and much, as the authors admit, is left out. The details of donation patterns coming from the big three states (California, New York and Texas) is often paired with the candidates' home states, where their social and political networks are well established. Reaching beyond the home state is imperative for eventual success.

Further investigation of the spatial patterns of aggregated and individual donations per capita is the focus of the third chapter, one that sees the authors use data with great spatial resolution, the county-level scale. Unsurprisingly, the authors find that wealthier areas give more per capita and that many of the counties that gave the most were in the big three states of California, New York, and Texas, and yet there were

concentrations of funds in more rural areas as well. Their analysis incorporates the Gini coefficient and the authors conclude that donations are fairly concentrated in specific parts of the country, but that there are counties outside of expected areas where high rates of political participation lead to higher rates of donations, if not higher amounts. The takeaway is that campaigns may need to look outside of traditionally fundraising areas where the competition is the keenest if a campaign wanted to soak up a greater percentage of available donations.

The question of patterns of fundraising for both major parties is explored in the fourth chapter. Noting that the 2004, 2008 and 2012 campaigns were different for both parties due to incumbency, the research showed both parties are largely successful in garnering donations but that certain counties had leanings toward one particular party, so while the literature points to partisan divides in general election fundraising, the authors conclude that donations come from a variety of locations and a clear mixing of donations to both Republicans and Democrats can be seen in most states.

The final chapter delves into the most important question associated with the spatial patterns of preprimary giving, the issue of relative wealth in the United States and its distribution engages one of the more interesting question, are spatial patterns simply of function of where the money is? Using median income levels to avoid the influence of outliers, the authors create a measure of “wealth extraction” for each candidate (ibid, p. 102) that reflects population size in each county, a value that sheds light on the percentage of a county’s wealth given to various campaigns in the preprimary period. Income levels of individuals were a highly important factor in determining political participation via donations and the spatial pattern was not simply a function of a county encompassing or being part of an urban area. The findings underscore that the donors are not the average citizens and the act of donating in a preprimary period is a rare political act.

Interesting questions are posed in the final chapter. Highlighting the rarity of a donor in the preprimary period, “1 in every 1,500” (ibid, p. 113), the authors make the point that the decision to donate is a serious one on behalf of the donor, but also vital for the candidate as they try to amass the resources for a sustained campaign. Despite the bias toward California, New York and Texas, there are pools of funds to be found elsewhere that take more effort and may not payback the investment of time and resources at the same rate, but they are there. The overall finding that there are spatial patterns at the county level for preprimary donations indicates an unequal connection between candidates and certain areas that supplied donors. The outsized influence of the Big Three and home state of a candidate should come as no surprise, but it is the finding that the most affluent candidates wield the most influence over potential policy drift that concerns the authors. The inequality between counties, increasing over time, indicates a cycle of influence that may only deepen this trend. With greater concentration of fundraising efforts on the affluent areas, it provides the wealthiest a greater voice, undercutting the idea of an inclusive politics and weakening the idea of equality in representative politics. It is not a great leap to note that casting a wider net for donations might address the idea of geographic biases in policy, but one that might cost a candidate valuable time and resources that would be more efficiently deployed in specific states and counties.

Despite the solid work here, there are reasons to be critical of the book. Despite a title referencing campaign finance and political geography, the reader gets only a small sample of either. The focus on the preprimary period is certainly important, and the authors make the case for the focus in terms that matter, access to candidates, but why title the book so broadly when the focus is clear in the text, especially when previous work openly embraced a title that was more focused (Sebold and Mitchell, 2014).

Additionally, despite using the term political geography, what we read is a cartographic analysis and description of spatial patterns. Today's political geography is focused on studying the manipulation of space and territory for political outcomes, not the mere description of spatial patterns). Providing median income comparisons, population, and political tendencies in contributions, the descriptions do little to explain the context of the local politics undergirding the social processes of deciding to make donations, which according to the authors is a relatively rare political act. This is necessary if one takes the citations of Agnew (1987) and Johnston (1995) seriously, but then that is the divide between political science approaches to space and place (fixed effects modelling) versus political geography's embrace of local contingency (O'Loughlin, 2016). The former assumes that context can be addressed through invoking control variables, the latter looks for the particularity of locales and places that influence the political process in unique ways, eschewing the need for models that work the same way in all cases. This is best exemplified when the authors claim that they address, "... whether geography plays a role in creating unequal patterns of contributions during the money primary." (Mitchell, *et al.* 2015). Geographers would work with spatial regression models to tease out the variables that would also have a distinct, unequal distributions in space, such as the ones the authors say should have explanatory power (*ibid.*, pp. 123-124).

Finally, the maps are highly problematic. In many cases, the reader can glean no discernible pattern from the maps, as the shading, gradations of white to black, often in three or four categories, does not provide enough differentiation of the data. The creation of classes is explained in an appendix but this does not excuse the fact that better cartography for production, not analysis, would have made a difference. This is in contrast to maps that appear in earlier, online versions of portions of the research where the colors were gradations of red to blue. Other weaknesses underscore that cartography is not the authors' strong suit, as the projection used is not labeled, in several cases the legends are different sizes and in differing fonts. As with the maps, there are issues with the figures trying to show differences in black and white which is a problem for the graphs in the second chapter which try to display the donations through various stages of the preprimary for a large number of candidates. The poor quality of the graphics undercut the clarity of the findings.

Succinctly, the book is an interesting read if one wishes to understand a key period of campaign fundraising. It raises important questions about where money and influence are situated and future work, with much greater longitudinal resolution, will likely start to reveal stronger patterns of tendencies, or conversely, it might reveal that the spatial patterns are quite contingent on ideas of political cultures of participation that will shift with demographic and economic changes in the coming years. Despite the caveats of the book being poor political geography and not connected to current approaches, it should be noted that political geographers rarely deal with these questions, thus the book

is a necessary collection of papers articulating an important arc of questions about the role of preprimary fundraising.

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