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The Fickle Financiers of Elections?: The Impact of Moving on Individual Contributions

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Abstract

What is the effect of a change in geographic location on the behavior of campaign donors? Looking at people who move presents a unique opportunity to assess the ways in which political behavior is altered by external circumstances. Holding the individual constant and observing how donation patterns vary under different external conditions allows us to explore donor behaviors in ways that are more difficult when using cross-sectional data. We use the DIME dataset to compare the donation behavior of over 7,000 individuals in the U.S. House election before and after they have moved. We observe the ways in which changes in the partisanship of the districts that they live in alter the share of their donations that go to each party. We find that the partisan composition of the districts that people arrive in influence their donation behavior – a move to a more Democratic district tends to increase the share of one's donations that go to Democrats. We conclude by discussing what these findings can tell us about the partisan and strategic motivations of campaign donors.

Keywords: campaign contributions, political geography, political behavior

Introduction

Why do people donate to political campaigns? Some research has sought to address this question, focusing largely on individual-level determinants of donation behavior. In general, donors tend to wealthier (Brady, Verba, and Schlozeman 1995) and more ideological (Barber 2015) than other citizens. These differences that emerge between donors and non-donors may be consequential, presenting questions about representation, who politicians listen to, and whose policy preferences are enacted (e.g. Gilens and Page 2014). With these potential disparities in mind, questions are raised about the behavior of individual donors. Donor motivations are undoubtedly heterogeneous and multifaceted, and competing theories leave us with a host of possible explanations.

Prior research has noted that there are several motivations for individual donations to campaigns. Francia et al. (2003) propose three types of motivations to donate: desire for access or other material benefits, solidary or social benefits, and donations to influence the partisan/ideological makeup of an office. Through a survey of significant donors to congressional candidates in the 1996 election, they examine what motivated individuals to donate to candidates. While they find support for all three types of motivations, ideological donors give more contributions and contribute more frequently in congressional elections. Interestingly, shared partisanship increases the likelihood of giving a donation for all three types of donors (Francia et al. 2003).

Using campaign finance records, Ensley (2009) and Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz (2008) also find evidence that candidate ideology is a major factor motivating individual donations to congressional campaigns. By surveying in-state and out-of-state donors in the 2012 Senate elections, Barber, Canes-Wrone and Thrower (2017) similarly demonstrate that individual donors are more likely to contribute to incumbents sharing their policy positions, concluding that individuals are "ideologically sophisticated contributors". Moreover, individual donors tend to be more ideologically extreme than the general population (Bafumi and Herron 2010; Barber 2015; Bonica 2014; Hill and Huber 2017), providing additional evidence for the influence of political views on donors' behavior.

Connected to partisan and ideological motivations is a strategic motivation to affect electoral outcomes in competitive races. Rather than donating solely due to shared partisanship or ideology (particularly in one's district), some individuals may donate to strategically influence competitive elections (Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008). Although the previous research on individual donor motivations has helped us better understand individual donors, there is still much we do not know about how the political context impacts individual donors.

We seek to add to this discussion by examining donor behavior using a unique factor – geography. While there is a sizeable amount of research on the link between geography and campaign donations (e.g. Gimpel, Lee, and Kaminski 2006; Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008; Tam Cho and Gimpel 2007; Bramlett, Gimpel, and Lee 2011; Sebold et al. 2012; Kirkland 2013), this work is largely interested in understanding the kinds of places where donations originate. Rather than look at *places* as much of this work does, we are interested in what places can tell us about *people's* donation decisions (see Lowry 2015 for a similar approach). That is, the districts that people reside in provide them with a certain set of circumstances and incentives in which they make donation decisions. We focus our analysis here on what happens to campaign donations when people move – i.e. their geographic circumstances and incentives change.

Looking at citizen mobility can allow us to weigh different motivations against one another, as we are able to hold the individual constant and vary the external circumstances. Consider a Democrat who moves from a safe Democratic district to a competitive and leaning Republican district. This individual has left a context in which her donations could certainly fulfill partisan or ideological motivations by donating to Democrats who will likely win, but were probably not strategic as the races are uncompetitive. If she wanted to engage in strategically motived donations, she would have to send money to outside districts (e.g. Gimpel, Lee, Pearson-Merkowitz 2008; Baker 2016). However, upon arriving at her new residence she is faced with a different set of external political circumstances. Do her motivations change? Do some citizens pursue a strategic strategy while others pursue an ideological one, regardless of circumstance? Or do people adopt different motives as their circumstances change? Does a change in political context result in a change in individual donation behavior? Looking to citizen mobility, and assessing how donation behavior changes after people move can help inform these questions.

To explore these questions, we use Adam Bonica's (2013) Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME). This dataset allows us to track the donation behaviors for active donors, who contribute to campaigns consistently. We are able to observe where they live when they make donations, and thus are able to follow their movements when they relocate. By using information on the districts that they reside in, we can assess how their local political environment changes and use this information to inform the previously mentioned theories. We find that when people move to a new place, they adjust their donation behavior. Those who move to more Democratic places increase the share of their donations that go to Democrats, and vice versa. This is true even for the most loyal of Republican donors. These findings provide evidence that the social and political context of an individual's location influences their political behavior, even for the staunchest of partisans.

How Mobility and Geography Can Inform Theories of Behavior

How can looking to citizen mobility help us to better understand the motivations that citizens have for campaign giving? When we follow the same individual over time, we are able to observe one person in different political settings, which means we can observe how the same person acts when presented with (potentially) different sets of circumstances and incentives. When we observe a citizen's behavior in one environment, and then look at how that same citizen behaves in a different environment, we are able to leverage this change to make much stronger claims about the effects of political circumstance on donor behavior than we would be able to by simply looking across different people in different locations. This approach allows us to examine whether the places we live in structure our political donations.

The environmental change that we are especially interested in is changes in partisanship. A citizen who moves from a Democratic context to a Republican context faces a different political landscape that may affect their political behavior, including their campaign contributions. Partisanship and ideology lies at the heart of several of the donor motivations noted above. Observing changes (if they occur) in donor behavior in light of a contextual change in partisanship can highlight the influence of their environment on politically active citizens.

Why might changes in geography produce changes in donation behavior? The places where we live are formative for a wide range of individual political attitudes and behaviors – vote choice (Huckfeld and Sprague 1995), partisanship (Campbell et al. 1960; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Lyons 2011), candidate evaluations (MacKuen and Brown 1987; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), issue stances (Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993), and turnout (Gimpel, Dyck, and Shaw 2004; Dyck, Gaines, and Shaw 2009). While there are several mechanisms through which places shape citizens, social influence from discussion networks is likely one of the most prominent.

The neighborhoods that we live in structure the people who we talk to (Huckfeldt 1983) – living in a neighborhood that is predominantly comprised of Democrats means that the individual is more likely to have a discussion network that consists of Democrats. Having a discussion network that is comprised largely of Democrats as opposed to Republicans means that the individual is more likely to become a Democrat (Sinclair 2012), vote for Democratic candidates (Sinclair 2012; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991, 1995), and most importantly for our focus, recruit people to donate money in non-candidate environments (Karlan and McConnell 2014; Shang and Crowson 2006), as well as for the candidates preferred by those in the network (Sinclair 2012).

Discussion networks influence attitudes and behaviors for several reasons – they transmit information, as well as norms and social pressures to conform to group attitudes and behaviors. These networks can supply information regarding the connection between the individual's political preferences and the candidate options, or, can supply social pressure to contribute. As Sinclair (2012) notes, people have a hard time saying no to their friends, and to the extent that the networks of those who are regular campaign donors are comprised of other campaign donors, these sorts of social pressures can serve to pull peoples' donation behavior into line with that of their peers. While most people do not have discussion networks comprised of campaign donors since these individuals are relatively rare, we know that campaign donors cluster together to some extent (Gimpel, Lee, and Kaminski 2006). For consistent donors, we would expect to see more discussion networks comprised of other donors, who can impart influence on the individual.

Consider an individual who moves from California's 30th Congressional District which is in the greater Los Angeles area, to Oklahoma's 1st Congressional District which includes Tulsa. California's 30th is a Democratic-leaning district, where the Democratic presidential candidate won almost 67% of the two-party vote in the year prior to the person's move, while Oklahoma's 1st is a largely Republican district where the Democratic candidate for president won only 36% of the two-party vote. On average, this person went from having a two in three chance of contacting Democrats in his or her daily life, to a one in three chance. Discussion networks at work, in the neighborhood, at a place of worship, or while recreating (likely) went from being comprised of Democrats to Republicans. With this shift in network composition can come a shift in information and social pressure. Where the individual was previously being exposed to perspectives about candidates and elections from Democrats, they are now exposed to this information from Republicans. Recruitment to make donations was likely to come from Democrats, and it is now likely to come from Republicans. Further, by virtue of being located in a Republican environment in Oklahoma, the individual is more likely to be solicited directly by Republican candidates or the Republican party for donations, whereas the opposite was true in California.

Suggestions that contextual social influence can drive donation behavior already exist. Perez-Truglia and Cruces (2017) find that when people are made aware of the partisan donations of their neighbors through a letter from researchers, it alters contribution behavior. Specifically, people in the partisan majority contribute more when informed that their neighbors are doing so, and those in the partisan minority contribute less. While this is a different story than the one that we are offering, it does point to a social and contextual basis for donation patterns. Rather than looking at an artificial external social stimulus (an experimental letter from a researcher), we are looking to see if these patterns occur naturally when people are faced with an external social change from a move.

The exact mechanism will differ from person to person, and obviously not all will be influenced, but we expect that on average that changes in the partisan composition of one's environment will alter donation behaviors.

> *Contextual Influence Hypothesis: Those who move to more Democratic (Republican) places will donate more money to Democrats (Republicans).*

In some ways, these expectations challenge our understanding of donors and their behavior. After all, the partisan motivation in donation behavior is strong (e.g., Francia et al. 2003; Barber, Canes-Wrone, and Thrower 2017), which would suggest that donation behavior is not especially malleable following a change in social circumstance. Further, the power of the partisan motivation is likely magnified by who donors are – more educated and more politically-

engaged than non-donor citizens (Francia et al. 2003), and also more ideologically-extreme than non-donors (Barber 2016; Hill and Huber 2017). For these people, political environments may be of less consequence, resulting in minimal changes in donation behavior following a change in location. Those who move may continue to donate to the same party, regardless of external circumstances.

Given these realities about donors, why would we expect them to change behavior in light of a change in partisan context? Our answer largely centers on exposure. While these may be more ideological and engaged individuals, those who are more engaged are often more politically knowledgeable (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). This knowledge means that they are more likely to be aware of and accurately perceive the new partisan environment that they are located in, and as a result are more susceptible to influence. As noted above, Perez-Truglia and Cruces (2017) find that when people are made aware of the donation behavior of their neighbors it changes their own partisan contributions. However, their work explicitly informed people of this information via randomized letters being sent to people – ideal for estimating causal effects, but it is not how contextual information is conveyed in practice. We argue that it is the more engaged and participatory campaign donors who are able to perceive the partisan composition of their neighborhood and thus be influenced.

There is ample reason to suspect that donation behaviors are structured by contexts through the discussion networks and social influence that they supply, but these influences may be constrained by the power of stable internal political orientations like partisanship. This is where citizen mobility becomes a useful tool to parse these different forces out. When a person moves, there can be a collision between these two factors – they take their partisanship with them, but their social influences can be disrupted. By studying donors that move, we undertake a harder test of the effect of social and political contexts on citizens' political behavior.

Although partisanship could be a sizeable challenge to contextual social influence following a move, we expect donors to adapt their contributing behavior to their partisan context. Those who move should modify their donations to better align with the partisan context of their new district. The Republican donor who moves from a Republican district to a Democratic district should shift their donations more Democratic in response to the political context and social influences in their new district.

While we have talked at length about the partisan motivation for donation behavior, we also know that strategic considerations motivate some donors (Francia et al. 2003). These donors want to contribute money to the winner, likely in the hopes that doing so will help them get access to the candidate. We acknowledge that this is undoubtedly occurring to some extent. However, recent research suggests that political factors (ideology and partisanship) largely motivates individual donors, not access goals (Barber 2016, Barber et al. 2017).

Data and Design

We evaluate the influence of moving on donor behavior using Adam Bonica's (2013) Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME), which includes campaign contributions in local, state, and federal elections. The DIME dataset contains donations from both individuals and organizations to candidates and committees in elections from 1979 – 2012. By incorporating campaign finance data from a variety of sources, the database makes it easier for scholars to study campaign donations across elections. The DIME dataset allows us to track individuals' campaign contributions across elections. By tracking individuals' contributions, we can evaluate how moving impacts (or doesn't impact) their donating behavior.

In this paper, we focus on contributions from individuals to candidates for the U.S. House in the 2002 – 2010 elections. We restrict our analysis to U.S. House races to best evaluate how a change in a donor's partisan context impacts their contributing behavior. House races provide more variation in partisan context than state-wide races like Senate and gubernatorial races. We also needed to ensure similarity in districts across elections. Otherwise, it would be difficult to examine the effect of a move on donors' contributions. Moreover, we needed to know that a change in a donor's district was not due to the donor being placed in a new district after redistricting. Therefore, we focus on campaign contributions to U.S. House candidates in the 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010 elections.

To track individuals' donations, we need a stable identifier for each donor. In the database, Bonica created a unique identifier for each contributor that is stable across elections. However, this unique identifier is created using the contributor's address. If a contributor changes their address (i.e., moves) at some point in the dataset, they are given a new identifier. Due to the challenges in confirming a contributor's identity without a shared address, this decision

makes sense. For most studies on individual donors, this decision rule regarding the unique identifier would not be a major issue. However, since we are interested in studying contributors' behavior after a move from one location to another, we had to create our own contributor ids.

We identified individual donors to congressional candidates that moved between elections in several steps. First, we identified individuals that contributed in at least two consecutive elections and dropped donors who only contributed in a single election. We identified these individuals by matching contributors' full names when merging together the election-cycle datasets. Contributors' full name includes their first name, last name, and their middle initial when available. We also created an identifier variable when matching contributors' full names, identifying contributors in different elections that are likely to be the same person. For example, this unique identifier might equal 75 for all Jane B. Does. This allowed us to identify donors with the same name living in different House district (i.e., potential movers) across election-cycles. While this is a good first step in identifying the same donors across contribution records that moved districts, this approach does result in some different individuals being matched together due to a shared name.

Second, in an effort to reduce the number of different donors inaccurately being matched as the same donor, we dropped cases in which the matched contributor names donated in the same election. From our review of the data, two (or more) individuals with the same name donating in the same election with different Bonica ids were usually different individuals that happened to share the same name. Therefore, we used this as an indication of two different donors with the same name and dropped those observations from the data.

Finally, we only included donors in our analysis with a last name frequency of 5 or under. In the DIME dataset, Bonica measured the prevalence of each donor's last name using the Frequently Occurring Surnames data from the U.S. Census. Last names that are rarer (i.e., occur less in the population), should reduce the likelihood of different donors with the exact same full name existing in the dataset. The surname frequency indicates the proportion it comprises of last names per 100,000 people. Restricting our data to donors with a last name frequency of 5 or less reduces the sample by about 75%, but including only donors with less frequent last names helps give us confidence that most of our observations are donors that moved districts between elections rather than different people.[1]

We use a change in a donor's House district to identify a move due to issues in using donor's zip codes, which is the other alternative. One major issue is that zip codes do not line up with House district boundaries. One zip code can cross multiple districts. This makes it difficult to accurately measure a donor's partisan context, especially since finding partisanship data at the zip code level is difficult. By using House district to identify a donor's residence, we are better able to measure the partisanship and competitiveness of a donor's political environment.

This process for identifying donors that moved to a different House district results in a sample of 9,823 observations.[2] When separated, we have four datasets in which donors move between consecutive elections: 2002-04 (949 movers), 2004-06 (1,165 movers), 2006-08 (1,629 movers), and 2008-10 (3,351 movers). For comparison, we added a random sample of non-moving donors contributing in these elections to the dataset. The full random samples of non-movers match the number of movers in each set of elections. However, we had to drop non-moving donors in the 2004-06 and 2008-2010 cycles. Because we measure partisanship with the two-party vote share for Democratic presidential candidates, the measure stays constant for non-movers from 2004 to 2006, and 2008 to 2010. Since we cannot measure change in partisanship for those non-movers, we dropped them from the analysis. We use the donors with stable addresses to help better understand how moving and contextual forces affect individuals' donation strategies and behavior.

To evaluate the impact of a move on donors' contributing behavior to congressional candidates, we calculated the change in their contributions after the move. We first calculated donors' aggregate contributions for each election. These aggregate variables for each donor include: the percentage of contributions given to Democrats and Republicans in the election, and the percentage of contributions given to candidates running in and out of the donor's district of residence. We then created variables calculating the change in these aggregate contribution variables after the move

[1] Our main results also hold when taking an even more conservative approach and restricting the sample to donors with a last name frequency less than or equal to 1 per 100,000 using the Frequently Occurring Surnames data from the U.S. Census.

[2] Some measures were missing for donors residing in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico districts, so we dropped those observations from the sample.

by subtracting the pre-move election variables from those in the post-move election. For an easier calculation and clearer comparison, we only include individuals' donations in the election directly preceding and following the move. We use these change in contributions variables as our dependent variables in the following analysis.

We expect a change in the partisanship of an individual's environment to affect their donating behavior. We measure the partisanship of the district with the percentage of the two-party vote won by the Democratic candidate for president in the House district in which they reside. For example, to calculate the partisan context of a respondent residing in Alabama's 1st Congressional District in 2008, we take the percentage of the vote that Barack Obama received in the 2008 presidential election in the district (38%), and divide it by the total two party vote share (Obama's 38% + McCain's 61%) = 38/(38+61). Therefore, the Democratic two-party vote share was 38% in Alabama's 1st. This measure allows us to evaluate the partisanship of the district and calculate the level of two-party competition in the district. One limitation of the measure is that House districts can cover a large area of land and diverse neighborhoods, so it is a more expansive measure than a more restricted measure of partisanship in a neighborhood. However, due to issues with other measures, we believe this is the best way to assess the partisanship of a donor's residence.

Results

We begin by taking a descriptive look at our dependent variable across the mover and non-mover samples.[3] The dependent variable ranges from -1 to 1. Recall that these are change measures, with pre-move values subtracted from post-move values. For the Percentage Donated to Democrats variable, a value of -1 would be an individual who gave 100% of their U.S. House donations to Democrats in wave 1, and 0% in wave 2, while a value of 1 would be the inverse. Positive values signify a shift towards more Democratic donations, while negative values signify a shift towards less Democratic donations. The mean values are close to zero (.043 for movers and .016 for non-movers) suggesting that there were roughly the same amount of shifts from Democratic to Republican donations, and from Republican to Democratic donations, with a slight tendency towards more Democratic donations during this time period. Comparing the mean value from our sample of movers to the mean value from the random sample of non-movers, we see that they are similar, suggesting that there are not systematic differences in partisan donation changes between movers and non-movers.

Our first analysis explores how partisan donation patterns change in response to changes in district partisanship following a move. All of the models presented in this paper are change-score panel models. The ability to use this approach is one of the advantages of looking at the same people following a move, rather than just looking across different individuals in a cross-sectional fashion. Change-score panel models are unbiased by heterogeneity that is unobserved/unmeasured that occurs between individuals and is constant over time (Johnson 2005). This allows us to assess the impact of a treatment such as moving to a different context on an outcome without contamination from observed or unobserved factors that differ between individuals. In order to calculate change scores, the dependent variables and primary independent variables are all calculated by subtracting the wave 1 values of the variables from the wave 2 values.

For the first set of results, we explore the change in the percent of donations to Democrats. We have also looked at the changes in the percentage that is donated to Republicans, but since these results are essentially the inverse of one another, we only present them for Democrats to simplify the presentation of our findings. The primary independent variable of interest in these models is the change in Democratic district partisanship.[4] Table 1 presents OLS regression results of these associations, with one model for movers and one for non-movers. We control for three other variables in these models which can account of other changes in donation behavior that occur following a move. These control measures are the change in the competitiveness of the district (positive values represent districts getting less competitive, negative values represent districts getting more competitive), change in the total amount of money that is donated to U.S. House candidates across the two years (positive values represent an increase in the amount of money donated, while negative values represent a decrease), and the change in the total number of donations that are made (positive values indicate an increase in the number of donations that are made across the two-year time span, negative values indicate a decrease).

[3] See Online Appendix C for a table of descriptive statistics for all variables used in our models.

[4] The Change in Democratic District Partisanship variable is created by subtracting the Democratic share of the two party vote in the district that is moved to (the destination district), from the Democratic share of the two party vote in the district that was moved away from. Negative values represent a move to a more Republican district, while positive values represent a move to a more Democratic district.

--Table 1 About Here--

Turning to the results in Table 1, we see that Changing District Partisanship is significantly associated with changes in the percentages of one's total donations that go to Democrats for both those who move and those who do not. As districts become more Democratic, we see that a larger share of the person's donations go to Democrats than in the election cycle prior to their move. The magnitudes of these effects are not trivial. For the individual who experienced the largest increase in Democratic partisanship that we observe in the data (a value of 65.1 on our Changing Democratic Partisanship measure), we would expect a 40.9% increase in share of their donations that go to Democrats. That is, if a person residing in a district where the Republican presidential candidate won with a 30% margin and they donated 50% of their money to Democrats, moved to a district where the Democratic candidate won with a 35% margin, we would expect this individual to donate roughly 91% of their money to Democrats in the year following the move. While this maximum effect is not the norm, more modest and common changes in district partisanship also produce meaningful changes in donation behavior. A one standard deviation increase (18 percentage points) in the Changing District Partisan measure would produce an expected increase in total percentage of donations to Democrats of 11.3%. An individual who had previously donated 50% of their money to Democratic candidates, but moved from a district where the Republican presidential candidate won by 30% to a district where the Republican presidential candidate won by 12%, would be expected to increase the share of their money going to Democrats to 61.3%.[5]

The only control variable that was significant in the model was the change in the total amount of donations. The negative coefficient indicates that as individuals donated more money than the prior year, they donated less to Democrats, though the effect is quite small. This result appears to be driven by the large number of respondents we have in the 2008-2010 wave, where we saw a surge in Republican donations nationally in the 2010 midterm election.

Turning to the model with non-movers, we see that changing district partisanship also drives donation patterns in the same direction. That is, someone who lives in the same district, and that district becomes more Democratic, donates a larger share of his or her donations to Democrats. However, the magnitude of this effect is slightly smaller, and the amount of change that we observe in environments for non-movers is much smaller than for those who move. For a person remaining in the same district and experiencing the maximum change occurring in our sample (30 points more Democratic), we would expect to see a 13.8% increase in the share of their donations that go to Democrats. A one standard deviation shift produces an expected increase in the total share of donations that go to Democrats of 1.9%. While these values are notably less consequential than the effects that we observe for movers, this is not a surprising result. Not only does a move disrupt social ties, it produces new candidates, and a new electoral landscape. We should expect to observe larger effects under these circumstances. With this discussion in mind, we want to be cautious about interpreting the differences between the size of the effect in the mover and non-mover model, as we are not 95% confident that the coefficients between the models are different from one another. We are confident that both are statistically significant and different from zero suggesting that there is an association between changing district partisanship and changing donation behavior.

What does this tell us about partisan donation patterns? There are several possible explanations, but it appears that donation behavior is influenced by the composition of the partisan composition of the district that one lives in. We argue that that people's partisan donation patterns appear to be (partly) a function of the degree to which they are surrounded by other partisans. The social and political circumstances that surround the individual can alter one's partisan donation behavior, even over a two-year time span from one election cycle to the next.

With these findings in mind, the question that is raised is what citizens are most susceptible to these environmental influences on their donation behavior? We turn to exploring what kinds of partisans are the most responsive to environmental changes. The challenge that we are faced with is that we are not using survey data, so we are unable to assess these people's party identification. However, we can look at their donation behavior in the first wave of our analysis. We do not claim that this is a measure of partisanship, but it is an individual-level characteristic that likely correlates with their partisan leanings. We interact this measure with the Changing Democratic District Partisanship variable from our prior analysis. This interaction can show us whether it is reliable Republican donors, mixed party donors, or reliable Democratic donors who are most responsive to changing environments. We show these interactions in Table 2.

[5] Our main finding regarding movers holds when we take a much more conservative name-matching approach and restrict our sample to those with a last name frequency of 1, giving us more confidence that the results reported in Table 2 are not a function of name-mismatches.

--Table 2 About Here--

For movers, we see that there is a negative interaction effect that is significant at the $p<.05$ level, but the interaction coefficient is not significant for the non-movers. The negative direction on the coefficients suggest that we observe a larger effect of Changing Democratic District Composition on reliable Republican donors than Democratic donors. To illustrate and better interpret these effects, we show marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals for movers in Figure 1 below.

--Figure 1 About Here--

First, we see that there are significant marginal effects across the range of prior donation behavior. That is, those who had donated primarily to Republicans and primarily to Democrats were both shifting their donation behavior in a Democratic direction following a move to a more Democratic district. However, the effect of a move to a Democratic district is more consequential for those who had donated primarily to Republicans than those who had donated primarily to Democrats. In part, this is likely a function of there being more possible changes to their donation bundle that could occur (if one had donated 100% to Republicans, the possible change in donation behavior to Democrats is much higher than if someone donated 80% to Democrats). However, the most interesting takeaway is that even the most partisan of donors are responsive to environmental shifts. This is interesting as we may view consistent donors as being amongst the most ideological of citizens (Barber 2015; Hill and Huber 2017), so seeing that even they will alter their behavior suggests a relatively powerful influence being exerted by the places where we live. In the interest of space, we do not present a plot of the insignificant interaction from the non-mover model.

In sum, this set of results suggests that the changes in context that result from a move are formative in altering donor behavior, especially for the most partisan of donors. It is those who have donated the most to Republican candidates who change their donation behavior the most. While we think that this is partly a measurement artifact (those who have donated 100% to Republicans are able to change their donation bundle in a Democratic direction more than those who donated 80% to Democrats), it does highlight that even the most partisan donors are susceptible to these forces.

Although we are unable to disentangle the myriad motivations that drive citizens' donation activities, the finding noted above raises some questions. If we are observing large swings in donation behaviors amongst the most partisan individuals, this could be a function of strategic donation patterns driven by the district's competitiveness. The partisan environment may have less influence on individuals' donating behavior if the district is competitive. Moreover, if the district is uncompetitive, individuals may be more likely to donate to the winning candidate regardless of partisanship. If this is the primary driver behind what is taking place, then we should see an interactive relationship between changing district partisanship and competitiveness. As a robustness check we explore this possibility in Table 3 by looking to see if an interactive relationship exists between Changing Democratic District Partisanship and Changing Competitiveness.

--Table 3 About Here--

We see from the results in Table 3 that there are not interactive effects between Changing Democratic District Partisanship and Changing Competitiveness. We have plotted these interactions and they do not reveal any kind of relationship of note, so we do not show them here in the interest of space. What this tells us is that the effect of Changing Democratic District Partisanship is not conditional upon changes in competitiveness. See online Appendix B for another treatment of this issue looking into races that are uncontested. These supplementary analyses help give us confidence in our findings. We are not able to say what exactly the impetus is, but the most plausible explanation for the broad pattern of results would be the social story that we presented in our theory.

Conclusion

We have sought to explore the consequences of changes in context on citizen donation behavior in U.S. House elections. People who move give us a unique chance to observe the same individual under two different sets of circumstances – holding the individual constant and varying the environment, rather than holding the environment constant and varying the individual as we do with cross-sectional data. An advantage of this approach is that we are able to better account for unobserved differences between individuals, and observe the behavior of one individual under two different conditions. We are also able to observe more consequential shifts in environmental characteristics. A given environment will change little from year-to-year, making it difficult to ascertain how changing environments

alter citizen behaviors. However, looking to citizen mobility offers a unique window into what happens when environmental influences are disrupted in a potentially serious fashion, helping us to better understand the role they play in forming our political actions. This allows us to better understand several different questions about individual donation behavior. Do people alter their donation behavior in light of different circumstances? Do the places where we live structure the ways in which we give money?

We have shown evidence that when people move, it changes their donation behavior. The partisan nature of a district exerts a pull on which party receives a citizen's donations. People who move to a place with a new partisan composition are more likely to begin donating to the party that is more prevalent in that location. A move to a district that is more Democratic (Republican) than one's previous district tends to result in a person giving a higher share of her donations to Democrats (Republicans). The social and political context in a new district appear to alter the behaviors of even the most consistent partisans. Recall the example given previously of a person who moves from California's 30th Congressional District which leaned Democratic, to Oklahoma's 1st which was solidly Republican. This example was a move made by one of the donors in the dataset. He gave $500 to a Democratic candidate and $0 to Republicans in the year prior to his move, while living in a Democratic district, but after moving to a largely Republican district gave no money to Democrats and $250 to Republicans in the year after his move. While this is just one example, it is illustrative of the kinds of changes in both environment and donation behavior that we find.

We have pursued a variety of robustness checks in addition to the competitiveness models presented previously. Online Appendix A examines if the main findings hold depending on whether people are sending their donations in or out of district after a move. We find that the results hold for both groups, but are strongest amongst the people who send all of their donations to candidates in the district they live in. We have also looked at alternative ways of accounting for competition, and in Online Appendix B we look at whether moving to or from districts with uncontested races could be driving our results, and we find that this does not appear to be the case. We have made additional efforts to strengthen our confidence in other aspects of the paper, such as checking to see whether a more restrictive rule for matching donor names across elections alters our findings. When we restrict to names that only appear one time in the dataset, we still find our same main result.

While this paper has shown consistent evidence that geography and mobility can shape campaign donations, it also leaves a number of questions unanswered. We have focused our analysis on U.S. House elections, which begs the question of whether these findings are unique to this level, or if they generalize to state and other federal elections. We also acknowledge that there may be additional factors that we have not been able to control for here due to data limitations. While the change-score panel design limits some of these concerns, it does not account for extra-individual factors that may vary over time, or other individual level circumstances that may be time varying. Finally, there are a host of other ways to assess donation behavior that we have not addressed here. Our focus is on the percent donated to each party, leaving many unanswered questions about outcomes such as whether a person chooses to donate or not, which we cannot answer with the data we have here. Despite these limitations and unanswered questions, this research helps us better understand the influence of geographic context on political behavior.

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Table 1: Effect of More Democratic Districts on Percent Donated to Democrats

	Movers	Non-Movers
Δ Democratic District Partisanship	.006*	.005*
	(.000)	(.001)
Δ Competitiveness	-.001	.000
	(.001)	(.001)
Δ Total Amount Donated	-.000*	-.000
	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Number of Donations	-.001	-.001
	(.002)	(.002)
Constant	.034*	.003
	(.007)	(.007)
R-Squared	.04	.01
N	7,093	2,729

Notes: p*<.05, p+<.1. OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

Table 2: Effect of More Democratic Districts on Percent Donated to Democrats, Moderated by Prior Donation Behavior

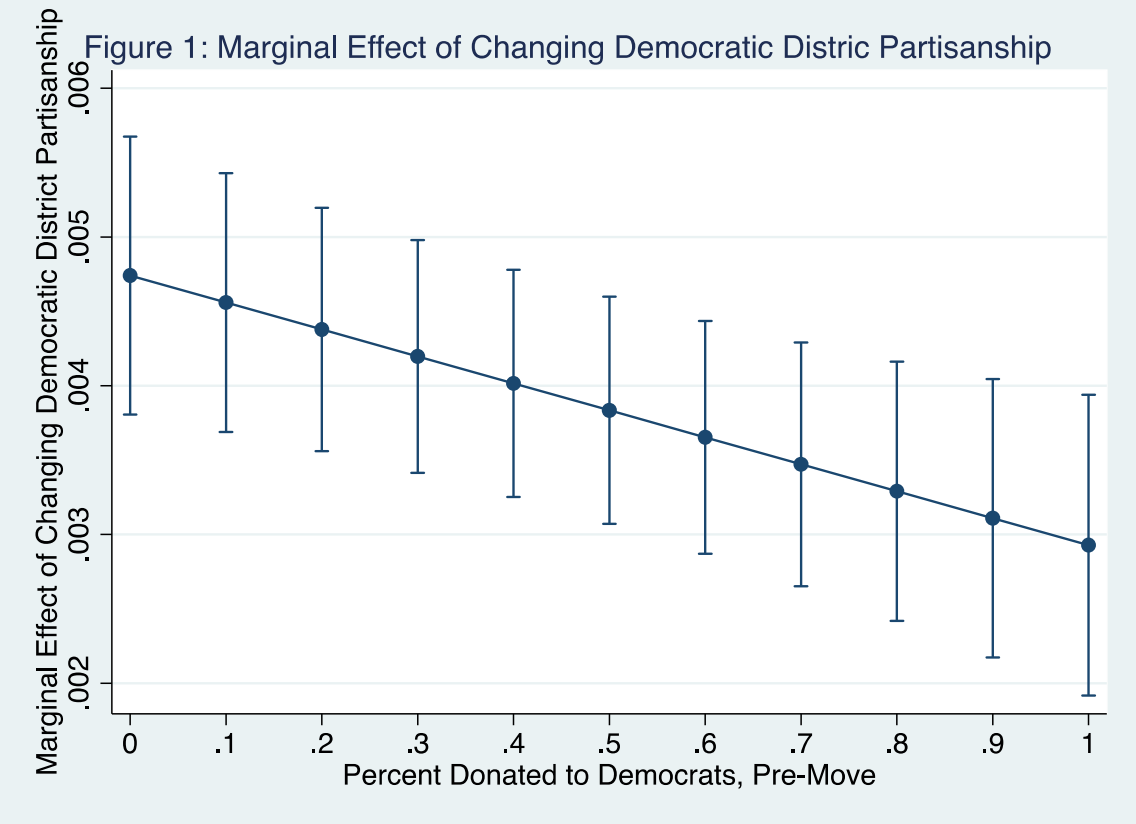
	Movers	Non-Movers
Δ Democratic District Partisanship	.005*	.005*
	(.001)	(.001)
% Donated to Democrats, Pre-Move	-.715*	------
	(.011)	
Δ District Partisanship X % Donated to Democrats	-.002*	------
	(.001)	
% Donated to Democrats, Wave 1	------	-.179*
		(.013)
Δ District Partisanship X % Donated to Democrats	------	-.001
		(.003)
Δ Competitiveness	.000	.003*
	(.001)	(.001)
Δ Total Amount Donated	-.000*	-.000
	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Number of Donations	.003	-.001
	(.002)	(.001)
Constant	.386*	.096
	(.008)	(.009)
R-Squared	.38	.10
N	7,093	2,729

Notes: p*<.05, p+<.1. OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3: Effect of More Democratic Districts on Percent Donated to Democrats, Moderated by Changing Competitiveness

	Movers	Non-Movers
Δ Democratic District Partisanship	.006*	.005*
	(.000)	(.001)
Δ Competitiveness	-.001	.001
	(.001)	(.002)
Δ District Partisanship X Competitiveness	.000	-.000
	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Total Amount Donated	-.000*	.000
	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Number of Donations	-.001	-.001
	(.002)	(.002)
Constant	.032*	.003
	(.008)	(.007)
R-Squared	.04	.01
N	7,093	2,729

Notes: p*<.05. OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.



Appendix A – Looking at In and Out of District Donations

Another consideration related to the linkages between geography and donation behavior is whether donations are being sent in or out of the district that the individual resides in. To see whether our results are sensitive to where donations are going, we have run our main findings from Table 1, but focused only on movers and looked at those who sent all of their post-move donations to in-district candidates, and those who sent all of their donations to out-district candidates.

Appendix Table 1: Effect of More Democratic Districts on Percent Donated to Democrats

	Movers who Donated 100% In-District	Movers who Donated 100% Out-District
Δ Democratic District Partisanship	.010*	.005*
	(.001)	(.001)
Δ Competitiveness	-.000	-.001
	(.002)	(.001)
Δ Total Amount Donated	-.000	-.000*
	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Number of Donations	.013	-.003
	(.010)	(.002)
Constant	-.030+	.055*
	(.017)	(.008)
R-Squared	.07	.03
N	1,351	5,502

Notes: p*<.05, p+<.1. OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. Models are restricted to those who moved.

We see here there is a significant effect of changing district partisanship on the partisan nature of donations across both groups, though the magnitude of the effect is almost two times as large (and we are 95% confident that the two coefficients are different from one another) for those who give all of their money to in-district candidates as opposed to those who give all of their money to out of district candidates. These findings appear to align with the theory that we have offered.

Since our theory is rooted in a social explanation of donation behavior it makes sense that we observe effects for both in and out-district donations. If one's environment is supplying more Republican cues, social pressures, and information, then that should influence how the individual thinks about donations not just in their home district, but also across the country. However, we might expect the pressures to be strongest as they relate to the in-district candidate. After all, it is likely that much of the information being presented from social sources is about the in-district candidate, or relates to matters more proximate to the person's new place of residence. Thus, finding that the effect exists across both groups is reassuring in that we are not just picking up on some dynamic where people shift the geographic base of their donations after moving. It is also reassuring to see that the effect is larger for those who are strictly making in-district donations compared to those who are strictly making out-district donations.

Appendix B – Accounting for Uncontested Races

Another factor that can change when people move districts is whether they are in a place where there is a contested election or not. For example, a person could move from a place that leans Democratic to a solidly Republican one, but the Republican could be running uncontested if it is a very Republican district. Thus, we would see a shift in donations to the Republican, but it would simply be due to only having a Republican to donate to.

To explore this, we create a dichotomous variable for whether the person resided in a district where the U.S. House race was uncontested by one of the two major parties, and the same measure for the district that they resided in post-move with data from the MIT Election Data and Science Lab (2017). In our sample of movers, 742 (10.3%) resided in an uncontested district in the election before they moved, and 532 (7.3%) resided in an uncontested district after they moved. We also create a change measure by subtracting the pre-move uncontested measure from the post-move uncontested measure. This creates a variable where -1 is those who moved from a district with a contested race to one where it was uncontested, 0 is someone who move moved from a district with a contested race to another district with a contested race, and 1 is those who move from a district with an uncontested race to one with a contested election.

In Appendix Table 2, we present four models. The first two use the post-move uncontested variable to account for whether our results are driven by people moving to uncontested districts. The first model simply includes this variable as a control to see whether our main findings hold, and the second interacts our changing district partisanship measure with the post-move uncontested elections variable to see if our finding is conditional upon moving to these districts. The second two models use our change measure – the first as a control and the second with an interaction term.

Appendix Table 2: Effect of More Democratic Districts on Percent Donated to Democrats

Δ Democratic District Partisanship	.006*	.007*	.006*	.006*
	(.000)	(.001)	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Competitiveness	-.000	-.001	-.001	-.001
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Δ Total Amount Donated	-.000*	-.000*	-.000*	-.000*
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Δ Number of Donations	.001	-.001	-.001	-.001
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Post-Move Uncontested District	-.020	-.011	-----	-----
	(.027)	(.028)		
Post-Move Uncontested District X Δ Democratic District Partisanship	-----	-.002+ (.001)	-----	-----
Δ Uncontested District	-----	-----	.019	.020
			(.018)	(.018)
Δ Uncontested District X Δ Democratic District Partisanship	-----	-----	-----	-.001 (.001)
Constant	.036*	.036*	.035*	.036*
	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)
R-Squared	.04	.04	.04	.04
N	7,094	7,094	7,094	7,094

Notes: p*<.05, p+<.1. OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. Models are restricted to those who moved.

Across all four models, our main effect remains significant, suggesting that controlling for uncontested races does not alter our central conclusion. In the second model the interaction coefficient is significant at the p<.1 level, and the negative coefficient indicates that the effect of changing district partisanship is reduced when the person moves to a district with an uncontested race. We are cautious to avoid overinterpreting this interaction since it does not meet conventional levels of significance, especially given our large sample. If anything, it suggests that the story we have told here is primarily taking in place for people moving into contested districts.

Appendix C – Descriptive Statistics

Appendix Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Comparing Changes in Donation Behavior Between Movers and Non-Movers

	Movers			Non-Movers		
	Min	Max	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
Dependent Variable						
Δ in % Donated to Democrats	-1	1	.043	-1	1	.016
Independent Variables						
Δ in Democratic Partisanship	-56.49	65.1	1.31	-11.73	30.03	2.91
Δ in District Competitiveness	-42	43	.280	-12	30	.475
Δ in Total Amount Donated	-50,050	73,722	-99.35	-60,363	55,782	244.18
Δ in Number of Donations	-44	101	.297	-35	96	.253
% Donated to Democrats(pre-move/wave1)	0	1	.495	0	1	.530

Looking to the independent variables that we use in the analyses that follow, we see relatively similar descriptive statistics between our mover and non-mover groups with one key difference. When looking at the amount of change that occurs to the measure of partisanship in one's district between waves, there is a much larger range for movers than for non-movers. This is what we would expect, as district partisanship in a given district is not likely to exhibit large movement over a two-year time span, but when one moves there is a much larger possible range of environments that they could find themselves in. Despite this larger possible range for those who move, the mean values of the two groups are quite similar (1.31 and 2.91). The same holds for the competitiveness of the district. Mobility raises the possibility for the individual to exhibit larger changes in the competitiveness of the place where they live, which is why we see a larger range for movers compared to non-movers. The ranges on these two variables help to underscore the utility of looking to citizen mobility to understand how contextual forces (may) shape donation behavior. Citizens may be a product of their environments, but with little temporal variation in a given environment, it can be difficult to ascertain its effects. Mobility is a rare opportunity where we see sizeable disruptions in these factors, and are able to assess what effects follow.