Political Donor Motivations and Public Support of Policies: A Time-Series Analysis *

The two predominant theories of political donor motivations are the access-oriented model and the consumption model. This paper combines political donation records and social media posts from politicians to examine behaviors predicted by these two theories using a time-series methodology. The access-oriented model of donors predicts that donations from specific groups of donors will precede public support of certain policies. The consumption model predicts that donations from various groups of donors will lag in response to public support of certain policy issues. This paper statistically derives coalitions of similar donors and tests the competing models of political donor motivations. While post research has treated each model monolithically, presuming that all donors operate under one model or the other, I find evidence of both motivational models in different donors.

*Code and data available at: github.com/rossdahlke

Introduction

The amount of money raised and spent by political campaigns in the United States continues to rise with each election cycle (Goldmacher 2020). However, the explanations of the motivations of political donors, the psychological reasons why political donors decide to make a contribution, remain unsettled. The predominant theories of political donor motivation fall into two categories, the access-oriented model or the consumption model. In the access-oriented model, contributions are given in exchange for access to politicians (Francia et al. 2003). The consumption model of donations sees donors as participants in the political process who seek to alter election probabilities in a way that helps one's preferred campaign, similar to how voting seeks to help a campaign achieve election (Ansolabehere, Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003). Despite taking diametric views of political donors, the two models share the similarity that past researchers have predominantly subscribed to a single model and don't consider the possibility of both of the models existing in different donors. In other words, most previous scholarship on political donors does not allow for the possibility that different political donors may have differing reasons for making their contribution.

The present work eschews this zero-sum view of the motivations of political donors. Instead, the two predominant models are both investigated under assumptions that allow them to co-exist by looking for both motivational models among different groups of donors. Researchers readily operate under the idea that individuals can have differing reasons for why and how they vote (e.g. (Arceneaux and Nickerson 2009; Feldman 1982; Lau 1985; Rahn, Krosnick, and Breuning 1994; Yiannakis 1981)). Then why has so much of past research on donors either pitted the two models of donor motivations against one another (e.g. (Welch 1980)) or operated exclusively in the domain of either the access-oriented model (e.g. (Baker 2020; Fellowes and Wolf 2004; Fouirnaies and Hall 2015; Francia, Green, Herrnson, Powell, and Clyde Wilcox 2003; Herndon 1982; Kalla and

Broockman 2016; Langbein 1986; Powell and Grimmer 2016)) or consumption model (e.g. Ansolabehere, Figueiredo, and Snyder (2003)])?

This paper makes three main contributions to the literature on political donors. First, it tests the two models of political donors in a way that allows both models to exist among different donors. Second, instead of arbitrary classification of donors, such as large versus small donors, I take a bottom-up network approach to studying political donors where donors are clustered together based on network connections based on donations patterns. Finally, I layer in social media data to fundraising data and show the value that using politicians' social media data can have on understanding political actors. Using these novel approaches to understanding political donor behavior, we find evidence that both models, the access-oriented and consumption models, likely exist, but within different donors.

Access-Oriented Model

Access-oriented political donors attempt to use their contributions to gain access to politicians. Most often, access-oriented motivations are thought to be the reason behind contributions from large donors. The idea is that donations can gain individuals access to politicians and their staff to influence legislative behaviors (Francia, Green, Herrnson, Powell, and Clyde Wilcox 2003).

Congress is an information ecology where competing facts and perspectives are everywhere and ever-changing. Providing political contributions can allow political contributors to gain direct access by cutting through all the noise of competing information that the legislator might be encountering (Milbrath 1958). Interest groups and individuals have the goal of gaining access to politicians through their financial contributions in order to influence government policies (Baker 2020; Fouirnaies and Hall 2015; Herndon 1982; Powell and Grimmer 2016). These attempts to buy access are successful in gaining meetings with congressional offices for both special interest groups (Langbein 1986) and

individual donors (Kalla and Broockman 2016).

Measuring the direct access that political financiers gain from political contributions can be a challenging endeavor due to all of the noise in the political ecology. Instead, researchers have treated the "access" component of contributor influence as an implicit assumption and instead look for evidence of "influence" of political contributors on politicians. Many political science papers do not use the explicit term "access-oriented donor" and instead refer to their work as examining the potential "influence" of political donors on politicians. This line of influence research inherently implies a gain of access by political contributors. In order to influence public policy, one must first have access to politicians in order to communicate with them because the contribution itself does not carry any intrinsic message (Langbein 1986). In other words, studies that examine the influence of political donors make the assumption of the access-oriented model because influence requires access.

Contributions from financial (Hayes 2017), telecommunications (Edwards and Figueiredo 2016), education (Constant 2006), environmental (Hogan 2020) and healthcare interest groups (McKay 2018) have all influenced legislation. Any connection that does exist between campaign contributors and public policy has a stronger impact if the contributions are from organized business interests within a member's district (Hall and Wayman 1990), similar to how members of congress prioritize public opinion of their district over national public opinion (Butler and Nickerson 2011). Further, there is a stronger influence as a result of contributions from individuals with business interests, opposed to PACs, which many other studies focus on (Fellowes and Wolf 2004). While it is "nearly universal" (Bonica 2016) that corporate executives of Fortune 500 firms make political contributions (Fremeth, Richter, and Schaufele 2013), there is heterogeneity in their political leanings (Bonica 2016).

Potentially, the influence exerted by contributors when making a political contribution is so indirect that it does not always materialize in statistical patterns of legislative

voting or public policy. Yet there is evidence of the influence towards the benefit of the financial contributor. Interest groups seek both direct and indirect access to the policy making process (Fouirnaies and Hall 2018). Firms that contribute to winning political campaigns have abnormal financial returns after the election (Akey 2015; Cooper, Gulen, and Ovtchinnikov 2010). In addition to immediately-felt financial returns, donors may systematically contribute money to legislative agenda setters, such as chairs of financial committees, in an effort to set future legislative agendas (Fouirnaies and Hall 2018). Even business executives understand that political contributions are purchases of "good will" which are positive in return but are not frequent nor universal (Gordon, Hafer, and Landa 2007). For example, political contributions reduce the punishment for business executives who are sanctioned for committing fraud (Fulmer, Knill, and Yu 2017); increase the number of "sweetheart" contracts awarded from the government (Ferris, Houston, and Javakhadze 2019); and increase the premium and survivability of Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) (Gounopoulos, Mazouz, and Wood 2021).

Instead of focusing on direct access or financial outcomes, this research article examines politicians' public support of policy issues. Under the access-oriented model of political donor motivations, one would expect to find politicians to be more supportive of certain policy issues after receiving campaign contributions from access-oriented donors. This hypothesis will be tested using a Granger causality model (Granger 1969), which is an econometric methodology to test whether changes in one time series predict future changes in another time series.

H_{1a}**: Donations from coalitions of political donors will precede, or Granger cause, increased public support of certain political issues from the politicians to whom they donate.**

Since access-oriented donors are thought to be wealthier contributors, sometimes seeking access for financial gain, this paper will also examine the amount contributed by members of donor coalitions that are accepted by H_{1a}.

H_{2a}: **Donors from access-oriented coalitions will on average be *larger* contributors to political campaigns than donors not in access-oriented coalitions.**

Consumption Model

While the access-oriented model is centered on donors *influencing* the political process, the consumption model is about donors *participating* in the political process. The consumption model of political donors concludes that political contributions are not vehicles by which donors seek access to politicians but instead are acts of consumption, or in other words, participation (Ansolabehere, Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003). Under this model, individual donors are intrinsically motivated by ideology (Ansolabehere, Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003). People do not receive a direct benefit by making a political donation, but they do experience the indirect benefits of participating in a political campaign that matches their ideology. Said another way, for consumption-motivated donors, making a contribution is just an extension of voting on a participatory spectrum. Under this approach, donations are a way for individuals to participate and be responsive to their "perception of the stakes in the election" (Hill and Huber 2017).

Ideological proximity, or the spatial distance between the ideology of candidates and donors, is an important component to the consumption model of political donors, (Ensley 2009). It is potentially of greater importance than agreement between the donor and the candidate on specific policy issue positions (Barber, Canes-Wrone, and Thrower 2019), such as taxes, global warming, and gay rights. Studies have shown that the similarity between a donor's policy preferences and a senator's roll-call votes is a predictor of whether a donor makes a contribution (Barber, Canes-Wrone, and Thrower 2017). However, it is unclear if this connection between contributors' policy preferences and legislators' votes holds historically or only recently (Canes-Wrone and Gibson 2019). Divergence of ideology among the candidates for an office, such as a more extreme political opponent, does not impact donors' decisions to make a contribution (Ensley 2009). The theoretical

implications for this paper are that consumption-oriented donors will contribute to politicians who already show support for the policy issues, or are ideologically proximate, to themselves. In other words, donors reward for policy proximity between themselves and candidates.

Altogether, under the consumption model of donor motivations one would expect public support of policy issues to attract political donors who care about that policy, which leads to H_3.

H_{1b}**: Public support from politicians on certain political issues will precede, or Granger cause, donations from coalitions of political donors.**

Individual donors, as opposed to PACs, continue to make up a clear majority of donations to political candidates (Heerwig 2016). These individual donors most often exhibit behavior consistent with the consumption model of donations (Barber 2016; Heerwig 2016). Further, individual donors arguably play an even more central role in politics more recently with the growth in small-dollar individual donors.

With the rise of small-dollar donors on the internet and the assumption that these donors fit under the consumption model of donor motivations, this paper will examine the amount of money contributed by members of donor coalitions that are accepted by H_{1b}.

H_{2b}**: Donors from consumption coalitions will on average be *smaller* contributors to political campaigns than donors not in consumption coalitions.**

Rise of Small-Dollar Donors

The growing number of small-dollar donors in the political process suggests that there will be more consumption-oriented donors in the future. The anecdotal examples of the Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns, both of which received a large number of small-dollar donors (Choma and Voght 2020), illustrate the consumption-oriented model's connection to such donors. Small-dollar donors likely did

not directly access or influence the politics of the Sanders or Trump campaigns. Instead, donors reacted to their messages and decided to move further down the participatory spectrum in those campaigns. Individual contributors are mostly participants in politics without an ulterior motive. They are "fickle financiers of elections" whose donation habits can be disrupted by little changes to their worlds such as moving to an area that is more or less Democratic or Republican (Kettler and Lyons 2019).

The Democratic Party as a whole has recently grown its proportion of funding from small-dollar donors (Albert and Raja 2020). Moreover, incumbents have been able to sustain their small-dollar fundraising programs (Heberlig and Larson 2020)–suggesting that this trend is not going to go away. This growth in small-dollar donors has created a donorate that is more demographically representative of America but is more ideologically extreme (Albert and Raja 2020) and one that gives indiscriminately to incumbents, challengers, and open seat candidates (Culberson, McDonald, and Robbins 2019). It is conceivable that campaigns that rely on small donors will adopt rhetoric and tout their "outsider" status in an effort to activate these small, more ideologically extreme donors (Arbour 2020). For instance, extremist politicians can leverage polarizing events to raise more money for their campaigns (Oklobdzija 2017). As a result, some have predicted that small-dollar donors will polarize the nation's politics even further (Oklobdzija 2017). Although legislators who receive a large number of small-dollar donors are not more polarized in their voting in the next legislative session, legislators taking up a more polarized agenda does increase the number of small-dollar donors they attract in the subsequent election (Keena and Knight-Finley 2019). This provides further evidence for the consumption model of political donor motivations. Other studies have agreed that mass donors are the cause of partisan polarization (Raja and Wiltse 2012), but this conclusion is not definitive (Harden and Kirkland 2016). Therefore, even though small-dollar donors themselves may not be polarizing, they may provide incentive for politicians to take more polarized positions.

This research paper will also examine the polarization of political donor coalitions and whether consumption-oriented donors and access-oriented donors are in polarized positions in the donor network graph.

H_{3a}**: Consumption-motivated donors will be more polarized in the political donor network than non-consumption donors.**

H_{3b}**: Access-oriented donors will be less polarized in the political donor network than non-access donors.**

Data

Data for this research come from two primary sources: politicians' social media posts and data on political donation data.

For social media posts, this paper used the Facebook (Barbera, Geisler, and Atteveldt 2017) and Twitter (Kearney 2019) APIs to collect social media posts from all candidates for the Wisconsin State Senate and Wisconsin State Assembly during the 2016 election cycle (n = 82,851). A random subset of 12,364 posts, or about 15% of the total posts collected, were hand-coded into 27 topical categories. These topical categories included if the post was made in support or opposition to a policy. For example, the "voting liberal" category contains posts that are supportive of repealing voting ID laws and expanding early voting whereas the "voting conservative" category contains posts that are in support of voter ID laws and other conservative voting reforms.

These posts were used to train and test a BERT deep learning transfer model where about 90% (or 11,128) were used in the training set and about 10% (or 1,236), were used in the test set. This trained model achieved 82.9% accuracy in categorizing the topic of posts in the held-out test set. Furthermore, this model was applied to the rest of the uncoded corpus that were later used for aggregations and calculations of the topics that politicians were posting about.

BERT, which stands for Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers, is a

pre-trained deep learning model to which researchers can add additional output layers, in this case to classify social media posts into the hand-coded topical categories (Devlin et al. 2019). BERT is currently a state-of-the-art model in the field of Natural Language Processing (Devlin, Chang, Lee, and Toutanova 2019). BERT and other transfer learning models have yet to be widely adopted by political scientists but are an ideal choice for political science text classification, especially when compared to traditional text-as-data methods in the discipline (Terechshenko et al. 2020). BERT has been applied to other social media research such as the detection of propaganda (Vlad et al. 2019), misinformation (Jiang et al. 2020), hate speech (Mozafari, Farahbakhsh, and Crespi 2020), stance (Tian et al. 2020), and aggression (Ramiandrisoa and Mothe 2020).

Social media can be useful in studying politics because digital communication methods are similar to traditional political communication and can be extrapolated to offline characteristics. The differences that are seen in online political communication, such as lowered costs and eased barriers to entry, represent a "difference-of-degree" and not a paradigm shifting "difference-in-kind" (Karpf 2010). There is a strong connection between online channels of communication in the form of social networks and offline connections, including the building and maintenance of social capital from those offline connections (Cranshaw et al. 2010; Ellison and Steinfield 2006; Liben-Nowell et al. 2005; Scellato et al. 2010). Online social networks have also been used to study offline-based actions and beliefs like opinion polarization (Lee et al. 2014), political polarization (Hanna et al. 2013), political participation (Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell 2010) and political discourse (Kushin and Kitchener 2009). Further, in modern campaigns, it is unlikely that issues would not be discussed online. In other words, it is unlikely that there would be other events, such as the salience of a particular issue that attracts political donors, that do not make it to social media.

Individual political donation data for all candidates to the Wisconsin State Legislature during the 2016 election cycle were collected from the Wisconsin Campaign Information

System (CFIS). Anonymous contributions were removed, names were made uniform (removed punctuation, made all names lowercase, etc.), and OpenRefine (Ham 2013) was used to stem names to identify people who might be the same person (e.g., Jim Smith and James Smith). To ensure that people who have the same name, but are different people, were not counted as the same individual, their zip code was appended to the end of their name to create a unique identifier. Finally, only contributions from donors who contributed to more than one campaign were used, following previous research that emphasizes the importance of repeat donors, particularly when making inferences (Heerwig 2018). These steps left 28,858 donations from 7,567 donors.

These donations were used to create a network of political donations with candidates and donors serving as nodes and donations between them as edges. This network was clustered into 13 distinct communities so that donors in each community are most similar to one another based on which campaigns they contributed to. The Louvain method as implemented by Gephi (Bastian, Heymann, and Jacomy 2009) did the clustering, or community detection.

This donor cluster network is visualized in Figure 1 using the Yifan Hu layout algorithm (Hu 2005) with the two political parties clearly divided with two large groups of donors, Democrats on the left, and Republicans on the right. The graph is colored by the statistical community the donor and candidates are in.

Figure 1: Network of political donors in Wisconsin in 2016. Each node (dot) is a donor or a campaign. Each edge (line connecting two nodes) represents a contribution. Nodes are sized by their in-degree, the number of contributions the node received. Nodes are colored by their assigned statistical cluster. The large bunch on the left are Democrats. The other large group on the right are Republicans.

Results

Donor Motivation Models

H_{1a} and H_{1b} test the relationships between the social media dataset and the political donation dataset. I tested the two models of political donor motivations using a Granger causality time-series model. Other social media studies have used this methodology (Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark 2018; Lukito 2020). For example, other researchers have used it to study the relationship between social media and non-social media events such as offline protests (Bastos, Mercea, and Charpentier 2015) and stock prices (Park, Leung, and Ma 2017). Granger causality detects whether movements in one time series precedes, lags, has a confounding variable, or is not related to another time series (Granger 1969). An abbreviated version of this methodology takes two time series variables X and Y. First, one builds a vector autoregression (VAR) model to predict the outcome variable Y with Y being the sole predictor in the model. In other words, the model only uses Y to predict Y. Then, a second model is built where both variables X and Y are used to build the VAR to predict Y. Effectively, if the second model, with the inclusion of X, does a better job of predicting Y than the first model alone, as measured by an *F*-statistic, X is said to Granger cause Y. To test for the possibility of counfounding variables, the methodology flips X and Y and performs the same process. If the null is rejected in both instances, then there is likely a confounding variable Z. This analysis was conducted in R (R Core Team 2013) with the `lmtest` package (Zeileis and Hothorn 2002). P-values were adjusted with the Bonferroni method (Haynes 2013). The optimal lag for each model was calculated using a Bayesian Information Criteria (Ahelegbey, Billio, and Casarin 2016) implemented by the `tsDyn` package (Stigler 2010). Altogether, this method allows me to test whether politicians' social media posts and donations from groups of donors are likely related.

I compare two time series, one of social media posts and another of political contributions from clusters of donors. The first time series constists of the number of social media

posts per day for each topic that were made by campaigns. The analysis only included campaigns that received contributions from a donor cluster. In other words, a time series of donations from a donor coalition was compared to the aggregate count of posts about a given topic made by candidates that the donor cluster contributed to. For example, donations from donor coalition 6 Granger caused politicians that received donations from the coalition to publicly support women's issue and pro-choice policies. Stated another way, donations from coalition 6 predict whether candidates will publicly support pro-women policies. The theoretical connection to political donor psychology is that this behavior is expected under the access-oriented model of political donor motivations. Coalitions and policy topics that are accepted by either H_{1a} or H_{1b} are in Table 1. The full results of the Granger causality tests are visualized in Figure 2.

Table 1: H1a and H1b acceptances

coalition	policy topic	model	Lag	F-statistic	p-value
0	veterans issues: bipartisan	consumption	5	7.6	<.001
1	veterans issues: bipartisan	access	7	7.1	<.001
1	drug abuse: bipartisan	consumption	7	4.5	<.001
3	race issues: liberal	access	4	6.7	<.001
4	guns: conservative	consumption	4	6.5	<.001
6	abortion and women's issues: conservative	access	2	14.2	<.001
7	drug abuse: bipartisan	consumption	7	5.7	<.001
11	infrastructure: liberal	consumption	7	5.8	<.001

There are three donor coalitions that show behavior consistent with the access-oriented model. For these three groups and policy issues, H_{1a} is accepted. These access-oriented coalitions represent 1,572 individual donors or 21.3% of all donors in the dataset; 6,489 individual donations or 22.4% of donations; and $654,577.60 or 16.5% of dollars contributed.

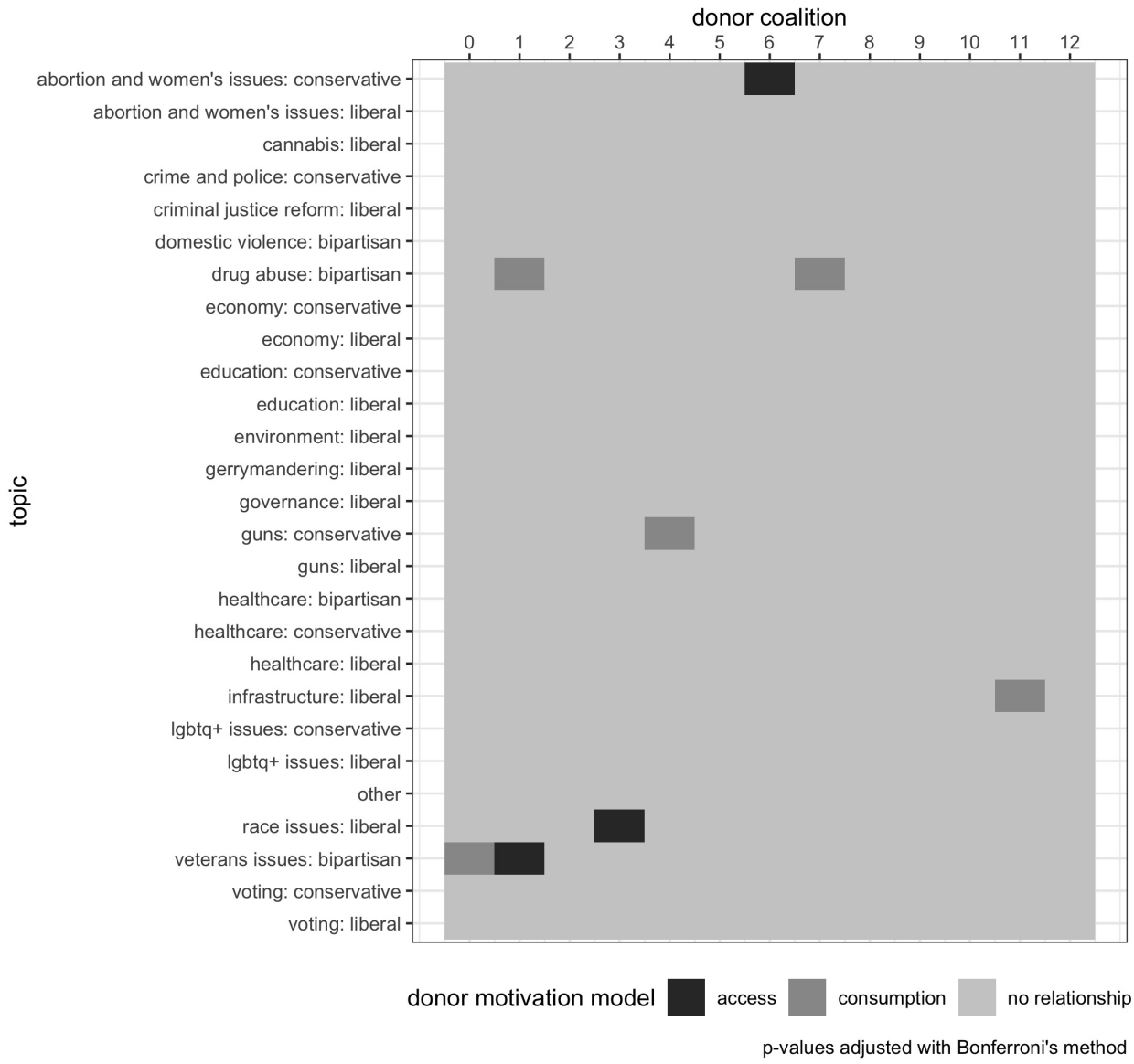

Figure 2: Donor Motivation Models

Each of these three coalitions appear to have unique policy and even ideological positions that they support.

In addition to these three access-oriented clusters of donors, five coalitions of donors exhibit behavior that one would expect under the consumption model of donor motivations and are accepted by H_{1b}. In other words, public support of various policy issues from campaigns predicts donations from these coalitions. The five consumption-motivated clusters of donors contain: 2,702 (36.7%) of donors; 11,080 (38.4%) of donations; and donated a collective $1,341,129.70 (33.8%) of money contributed. Similar to access-oriented clusters, consumption-oriented coalitions show significant relationships to policy issues across the ideological spectrum.

These results were used to test H_{1a} and H_{1b}. Donor coalitions and the topic of social media posts that were accepted by H_{1a} and H_{1b} are listed in Table 1.

Donor Sizes

Coalitions of donors that were accepted by only H_{1a} or H_{1b} were used to test H_{2a}, that access-oriented donors are on-average larger donors, and H_{2b}, that consumption-oriented donors are on-average smaller donors, with a difference-in-means permutation test. A non-parametric bootstrap was used since the statistical assumptions were not met for an OLS regression. Results to H_{2a} and H_{2b} are in Table 2. Neither the access-oriented donors nor the consumption-oriented donors contributed statistically significantly different amounts of money than the other donors.

Table 2: Difference in Average Donor Size

Hypothesis	Model	Avg. Diff	95% CI	p-value
H_{2a}	access	-48.62	-115.4, 21.47	0.144
H_{2b}	consumption	34.60	-29.21, 118.39	0.310

A histogram showing the total contributions of donors by motivational model are in Figure 3.

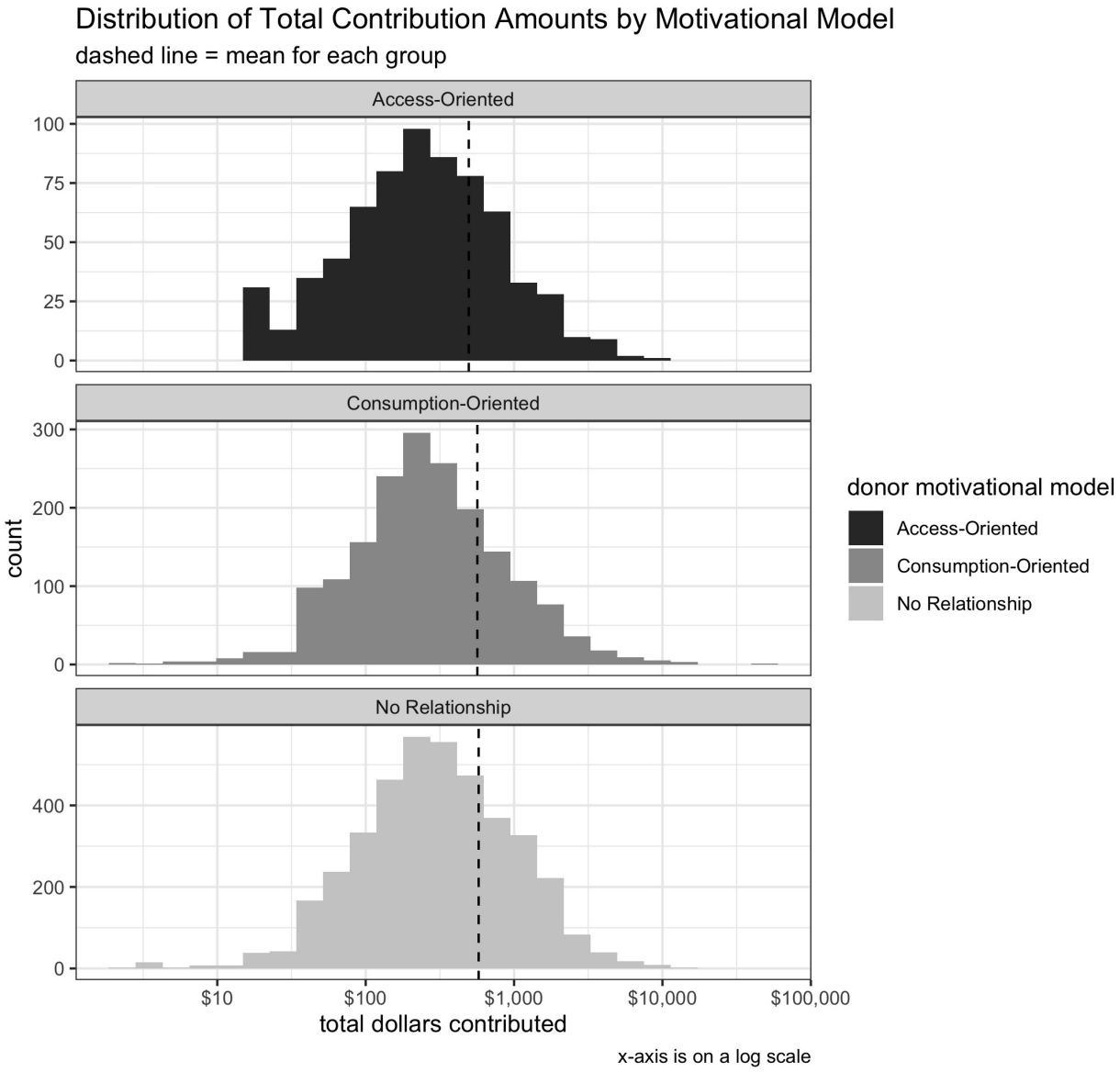

Figure 3: Amount contributed by each donor in the dataset by motivational model.

Donor Spatial Positions

To study the polarization of consumption-motivated donors, I extract the x-coordinate, the axis of ideological position, from the donor network (Figure 1). The positions of all the donors grouped by motivational model is shown in Figure 4.

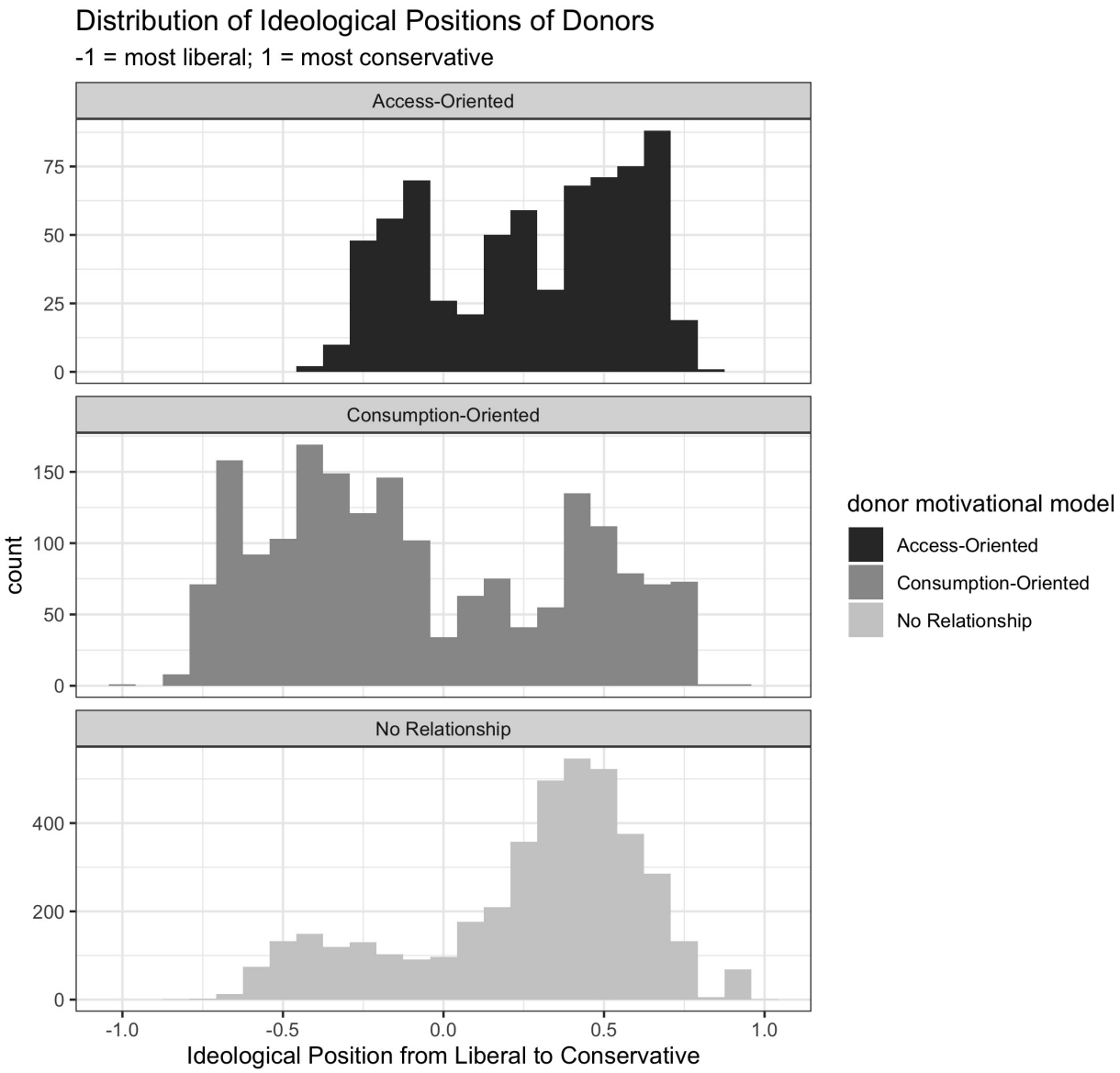

Figure 4: Spatial position along the ideological x-axis of each donor.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of donors who contribute a majority of their money to Democrats and Republicans by motivational model.

Table 3: Percent of donors categorized as each motivational model who contributed a majority of their money to Republicans and Democrats

Motivational Model	% Republican	% Democrat
Access-Oriented only	63.9%	36.1%
Consumption-Oriented only	34.7%	65.3%
No Relationship	74.7%	25.3%

I then rescale the coordinate position to be -1 to 1, with -1 representing the most Democratic node and 1 representing the most Republican node. To test H_{3a}, that consumption-oriented donors are more polarized in the network graph, and H_{3b}, that access-oriented donors are less polarized in the network graph, a difference-in-means permutation test was conducted on the absolute value of the rescaled x-coordinate with the coalition category as a variable. A non-parametric permutation test was used since the statistical assumptions for an OLS regression were not met. This absolute value effectively is the level of polarization in the graph, with the nodes that are on the extremes of the graph being closer to 1 and the central-most nodes, representing bipartisan donors, being closer to 0. Results for H_{3a} and H_{3b} are in Table 4. Consumption-motivated donors are on average in more polarized positions (further to the left and right of the graph) than non-consumption-oriented donors, and access-oriented donors are on average in less polarized positions (closer to the middle of the graph) than non-access-oriented donors.

Table 4: Difference in Average Donor Position Polarization

Hypothesis	Model	Avg. Diff	95% CI	p-value
H_{3a}	access	-0.05	-0.06, -0.03	<.001
H_{3b}	consumption	0.01	0, 0.02	0.014

The polarized positions of all the donors are shown by group in Figure 5.

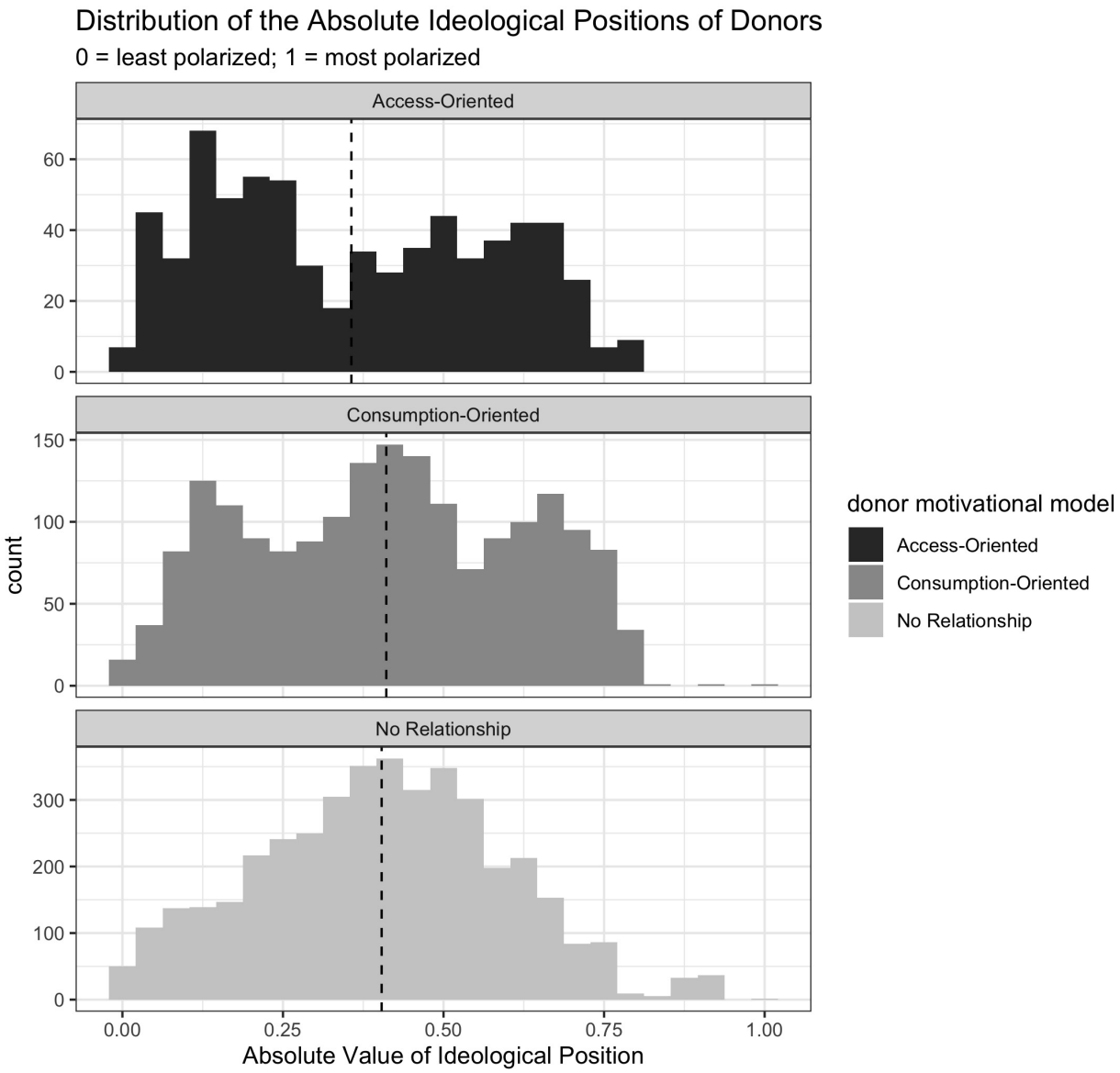

Figure 5: Polarized spatial position of each donor.

Discussion

I find evidence that eschews historical scholarship that political donors are monolithic in their motivations. Instead, I find that different donors hold different motivations.

Different donor coalitions exhibited behavior that is in line with both the access-oriented and consumption model of political donations with policy issues across the ideological spectrum of liberal, conservative, and bipartisan. Example social media posts of the various topics can be found in the appendix.

While much of the popular concern over money in politics is around access-oriented donors manipulating the political system, I find that there are more consumption-oriented–rather than access-oriented–donors (2,702 versus 1,572), donations (11,080 versus 6,489), and total amount contributed by each type ($1,341,129.70 versus $654,577.60). While any number of access-oriented donors may remain concerning to some in the public, these results suggest that more people use political donations as a vehicle for increased participation in, not manipulation of, the political process.

One idea about political donors is that access-oriented donors are large-dollar donors with financial incentives, but the results of H_{2a} reject this idea in the context of the 2016 elections in Wisconsin. Donors in access-oriented coalitions do not contribute statistically significantly more money on-average than other donors. Just because a donor is not contributing a large sum of money themselves does not mean that they are not seeking to coax a politician into supporting specific policies. This attempt at influence can be amplified when coalitions of donors operate in conjunction with one another. For example, members of an interest group could each contribute a relatively small amount of money, but in the aggregate, the unified donations could potentially gain that interest group access to a politician. A future study could replicate this analysis with multiple election cycles or study multiple states or federal elections to achieve higher statistical power.

The stereotype of consumption-motivated donors is of small-dollar donors whose con-

tributions are harnessed online. Similar to access-oriented donors, H_{2b} is rejected and consumption-motivated donors are not on-average smaller donors than other contributors. Again, these results suggest a rethinking of the notion that the amount of money one contributes is indicative of one's motivations. If someone is able to contribute a large sum of money and they care about a certain issue, it stands to reason that they may just support politicians who already care about that issue. This paper challenges conventional beliefs on the size of access-oriented versus consumptive donors.

In contrast, this paper concurs with the literature that consumption-motivated donors are in more polarized spatial positions within the donor graph than non-consumptive donors. Access-oriented donors are more centrally located. The acceptances of H_{3a} and H_{3b} are in agreement with past literature. These results provide descriptive context and are not meant to imply any level of causality. Past studies have either suggested or found a connection between donor motivations and political polarization, and this study also finds these descriptive relationships. Future studies should examine the causal mechanisms of these relationships. Do candidates take more polarizing stances in an effort to court consumptive donors? Has an increased number of consumptive donors helped more polarized candidates to win office? Do access-oriented donors seek out campaigns that are more moderate? Or can access-oriented donors influence the ideological extremity of candidates?

In addition to the finding that both models can exist in different donor coalitions, it is also possible that the same cluster can operate under both models. One of the thirteen donor clusters, coalition 1, revealed a duality where they were access-oriented in relation to one policy issue and consumption-oriented in relation to another. While it is possible that this finding is statistical noise, there is additional face validity because the two issues the donor coalition had a relationship with were both bipartisan issues–veterans issues and drug abuse. Few studies have come to the conclusion that donors can operate with both motivational models. While this study finds this behavior to be relatively rare, in

only one donor cluster, it hints to a more complex view as to why donors make a political contribution. Further, public support of one policy issue, veteran's issues, is both Granger caused by donations from a coalition and Granger causes another coalition to make a contribution. This result suggests that issues can play different roles to different groups of political donors. One group of donors can seek access to influence a policy, and another group can display consumptive behavior and reward politicians who already publicly support that policy.

Finally, there has been a debate among campaign-finance scholars as to whether donation motivations are driven by only ideological proximity or specific policy issues. I find that policy issues are a factor in contribution motivations, at least for the specific groups that exhibit access-oriented or consumptive behavior. The policy issues that are connected to donor clusters in this study range the political spectrum, including liberal policies (race issues, public infrastructure), conservative policies (pro-life, pro-gun), and bipartisan issues (drug abuse, veteran's issues). Further, some of the topics are perennial focuses of campaigns, such as pro-life politics. Other issues were particularly salient during this election cycle, such as veterans issues with the Tomah Veterans' Affair hospital scandal (Honl 2016) and King Veterans' Home scandal. These two scandals created an electoral environment in which veterans' issues were in the public focus, and results from this paper suggest that some political donors both sought to influence campaigns to address these issues as well as reward politicians for their focus on the topic.

Six of the thirteen coalitions of donors did not display access-oriented or consumption-oriented behavior with the policy topics tested. The motivations behind these clusters of donors remain unclear. It is possible that they are motivated by ideological proximity in a way that is not adequately tested using the methods in this paper. Future studies should test other potential reasons that people make political contributions, such as individuals contributing to ideologically proximate campaigns, geographically local campaigns, competitive campaigns, or other potential motivations.

Limitations

Like all observational studies, this research cannot claim true causality. While the main methodology employed is formally called "Granger causality," this causality is in an econometric sense and is more akin to predictive value. So while the findings of this paper do have predictive power–for example, donations from certain groups of individuals successfully receiving candidates to publicly support policy issues–true causal claims cannot be made. Future studies should use the findings from this research to conduct lab experiments where causal claims can be made.

I found discrete examples of donor coalitions demonstrating access-oriented or consumptive behavior on specific issues. However, these results do not suggest that these donors only care about those issues or that other donors do not care about these issues. Instead, these donors have a unique statistical relationship where when they contribute money to a political campaign, it either predicts or is predicted by campaigns' public support of policy issues. Future studies can employ surveys to identify if the statistical relationships found in an analysis like this present work concur with people's self conceptions. Do donor coalitions who donate in a consumptive fashion, that is where they contribute to a campaign after they publicly support an issue, actually report that they prioritize that issue? Possibly, these behaviors are subconscious reactions. Donors may not be able to exactly identify *why* they like a candidate or may report some other reason, when it is actually a reinforcement of a concurrence between their policies and the information environment that they consume.

Finally, this study was not meant to find nor did it find exhaustive evidence as to what motivates ever single donor in the dataset. Even within the information ecology, this study does not consider things like news stories or personal friend circles. Moreover, there are other potential reasons that donors make contributions, such as geographic proximity where people donate to their local candidates or allocating money to competi-

tive races. Future research can consider these other variables as possible explanations for political donations.

Conclusion

Campaign finance scholars are divided on the motivations of political donors. Do political donors seek to buy access, to participate more in politics, or some combination of both? This study finds that different coalitions of donors, and in one instance, a singular coalition, exhibit behavior that is consistent with different motivational models. Overall, there are more consumptive donors compared to access-oriented donors. In addition, there is no statistical difference in the average contributor size of access-oriented and consumption-oriented donors compared to other donors. However, access-oriented donors are found to be more spatially central within donor networks, and consumptive donors are more polarized. While past research has largely treated political donors as a monolith, with the possibility of operating under a single, I find that different donors can have different motivational models.

Appendix

Table 5: Social Media Examples

example #	topic	campaign	social media site	post
1	race issues: liberal	Bowen 4 Action	Twitter	@ JoyAnnReid: #OscarsSoWhite black people can't even get nominated for the movies about black people...
2	race issues: liberal	Citizens of the 81st for Dave Consi-dine	Twitter	1 in every 9 African-Americans are disenfranchised because of felony convictions in Wisconsin
3	abortion and women's issues: conser-vative	Ken Skowron-ski for Assem-bly	Facebook	Last night I had a great time at the Wisconsin Right to Life Dinner with my fellow colleagues. I am proud to have supported the bold Pro-Life reforms we have put in place and I will continue to defend the rights of those who cannot defend themselves.

Table 5: Social Media Examples *(continued)*

example #	topic	campaign	social media site	post
4	abortion and women's issues: conservative	Friends & Neighbors of Robin Vos	Twitter	An Assembly committee will vote on a bill to ban the sale of aborted children's body parts on Wednesday.
5	abortion and women's issues: conservative	Friends of Chuck Wichgers	Facebook	'I'm glad to know Chuck, who is a solid conservative. He's shown that he understands the principles that secure our freedom and that he will work for them in office. But more than that, I've seen that he is passionate about the God-given dignity of every human life. He knows that every person's right to live and to live freely comes from a much higher source than government.'PATRICK MCILHERAN, FORMER EDITORIAL WRITER, MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Table 5: Social Media Examples *(continued)*

example #	topic	campaign	social media site	post
6	veterans issues: bipartisan	Sanfelippo for Assembly	Twitter	Welcome Home Veterans Initiative seeks to solve veteran homelessness in state:
7	veterans issues: bipartisan	Citizens for Peter Barca	Twitter	Regionalizing Wisconsin's county veterans service offices remains a concern in vet community
8	guns: conservative	Scott Fitzgerald for Senate	Twitter	Thanks to the Wisconsin Game Preserve Association for the honor of their 2015 Legislator of the Year award!
9	guns: conservative	Kremer for Wisconsin	Facebook	This is a fair interview with Frederica Freyberg discussing the 'Campus Carry Act' in Wisconsin. This aired on public television yesterday morning.

Table 5: Social Media Examples *(continued)*

example #	topic	campaign	social media site	post
10	infrastructure: liberal	Friends of Jonathan Brostoff	Facebook	Dr. Mark Stout has written a compelling alternative to the $1.1 billion highway proposal. This option that would save money and provide a brighter, more progressive, more responsible future for our state. If you haven't yet, please take a look and share widely.
11	infrastructure: liberal	Wachs for Assembly	Twitter	WI roads rank 3rd worst in US. Yet Scott Walker isnt ready to put politics aside to solve our infrastructure woes.
12	drug abuse: bipartisan	Michael Schraa for Assembly	Facebook	A great story about the HOPE Agenda and my colleague on Joint Finance, WI State Rep John Nygren's efforts to fight against heroin and opiate addiction.

Method	koRpus	stringi
Word count	5445	5423
Character count	36476	36498
Sentence count	281	Not available
Reading time	27.2 minutes	27.1 minutes

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