

# Critical Analysis Project: Campaign Contributions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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In 2020, millions of Americans will, once again, line up outside of school gymnasiums, community buildings, and churches to vote in federal, state, and local elections. In the United States, voting is a time-honored and sacred form of **political participation**—a mechanism by which citizens can express their political opinions and affect political outcomes. The right to vote is not the only way Americans can work to influence politics: volunteering in campaigns, putting up lawn signs, and calling elected officials are all forms of political participation. **Campaign contributions** are another critical, although hotly contested, form of participation in politics. Many people think that money equals power, and that those individuals who make more money will donate more and, in turn, have a greater say in the political process. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), two-thirds of Americans think that those who donate more money have better representation in government. Other people say that political donations are an important way for certain Americans to have their political opinions heard, namely those voters in a political minority. For instance, while a Democrat's vote in the safely Republican state of Alabama will do little to sway political tides, that voter can have her voice heard by donating to the Democratic Party. This tension begs the question: **do rich voters give more to politicians, or do those who are politically disadvantaged?**

## 2. THEORY

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Two main factors may dictate an individual's decision to give money to a campaign, these are (1) means and (2) motivation. Unlike many Americans, individuals who have a greater amount of expendable income can afford to have their political opinions "amplified." Wealthier Americans can afford to give money to politicians or parties to affect political outcomes. These individuals have the **means** to donate. Individuals of a political minority (i.e. a Republican in a Democratic state) have few avenues to meaningfully participate in politics. Their vote will not influence the election. Their time volunteering for a local candidate will not change the outcome. One of the few ways these kinds of voters can have an affect on the political process is by donating money. These individuals have the **motivation** to donate.

## 3. OPERATIONALIZATION

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IV: Household Income (faminc\_new); Presidential Vote Share in State (p\_vote)

DV: Total Political Contributions (CC18\_417c)

## 4. HYPOTHESES

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*H1: Individuals with a higher household income will give more money in campaign contributions than those individuals with a lower household income*

*H2: Individuals in the political minority from safety partisan states (60%+ vote for presidential candidate) will give more money in campaign contributions than other voters*

*H3: \*\* Write your own hypothesis: do you think individuals with means or motivation will give more? \*\**