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## **Political Parties on Campus: College Republicans and College Democrats' Conceptions of Partisanship**

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# **Political Parties on Campus: College Republicans and College Democrats' Conceptions of Partisanship**

**Philip J. Goodrich**

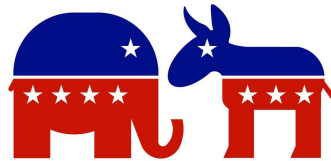
December 1, 2021

Chapman University Student Scholar Symposium

## Grossmann and Hopkins' – Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats

“The Republican Party is best viewed as the agent of an ideological movement whose members are united by a common devotion to the principle of limited government.”

“In contrast, the Democratic Party is properly understood as a coalition of social groups whose interests are served by various forms of government activity.”



## Hypotheses

**H1:** College Democrats will align more with Grossmann and Hopkins' theory, while College Republicans will not

**H2:** College Republicans will be less focused on the principle of limited government and more focused on (1) promoting the Republican Party, (2) criticizing the Democratic Party, and (3) commenting on specific issues and topics

**H3:** The two groups will remain asymmetrical, albeit for slightly different reasons than those put forth by the theory in question

# A Look at the Literature

## **Collegiate Politics**

- College Republicans and College Democrats have received little attention in the scholarly realm
- College and Young Republicans have been the preferred subject of study (i.e., Kidder, 2016; Nokleby, 2019)
- An individual's time in higher education is highly influential, especially in terms of political identity and engagement (i.e., Perrin and Gillus, 2019)

## **Political Socialization**

- Scholars have written extensively on the concept of political socialization
- An individual's youth, particularly between the ages of 14 and 25, are incredibly influential (i.e., Niemi and Hepburn, 2010)
- There is debate over the primary forces of political socialization, especially as it pertains to higher education

## **American Political Parties**

- Original literature on American political parties suggests they have similar characteristics and are symmetrical
- This style of thinking has been countered by scholars who claim each party has distinctive identities and characteristics (i.e., Grossmann and Hopkins, 2015; Galvin, 2010)
- Few, if any at all, have applied this thinking to college political organizations

## Methods

- Content analysis of College Republican and College Democrat social media
  - Analyzing ten most recent substantive Instagram posts
- Examining *both* organizations at twenty total schools (controlled by region and public/private)
- Limitations:
  - Not all organizations have active Instagrams
  - Social media posts do not always reflect all views or beliefs of all members
  - Coding is a semi-subjective process



## Coding Process

- ▣ Includes advocacy for a specific issue, specifically one that includes "the principle of limited government"? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for a specific issue, specifically one that includes "forms of government activity" that serves a "social group"? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for or against a specific issue that does NOT include "the principle of limited government" or "forms of government activity" that serves a "social group"? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for or against a particular ideology? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for or against a particular political figure or candidate? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for or against a particular party? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for a particular "social group" or demographic? (Y/N)
- ▣ Includes advocacy for or against campus policies or politics? (Y/N)
- ▣ Other Comments: (open-ended)

## Sample Schools

### ▣ **West:**

- Chapman University; Stanford University; Arizona State University; University of California, Los Angeles; and University of California, Berkeley

### ▣ **South:**

- Baylor University; University of Florida; Auburn University; American University; and University of South Florida

### ▣ **Midwest:**

- Ohio State University; Kansas State University; Purdue University; Butler University; and Michigan State University

### ▣ **Northeast:**

- Penn State University; Villanova University; University of Connecticut; Boston College; and Temple University



**Includes advocacy for a specific issue, specifically one that includes “the principle of limited government.” (Y/N)**

Organization	Percent of Posts
College Republicans	14%
College Democrats	1.5%

- Very few College Republican organizations shared posts promoting “the principle of limited government”
  - When sharing such posts, the organizations often allude to broad notions of freedom and liberty, rather than specific issues that promote limited government
  - In fact, many organizations promoted issues that increased the role of government (i.e., support for law enforcement and abortion restrictions)



ufcollegerepublicans



## DENOUNCING GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION

*Viva Liberty calls for denouncing human rights abuses and government oppression. So many Floridians value this freedom because we know just 90 miles south of our border exists a people suffering under their government who would risk their very lives just to be free in America.*



54 likes

ufcollegerepublicans Never take your freedom for granted! There are millions who would risk their lives every day for the freedoms we are blessed to have in America 🇺🇸  
#VivaLiberty #Day2 @ffrcgop

[View all 3 comments](#)

October 12



osucrs



### College Republicans at The Ohio State University Statement on President Johnson's Commitment to Student Safety

Our organization applauds President Johnson on her decision to affirm The Ohio State University's relationship with the Columbus Division of Police. We would like to thank President Johnson, as well as CPD, for their continued efforts in creating a safer and more secure community for our fellow students. The College Republicans firmly stand in opposition to any and all unrealistic calls for the University to disassociate from the Columbus Division of Police. With crime rates increasing in our off-campus communities, the need for a stronger police presence has never been greater. Our membership greatly appreciates the work of both the University and CPD in preserving our safety and the Buckeye way of life.



125 likes

osucrs Our statement on the university's relationship with the Columbus Division of Police.

[View all 3 comments](#)

April 30

**Includes advocacy for a specific issue, specifically one that includes “forms of government activity that serves a social group.” (Y/N)**

Organization	Percent of Posts
College Republicans	0.5%
College Democrats	23%

- While more College Democrat organizations promoted “forms of government activity that serve a social group” than College Republican organizations promoted “the principle of limited government,” the number is NOT substantial
  - Nevertheless, common themes include advocacy for women, the Black community (especially after the murder of George Floyd), the LGBTQIA+ community, the working class, and others



bruindems

...



## Bruin Democrats at UCLA Executive Board, 2020-21

[CW: Police violence]

### Call for Solidarity with Agitators and Protesters

To the UCLA community and beyond,

There are few words that can adequately encapsulate our anger and frustration at the state of America today. On May 25, 2020, yet another life was taken by the scourge of anti-Black police violence. George Floyd, 46, was murdered by a white police officer in cold blood, with three other police officers also involved.

Black lives matter. All Democrats, Republicans, progressives, Bruins, white Americans, and non-Black people of color must be in solidarity with our Black communities on campus and beyond. It is incumbent on political organizations such as ours to fight so long as systems of oppression continue to threaten the lives of Black people everywhere.

Some might see it fitting for us to focus on the disgusting and incendiary response of our current president. His response was grievously disappointing, and not at all surprising. But it would be inappropriate for us not to address the role of white liberals in stoking police violence—white liberals like Amy Cooper, who on Monday morning called the police on Christian Cooper, a Black man who was bird-watching in Central Park. In the case of non-Black people of color who have yet to address the anti-Blackness in their communities too, passivity contributes to oppression. As Democrats, we must continuously push ourselves to realize and acknowledge that, as people who claim to be supporters of social justice, our party and its supporters still play a role in the systemic inequality that has cost individuals like George Floyd their lives. After all, Amy Cooper supported numerous Democratic candidates in the past. Democrats are and have been complicit.

Accordingly, we are committed to holding ourselves and our political allies accountable just as much as our adversaries. As an organization, we choose to align ourselves with the wide array of leftist campus organizations in solidarity with agitators and protesters at this time. We stand with members of the UCLA community in mounting a challenge to UCPD and other demonstrably anti-Black institutions in our community. We stand with the Black youth-led movements that demand justice and accountability. We must do our part to work alongside those who seek a better future for the Black community both on campus and nationwide.

In solidarity,

The Executive Board, 2020-21  
Bruin Democrats at UCLA

USAC Allyship Resources:  
<https://bit.ly/2aCWQy8>



49 likes

bruindems The Executive Board of Bruin Democrats releases this statement in solidarity with agitators and protesters across the country who are rising up to demand justice and accountability. Read our statement here:

May 30, 2020



asuyoungdems

...



Dear President Michael Crow and the Arizona Board of Regents,

Among many other anti-abortion bills this session, a particularly dangerous and catastrophic bill called **SB 1457 (the forced birth bill)** has been introduced in Arizona. It is a blatant attack on reproductive freedom, criminalizing healthcare by threatening physicians and women (or any individuals pursuing reproductive healthcare) with jail time. SB 1457 is sweeping and purposefully vague in language to tie the hands of physicians and impose countless limitations. As of right now, the bill has passed both chambers and is headed to Governor Ducey's desk. Immediate action needs to be taken to halt this bill.

If signed into law by Governor Ducey, SB 1457 would:

- Make abortions due to a "genetic abnormality" (such as a fatal fetal diagnosis) a **CLASS 3 FELONY**
- Grant personhood rights to fetuses (require fetal remains to be cremated or buried)

These actions would in turn:

- Traumatize, shame, and endanger patients
- Spike the rates of **UNSAFE** abortions

**44%** of the students at your institution are women (U.S. Department of Education). As proudly displayed on the ASU website, **48%** of the faculty at your institution are women. The consequences of this bill would especially endanger and jeopardize the health of the community of women at your university. **40.9%** of women who have abortions are college educated; **45.5%** of abortions are performed on college-age women (~20 to 24) ([guttmacher.org](http://guttmacher.org)). Historically, fetal personhood laws in other U.S. states reap devastating repercussions on young, poor, women of color, who are most often targeted with persecution under these bills. **48%** of the students at your university are BIPOC (U.S. Department of Education). We stress that **ASU students would be thrown in jail** for pursuing healthcare under this bill. Young women would also inevitably resort to pursuing unsafe abortions, **risking complications and death**.

Not to mention, this bill ties the hands of physicians and OB-GYN residency programs. Arizona medical students would have to go out of state to pursue residency training. This bill would also halt important research being done. SB 1457 would discourage medical students from bringing their talent to ASU and other top schools in the state.

ASU champions gender and racial diversity. The young women and young women of color that choose to bring their talent to ASU deserve the advocacy of Michael Crow. This is not political or controversial: this is a **public health issue**. The lives and health of the women who attend your university and the women who work for your university are in **immediate danger**. You have a responsibility to use your leverage and power as the President of this major institution to speak up against SB 1457. A salary of \$1.5 million seems well sufficient to expect advocacy for **half of your students and faculty** (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Abortion is safe, legal, and essential health care. We demand that ASU as an institution takes action and breaks the silence immediately. This is not a matter to be taken lightly. We urge other student organizations on campus to demand that Michael Crow addresses the dangers of SB 1457. We also urge student organizations at NAU and the U of A to dash letters to their respective Presidents and the Arizona Board of Regents.

Sincerely,

Planned Parenthood Generation Action ASU and the ASU Young Democrats



63 likes

asuyoungdems We are joining @ppgenasu in demanding that @asuprescrow and @azregents break their silence on the harmful, sweeping anti-abortion bill, SB1457... more

View all 7 comments

April 22

**Includes advocacy for or against a specific issue that does NOT include “the principle of limited government” or “forms of government activity” that serves a “social group” (Y/N)**

Organization	Percent of Posts
College Republicans	56%
College Democrats	58.5%

- Both organizations equally shared posts commenting on issues outside the scope of the theory in question
  - College Republicans: Examples include commenting on the 2020 election and immigration issues under Joe Biden
  - College Democrats: Examples include commenting the impeachment of Donald Trump and academic freedom violations



 Liked by  and 1,081 others

chapmanrepublicans In the last 48 hours, we have witnessed an attempt to win this election through dishonest and criminal means.



The Chapman Republicans rightly denounce:

- The deliberate secrecy and lack of transparency by ballot counters in Democrat-run cities. Observers MUST be allowed into the ballot-counting centers.
- The dishonest and inaccurate coverage of this election by major media outlets, including Fox News.
- The (very likely) stealing and fraudulent filling out of blank mail-in ballots. These illegitimate votes are indistinguishable from real ones once they're separated from envelope and voter info.
- The mass and coordinated censorship of our president by social media and news outlets.

If the blatant fraud in this election is not corrected, then how can any American trust the integrity of future elections?

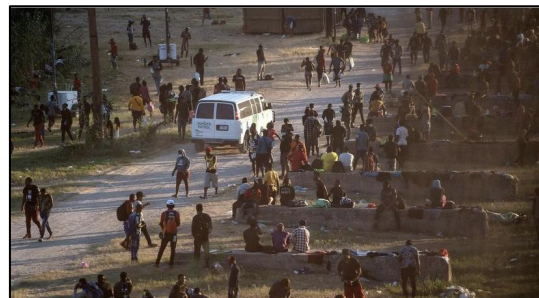
We fully endorse Donald Trump's call to pause counting until the ballot counters can be supervised to prevent any further corrupt and fraudulent activity.

View all 1,400 comments

 where are all of these random commenters coming from? 

 like who r these people

November 6, 2020



22 likes

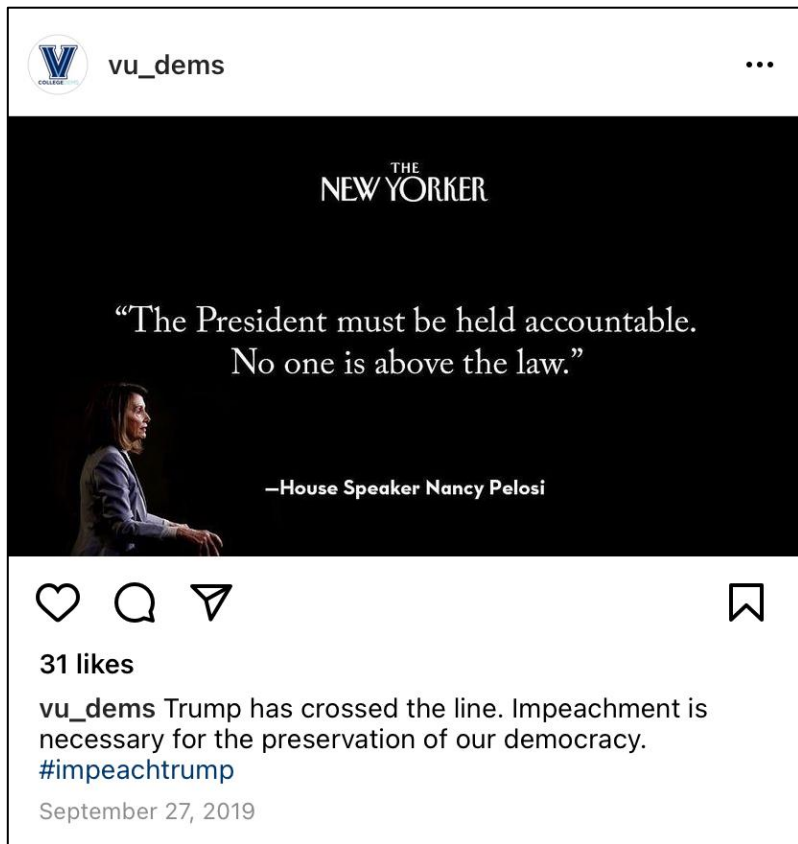
stanfordcollegerepublicans The full scale invasion of our country continues at our southern border as millions of illegal aliens are flooding the points of entry in Texas, overwhelming ICE and border patrol agents who have been defanged by the Biden Regime. As we have said before, this entire crisis was engineered and orchestrated by the illegitimate regime in the White House to change the demographics of our country forever. Governor Greg Abbott and the government of Texas must act unilaterally to shut down the entire Texas-Mexico border. Texas should turn away every illegal invader and use tear gas to clear the bridge at Del Rio if needed. These are extraordinary times, and they require extraordinary measures. Americans should demand that Texas' leadership rise to the occasion and do what must be done.

<https://www.nationalreview.com/news/thousands-of-migrants-camp-under-texas-bridge-as-border-patrol-overwhelmed/>

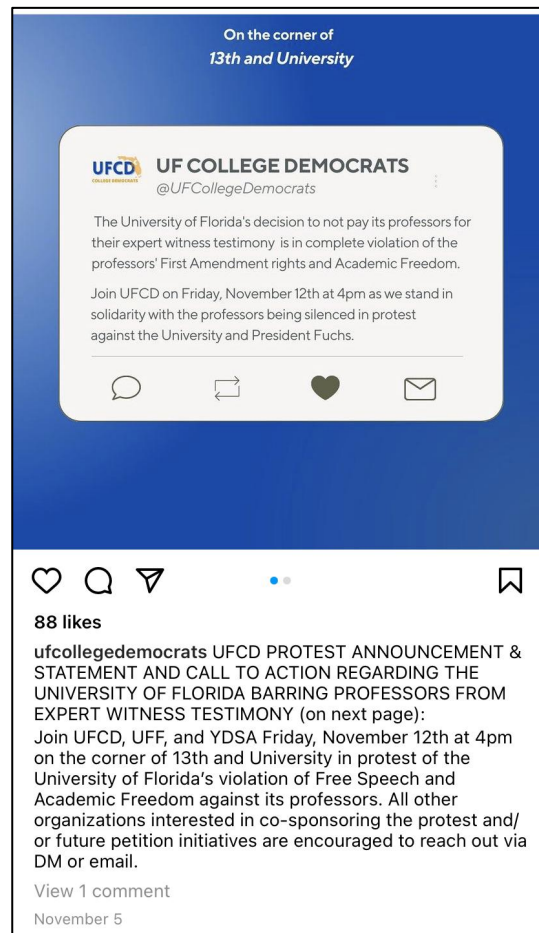
#americafirst #americafirst🇺🇸 #gop #conservative #republican #republicanparty #buildthewall #legalnotillegalimmigration #stanford #stanforduniversity #standordlaw #stanfordmedicine

View 1 comment

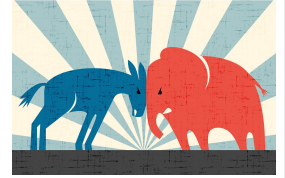
September 16



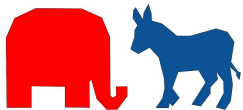
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## Conclusions and Looking Ahead



- Preliminary findings suggest neither College Republicans nor College Democrats fit directly within Grossmann and Hopkin's theory
  - However, initial findings showcase the asymmetrical nature of the two major American political parties and, thus, confirm part of the Grossmann and Hopkins theory
- Looking ahead, further research should...
  - Build upon this content analysis with other research techniques (i.e., surveys or interviews with students) to garner a more holistic understanding of these organizations
  - Analyze a larger and more randomized sample to obtain more representative and generalizable findings
  - Examine the specific techniques employed by both organizations to share and promote their respective beliefs





# Thank You!

I welcome your questions and feedback as I  
continue to develop and refine this project.