U.S. Elections, Corporate Influence, and Perceptions of Corruption: Analyzing the Impact of *Citizens United v. FEC* on Voter Attitudes

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"We have one of the worst election processes in the world right in the United States of America, and it's almost entirely because of the excessive influx of money."

-Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the Carter Center, 2012

"…The American dream… is simple. That anyone, no matter who they are, if they are determined, if they are willing to work hard enough, someday they could grow up to create a legal entity which could then receive unlimited corporate funds, which could be used to influence our elections."

-Comedian Stephen Colbert at the Federal Election Commission, 2011

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Abstract

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* shook the political landscape in 2010, lifting campaign finance regulations on independent expenditures and opening the door for an unprecedented amount of free flowing fundraising and spending by corporations, unions, and other wealthy interests. The court decision has been hotly contested in the political discourse ever since: critics have assailed the court for allowing wealthy interests to drown out ordinary voters, failing to recognize the limits of corporate personhood with regard to First Amendment rights, and exacerbating a devastating perception of corruption in the political system that causes voter disillusionment and disengagement. The latter argument has spurred compelling rhetoric encouraging voters to take back control of the political process, generating a great deal of negative sentiment toward *Citizens United* and the influence of wealth and corporate players in American politics.

This paper focuses on voters' perceptions of corruption within the U.S. electoral system, examining how campaign finance restrictions evolved to mitigate the influence of business and rich donors on elections and legislative outcomes. It then asks a narrower question: how did the *Citizens United* decision alone impact perceptions of corruption among voters? More specifically, I aim to discover whether *Citizens United* has a meaningful marginal impact on preexisting voter cynicism that is based on issues much broader than a single court ruling, however important that decision was. My research proceeds in three parts. First, I conduct a randomized survey experiment exposing subjects to information about *Citizens United* in order to examine whether individuals who learn of and are primed to think about *Citizens United* while considering the political system are more cynical than those who are not. Second, I attempt a randomized field experiment in coordination with a New Haven mayoral campaign to test whether the popular campaign appeal calling for greater voter participation after *Citizens United* to counterbalance wealthy interests is an effective message. Finally, I investigate whether differently framed messages about *Citizens United* affect voters' attitudes towards the importance of political participation.

I hypothesize that *Citizens United*, given the gravity of the decision and the amount of outrage it has generated in the media and mass public, will have at least a small negative impact on voter cynicism and ratings of the importance of voter participation. However, I surprisingly find that is not the case. Rather, I discover that *Citizens United* in isolation does not significantly affect voter attitudes at the margins. My results suggest that cynicism in the American public has much deeper roots, drawing as its source a broad range of long-term dissatisfaction with the political process. The implications of this finding are important for lending empirical credibility to the arguments about *Citizens United*'s constitutionality: if *Citizens United* is not a meaningful tipping point in perceptions of corruption, a more useful dialogue about the ruling's effects ought to shift to other areas such as spending patterns and legislative behavior.

Replication files are available upon request—please contact stacey.s.chen@gmail.com.

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Chapter One: Corporate Influence and *Citizens United v. FEC*

"Money has always been a factor in politics, but we are seeing something new in the no-holds barred flow of seven and eight figure checks, most undisclosed, into super-PACs; they fundamentally threaten to overwhelm the political process over the long run and drown out the voices of ordinary citizens."

-Barack Obama, 2012

1. Introduction

Comedian Stephen Colbert took the political world by storm in 2011 when he announced the creation of his "Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow" Super PAC, an independent expenditure committee that would allow him to raise funds from individuals and corporations and engage in unlimited political spending (Comedy Central 2011). His series of satirical television segments highlighted the unprecedented effects of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, a landmark Supreme Court case in 2010 that held that the First Amendment protects corporate political speech as part of "an essential mechanism of democracy" (Citizens United v. FEC 2010). Colbert sarcastically but neatly summarized part of the underlying logic of the decision: "Money equals speech, therefore, the more money you have the more you can speak. That just stands to reason. If corporations are people, corporations should be able to speak" (ABC News 2012).

In part thanks to Colbert's television show, *Citizens United* gained substantial public notoriety during the 2012 general election campaign cycle. The decision remains hotly contested by those who laud it as a protection of corporate free speech and those who see it as an

infringement of individual speech rights. Yet the polarized debate over *Citizens United*'s effects on the American electoral process is highly speculative—both sides have provided little empirical evidence for their claims about the impacts of the ruling. This paper seeks to investigate the empirical effects of *Citizens United v. FEC* on voter attitudes, focusing specifically on its marginal impact on perceptions of corruption and its potential ability to galvanize voter participation when used in campaign messaging.

2. Research Design

The crux of the debate over *Citizens United v. FEC* is whether the decision promotes free speech by allowing corporations and unions to exercise their speech rights or if it hinders free speech by suppressing individual speech and warping political information and voter behavior. It strikes at the heart of campaign finance theories, pitting the idea of unfettered political spending as discourse against a compelling government interest in limiting contributions to stem corruption (Ansolabehere 2011). This paper seeks to lend empirical backing to the theoretical debate and ground arguments about *Citizens United*'s constitutionality in tangible electoral outcomes. The central notion underpinning this research is the idea that voters, when confronted with *Citizens United* and the knowledge of corporations' ability to play a major role in election campaigns, may react in a number of different ways. First, they may become disillusioned with the political system and become less likely to participate, decreasing both individual donations and voter turnout. Alternatively, they may be spurred to counter the undue influence of corporations through *Citizens United* such that displeasure over the decision manifests itself in the form of greater individual donations and voter turnout. Finally, voters may already hold such high levels of existing cynicism over the political system that *Citizens United* does not marginally influence their behavior. The first hypothesis supports opponents of the ruling's

argument that the decision suppresses rather than protects free speech; the second demonstrates that the consequences of *Citizens United* may be positive despite negative sentiment towards it, thus supporting the constitutionality of the decision; and the final suggests that the decision is less important to voters than has been portrayed, perhaps implicitly supporting *Citizens United*'s constitutionality at least when it comes to its impact on perceptions of corruption. Unfortunately, little research exists to point toward the truth of any of these conflicting possibilities.

This paper opens with a literature review briefly spanning the vast body of research about the impact of political expenditures on political outcomes, focusing specifically on the influence of corporations in American politics to set the stage for the debate over campaign finance regulations relevant to *Citizens United*. It then continues with some pertinent background information about the development of campaign finance laws that led up to *Citizens United* and summarizes the major aspects of the *Citizens United* ruling. Next, I move to a more specific recent literature on *Citizens United*'s effects on campaign spending. The empirical studies that follow come in two parts. First, I investigate the marginal impact of *Citizens United* on voters' perceptions of corruption in American democracy. In order to do this, I examine with a randomized survey experiment whether exposure to information about *Citizens United* causes voters to feel more cynical about the political system and increases negative attitudes towards corporations and voter efficacy. Second, I explore the potential effects of different methods of framing the impacts of *Citizens United* on voters' beliefs about their place in the political process. Here, I attempt a randomized field experiment to study the effectiveness of campaign messages about *Citizens United* in galvanizing voters to donate. I then draw on another randomized survey experiment to see if positive and negative portrayals of *Citizens United* generate different voter attitudes towards political participation. Finally, I conclude with a

summary of my findings, which broadly suggest that the impact of *Citizens United* on voter attitudes has been exaggerated in the critical discourse.

3. The Influence of Money and Corporations on Politics[1]

While advocates of campaign finance reform call for the development of a "level playing field" because of the intuitive belief that economic power translates into political power (Sheff 2010), the tangible effects of money in politics are not always clear. At a theoretical level, the controversy over campaign finance restrictions lies in whether or not they are acceptable limitations on free speech. Underlying this argument in relation to corporations are two premises: first, that money is a form of speech; and second, that corporations have First Amendment speech rights. *Citizens United v. FEC* accepts both, discussing at length the dangers to political speech of selectively regulating campaign spending and citing numerous decisions as precedent that "we have long since held that corporations are covered by the First Amendment" (Citizens United v. FEC 2010; Liptak 2010). Ripken (2012) points out that the Court framed the decision around the *speech* rather than the *speaker*, thus avoiding the idea of corporate personhood despite the popular perception that corporate personhood underpinned the decision. Campaign finance reformers, however, emphasize the necessity of protecting political discourse from being dominated by the rich. They argue that unfettered expenditures from wealthy interests like corporations drown out the voices of individuals, damaging the quality of speech and violating the right of the less wealthy to participate in discourse.

Empirically, the degree to which corporations are able to influence American elections and politics through campaign expenditures and other forms of power has been heavily

[1] Sections of the literature review are extensions of a previous paper written for PLSC 854 Business Power & American Politics entitled "Does Corporate Influence in Politics Change Voter Attitudes? A Randomized Experiment."

scrutinized. There is no doubt that the political advertisements key to running a successful campaign in the age of national media are extremely expensive: for instance, Stratmann (2009) finds that $100,000 of television advertising yields less than a 1% change in candidate vote share in congressional elections. The high access bar of funding impactful political ads implies that the wealthy have a disproportionate capacity to sway voters. However, closer examinations of corporate influence in politics have led to diverse and often competing findings. The instrumental power exerted by corporations and the wealthy through lobbying and campaign activities are the most public form of corporate influence. At the ballot box, some literature suggests that political advertisements implant emotional and affective attitudes that change voters' opinions toward electoral players, indicating that wealthy interests' ability to pay for advertisements gives them sway over electoral outcomes (Atkin and Heald 1976; Chang 2001; Sheff 2010). However, recent research (e.g. a natural experiment conducted by Krasno and Green 2008) also suggests that advertisements have little effect on measures like voter turnout, thereby limiting the scope of influence of wealthy campaign contributions and independent expenditures.

At the policymaking level, the literature is similarly mixed. Hall and Wayman (1990) find that money has an effect on motivating the participation of congressmen with sympathetic views at the committee level but do not find an effect on congressional votes. Other literature suggests that concrete policy changes as a result of lobbying are rare, due to the combination of large, heterogeneous coalitions of groups lobbying on both sides of any given issue and powerful interests that are satisfied with the status quo (Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Kimball, and Leech 2009). Vogel (1989) hypothesizes that the level of business influence over policymaking shifts over time, with cohesion in the business community serving a crucial role in increasing

business influence. Conversely, Smith (2000) rejects the power of business cohesion and argues that business interests require public support in order to succeed in legislative battles.

Yet beyond the jumble of literature investigating business power over various outcomes and in various conditions, even the basic premise that corporate contributions are meant to influence outcomes has been questioned. Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder (2003) view campaign donations primarily as a form of political participation or consumption, rather than as an investment aimed at achieving favorable outcomes. They find that, contrary to popular conception, donations of small amounts by individuals far exceed large donations by organized interest group PACs. In the 1999 to 2000 election cycle, they calculate that of the total $3 billion raised by candidate and party committees, $2.4 billion came from individuals, with an average individual contribution of $115. Because politicians can raise necessary campaign funds from individuals, they need not be beholden to rent-seeking interest groups, thus explaining why contributions account for only a very small fraction of the variation in legislator voting behavior. Therefore, Ansolabehere et al. (2003) see campaign contributions as merely a form of political participation rather than as a calculation intended to buy policy benefits.

In addition to the instrumental power of business through lobbying and campaign expenditures, business interests also have the potential to exert more subtle forms of political power. Lindblom (1982) explains the structural power of business, arguing that politicians motivated by reelection seek to pass legislation that creates a favorable business environment and is thereby conducive toward economic growth. Business thus exerts a check on politicians who fear negative business reactions merely by responding to incentives created by legislation in the natural course of their operations; unlike instrumental power, structural power need not be consciously employed nor politically motivated. Rather, business creates a bias toward stability

and the status quo as politicians attempt to avoid "automatic" punishment for changes to the system. Importantly, the structural power of business operates outside the realm of campaign finance regulations and can be portrayed positively as incentivizing politicians to care about promoting economic success.

4. Campaign Finance Background

In order to counter the influence of money, business, and other special interests in American politics, campaign finance regulations sprung up early in American political development. However, campaign finance laws have a long and twisted history in the U.S. Since the early 19th century, presidential candidates sought wealthy donors to back their campaigns, and political parties relied on rich supporters to bankroll their operations (Birnbaum 2000). Business was heavily involved in politics, and progressives fought against vote-buying and excessive corporate influence they believed thwarted the interests of ordinary individuals. In 1907, the Tillman Act attempted to ban corporations from directly contributing to federal candidates, but it lacked effective enforcement mechanisms. Disclosure requirements, contribution limits, and limits on union expenditures soon followed through legislation including the amended Federal Corrupt Practices Act (1925), the Hatch Act (1939), and the Taft-Hartley Act (1947). Serious campaign finance restrictions, with comprehensive regulation and enforcement mechanisms unlike the previous acts, arrived in 1971 via the Federal Election Campaign Act and were strengthened in 1974 by amendments following the Watergate scandal. The Federal Election Commission was established to enforce campaign finance laws, including disclosure, the use of public financing, and contribution and expenditure caps (Birnbaum 2000).

Supreme Court rulings have played an instrumental role in driving the direction of campaign finance reform. In 1976, the Supreme Court famously declared in *Buckley v. Valeo*

that "the concept that government may restrict the speech of some elements of our society in order to enhance the relative voice of others is wholly foreign to the First Amendment" (Buckley v. Valeo 1976). The ruling foreshadowed *Citizens United* with its argument that limits on some types of expenditures were violations of free speech. 2002 saw the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, commonly called the McCain-Feingold Act, which was a comprehensive campaign finance reform package that included a ban on corporations and unions sponsoring "electioneering communications"—advertisements identifying a federal candidate within 30 days of a primary or 60 days of a general election. The Supreme Court largely upheld McCain-Feingold in *McConnell v. FEC* (2003) but would soon begin to reverse its jurisprudence on expenditure limits.

In *Randall v. Sorrell* (2006), the Supreme Court struck down Vermont's campaign contribution limits as unconstitutionally low, marking the first time the Supreme Court struck down a contribution cap. The Court in *FEC v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc.* (2007) also carved out room for select advertisements to be exempt from McCain-Feingold's electioneering communications restrictions. The Court's scaling back of campaign expenditure limits set the precedent for *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010).

4.1. Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

Section 203 of the McCain-Feingold Act (also known as 2 U.S.C. §441b, or commonly §441) was the centerpiece of *Citizens United v. FEC* in 2010. During the 2008 election campaign, the conservative 501(c)(4) organization Citizens United produced *Hillary: The Movie*, a political documentary critical of Hillary Clinton set to air on DirecTV. In early January, the D.C. District Court ruled that advertisements for *Hillary: The Movie* violated McCain-Feingold's ban on electioneering communications in advance of the primary election. The Supreme Court's

decision in *Citizens United* struck down §203 of McCain-Feingold, arguing that its ban on independent expenditures by corporations and unions violated First Amendment free speech protections (Citizens United v. FEC 2010; Oyez Project 2013). The Court's reasoning followed *Buckley v. Valeo*'s precedent that money is an essential component of speech. *Citizens United* overruled *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* (1990), which declared constitutional a state ban on corporations financing campaigns for or against candidates, and struck down the portion of *McConnell v. FEC* (2003) that allowed §203 of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act.

The well-known consequences of *Citizens United v. FEC* were the lifting of limits on independent political expenditures by corporations and unions and the establishment of "Super PACs" that could accept unlimited donations with hazy transparency requirements. In more detail, the ruling argued that the government may not treat corporations and unions as disfavored speakers, as such discrimination would essentially be deciding which speech is worthy of protection. It reiterated precedent that laws burdening political speech are subject to the high judicial standard of strict scrutiny ("a compelling state interest that is narrowly tailored to achieve that interest") because they chill free speech. The Court concluded that §203 did not meet strict scrutiny for reasons such as alternative protections against excessive corporate influence in elections, including disclosure laws (Citizens United v. FEC 2010).

The dissent, authored by Justice John Paul Stevens, argued that Congress has the power to limit the undue influence of money in elections, prevent corruption more broadly than only *quid pro quo* corruption, and preserve the appearance of a just election system. Stevens also drew a distinction between legal entities and individuals, pointing to the ability of immense corporate spending to marginalize the speech of individuals who were the true subjects of First Amendment protections (Citizens United v. FEC 2010). Much criticism of *Citizens United* since

2010 has focused on the decision's potential to adversely affect voters by drowning out individual speech and distorting election outcomes.

SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission followed *Citizens United* in the same year, with the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals holding that individuals may donate unlimited amounts to independent expenditure political action committees (SpeechNow.org v. FEC 2010). Because of *Citizens United*, the decision implied that corporations and unions could also contribute unlimited amounts for independent expenditures, clarifying the legality of Super PACs. In 2012, the Supreme Court further strengthened *Citizens United*'s precedent in *American Tradition Partnership v. Bullock*, ruling that *Citizens United* applies to state and local elections because corporate money is speech (American Tradition Partnership, Inc. v. Bullock 2012). This series of rulings including *Citizens United* are part of a pattern of Supreme Court free speech decisions that value participatory democracy, the *opportunity* for individuals to participate in democratic speech, as its most important principle (Weinstein 2011).

5. Effects of Citizens United Since 2010

Much research about *Citizens United* has focused on the impact of the new campaign finance regulations (or rather, the lack thereof) on spending patterns and election outcomes. In 2010, 83 Super PACs spent over $63 million, and in 2012, 1,309 Super PACs spent an astounding $623 million (Center for Responsive Politics 2013). Studies have compared the 2006 and 2010 election cycles and found a tangled assortment of results from this spending. There is some evidence that outside expenditures were marginally more influential in boosting the success of House seat challengers in 2010 after *Citizens United*, but the impact is rather small, perhaps suggesting that the political discourse exaggerates the implications of the decision (Gaffey 2012). Hamm, Malbin, Kettler, and Glavin (2012) compare state-level elections in states

that did and did not limit independent expenditures before *Citizens United*, and they find that increases in independent spending in 2010 were comparable in both states that banned corporate spending before the ruling and those that did not, implying that the lifting of expenditure bans by the decision did not directly affect spending levels in state elections. Furthermore, Werner and Coleman (2012) find that variation in campaign finance laws at the state level from 1977 through 2006 had minimal effects on corporate and union independent expenditures in general and specifically on policy outcomes, leading them to conclude that the effects of *Citizens United* in 2010 are likely to also be small.

On the other hand, Spencer and Wood (2012) find that the increase in independent expenditures between 2006 and 2010 was more than twice as large in states that banned corporate independent expenditures before *Citizens United* overturned those restrictions than in states that were unchanged by the court ruling. Their method pairs states that were "treated" with the exogenous shock of the court ruling striking down their campaign finance restrictions with "control" counterfactuals that were not affected by the ruling. They also test whether larger donors crowd out smaller donors by examining both if there is a shift toward larger independent expenditure amounts after *Citizens United* and if players who spent in the past continued to spend after the ruling. Their findings suggest that small spenders were not crowded out by the decision and that repeat players continue to spend.

Additionally, scholars and political practitioners have disagreed about the decision's partisan impact on elections. Klumpp, Mialon, and Williams (2012) find that *Citizens United* has a significant effect of seven percentage points on the probability of Republicans winning in state congressional elections. Yet the American Federation of Labor's political director, Mike Podhorzer, followed the quote "look, we don't think of it as a good decision at all" with the

acknowledgement that the repeal of Taft-Hartley by *Citizens United* is an incredible boon to labor's ability to defend its policy interests by reaching out to voters beyond union members, acting as a counterweight (albeit imperfect) to corporate interests (Issenberg 2012). The same holds for lobbyists on particular issues, such as environmental policies that pit big corporations against non-profit advocacy groups like the Sierra Club, which was fined in 2006 for distributing pamphlets about candidates' environmental views but is now permitted to do so (Rohrman 2010). Moreover, some scholars have found that campaign finance limitations harm challengers more than incumbents (e.g. Bonneau and Cann 2011), suggesting that *Citizens United* may benefit challenger candidates more than incumbents—a perhaps counterintuitive conclusion because incumbents are often better connected to wealthy donors.

Chapter Two: *Citizens United v. FEC* and Voter Cynicism

"We should not resign ourselves… to a distorted system that corrodes our democracy, and this is what is contributing to the justifiable anger of the American people. They know it. They know we know it. And yet nothing happens. The truth requires that we call the corrosion of money in politics what it is -- it is a form of corruption and it muzzles more Americans than it empowers, and it is an imbalance that the world has taught us can only sow the seeds of unrest."

-John Kerry, 2013

6. Criticisms of Citizens United v. FEC and Electoral Corruption

The previously discussed literature focusing on the impact of business and campaign spending on voters and legislator behavior misses another important aspect of corporate influence on the political process. Beyond simply the *actual* outcomes of business influence and *Citizens United*, *perceptions* of the impact of business influence and the court ruling also play a central role in campaign finance reform. Regardless of the correctness of any of the previously discussed findings, perceptions and attitudes toward the role of business in American politics can have a self-reinforcing impact on the political process: if voters see business as corrupting the political system even if there is no *quid pro quo* corruption, they may behave differently in elections; if candidates see business as crucial to their funding base even if individual voters donate more, they may vote differently in Congress. This may create a cycle of expanding business activity in the political realm as corporate forces realize their potential power.

The discourse about *Citizens United v. FEC* has prominently featured arguments about perceptions of corruption in relation to business. The dissent penned by Justice Stevens declared

that “a democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold” (Citizens United v. FEC 2010). Opponents of the ruling claim that it perpetuates another broad and invidious form of corruption: Lessig (2010) champions the theory of “institutional corruption,” arguing that corporate influence in elections weakens voter trust in Congress and democratic institutions even though it is not illegal or necessarily unethical. Even if legislators in reality act in good faith toward their constituencies, Lessig fears that they may be distracted from their obligations to voters by conflicting dependency on fundraising for reelection campaigns. In support of his thesis, he cites the fact that the vast majority of Americans already believe that money buys congressional outcomes, leading less than a quarter to believe that Congress as an institution is trustworthy. Lessig criticizes the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* for ignoring the broader implications of institutional corruption and the chilling of individual political speech that could result from the dangerous perception that Congress is corrupt and unresponsive to its constituents. Redlawsk and McCann (2005) find supporting evidence for a more expansive definition of corruption, reporting that voters do consider corruption to mean not only lawbreaking, but also subtle issues like favoritism. Ruprecht (2013) laments the way in which corporations have been given license to speak prominently as “people,” noting that individuals by turning themselves into corporations can “escap[e] the normal structures of accountability that apply to people when they engage in public speech. The real losers in all of this are actual people.”

Wilkinson (2010) challenges the idea of institutional corruption by pointing out a lack of empirical evidence in support of the theory. He refers to literature that demonstrates little evidence of an effect of campaign contributions on congressional role call votes to suggest that Congress is able to check its dependency on fundraising. He also points to long-term trends in

American trust in government that show changes in the level of political cynicism over time to be uncorrelated with campaign finance regulations. Rather, he attributes changes in voter trust in government to watershed events like the Watergate scandal and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He doubts that campaign finance laws can truly affect political trust given the broad distrust and cynicism that Americans already hold. This refutation turns Lessig's arguments about the great degree of cynicism among American voters against him: if *Citizens United* is not the tipping point for voter cynicism, perhaps the Court was right to prioritize the freedom of corporate speech. Furthermore, even if Lessig's fears about corporate campaign contributions creating negative perceptions are true, Wilkinson does not believe this perception is sufficient justification for restrictions on the fundamental constitutional right to free speech.

There is no doubt that *Citizens United* elicited heavy disapproval from the American public. Following the Supreme Court's decision, a grassroots movement called "Move to Amend," consisting of over 250 civil rights and social justice groups formed in opposition to *Citizens United*, called for a constitutional amendment establishing that money does not constitute speech and that only human persons, not corporations, have constitutional rights (Ripken 2012). This movement represented a large tide of negative public sentiment toward and voter disenchantment with *Citizens United* and its effects, which was also gauged by public opinion polls. Indeed, some polls of the mass public seem to strongly support Lessig's arguments about growing voter disenchantment and perceptions of corruption after *Citizens United.* A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center shortly after the court handed down its ruling asked voters "how much, if anything, have you read or heard about the Supreme Court's decision on campaign finance rules that now allows corporations to spend on behalf of candidates in elections?" A majority had some knowledge of the decision, with 19% answering that they had

heard a lot and 46% a little, while a sizable minority (35%) reported hearing nothing at all about the ruling. The follow-up question, "do you approve or disapprove of the Supreme Court's decision that allows corporations to spend on behalf of candidates in elections?" found a 17% approval rate, 68% disapproval rate, and 15% unsure. The partisan divide was relatively small: among Republicans, only 22% approved, 65% disapproved, and 14% were unsure; and among Democrats, a mere 13% approved, 76% disapproved, and 11% were unsure (Pew 2010). Another Washington Post-ABC poll reported similar results, with 65% "strongly" opposed to the court ruling and 72% in favor of reinstating limits on corporate political spending (Eggen 2010).

Dowling (2012) also gauges public opinion on *Citizens United* but with more detailed experiments, finding that approximately 30% of respondents agree with the Supreme Court's ruling to allow "corporations and unions to use their general treasury funds to support or oppose specific candidates." He also finds through a question wording experiment that information about the amount of spending by "corporations, unions, and other special interest groups" does not substantially alter public opinion about the decision, and the partisan divide over *Citizens United* is small (27% of Democrats, 31% of Republicans, and 32% of Independents support the ruling). Dowling then delves into the theoretical basis for *Citizens United*: the idea that corporations are people and merit First Amendment protections. His second embedded question wording experiment finds that a minority of the public (23%) believes "corporations should have the same rights as people." Moreover, when presented with different priming frames, he finds that more people believe corporations should have the same rights as individuals with regards to lobbying (26%) than with regards to elections (16%). Additionally, he discovers substantial partisan differences, with only 15% of Democrats and 19% of Independents believing that corporations should have the same rights as individuals versus 42% of Republicans. However,

the partisan divide is smaller with the elections frame (10% of Democrats and 28% of Republicans) than the lobbying frame (15% of Democrats and 43% of Republicans). Dowling's research demonstrates greater nuance than basic public opinion polls, hinting at ways in which a sizable minority of the American public might be somewhat supportive of corporate rights in the political process.

These polls are informative measures of public sentiment, but they suffer from several flaws that limit their usefulness in assessing true voter attitudes. First, directly questioning respondents about *Citizens United* (particularly just after the ruling occurred) may not produce results that reflect voters' general beliefs about the issue, as opposed to when they know they are being specifically asked about the ruling for some research purpose. Second, polls ask a limited array of questions that do not test the impact of *Citizens United* on political issues beyond the decision itself, such as Lessig's fears of eroding trust levels or any hypotheses about how the decision might change voter behavior. Third, individuals who claim previous knowledge of the decision and therefore have prior opinions to express are likely different from individuals who do not—their levels of political interest, political knowledge, and other characteristics may be responsible for shaping their attitudes toward *Citizens United*, rather than the decision itself being the key factor. Finally, and most importantly, polls that measure voter dissatisfaction with *Citizens United* do nothing to separate the effects of this particular court ruling from the effects of a general political climate of voter cynicism that has existed since before the Supreme Court altered campaign finance regulations. Put simply, perceptions of institutional corruption may be a problem among the American electorate, but *Citizens United* may not be a tipping point for voters' attitudes about this type of corruption. This paper therefore seeks to isolate the impact of

information about *Citizens United* alone on voter attitudes through randomized experimental methods.

7. Experiment One: The Effect of Citizens United on Voter Cynicism[2]

7.1. Theory and Hypotheses

I begin my empirical analysis of the effects of *Citizens United* on voter attitudes with a test of the most basic question of institutional corruption: does information about *Citizens United v. FEC* cause voters to become more cynical about the American political process than before they learn about the court ruling? This experiment aims to supplement public opinion polls and theories about the potential disillusionment created by *Citizens United*, examining directly whether information about the Supreme Court ruling has an effect on changing voter attitudes. Although Lessig (2010) and other believers in the existence of institutional corruption are confident in the "obvious truth" that voters who learn about the lifting of spending regulations will suspect corruption in the political system and feel like they have less political efficacy, neither side of the debate is backed by much empirical evidence. It is highly possible that Wilkinson's argument (2010) that individual campaign finance regulations do little to affect voter cynicism, which is generally high and only moved by large scandals like Watergate, is true instead.

I hypothesize that generally, the concept of institutional corruption holds true: voters who are exposed to information about corporate political influence and massive amounts of campaign spending become politically cynical. More specifically, I predict that subjects who are primed with information about *Citizens United*'s changes to campaign finance regulations and corporate

[2] This experiment was originally conducted and analyzed for a previous paper written for PLSC 854 Business Power & American Politics entitled "Does Corporate Influence in Politics Change Voter Attitudes? A Randomized Experiment." I have re-conducted the data analysis with changes for improved quality of analysis.

spending will think that the American political system is more corrupt than those who are not primed with *Citizens United* exposure. Therefore, those who are treated with the prime should be more likely to believe that campaign finance reform is necessary, corporations have disproportionate and undue influence over elections and policymaking, and individual voters have little efficacy. However, I expect levels of political cynicism to be high in both groups, reflecting the dissatisfied public discourse about corruption in American elections and governance. The critical distinction between this experiment and ordinary public opinion polling is that it seeks to gauge whether *Citizens United* causes an unconscious shift in broader political attitudes, rather than only inquiring about voter approval of *Citizens United* itself. Nonetheless, at the close of the survey, I ask the standard questions about respondents' prior familiarity with and approval of *Citizens United*, with the expectation of a high level of disapproval of the decision as previously found by national polls.

7.2. Experimental Design

This study was conducted on April 20, 2012 using Amazon Mechanical Turk ("MTurk"), an online service that allows researchers to recruit individuals for "human intelligence tasks" such as surveys. 452 American subjects over the age of 18 were paid $0.50 to complete a five to ten minute survey, a standard payment on Mechanical Turk. They were randomly and evenly divided into a control and treatment group. The control group received a neutral factual paragraph about politics not related to *Citizens United* or corporate campaign involvement. The treatment group received most of the same neutral paragraph but with some information about *Citizens United* and corporate political involvement substituted at the end. This method of priming experimental subjects is popular in the psychology and political science literatures (see,

e.g. Baumgartner and Wirth 2012; Domke, Shah, and Wackman 1998). The paragraphs read as follows:

Control: The 2012 election will be between incumbent Democratic president Barack Obama and a Republican challenger. It will be held on November 6, 2012. The Republican candidate is currently being chosen through the Republican primaries, during which voters in each state cast ballots for candidates. The winner of each state receives delegates to the Republican National Convention, at which the final Republican candidate will be chosen. The Republican National Convention will be held during the week of August 27, 2012.

Treatment: The 2012 election will be between incumbent Democratic president Barack Obama and a Republican challenger. It will be held on November 6, 2012. The Republican candidate is currently being chosen through the Republican primaries, during which voters in each state cast ballots for candidates. Since the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010, corporations are now allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

After answering a basic set of demographic questions and reading their assigned paragraphs, both groups were asked to complete the same survey containing a set of questions about political cynicism (the term I will use throughout this section to refer to the attitudes of interest in the hypothesis section). The full survey can be found in Appendix A, including a useful list of the nine cynicism questions and the shortened names I assign to each for ease of reading. The primary questions of interest about political cynicism were presented in randomized order for each subject in order to avoid the risk of early questions priming answers to later questions, and the survey finished with questions that directly asked participants if they had prior familiarity with *Citizens United* before participating in the study. Finally, I employ two methods to allay concerns about whether participants were paying attention to the survey questions rather than merely skimming through to receive payment: first, a hidden timer was placed on the page with the priming paragraph to monitor how long participants spent reading, and second, an

attention check where participants were told to select a particular answer to the question if they were reading carefully was placed near the end of the survey.

7.3. Results and Data Analysis

I begin by creating post-stratification weights based on demographic information in order to adjust my sample to be representative of the U.S population (Little 1993). Where possible, I use data only for the population ages 18 and above because only adults were permitted to take the survey. For weighting using the iterative proportional fitting algorithm (raking), I collected the following demographic variables: age, gender, education, race and ethnicity, and household income. For age, gender, and race and ethnicity, I use data for adults ages 18 and above from the 2010 U.S. Census (Social Explorer 2013; see also Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011 and Howden and Meyer 2011). For education, I use data for adults ages 18 and above from 2011 reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics 2011). For household income, I use the 2011 American Community Survey's 1-year estimates (Social Explorer 2013). The results of the analysis in most cases do not change significantly when the data is analyzed while unweighted, so I report the weighted results unless otherwise noted.

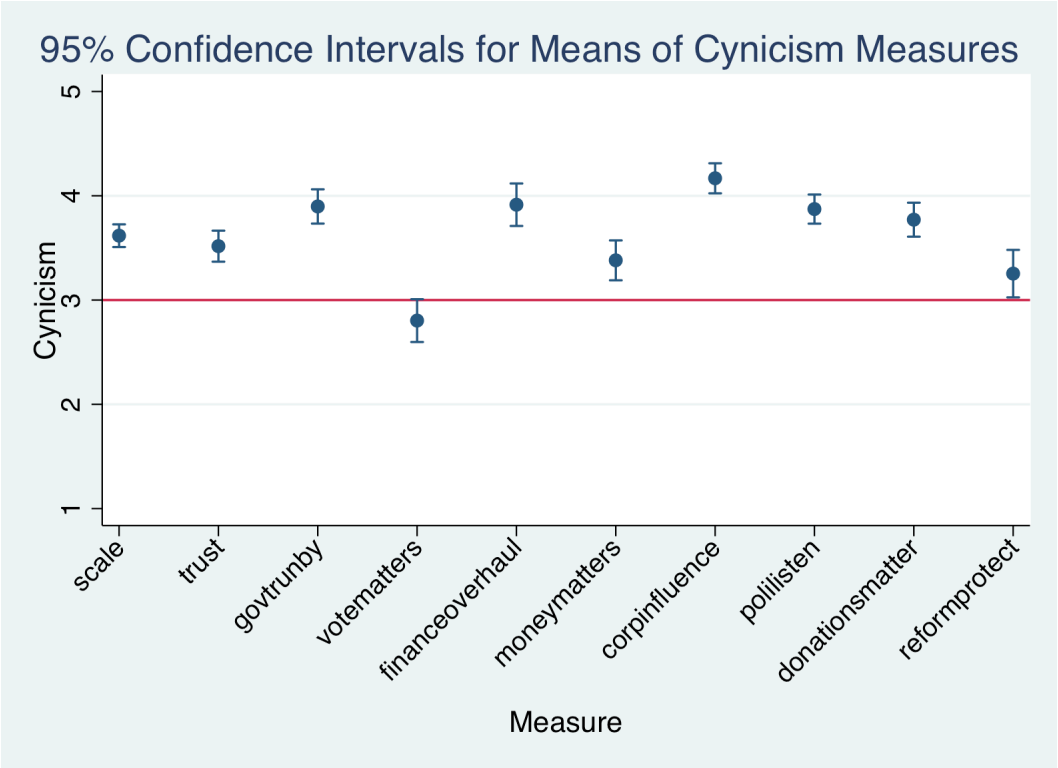
In order to verify that randomization occurred properly between the control and treatment groups, I use logit to predict experimental assignment as a function of the collected demographic variables and political interest measures. A likelihood ratio test with 73 degrees of freedom is highly insignificant ($LR=60.22$, $p=0.8578$), indicating that the treatment and control groups are closely balanced in terms of observable characteristics. This suggests that randomized assignment at least appears to have succeeded, implying that unobservable characteristics are likely to be closely balanced as well even though it is obviously impossible to test unobservables. The importance of randomization in this experiment is that it allows causal inference of the

treatment effect based on comparisons between the control and treatment groups without fear of confounding omitted variables.

Question One: How Does *Citizens United* Affect Voter Cynicism?

The nine cynicism questions in the main body of the survey are all measured on a scale of 1 to 5, coded so that the higher end of the scale represents higher political distrust, voter disillusionment, and anti-corporation sentiment. In order to analyze the results, I generate an aggregate scale based on each individual's responses to all nine questions as a representation of "cynicism" more broadly—as with the individual questions, higher values on the aggregate scale reflect greater political cynicism. Cronbach's alpha (the scale reliability coefficient) is 0.7589, indicating that the scale is a good, stable measure. An initial glance at the means of the scale and individual cynicism measures validate my hypothesis that there are generally high levels of political cynicism among all subjects (Figure 1).

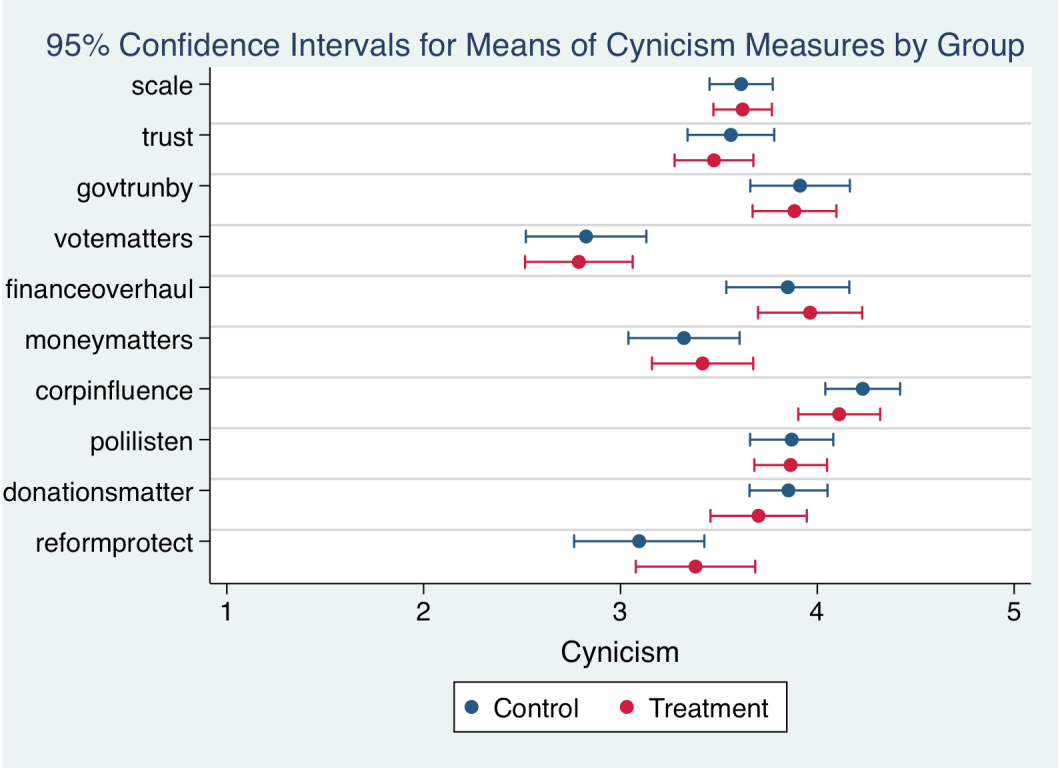
Figure 1. Confidence Intervals for Means of Cynicism Measures



Nearly all of the means are above the neutral center of 3, indicating greater cynicism than optimism. The only exception is for *votematters*, which suggests that voters still believe that the flagship act of democracy, participation through voting, is worthwhile. Respondents were most cynical about the level of corporate influence over policymaking.

Next, I begin analysis of the treatment effect of information about *Citizens United* by doing a basic comparison of means between the treatment and control groups. Because randomization should ensure that characteristics in the error term are balanced across the treatment and control groups, it is not necessary to include covariates in order to attain an unbiased estimate of the treatment effect. Therefore, I simply compare the treatment and control groups' mean responses to each cynicism question to see if they differ significantly (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Confidence Intervals for Means of Cynicism Measures by Group



For the aggregate scale as well as each individual measure, the 95% confidence intervals for the mean value overlap substantially between the control and treatment groups. This suggests

initially that the two groups did not differ significantly in their levels of cynicism. Substantively, it also does not seem like the means of the treatment group consistently tend to be higher or lower than the means of the control group regardless of statistical significance.

To confirm these results, I run a series of bivariate linear regressions in which the cynicism scale and each individual measure (Y_i) for each subject *i* is regressed on assignment to treatment (the base group is the control). The model can be written as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 treatment_i + u_i,$$

where u_i represents the unobserved disturbance term. For no outcome variable does the coefficient on assignment to treatment approach statistical significance at even the α=0.10 level. One caveat is that when the data is unweighted, the regression of *moneymatters* on treatment assignment produces a coefficient of 0.186 on treatment with a p-value of 0.063. It is possible that this is because *moneymatters* is the only question that explicitly asks whether money or substantive issues matter more in elections, rather than speaking generally about the financial influence of different groups in elections or campaign finance reform abstractly. Subjects who are exposed to information about *Citizens United* and Super PACs may be more prone to believe that campaigns are decided only by money, regardless of the donors and spenders of that money. However, it is more likely that the relatively low p-value of treatment in the *moneymatters* regression is coincidental due to the large number of dependent variables used to measure cynicism in the study and should not be considered particularly conclusive.

Finally, I conduct subgroup analysis to see if there are heterogeneous treatment effects hidden in the overall results. In order to do this, I analyze a series of regressions of the following form:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 treatment_i + \beta_2 Z_i + \beta_3 Z{*}treatment_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* is the cynicism scale, *Z* represents partisanship, income, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and the coefficient β_3 represents the interaction effect between the treatment and covariate *Z*. Among those demographic and political background variables, I find that only the coefficient on *donated*treatment* is marginally statistically significant (and this effect only holds for the weighted analysis). The regression table is presented below (Table 1).

Table 1. Regression of Scale on Treatment, Prior Donation, and Interaction

	Scale	
treatment	0.0814	(0.61)
donated	0.187	(1.37)
donated_treatment	-0.349+	(-1.67)
Constant	3.574***	(35.96)
Observations	452	

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

This result shows that there is a -0.35 point difference between the effect of the *Citizens United* treatment for subjects who reported previously donating to a political campaign and for subjects who did not. Among prior donors, the treatment actually caused respondents to become *less* cynical after receiving information about *Citizens United*. This result is fairly reasonable: given the high level of political cynicism among respondents overall, those who previously donated to a political campaign are probably more generally optimistic about the political system and less likely to believe that money does not belong in politics. Therefore, when presented with information about *Citizens United*, these respondents may interpret the decision as protecting the right of people to donate to campaigns, a right that they themselves have exercised in the past. However, given the large number of subgroups I examined for interactions, this significant result should be replicated before being considered definitive.

Following my analysis of the treatment effect, I conduct some exploratory analysis using multivariate regression in the hopes of gleaning insight into what might affect political cynicism if not the priming treatment. It is very important to remember that the findings in this section should not be interpreted as definitively causal, as subjects' demographic and political characteristics were not randomly assigned like the treatment groups. However, the observational data we gather about covariates allows us to examine associations between covariates and levels of cynicism to speculate about possible factors that predict cynicism. Theoretically, many of the covariates seem likely to predict levels of cynicism. For example, younger respondents might be less cynical because they have less exposure to the political system and fewer life experiences. The more educated and wealthy who are better positioned to achieve their goals and have efficacy in society may be more optimistic, while minorities with little political power may feel disenfranchised. Respondents who score higher on political knowledge may be cynical due to greater exposure to information about political controversies and electoral issues, but those who self-report greater interest and participation in politics may be less cynical as demonstrated by their attitudes and active involvement. Partisanship is also a likely factor, as Democrats have led the protest against *Citizens United* and are more likely to express negative sentiments toward wealthy interests.

As with the subgroup analysis, I focus on the scale rather than the individual questions because the scale is a more stable measure and there is no evidence of major differences between the question results. The results of the weighted and unweighted multivariate regressions of *scale* on the demographic and political interest variables as well as assignment to treatment are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression of Scale on Treatment and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
treatment	-0.111	0.0336
	(-1.14)	(0.58)
age	-0.00146	-0.00108
	(-0.32)	(-0.38)
male	0.0870	0.137*
	(0.88)	(2.21)
education	0.0259	0.0190
	(0.59)	(0.74)
white	0.374**	0.0369
	(2.62)	(0.23)
black	-0.0404	-0.122
	(-0.20)	(-0.66)
hispanic	0.497***	0.236
	(4.16)	(1.33)
asian	0.269	0.0135
	(1.42)	(0.08)
nativeam	-0.191	-0.487*
	(-0.87)	(-2.07)
mixedrace	-0.212	0.0625
	(-1.38)	(0.27)
income	-0.0490***	-0.0235*
	(-3.57)	(-2.54)
politicalinterest	-0.103	-0.0344
	(-1.04)	(-0.67)
registeredvoter	0.198	0.0484
	(1.25)	(0.48)
voted	-0.0715	0.104
	(-0.53)	(1.26)
donated	0.0362	-0.0133
	(0.29)	(-0.16)
volunteered	-0.0415	-0.0185
	(-0.21)	(-0.20)
poliknow	0.222**	0.141***
	(2.90)	(3.45)
partisan	0.0639*	0.0722***
	(2.20)	(4.43)
Constant	2.790***	2.860***
	(8.98)	(11.84)
Observations	391	391

t statistics in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The model can be written as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 treatment_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 male_i + \beta_4 education_i + \ldots + \beta_{18} partisan_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* is the cynicism scale, and the regression includes the treatment and all the covariates in Table 2. The treatment effect remains insignificant with covariate controls included. There are several differences between the weighted and unweighted regressions: the coefficients on *male* and *nativeamerican* are significant in the unweighted regression, while the coefficients on *white* and *hispanic* are significant in the weighted regression. These differences are unsurprising given that weighting a relatively small sample of survey respondents to be nationally representative could shift the data significantly on gender and race. I focus on the *income, politicalknowledge,* and *partisanship* measures that are significant in both models, using the coefficients from the weighted model.

First, income is coded such that higher values represent higher income. The coefficient can be interpreted as meaning that a one-unit increase in income, which is usually a $10,000 increment (see Appendix A), predicts a 0.049 point decrease in *scale*. This means that increases in wealth correspond with less political cynicism, which aligns with the hypothesis that the wealthy are less likely to feel that money's influence in politics is problematic because they have the ability to engage through donations and benefit from a system that allows money to sway political outcomes. Political knowledge is coded as the number of basic political knowledge questions the respondent answered correctly out of three. In this model, each additional question answered correctly predicts a 0.222 point increase in *scale*, meaning that the more politically knowledgeable respondents are also more cynical. This is again consistent with the hypothesis that greater familiarity with political issues and problems can cause disillusionment. Finally, partisanship is coded on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing "Strong Republican," 7

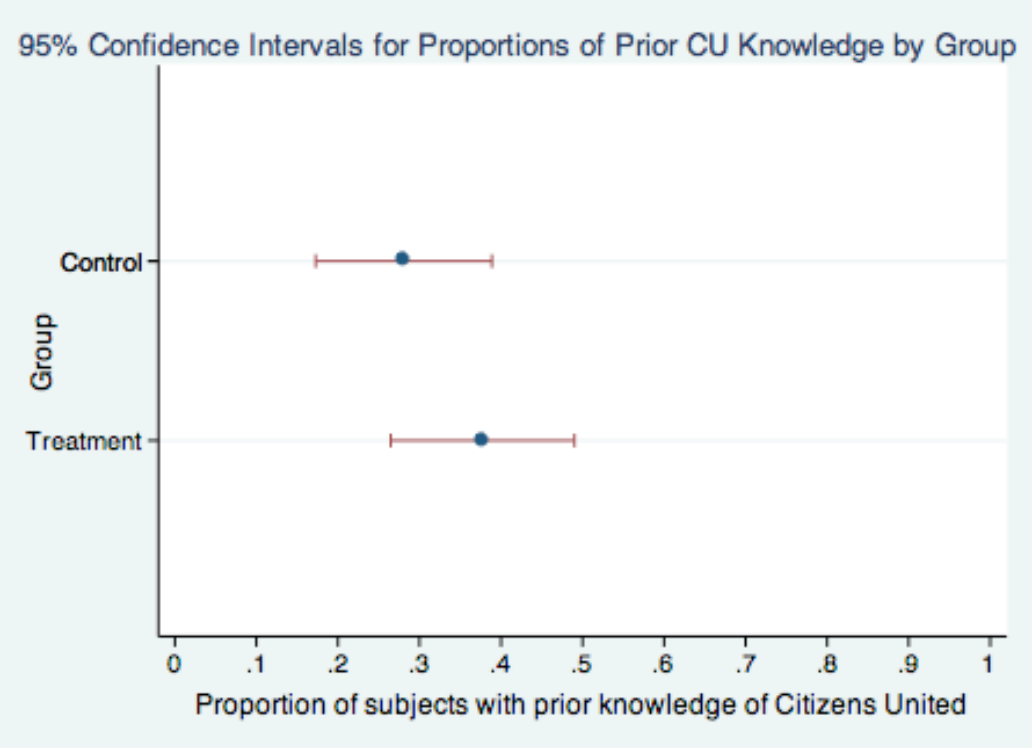
representing "Strong Democrat," and 4 representing "Independent equally close to both parties." A one-point increase in partisanship predicts a 0.0639 point increase in *scale*, indicating that Democrats are more cynical than Republicans. Again, this is unsurprising given that leading opponents of *Citizens United* tend to be members of the Democratic Party. In summary, less wealthy, more politically knowledgeable, and more Democratic respondents tend to be more cynical. It is important to recognize, however, that the substantive magnitude of these effects is small, likely due to the high levels of cynicism across the board. Contrary to my hypothesis, self-reported measures of political interest and participation (registering to vote, voting, volunteering for a campaign, and donating) are not significant predictors of cynicism.

Question Two: Do Voters Approve of *Citizens United*?

The end of the survey asked subjects about their prior knowledge of *Citizens United* and their beliefs about its impacts on the fairness of elections, aiming more directly to gauge respondents' positive or negative sentiments towards the court ruling. Predictably, a minority of subjects (33%) reported hearing about the ruling before the study. The proportion was higher for the treatment group (38%) than the control group (28%), likely due to bias induced by being primed with information about *Citizens United* at the beginning of the survey. However, the difference is not statistically significant (Figure 3).

Respondents who reported prior knowledge of *Citizens United* were asked a follow-up question inquiring about their opinions on the impact of the ruling. Here, I do not use weights because I do not expect those who report prior knowledge of the ruling to be nationally representative. An overwhelming majority believes that the decision has had a negative effect on the fairness of elections (84.8%), while only 3.5% believe it has had a positive impact. 3.5% also believe it has had no effect on the fairness of elections, and 8.2% are unsure. Considering the

Figure 3. Confidence Intervals for Proportions of Respondents with Prior Citizens United Knowledge by Group



sizeable amount of popular discourse about the importance of free speech rights, this finding of incredibly high disapproval of *Citizens United* is almost surprisingly one-sided. It is also remarkable given the insignificance of the treatment of priming subjects with information about *Citizens United*. However, those who report prior knowledge of *Citizens United* are likely a non-representative group of individuals, and when confronted with a direct question about the effect of the decision on electoral fairness, it is probable that respondents were somewhat led toward negative answers.

Given the disproportionate opposition to *Citizens United* among those surveyed, I investigate the relationship between prior exposure to the court ruling and partisanship, political knowledge, political interest, and the cynicism scale. Again, these findings do not confirm a causal relationship between the explanatory variables and prior knowledge of *Citizens United*

because there was no randomization of covariates. I expect Democrats to be more likely to have heard of *Citizens United* because of the Democratic Party's opposition to the ruling. I also hypothesize that those with greater political knowledge and political interest are more likely to have prior knowledge. Finally, I expect the more politically cynical to be more likely to have prior knowledge of *Citizens United* because cynicism is derived from information about politics. The results of running a logistic regression of prior knowledge of *Citizens United* on these variables is presented in Table 3, and the model can be written as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 partisan_i + \beta_2 scale_i + \beta_3 politicalknowledge_i + \beta_4 politicalinterest_i + u_i,$$

where Y is the log odds of prior knowledge of *Citizens United*.

In this logistic regression, *partisanship* and *politicalknowledge* are not statistically significant with weighted data while all of the coefficients are significant with unweighted data. Despite this difference, however, the results are mostly in the expected direction. For every one-point increase in political interest, the log odds of prior knowledge of *Citizens United* increases by 1.362. For every one-unit increase in the cynicism scale, the log odds of prior knowledge of *Citizens United* increases by 1.049. This is consistent with my hypothesis that those who are

Table 3. Logit Regression of Prior CU Knowledge on Cynicism and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
partisan	-0.0184	0.165*
	(-0.15)	(2.40)
scale	1.049**	0.728***
	(2.77)	(3.48)
poliknow	0.496	1.021***
	(1.35)	(5.24)
politicalinterest	1.362**	1.283***
	(3.14)	(5.63)
Constant	-8.845***	-9.339***
	(-5.33)	(-8.87)
Observations	424	424

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

more politically interested and more cynical are more likely to have heard of *Citizens United* before taking the survey. Considering the overwhelming proportion of respondents that answered the follow-up question with a negative attitude towards the decision (only six subjects believed the decision had a positive impact), I do not include an analysis of sentiment toward *Citizens United* by subgroup. The results of this survey are even more negative than the Pew and Washington Post polls of 2010, which found approximately 65% disapproval of the decision (Pew 2010; Eggen 2010). This may be attributable to question wording or ongoing media coverage of the 2012 presidential election, which prominently criticized Super PACs and *Citizens United*, at the time when the survey was conducted.

7.4. Discussion

I begin the discussion of these results by addressing potential flaws of the study. Most notably, the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk raises several potential concerns that are also relevant for the second survey experiment analyzed in this paper. Overall, I believe the problems associated with using MTurk are no more severe than the problems faced by surveys using more traditional subjects pools. First, the sample of subjects on MTurk may not be representative of the entire American voting population, limiting the study's external validity. Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz (2012) conduct an investigation of MTurk's subject pool in order to compare MTurk workers to the U.S. population and find that it is fairly diverse and representative of the American population as a whole. They conclude that MTurk is a valid tool for political science research and even argue that MTurk workers are more demographically representative of the United States than the usual student and convenience samples often employed in academic experiments. By replicating previous political science experiments conducted using standard convenience and nationally representative samples, Berinsky et al. verify that MTurk workers

produce similar results. However, the results of my study should of course be replicated with other subject pools in order to bolster the credibility of its findings, especially because I weight my sample to be representative of the voting age population rather than the voting eligible population.

Second, the study may suffer from internal validity issues if subjects do not faithfully adhere to survey rules. Berinsky et al. (2012) examine IP addresses of survey respondents and find that very few subjects attempt to complete the same survey multiple times in order to gain extra pay. They also insert an attention check question into their studies to determine how closely workers are paying attention to the information and questions. Their study yields correct answers from 60% of respondents, compared to only 49% correct answers by Polimetrix/YouGov Internet panels and 46% correct answers from Survey Sampling International samples. This study's attention check that dictated which answer respondents should select if they were reading the question carefully produced an even higher proportion of correct answers, 65%.

Another concern with the study is that subjects may not have been successfully primed by the control and treatment paragraphs. In order to monitor this to some degree, I first gave subjects an explicit instruction to "read the paragraph carefully." Second, I embedded a hidden timer on the page where subjects were asked to read the paragraph. The control group spent an average of 26 seconds on the page, while the treatment group spent an average of 35 seconds on the page. Both times seem reasonable given the short length of the paragraphs, and the longer average time for the treatment group is a promising sign because the treatment was slightly longer. It is very plausible that most individuals did read the paragraphs carefully as directed. Another possible criticism is that the priming effect from reading the paragraphs was not strong enough. However, reading news both online or in print is a sensible parallel to how individuals

obtain political information in the real world. Other realistic priming methods such as edited videos might have a stronger effect, but such a design would have been difficult to execute as finding two comparable videos with the treatment containing an added segment about corporations could introduce other unpredictable factors such as the personal qualities of the speakers in the video. Additional studies in the future with different priming mechanisms could be useful follow-ups to confirm the results of this experiment.

More generally, this study suffers from the usual limitations of survey research. First, measures of attitudes from surveys may be inaccurate due to variation from question wording and other sources of measurement error (Ansolabahere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008). I correct for this problem by crafting the nine-item scale using all the measures of political cynicism, and the means for individual measures are also reassuringly similar without the scale. Second, participants' answers to survey questions may not reflect their day-to-day beliefs. Respondents may feel pressured to provide answers even if they do not hold much of an opinion, or they may attempt to guess the researcher's hypothesis and provide the "correct" answer. Recognizing that these behaviors are difficult to identify or solve in any survey, I attempt to keep questions as neutral as possible and present the answer options on a scale to allow respondents to place themselves in the middle if they have no opinion.

The results of this study are in part consistent with previous findings and in part a surprising rejection of the fairly untested institutional corruption hypothesis. A sizable minority of subjects reported having prior knowledge of *Citizens United*, suggesting that its potential to influence many voters should be taken seriously. As predicted by opinion polls, subjects expressed highly negative opinions of the effect of the court ruling on the fairness of elections. The results are even more dramatic than polls released shortly after the decision, which may be a

sign that societal dialogue since 2010 about corporate political expenditures and the power of Super PACs has moved voters to view the Court's ruling even more unfavorably today.

On the other hand, Lessig's theory of *Citizens United*'s impact on institutional corruption is not directly supported by this study. He is right that Americans hold a high level of distrust and cynicism towards the U.S. political system—that assertion is resoundingly confirmed by this study. However, voter cynicism does not appear to be affected by information about *Citizens United* alone. When people are given neutral factual information about the court ruling and have that in their subconscious while considering questions about political cynicism, they react no differently than if they did not have that information about *Citizens United* at hand. Their levels of political trust, beliefs about campaign finance, and feelings of voter efficacy seem to be low enough that *Citizens United* is not a tipping point. Other factors like income and political knowledge do predict cynicism, but even those effects are substantively small compared to the high absolute amount of cynicism to begin with for all subjects. Put simply, voters disapprove of *Citizens United*, but the ruling makes little difference to their attitudes given their already great disillusionment with politics.

This experiment is a valuable contribution to a literature that has extensively researched the outcomes of business influence via campaign expenditures, lobbying, and structural power but understudied business influence via regulations that alter voter perceptions of the democratic system as a whole. This study's evidence contradicting the application of the theory of institutional corruption to *Citizens United* is only the first step toward gathering empirical evidence for the arguments on either side of the campaign finance reform debate. Institutional corruption as a whole might be problematic for the American political system, but the direct marginal impact of *Citizens United* on that variety of corruption seems small. If institutional

corruption impacts are not an empirical reality, perhaps opponents of *Citizens United* need not focus so intensely on this particular issue with the ruling and should instead consider other potential perverse effects on voters and American democracy. I hope that future research will further substantiate these findings and encourage both political theorists and partisan actors to contemplate *Citizens United*'s true effects rather than merely asserting their beliefs.

Chapter Three: Political Participation after *Citizens United*

"Should things go wrong at any time, the people will set them to rights by the peaceable exercise of their elective rights."

-Thomas Jefferson, 1806

8. Voter Behavior and Social Psychology

Although the previous experiment in this paper did not find that *Citizens United* has a direct impact on levels of voter cynicism, it is possible that the decision may still influence broader voter attitudes. This section of the paper focuses on different ways *Citizens United* can be framed, testing which arguments about the court ruling voters find compelling and whether different frames can change voter beliefs about the importance of political participation. Given the high stature of the U.S. Supreme Court, it is reasonable to hypothesize that decisions from the Court can influence the opinions of American voters. However, studies of the Court's impact have found conflicting results, with some discovering no effect on public opinion (e.g. Marshall 1978) and others finding that the Court does lead public opinion (e.g. Franklin and Kosaki 1989). Using both survey and experimental data to overcome methodological issues with previous studies, Linos and Twist (2013) find that the Court can change public opinion even on issues that were highly politicized and extensively covered in the news prior to the court's decision. This would contradict the idea that voter attitudes that were previously set in cynicism could not be swayed by the Supreme Court's judgment that increased corporate and union spending in elections ought be permitted.

Yet some research since the ruling has found messages drawing attention to corporate influence in politics to be effective at shaping voter attitudes, suggesting that voters do not believe the Supreme Court's nuanced rationale for why corporate and special interests do not constitute corrupting forces. For example, the Analyst Institute conducted a field experiment in which they sent a treatment group of voters a mail message linking corporate and special interest contributions to congressional incumbents in the 2012 election cycle. They then followed up with a phone survey that found that individuals who received the mailer were more likely than those in the control group to agree that the "incumbent has corporate donors and lobbyists in mind when [he/she] makes decisions" rather than trusting the incumbent to understand voter concerns (Donnelly, Hogue, and Robinson 2012). Dowling and Wichowsky (Forthcoming) run an experiment varying the information provided to subjects about the interests sponsoring an attack ad, and they find that disclosing increased information about donors causes voters to become more supportive of the attacked candidate. This implies that voters may discount information presented in appeals by corporate interests if there is a mechanism mandating the disclosure of sponsors, but not if they merely see an ad and do not explicitly realize the Super PAC sponsor is corporate. Taken together, this line of experimentation shows that voters have not changed their minds since *Citizens United* about corporate involvement in politics being negative.

Walker Wilson (2012) investigates Lessig's theory of the appearance of corruption, asking how voters were affected by their perceptions of corruption generated by *Citizens United v. FEC*. She cites public opinion polls indicating that a large majority of Americans believe there is too much money in political campaigns, oppose Super PACs, would support a constitutional amendment banning corporate political spending, and feel like wealthy interests are allowed to

drown out ordinary citizens in the status quo. Most notably, a survey conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice in 2012 found that a quarter of respondents (and even more African Americans, Latinos, and low-income voters) said they are less likely to vote because wealthy Super PAC donors have a disproportionate influence over average Americans (Brennan Center 2012). Walker Wilson argues that Americans are responding to their declining political efficacy after *Citizens United* by disengaging from the political process, observing that despite a relatively high amount of small donations and volunteering as a result of President Obama's campaign strategy, voter turnout was lower in 2012 than in both 2008 and 2004.

Conflicting theories of voter behavior predict different impacts for *Citizens United.* Beyond the donation level (e.g. where Ansolabehere et al. (2003)'s view of political donations as consumption rather than attempts to influence outcomes suggests that lower efficacy of small donations would not affect voters' decision to donate or not), it is possible that voters may be less likely to vote if they believe that *Citizens United* makes their votes matter less. Some theorists argue that people believe their individual votes are relevant (e.g. Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Studies conducted by Acevedo and Krueger (2004) found that some individuals vote not because they overcome their own self-interest, but rather because they actually expect their behavior to matter. Even though these beliefs are mistaken due to the incredibly low probability of the relevance of a single vote, if *Citizens United* changes voters' perceptions that their votes matter, voter turnout may decrease. Other models of voter behavior, however, argue that individuals vote for other reasons, such as social pressure (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008) and expressive gratification (Brennan and Lomasky 1993). These theories point to a smaller effect of *Citizens United* on voter turnout because the court ruling might not change these motivations. Empirically, Mellen and Carlan (2013) find that the growth in independent expenditures on

negative advertisements following *Citizens United* did not have a mobilizing or demobilizing effect on voter turnout in the 2012 Senate elections.

Campaigns have speculated on the possibility of using *Citizens United* appeals to galvanize voter support. For example, an email message from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee sent to supporters by Senator Michael Bennet on April 25, 2012 centers on the importance of grassroots campaigns in countering big Republican contributors (Bennet 2012):

> First right-wing extremists took aim at women's healthcare. Now, they're trying to double interest rates on millions of student loans.
>
> And thanks to the Citizens United ruling, Karl Rove and the Koch brothers will try to make this radical agenda law by defeating President Obama and taking over the Senate with nearly unlimited cash.
>
> **Our side's different -- 97% of our support comes from grassroots donations. It's you vs. the Rove and Koch attack machine.**
>
> That's why it's critical you defend the 23 Democratic senate seats up for grabs. Republicans need to win just four to take the Senate. Don't let it happen.
>
> We have to raise $600,000 before midnight April 30 to counter the attacks. We need you to step up now to help us win in November.
>
> Click here to give $5, $10 or more to the DSCC so we can combat the right-wing attacks and protect our Senate majority.
>
> Rove came after me in 2010. Unregulated groups dumped millions into my race, which was decided by 15,000 votes. We were only able to defeat them with grassroots support.
>
> We expect races around the country to be just as close this time around. Twenty-three seats is a lot to defend, especially when Republicans need to win only four.
>
> But if we can go toe-to-toe with Republicans on the ground -- like I did -- and compete with their billionaire-backers on the air, we can re-elect President Obama and hold the Senate.
>
> **It's up to you. We can only stand up to the unceasing spigot of right-wing dollars if our grassroots supporters step up.**
>
> Please get involved. Help us meet our goal, right now.

Can you give $5, $10 more to the DSCC right now? Control of the White House and the Senate depends on it.

It's thanks to the DSCC and its grassroots donors I'm around to fight against the likes of Karl Rove.

Together, let's keep at it. Let's protect students, women, the middle class and seniors by taking ownership of this election.

Another example comes from Rhode Island, where the David Cicilline for U.S. Congress campaign sent an appeal on June 28, 2012 centered on the Affordable Care Act and tied the issue to corporate opponents and Citizens United—the interest group rather than the court decision, but certainly bringing to mind the Supreme Court ruling in the process (Cicilline 2012):

I can't thank you enough for your incredible support. My finance director, Rebecca, just informed me that because of your overwhelming generosity we are now just $3,465 short of our mid-year fundraising goal.

This race isn't going to be easy. My Republican opponent has already benefited from hundreds of thousands of dollars pouring into our state from a national group that supports privatizing Social Security, **repealing the Affordable Care Act,** and keeping in place tax breaks for companies who outsource jobs. We know that even more corporate-backed special interest money is on its way to the airwaves in Rhode Island, and we need to make sure we can fight back.

Can you help today with a contribution of $100, $50, or even $25?

With an historic Supreme Court ruling today, the Affordable Care Act will continue to be the law of the land, and thousands of Rhode Islanders will continue to benefit from the critically important provisions in this law -- like young people being able to stay on their parents' insurance plans and preventing health insurance companies from discriminating against people with preexisting conditions.

Unbelievably, during a recent talk radio interview my Republican opponent recently failed to name a single piece of the health care bill that he would want to keep. A single one. Talk about out of touch.

The Tea Party-backed Republican leadership has already promised to continue to waste time and energy on more votes to repeal healthcare in the months ahead and my Republican opponent supports repealing the bill. We need to make sure we don't send even more Republicans to Washington to help them repeal this vital law.

Can you help by donating $150, $50 or even $25?

P.S. Citizens United has already contributed the maximum contribution of $10,000 to my Republican opponent and the corporate-backed special interests have already spend [*sic*] hundreds of thousands of dollars on the air here in Rhode Island. I need your help today.

Messages about *Citizens United*'s consequences for voter participation abound, but there is little literature that directly tests whether these appeals are effective. This portion of the paper aims to begin grounding these hypotheses in empirical data.

9. Experiment Two: The Effect of Citizens United Appeals in Campaign Messaging

9.1. Theory and Hypotheses

Although the first survey experiment demonstrates that *Citizens United* alone does not sway the already cynical attitudes of American voters, there is a common perception among political campaigns that voters can be galvanized to donate, fundraise, volunteer, and vote by appeals emphasizing the imperative of voter participation in the wake of special interests. This portion of my research seeks to test the way voters consider information about *Citizens United* as it is commonly integrated into real world campaigns. I hypothesize that when contextualized in a political campaign, language about *Citizens United* that is tied to civic duty or a necessity of balancing wealthy interests can increase the success of fundraising and turnout appeals. An important distinction between this type of situation and an experiment seeking to investigate *Citizens United*'s effect on Americans generally is that campaigns selectively target messages to contact lists that consist of those likely to be supporters. Therefore, it is much more likely that appeals about *Citizens United* will come from Democratic candidates, challengers who are not well-connected to big donors, and other candidates who believe they are in a place to win support by emphasizing the importance of individual voters outside the circle of wealthy, established political players. However, in order to distinguish between the efficacy of appeals

targeted by campaigns at *subsets* of their supporters who are more likely to be receptive to messages like *Citizens United* appeals (for example, lower income voters on their contact list) and the efficacy of appeals targeted at *all* of the supporters of a particular candidate, a randomized experiment is still necessary.

9.2. Experimental Design

I conduct a field experiment sent out on March 29, 2013, the same day as my second online survey experiment that I will discuss later in this paper. The experiment was conducted in cooperation with Connecticut State Representative Gary Holder-Winfield's campaign in New Haven's 2013 mayoral race. For brief context, this race is New Haven's first open seat mayoral race since John DeStefano became mayor in 1993. At the time of the experiment, several candidates including Holder-Winfield had already declared their candidacies, and the total number of candidates already being talked about by the media was approximately six. The experiment email was sent out as part of a final push for Holder-Winfield to qualify for the New Haven Democracy Fund by the first campaign fundraising filing deadline. The Democracy Fund is a public financing program for New Haven mayoral candidates who agree to abide by certain campaign fundraising and spending limitations. In order to qualify for the Fund, a candidate must receive at least 200 contributions from separate registered voters in New Haven, and the contributions must be between $10 and $370. Fundraising ethics were a salient issue to those paying early attention to the mayoral race: Holder-Winfield's campaign platform strongly emphasized transparency in elections and the importance of fair campaign financing, and other candidates (e.g. New Haven Alderman Justin Elicker) already supported and had qualified for the Democracy Fund.

For Holder-Winfield, the experiment took place near the beginning of his campaign's organizing efforts, so the email contact list used was not an official voter list purchased by the campaign. Rather, it was a list of theoretically potential supporters (not only supporters who had opted into his email messages) put together by his campaign staff. The email went out on the Friday before the Sunday deadline for Democracy Fund qualification in time for the first fundraising filing. 370 people were randomly selected to receive the control email, and the remaining 365 people on the email list were assigned to receive the treatment. Below is the text of the email, with the treatment denoted in brackets (Holder-Winfield 2013). The subject of the email was "Standing for Clean Elections."

Dear Friends,

Last night I stood on the steps of City Hall and pledged myself, before the entire city, to a clean primary free from outside spending, special interests, and dirty tactics. I believe strongly that politics needs to come from the people up, not from the top down. I'm running to be a new kind of mayor for New Haven, and that takes running a new kind of campaign - a campaign rooted in the voices of the people of New Haven.

The people of New Haven have shown that they value clean elections.

They stood up for those values when they created the Democracy Fund, a landmark public financing program that ensures transparency and protects small donors from being overwhelmed by special interest spending. I'm proud to be participating in the Democracy Fund and standing for clean campaigns in this mayor's race.

Here's how it works: All donations are capped at $370 to make sure that campaigns are powered by regular people, not the super wealthy - and donations can only come from normal, breathing people (not companies or special interest groups). Donations of $25 or more are matched with $25 from the Fund and donations below $25 are matched 2-to-1, so donors get their voice amplified. And if we get enough local donors, there are grants the campaign receives to keep fighting.

We've participated in the Democracy Fund from the very beginning of our campaign, but we need your support to make it work. We have until the end of the month (Sunday!) to get local donations for this filing period and we need your help to get there.

<u>With your contribution of as little as $10 or as much as $370, you can show your support and stand for a change in the way politics works in this city.</u>

[After the Supreme Court case Citizens United, corporate special interests and third party groups can spend almost unlimited amounts of money on races and drown out normal voters. Now more than ever, clean election programs and small donations matter because they show that elections can't be bought by business interests or PACs that don't even need to disclose where their money comes from.]

We have the rare opportunity this year to provide the people of New Haven with a real choice in the direction that this city will go – and they need a race that is clean, that is fair, that is open, and that is honest. This is a great moment for this city, and we owe nothing less than our full devotion to a clean race we can be proud of, for ourselves and for our city.

Click here and donate today to help us show that a people-driven campaign can work!

Sincerely,
Gary Holder-Winfield
Leadership from the people, for a change.

After the email was sent, I tracked the number of clicks through links embedded in the email and the number of donations given through the email to compare the control and treatment.

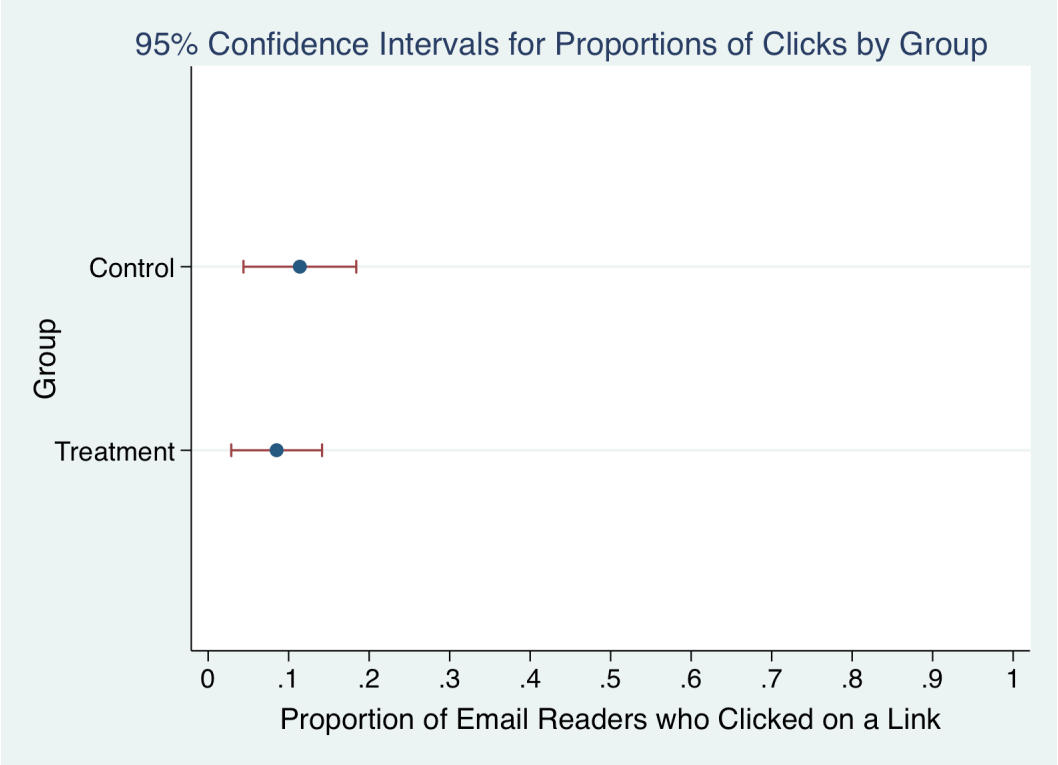
9.3. Results and Data Analysis

Unfortunately, this experiment suffered as a result of being sent out early in the mayoral campaign cycle. There was a high rate of unsuccessful attempts to deliver the emails as a result of bounces and bad addresses: 44 emails for the control group and 49 emails for the treatment group were not successfully delivered to their intended recipients. Furthermore, because the list was not an official voter list or a list of individuals who opted into receiving Holder-Winfield's campaign solicitations because of prior interest, there was a very low rate of email opens (which was not affected by the treatment because both emails had the same subject line, and the treatment was too far down in the body of the email to appear in the email preview). Only 79 control and 94 treatment emails were opened, leaving an extremely small sample size for comparison between those who saw the email and were treated and those who saw the email but

were not treated. Finally, because the email list was not created from a voter file, the email addresses were not linked to demographic information or political participation records.

Rather than conducting an analysis of intent to treat effects among all the email addresses that were assigned to receive emails, I focus on comparisons between those in the control and treatment groups who actually opened the email and therefore saw their assigned email text. This is because I expect no effect of the treatment on likelihood of opening the email in the first place, and the response rate to the email was extremely low due to an unfortunately faulty email list. While campaigns might be interested in the effect of the treatment message on their voter contact list in general, this case is exceptional because the choice of contact list was not necessarily determined by prior interest in the campaign. Furthermore, because emails are monetarily cost-free, there is minimal harm to sending out emails to individuals who will not open them. Therefore, it is reasonable to focus on the treatment effect among those who do open the email.

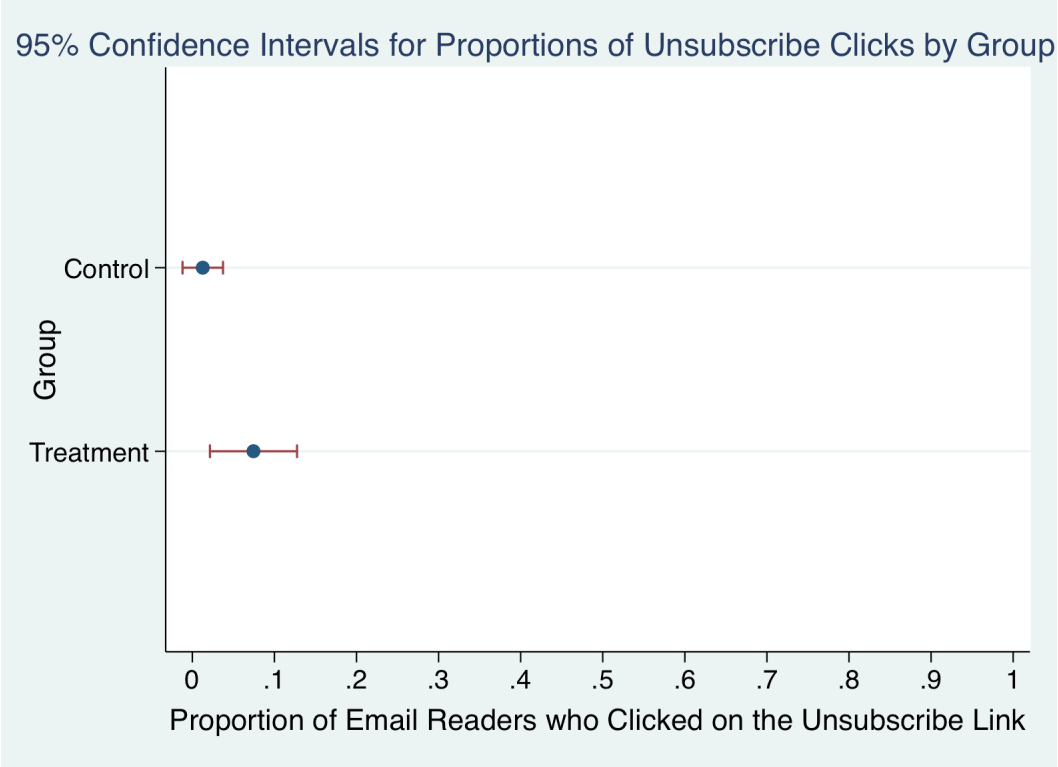
Figure 4. Confidence Intervals for Proportions of Email Readers that Click a Link by Group



Each email contained five links: first, a link to Gary Holder-Winfield's campaign website via clicking on the logo at the top of the email; second, a link to a donation page; third, another link to the donation page, with the treatment placed between the first and second donation links; fourth, a link to the campaign's Facebook page; and fifth, a link to unsubscribe from the email list. I begin by examining confidence intervals for the proportion of respondents in each group that clicked on any link in the email except for unsubscribe (Figure 4). The proportions of those who read the email and clicked on a link within it is low in both the control and treatment groups, and the difference in proportions between the two groups is clearly not statistically significant.

The starkest difference between the control and treatment groups is in the number of email readers who clicked the link to unsubscribe from emails: only one control group reader

Figure 5. Confidence Intervals for Proportions of Email Readers that Click the Unsubscribe Link by Group



clicked to unsubscribe, compared to seven treatment group readers. However, the number of unsubscribe clicks from both the control group and the treatment group is so small that the comparison is not very useful (Figure 5). A table of the complete results from this experiment can be found in Appendix B; given the lack of rich data due to such low response rates across the board, I do not include additional analysis here.

9.4. Discussion

The results from this field experiment are inconclusive—there was not enough data to reasonably draw inferences about the efficacy of the *Citizens United* appeal embedded in the campaign message. One rational conclusion might be that even among email recipients who were interested enough in Holder-Winfield's campaign to open the email, both messages focusing on the Democracy Fund and clean campaigns were not compelling appeals. This would be a surprising repudiation of the New Haven mayoral candidates' assumption that running on a "clean campaign" platform would bring in public support. However, this explanation must be contextualized in the fact that the experiment was not targeted at a well-designed list, so there may be a subset of voters that were not included in the experiment who could be significantly swayed by appeals about clean elections. Additionally, a clearer distinction between the control and treatment groups in a future experiment might reveal greater differences: the treatment paragraph was embedded in a fairly long email that was already about clean elections, so it is possible that even those who opened the email did not read the treatment portion at all or that the treatment was not strong enough to generate any significant results.

Therefore, the primary lessons from this portion of my research were in experimental design, demonstrating the methodological difficulties of successfully coordinating field experiments with political campaigns. Although the Holder-Winfield team was eager and

helpful, the email list used to conduct the experiment was simply insufficient. The greatest takeaway was the difficulty of convincing non-voluntary subscribers to campaign contact lists to actually open unsolicited campaign emails. Given the opportunity to replicate this experiment with another better-organized campaign, I believe it could yield interesting results. However, in another attempt to answer the question posed in this experiment of whether galvanizing *Citizens United* messages can be effective, I conduct a second survey experiment.

10. Experiment Three: The Effect of Citizens United Framing on Voter Attitudes Toward Political Participation

10.1. Theory and Hypotheses

The first experiment about cynicism conducted for this paper has two major components: first, it presents information about *Citizens United* in a neutral, factual manner; and second, it only tests the effect of that information on measures related to voter cynicism. However, information about the Supreme Court ruling and its effects is frequently not presented in this fashion to voters in the real world. Rather, voter exposure to *Citizens United* is much more likely to be slanted in some fashion, either arguing that the decision was positive or negative or in some way presenting a biased opinion. Furthermore, it is very possible that despite its lack of impact on generally high levels of voter cynicism, *Citizens United* may affect other voter attitudes, such as beliefs about the importance of political participation and affective feelings towards different actors in the political system.

This study extends the first experiment by investigating whether framing the impact of *Citizens United* differently causes voters to change their attitudes about political participation. I hypothesize that, as found in the previous study, neutral factual information about *Citizens United* will have little impact on voter attitudes. However, I believe that information about how

Citizens United has decreased voter efficacy and made individual contributions and votes irrelevant may cause voters to believe that participation in the political system is less worthwhile. On the other hand, I hypothesize that even when voters learn about the massive amount of independent expenditures from corporations, unions, and special interests after *Citizens United*, a frame that calls on voters to balance those interests with greater participation may lead them to believe that political participation is more important since the court ruling. Additionally, consistent with my findings from the first survey experiment, I hypothesize that subjects who report having previously donated to a political campaign will be more receptive than non-donors to the positive message emphasizing the importance of participation after *Citizens United* and may even interpret the negative and neutral treatments as reasons for greater voter involvement.

This survey also seeks to answer several other questions. First, I hypothesize that subjects will find negative arguments about *Citizens United* more compelling than positive arguments due to their high levels of political cynicism. Second, I expect levels of prior knowledge about *Citizens United* to be similar to levels found in the first survey if not slightly higher thanks to the continued dialogue about the ruling in the 2012 election cycle. I also hypothesize that disapproval of *Citizens United* and its effects on the electoral system will still be very high. Finally, in keeping with the findings of high cynicism, I hypothesize that respondents' favorability toward political players and satisfaction with the political process will be low.

10.2. Experimental Design

The design of this experiment is similar to the design of the first. The study was conducted on March 29, 2013 through April 6, 2013 using Amazon Mechanical Turk. 917 American subjects over the age of 18 were paid $0.50 to complete a seven to ten minute survey. They were randomly divided between a control and two treatment groups, with approximately

25% assigned to the control group and the remainder evenly split between the two treatments. The control group (n=236) received a neutral factual paragraph about *Citizens United*. The first treatment group (n=343) received the same neutral paragraph with a second paragraph about increased corporate and special interest involvement in politics, along with a third paragraph about decreased voter efficacy because of wealthy interests drowning out individual participation. The second treatment group (n=338) was given the same first two paragraphs as the first treatment, but the third paragraph centered on the idea that voter participation is more important than ever to balance wealthy special interests. The paragraphs read as follows:

Control Group
In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Negative Treatment
In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Corporations, unions, and special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections since 2010. Their independent expenditures (money spent independently of candidates and parties but often in support of a particular candidate or party) have grown substantially since *Citizens United,* making them more influential than ever.

As a result, some say that voters have less control over the political process and their grassroots campaign donations and votes matter less. As big contributions grow, they worry that wealthy special interests will make the voice of voters irrelevant no matter what they do. Critics have even accused *Citizens United* of creating corruption in the political system.

Positive Treatment
In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited

donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Corporations, unions, and special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections since 2010. Their independent expenditures (money spent independently of candidates and parties but often in support of a particular candidate or political party) have grown substantially since *Citizens United,* making them more influential than ever.

However, grassroots campaign donations from individual voters remain extremely important to candidates and political parties. In fact, some say that it is even more important now than before *Citizens United* for voters to actively participate in the political process by contributing to campaigns and voting. A number of candidates who were supported by big corporate money in the 2012 election cycle still failed to win, suggesting that other interests like unions and voters are able to balance the political process if they are motivated to do all they can.

Respondents began by answering a basic set of demographic questions and reading their assigned paragraphs. All groups were then asked to complete the same survey containing a set of questions about political participation, attitudes towards different actors in the political system, community involvement, political cynicism, the effects of *Citizens United*, and the persuasiveness of different arguments about voter behavior. The full survey can be found in Appendix C. As in the first survey, I attempt to check the attentiveness of survey respondents in three ways. First, a hidden timer was placed on the pages with the priming paragraphs to monitor how long participants spent reading. Second, the study contained two attention checks where participants were told to select a particular answer to the question if they were reading carefully (one was placed immediately after the priming paragraphs, and the other was placed near the end of the survey). Third, respondents were asked a basic factual question about the vignette they were required to read. 45 responses (not counted in the final total of 917) were rejected based on strict criteria to avoid biasing the sample against people who may have been answering the questions in good faith but made some honest mistakes: those who answered both attention checks incorrectly and filled in strings of neutrals on batteries and those who clearly failed to

read the paragraphs based on spending less than a few seconds on the page were removed from the sample.

10.3. Results and Data Analysis

I begin by generating post-stratification weights based on demographic information to adjust my sample to be representative of the U.S. population (Little 1993). Like the first survey experiment, I weight on age, gender, education, race and ethnicity, and household income. I report the weighted results unless otherwise noted. Next, before beginning my analysis, I check to see if observable covariates are balanced between the control and treatment groups in order to verify that randomization occurred properly. I use a multinomial logistic regression to predict assignment to each of the three groups as a function of the collected demographic variables and political interest measures. A likelihood ratio test with 72 degrees of freedom is insignificant (LR=76.13, p=0.3471). This suggests that randomization between the control and both treatment groups appears to have succeeded and implies that unobservable characteristics between the groups are also likely to be balanced, allowing causal inference for the treatment effects.

Question One: Does *Citizens United* Affect Voter Beliefs About the Importance of Political Participation?

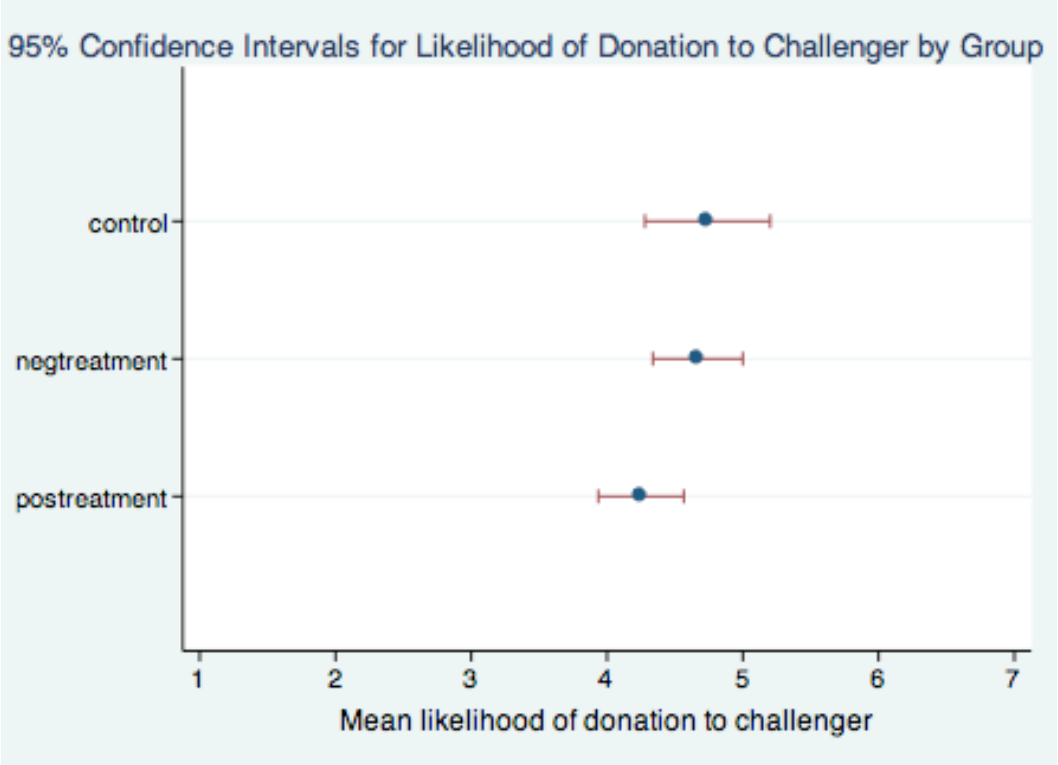
The first major question this experiment hopes to answer is whether different framing of *Citizens United*'s effects can alter people's beliefs about the importance of political participation. I measure this in several ways, beginning with a vignette to see how subjects respond to a scenario similar to a typical election campaign. The vignette is generic and does not contain any names in order to avoid creating unnecessary bias:

> Imagine there is a moderately important political race between an incumbent candidate who currently holds office and a challenger candidate looking to unseat him. You would like the challenger to win. Both candidates are fundraising for their campaigns. The incumbent is supported by wealthy special interests such as corporations, and there is also a great deal of third

party spending in support of his campaign. The challenger is mostly dependent on smaller contributions from individual voters. The amount of funds the incumbent has raised from his big donors exceeds the amount the challenger has raised from his small donors, allowing the incumbent to spend more on his campaign efforts.

After reading the vignette, respondents were asked, "In the scenario you just read about, how likely would you be to contribute to the challenger's campaign?" Before this question, however, an attention and comprehension check was asked to test respondents' understanding of one of the main points of the vignette, that the incumbent was supported by larger donors: "According to the paragraph, which candidate is supported by wealthier donors?" Reassuringly, 94% of respondents correctly selected the incumbent. Subjects' likelihood of contributing to the challenger's campaign was coded on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing "very unlikely," 4 representing "neutral," and 7 representing "very likely." The means for each group are presented below (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Confidence Intervals for Mean Likelihood of Donation to Challenger by Group



For all groups, the mean likelihood of making a contribution to the challenger candidate is between "neutral" and "somewhat likely." I run a simple regression of likelihood to donate to the challenger (Y_i) for each individual *i* on assignment to each of the treatment groups, which can be written as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negativetreatment_i + \beta_2 positivetreatment_i + u_i,$$

where u_i represents the unobserved disturbance term. The control is the reference group in the model above (results displayed in Table 4), but I also calculate the difference between the negative treatment and positive treatment groups. This finds significant but surprising results at the α=0.10 level: in comparison to the control group, assignment to the positive treatment predicts a 0.49 point decrease in likelihood of donation to the challenger (p=0.086), and in comparison to the negative treatment group, assignment to the positive treatment predicts a 0.42 point decrease in likelihood of donation to challenger (p=0.073).

Table 4. Regression of Donation Likelihood on Treatment Groups

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.0717	-0.104
	(-0.25)	(-0.74)
postreatment	-0.490+	-0.133
	(-1.72)	(-0.95)
Constant	4.740***	4.538***
	(20.16)	(42.23)
Observations	917	917

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

This finding is the opposite of my hypothesis that a positive message about the importance of voter participation after *Citizens United* would increase the likelihood that subjects would believe in the importance of and engage in participation. Possible reasons for this result are discussed later in the paper, when I analyze which arguments subjects found convincing about voter participation post-*Citizens United*—I discover that subjects find negative arguments

about the importance of voter participation after *Citizens United* to be more universally compelling than positive arguments about voter participation. Positive arguments can be persuasive if framed correctly but are otherwise considered weak. It is worth noting, however, that none of the coefficients for assignment to each treatment group are significant when the regression is unweighted. The significant results may be due to the relatively small sample size of each experimental group and should be replicated for credibility.

I continue by checking for differential effects of the negative and positive treatments on various subgroups, examining whether there are interaction effects for partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, prior voter registration, prior voting, prior donation, and prior volunteering on a campaign. The purpose of this is to test the hypothesis that individuals who are more politically interested and have engaged in politics before are more likely to believe the positive appeal and less likely to believe the negative appeal than other subjects. For subgroup analysis, I analyze a series of regressions of the following form:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 Z_i + \beta_4 Z{*}negtreatment_i + \beta_5 Z{*}postreatment_i + u_i,$$

where Y represents likelihood of donation to the challenger, Z represents partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and β_4 and β_5 represent the interactions between Z and each of the treatments (Table 13, Appendix E). Tables of the results for all subgroup analyses in Experiment Three can be found in Appendix E, and sample statistics for the covariates tested for interaction effects are provided in Appendix F. I only describe significant findings in the body of the paper for brevity. For clarity in interpreting the substantive meaning of the interaction effects, I also provide relevant values for the negative and positive treatment effects for the base groups (β_1 and β_2). Although I offer some interpretations of interaction effects for each question, given the large

number of subgroups I test, it is likely that some significant findings are the result of random chance. Therefore, I am wary of drawing definitive conclusions based on the interactions found for individual questions and reserve the strongest conclusions for the holistic discussion of this experiment's results in order to focus more broadly on patterns found for the treatment effects across questions.

I find a marginally significant effect for the interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=-0.57) and prior volunteering for a campaign, with a coefficient of 1.14 on the interaction term (p=0.096). This indicates that among those who were politically engaged enough to have volunteered for a campaign before (the greatest demonstrated commitment to political participation that was measured in the survey), the message aimed at galvanizing voter participation after *Citizens United* was more convincing, perhaps because volunteers for campaigns clearly place a high value on participation. The unweighted result is opposite, however, with a significant interaction effect of -0.70 (p=0.084) between volunteering and the negative treatment (β_1=-0.02), suggesting that previous volunteers who received the negative treatment were more convinced not to donate in the vignette scenario than people who received the negative treatment but had not volunteered before. Unweighted, I also find a significant interaction between age and assignment to the negative treatment (β_1=-0.78): the interaction effect is 0.02, meaning that for every year increase in age, the treatment effect of the negative treatment increases by 0.02 (p=0.08). This interaction, however, is substantively small: in order for the treatment effect to increase by one point on the seven-point scale, age would have to increase by 50 years. The result of this interaction is that as subjects age, the treatment effect becomes closer to 0. This fits a narrative in which older individuals have already been exposed to

enough information that additional negative information does not marginally increase their cynicism and cause them to care less about supporting campaigns.

The obvious question is if *Citizens United* does not strongly affect the likelihood of donation to the challenger, what does? I conduct a multivariate regression including demographic and political variables to investigate. These findings are merely observational and not causal because demographic and political characteristics are not randomly assigned to subjects. However, the wealth of data collected in the survey allows us to begin examining correlations between certain characteristics and beliefs about political participation. I hypothesize that individuals who are more interested in politics and have previously demonstrated an interest in politics by registering to vote, voting, volunteering for a campaign, or donating to a campaign will be more likely to want to donate to the challenger in the vignette.

The regression model is

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 partisan_i + \ldots + \beta_{19} volunteered_i + u_i,$$

where Y is likelihood of donation to challenger, and the regression includes the treatments and all the covariates in the full Table 5. The results presented in Table 5 are truncated to display only the treatments and significant results here for brevity. The entire regression table for this and other similarly shortened tables in this section of the paper can be found in Appendix D. The coefficients on political interest and prior donation are significant in both models, while age and white are significant only in the weighted model and education, male, Hispanic, and registered to vote are significant only in the unweighted model. Focusing on the results robust to both models (and using the magnitudes from the weighted model), a one-unit increase in political interest predicts a 0.489 point increase in likelihood to donate to challenger. Having previously donated to a political campaign also predicts a 0.683 point increase in likelihood to donate to challenger.

Both of these findings are intuitive, as individuals who are more interested in politics and have previously been willing to donate to a campaign in real life can be expected to express a greater willingness to donate to the challenger in this hypothetical vignette.

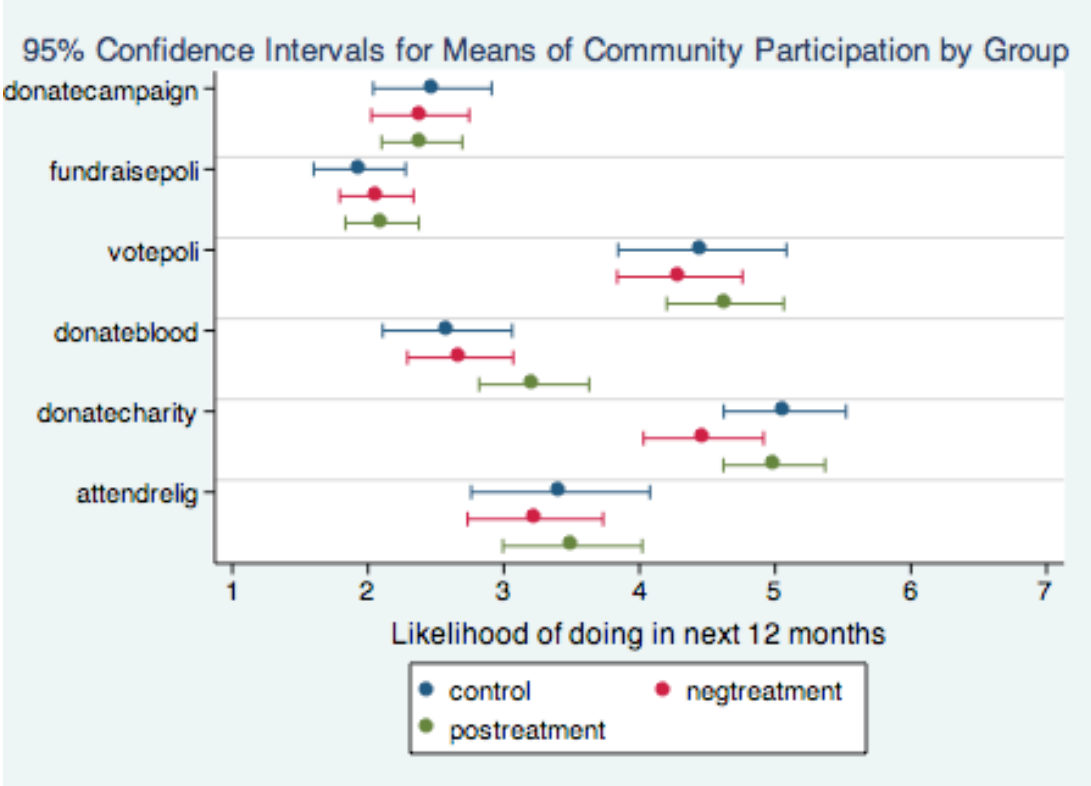
Table 5. Regression of Donation to Challenger Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.0840	-0.105
	(-0.30)	(-0.78)
postreatment	-0.424	-0.181
	(-1.56)	(-1.34)
education	0.00908	-0.0899*
	(0.11)	(-2.02)
politicalinterest	0.489**	0.457***
	(2.97)	(4.72)
age	0.0136+	-0.00301
	(1.80)	(-0.63)
male	-0.0287	-0.278*
	(-0.12)	(-2.57)
white	-0.648+	-0.219
	(-1.96)	(-0.91)
hispanic	-0.389	-0.459+
	(-1.10)	(-1.71)
registeredvoter	0.291	0.497**
	(0.89)	(2.69)
donated	0.683**	1.096***
	(2.91)	(6.82)
Constant	3.386***	3.602***
	(4.82)	(8.65)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Next, I examine another question about respondents' self-reported likelihood to engage in several types of community participation in the next 12 months including donating to a political campaign, fundraising for a political cause, and voting in a political election. Other community activities such as donating to a charity are included as comparisons for non-political participation. These questions are measured on the same scale as the vignette, with 1 indicating "very unlikely" and 7 indicating "very likely" (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Confidence Intervals for Mean Likelihood of Community Participation Measures by Group



The top three measures on the graph are political: donating to a campaign, fundraising for a political cause, and voting in a political election. The bottom three are non-political: donating blood, donating to a charity, and attending a religious institution. Both measures related to contributing financially to political causes (donating and fundraising) receive the lowest likelihood, between unlikely and somewhat unlikely. Respondents reported a higher likelihood of voting in an election, between neutral and somewhat likely. Among the actions measured, likelihood of voting is only exceeded by likelihood of donating to a charity. Neither the negative nor the positive treatments appear to have a significant effect on respondents' self-reported likelihood of engaging in any type of political participation, although the means for voting, donating blood, donating to charity, and attending a religious institution are higher for the positive treatment group than the negative treatment group.

Regressions of these community participation measures on assignment to treatment groups find significant coefficients for *donateblood* and *donatecharity*. The model used for this series of regressions can be written as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negativetreatment_i + \beta_2 positivetreatment_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* represents *donatecampaign, fundraisepoli, votepoli, donateblood, donatecharity,* and *attendrelig*. I also estimate the model with *negativetreatment* as the excluded base group in order to compare the negative and positive treatment groups directly. Assignment to the positive treatment group predicts a 0.64 point increase in likelihood of donating blood in the next twelve months compared to the control group (p=0.046) and a 0.54 point increase in comparison to the negative treatment group (p=0.058). Assignment to the negative treatment group predicts a 0.60 point decrease in likelihood of donating to a charity compared to the control group (p=0.063) and a 0.52 point decrease compared to the positive treatment group (p=0.079). These results are rather strange because I did not hypothesize that the political participation priming treatments would affect voter attitudes towards non-political community participation (the non-political measures were included in the survey merely for comparisons to see how relatively important subjects considered political participation). Both effects are in the same direction, however, with members of the negative treatment group less enthusiastic about community participation than members of the positive treatment group. Perhaps this suggests that the treatments did not affect voters' beliefs about political participation because voters are very cynical about politics, yet they were moved by the civic duty appeal to care generally about community participation that they consider more worthwhile, such as donating blood and donating to charity. However, this hypothesis requires more testing for confirmation, as the results are not robust in the unweighted model.

In subgroup analysis to see if the treatment has differential effects on subjects' likelihood of community participation, I find several results using the linear regression model

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 Z_i + \beta_4 Z{*}negtreatment_i + \beta_5 Z{*}postreatment_i + u_i,$$

where Y represents *donatecampaign, fundraisepoli,* and *votepoli*, Z represents partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and β_4 and β_5 represent the interactions between Z and each of the treatments. First, for the dependent variable of likelihood of donating to a campaign (Table 14, Appendix E), the interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=1.14) and political knowledge is -0.63 (p=0.06), suggesting that as political knowledge increases, the effect of the positive treatment decreases. The same holds true for political interest: the interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=1.37) and political interest is -0.74 (p=0.027). Being a registered voter also has a negative interaction effect of -0.94 (p=0.073) with the positive treatment (β_2=0.73). When the data is unweighted, there is still a negative interaction between political knowledge (-0.29, p=0.063) and the positive treatment (β_2=0.85) as well as political interest (-0.49, p=0.011) and the positive treatment (β_2=1.16). This implies generally that voters who are more knowledgeable about and interested in politics may find the positive treatment less convincing or simply less important to their decision whether to donate because they prioritize other considerations. In the unweighted regression only, there is also a negative interaction (-0.42, p=0.031) between political interest and the negative treatment (β_1=0.86).

Second, I look at the dependent variable of fundraising for a political cause (Table 15, Appendix E). Here, I find interaction effects for both treatment groups with partisanship. Partisanship is measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing strong Republican and 7 representing strong Democrat. There is a -0.23 interaction between partisanship and both the

negative and positive treatments (p=0.28 and p=0.039 respectively; β_1=1.21, β_2=1.26), meaning that becoming more Democratic decreases the effects of both treatments. The interaction between being a registered voter and the positive treatment (β_2=0.86) is -0.78 (p=0.063). The unweighted interactions for partisanship are not robust, while being a registered voter maintains its interaction effect, with an interaction of -0.61 (p=0.075) between the negative treatment (β_1=0.52) and voter registration. This finding is consistent with the results for the donating to a campaign variable, with voters who demonstrated previous interest in politics by registering to vote less affected by either of the treatments because they have already decided on the importance of political participation. Unweighted, there is an interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=-0.63) and education, with a one-unit increase in education corresponding with a 0.18 point increase in the effect of the treatment on likelihood of fundraising (p=0.037). There are also interactions of 0.02 between both treatments and age (p=0.064 for negative, p=0.056 for positive; β_1=-0.61, β_2=-0.52). These results substantively mean that increases in age and education make the treatment effects move toward 0, again aligning with the hypothesis that those with greater information and experience discount information about *Citizens United*.

Finally, I examine the last political community participation dependent variable, likelihood of voting in a political election (Table 16, Appendix E). There is an interaction between the negative treatment and income: each one-unit increase in income decreases the negative treatment effect (β_1=1.17) by 0.21 points (p=0.052). The interactions between both treatments and political knowledge are also negative and significant, with -0.81 (p=0.038) and -0.79 (p=0.047) as the coefficients for the negative (β_1=1.81) and positive treatments (β_2=2.09) respectively. Furthermore, each one-point increase in political interest decreases the positive treatment effect (β_2=2.16) by 1.01 points (p=0.031), and the interaction effect between being a

registered voter and receiving the positive treatment (β_2=1.81) is -1.87 (p=0.068), while the interaction between previously donating and receiving the positive treatment (β_2=0.56) is -1.41 (p=0.052). Unweighted, income's interaction with the negative treatment (β_1=0.71) is still significant (-0.13, p=0.022), but the other interaction effects do not hold. Overall, between the three dependent variables in this question, it appears that increased political knowledge, political interest, and previous political participation mitigate the effects of both treatments.

I conclude analysis of this question by examining covariates to see what predicts greater likelihood of the political participation measures included in this portion of the survey, again emphasizing that these results are not causal due to the lack of randomization of covariates. I run a series of linear regression models that follow the form

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 partisan_i + \ldots + \beta_{19} volunteered_i + u_i,$$

where Y is *donatecampaign, fundraisepoli,* and *votepoli*, and the regression includes the treatments and all the covariates in the full tables in Appendix D.

Table 6. Regression of Donation Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.212	-0.0241
	(-0.88)	(-0.22)
postreatment	-0.165	0.0722
	(-0.73)	(0.66)
income	0.0513*	0.0416**
	(2.05)	(2.86)
politicalinterest	0.679***	0.480***
	(4.54)	(6.08)
nativeam	1.324+	-0.144
	(1.81)	(-0.45)
donated	1.649***	1.364***
	(5.92)	(10.40)
Constant	0.491	0.922**
	(0.71)	(2.71)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The significant results for likelihood of donating to a campaign in the next twelve months are presented in Table 6. Income, political interest, and prior donation to a campaign are significant in both the weighted and unweighted models. A one-unit increase in income (usually measured in $10,000 increments; see Appendix C) predicts a 0.05 point increase in likelihood of donating. A one-unit increase in political interest predicts a 0.68 point increase in likelihood of donating, and having previously donated to a campaign predicts a 1.65 point increase in likelihood of donating to a campaign in the next year. These results line up with reasonable hypotheses that those with higher incomes and therefore more financial freedom are more likely to donate to campaigns, and those who are more interested in politics and have previously donated to campaigns are more likely to donate as well.

Table 7. Regression of Fundraising Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.0401	-0.0511
	(0.21)	(-0.46)
postreatment	0.183	0.0723
	(1.02)	(0.66)
politicalinterest	0.565***	0.439***
	(3.94)	(5.57)
age	-0.00624	-0.00761+
	(-1.25)	(-1.96)
hispanic	-0.400+	-0.458*
	(-1.71)	(-2.06)
nativeam	2.210*	-0.0305
	(2.36)	(-0.10)
mixedrace	0.722*	0.111
	(1.98)	(0.28)
donated	0.922***	0.664***
	(4.05)	(5.06)
volunteered	-0.0366	0.291*
	(-0.14)	(2.14)
Constant	1.116*	1.576***
	(2.00)	(4.62)
Observations	853	853

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7 examines the regression of likelihood of fundraising for a political cause in the next year on the treatments and covariates. The coefficients on political interest, Hispanic, and previous donation are significant in both models. The findings for political interest and previous donation are unsurprising for the aforementioned logic, but the result for Hispanic is unexpected. The marginal significance of the coefficient, however, suggests that it may be simply the result of random probability when so many covariates are included in the model; however, if

Table 8. Regression of Voting Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.481	-0.0515
	(-1.44)	(-0.32)
postreatment	-0.181	0.0230
	(-0.59)	(0.14)
income	0.00405	0.0360+
	(0.11)	(1.68)
education	0.209*	0.144**
	(2.08)	(2.68)
poliknow	0.394**	0.138
	(2.64)	(1.57)
politicalinterest	0.917***	0.757***
	(3.75)	(6.50)
male	-0.286	-0.332*
	(-1.04)	(-2.54)
asian	-1.171*	-0.284
	(-1.97)	(-0.85)
nativeam	1.765*	0.0796
	(2.11)	(0.17)
registeredvoter	0.222	0.725**
	(0.58)	(3.26)
voted	0.826*	1.113***
	(2.14)	(6.13)
volunteered	0.0572	0.429*
	(0.13)	(2.14)
Constant	0.679	0.185
	(0.86)	(0.37)
Observations	859	859

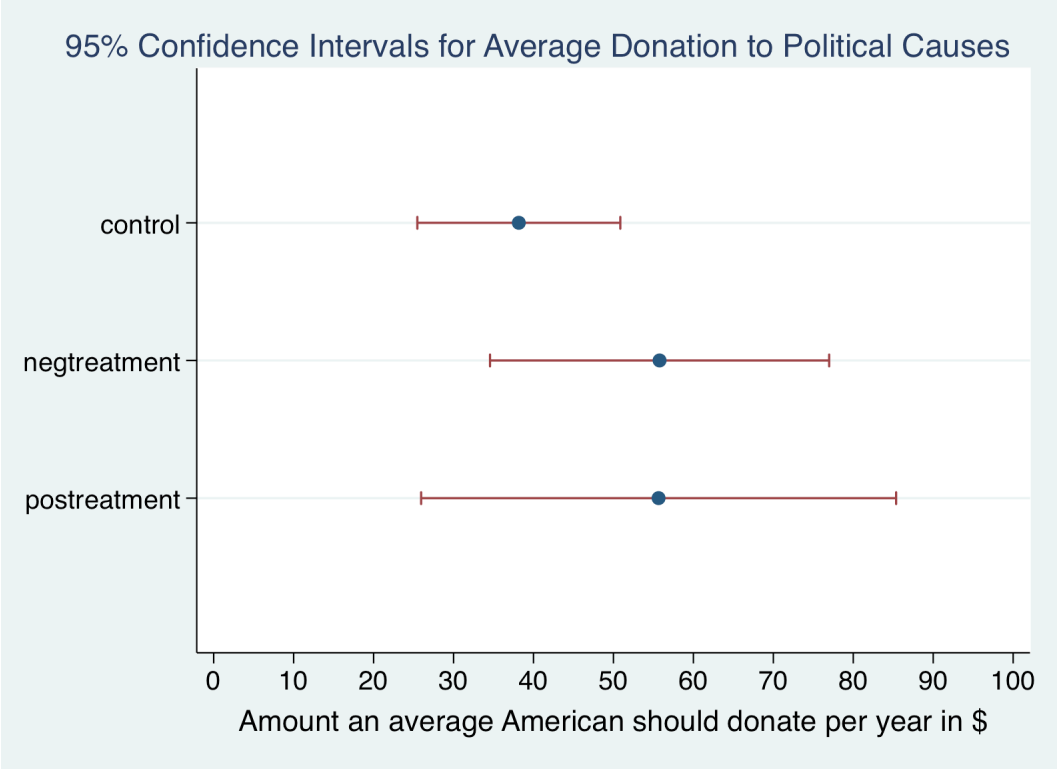
t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

replication confirmed this result it might suggest some effect of Hispanic discouragement with fundraising for political causes.

Next, the regression of likelihood of voting on the treatments and covariates is provided in Table 8. The coefficients on education, political interest, and previous voting are significant in both models, and political knowledge is significant in the weighted model only. A one-unit increase in education (categories of education are found in Appendix C) predicts a 0.21 point increase in likelihood of voting in the next year. A one-point increase in political interest predicts a 0.92 point increase in likelihood of voting in the next year, and previously voting predicts a 0.83 point increase in likelihood of voting again. All of these effects are in the intuitive direction, as the more educated generally turn out at higher levels, and the more politically interested and prior voters also tend to turn out more.

I also asked respondents to consider how much they think the average American should contribute to political campaigns each year. I calculate the means for each group's responses, including all responses up to $1000, which excludes only 6 extreme outliers that are fairly evenly distributed between the three groups (Figure 8). Interestingly, while the difference is not statistically significant (confirmed with the regression of *avgdonate* on treatment assignment), the average amount for the control group is less than $40, while the averages for both treatment groups are around $55. This difference may be because the additional information provided to both treatment groups included the fact that "corporations, unions, and special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections since 2010" and have grown in influence because of their independent expenditures. While the control group learned that unlimited spending and contributions to Super PACs were legalized, they were not given a specific amount like "hundreds of millions of dollars" to consider. This potential difference

Figure 8. Confidence Intervals for How Much an Average American should Contribute to Political Causes per Year



would be compelling to investigate in future studies, as it may be possible that subjects are affected by the treatments when they consider how the American electorate *as a whole* should behave rather than just how they *themselves* should behave (this study's vignette and community participation questions focus on how each subject would behave himself, rather than how others should behave).

When I conduct observational analysis of what factors predicts higher responses for how much an average American should donate to political causes per year using the model

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 partisan_i + \ldots + \beta_{19} volunteered_i + u_i,$$

I find that more informed individuals tend to give higher estimates for how much an average American should donate to political causes per year (Table 9).

Table 9. Regression of How Much an Average American should Donate per Year on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.490	-0.0440
	(-1.47)	(-0.27)
postreatment	-0.214	0.0176
	(-0.70)	(0.11)
education	0.223*	0.146**
	(2.21)	(2.70)
poliknow	0.430**	0.151+
	(2.80)	(1.69)
politicalinterest	0.908***	0.752***
	(3.67)	(6.42)
male	-0.288	-0.323*
	(-1.05)	(-2.46)
asian	-1.079+	-0.240
	(-1.80)	(-0.72)
registeredvoter	0.184	0.699**
	(0.48)	(3.12)
voted	0.881*	1.143***
	(2.23)	(6.19)
volunteered	0.0354	0.429*
	(0.08)	(2.14)
Constant	0.651	0.157
	(0.83)	(0.31)
Observations	853	853

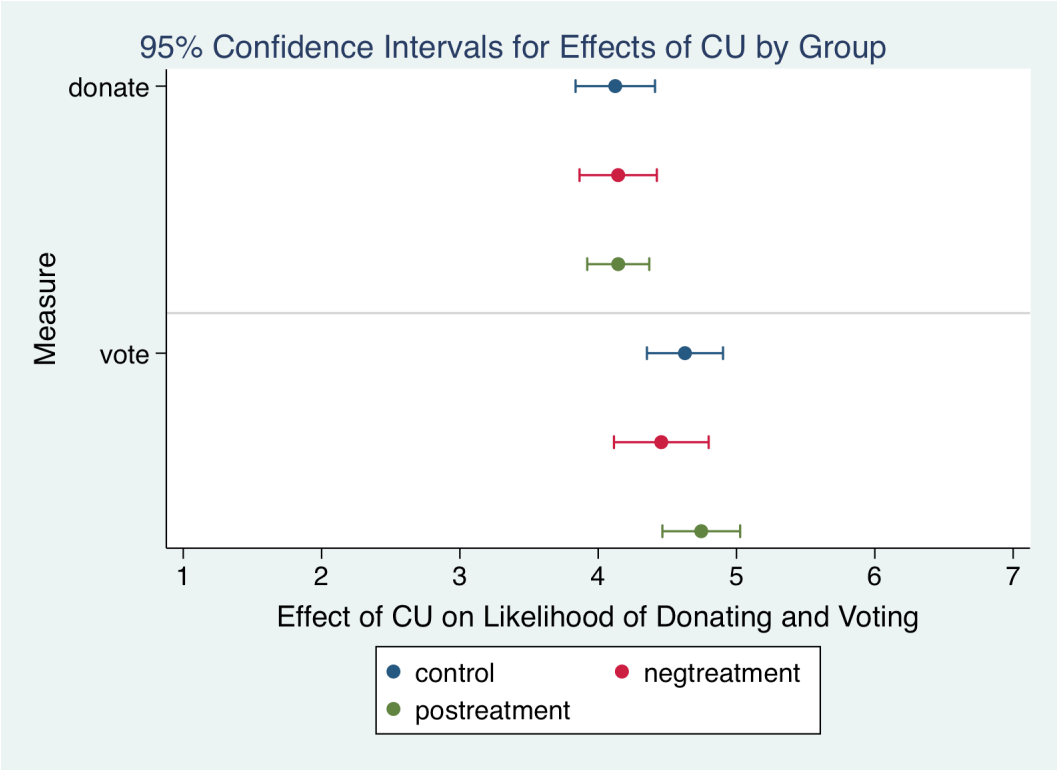
t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Increased education and political knowledge both predict higher answers for how much Americans should give. Additionally, greater political interest and previously voting also predict higher estimates. These findings trace the narrative that individuals who think about and participate more in the political process believe others should do so as well, although the analysis is not conclusively causal because these covariates are not randomly assigned.

I finish examining the question of whether the treatments affect subjects' belief in the importance of participation by asking several direct questions about how they think about *Citizens United*'s relationship to voter participation. I ask respondents if learning about *Citizens*

United makes them more or less likely to donate to a political campaign and more or less likely to vote. These questions are coded so that 1 represents "much less likely" and 7 represents "much more likely." The graph for mean responses by group is presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Confidence Intervals for How Citizens United Affects Likelihood to Donate and Vote



It is notable that none of the means are below "no effect," and the means for *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood of voting is between "no effect" and "somewhat more likely." This contradicts the idea that *Citizens United* will depress voter participation because voters are dissatisfied with their lack of efficacy. Rather, voters are either unmoved or slightly more inclined to donate or vote when considering information about *Citizens United*. Additionally, regression analysis finds significant differences between the positive and negative treatment groups for *Citizens United*'s effect on both likelihood of voting and likelihood of donating when the data is unweighted. I run the linear regression model

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negativetreatment_i + \beta_2 positivetreatment_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* is the effect of *Citizens United* on likelihood of donating and the effect of *Citizens United* on likelihood of voting, and I also run a model with the negative treatment group as the base group. For donating, assignment to the positive treatment group predicts a 0.24 point increase in *Citizens United*'s effect on subjects' likelihood to donate to a campaign compared to the negative treatment group (p=0.008). For voting, assignment to the positive treatment predicts a 0.18 point increase compared to the negative group (p=0.088). Substantively, these differences are small, which is likely why they disappear when the data is weighted. Even so, these are the first significant results from the study that directly corroborate the original hypothesis that the positive treatment would make subjects believe voter participation is more important after *Citizens United*.

There are several differences between subgroups for this question. I use a series of regressions of the form

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 Z_i + \beta_4 Z{*}negtreatment_i + \beta_5 Z{*}postreatment_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* represents *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood of donating and voting, *Z* represents partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and β_4 and β_5 represent the interactions between *Z* and each of the treatments. First, as displayed in Table 17 in Appendix E, the interaction between *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood of donating and income is significant for both the positive treatment (0.08, p=0.094; β_2=-0.50) and the negative treatment (0.10, p=0.03; β_1=-0.59). When unweighted, however, the income effects are no longer significant. There is a significant unweighted interaction between partisanship and the negative treatment, with a one-unit increase in partisanship (move towards Democratic) predicting a 0.11 point (p=0.048) increase in the treatment effect (β_1=-0.61). Additionally, the interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=-

0.01) and having volunteered is -0.51 (p=0.08). These findings are not very conclusive because none hold for both the weighted and unweighted models.

Second, as shown in Table 18 (Appendix E), the interaction between *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood of voting and education is significant for the positive treatment (0.32, p=0.014; β_2=-1.00). There is also a significant interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=-0.88) and registering to vote (0.80, p=0.084) as well as a significant interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=-0.58) and prior voting (0.78, p=0.098). Unweighted, the interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=-0.59) and prior voting remains significant (0.74, p=0.009). Consistent with subgroup analyses for previous political participation questions, this indicates that prior voters were less swayed by the treatment. Intuitively, prior voters were almost certainly aware of the influence of corporations, unions, and other political actors when they voted but chose to vote anyway; therefore, *Citizens United* shifting the balance of electoral influence further away from voters is unlikely to be a tipping point for their beliefs about voting.

I then run multivariate regressions of *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood to donate in order to see if any of the standard political interest and participation variables predict people's reactions to the court ruling. This analysis is purely observational and intended to investigate correlations rather than causal effects of the covariates. I use the model

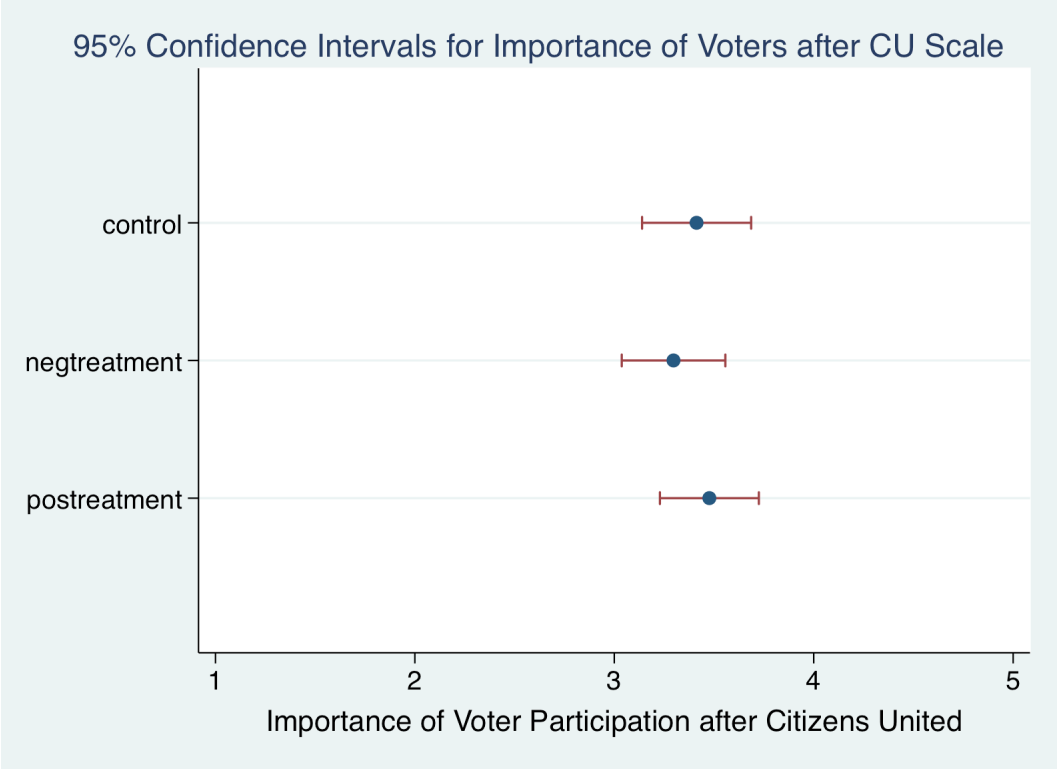
$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 partisan_i + \ldots + \beta_{19} volunteered_i + u_i,$$

where Y is *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood to donate and vote, and the regression includes the treatments and all the standard covariates (see tables in Appendix D). For the effect of *Citizens United* on likelihood of donating, I find that only previous donation is significant in both the weighted and unweighted models so I do not show the table for brevity. Previously donating predicts a 0.96 point increase in the effect of *Citizens United* on likelihood to donate, and the

finding is significant at the p<0.001 level. None of the coefficients are significant in both models for the voting version of this question.

Finally, I also ask respondents to rate on a five-point scale whether they believe since *Citizens United*, voter participation is a hopeless cause (1) or voter participation is more important than ever to counterbalance corporate influence (5). The difference between the groups is again insignificant, but voters lean more toward agreeing with the statement that "it is more important than ever for voters to donate to political campaigns and vote to counterbalance the influence of corporations" than "voter participation is a hopeless cause" (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Confidence Intervals for Scale of the Importance of Voter Participation Post-Citizens United



For subgroup analysis, I analyze a series of regressions of the form

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 Z_i + \beta_4 Z{*}negtreatment_i + \beta_5 Z{*}postreatment_i + u_i,$$

where *Y* represents rating of the importance of voter participation post-*Citizens United*, *Z* represents partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and β_4 and β_5 represent the interactions between *Z* and each of the treatments (Table 19, Appendix E). I discover a barely significant interaction between the negative treatment and age when the data is unweighted, with a one year increase in age predicting a 0.02 point (p=0.093) increase in the treatment effect (β_1=-0.53). I also find a significant interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=0.03) and having volunteered (-0.64, p=0.035), but this also appears only in the unweighted model. I then examine observationally what covariates do predict subjects' beliefs about the importance of voter participation after *Citizens United* using a multivariate regression of the importance of voter participation scale on the treatments and covariates, but I do not find any significant coefficients.

Overall, there is evidence to support the intuitive hypothesis that individuals who have greater political interest and a record of political participation through previous donations and voting are more likely to believe that political participation is important. Moreover, despite the fact that many voters self-report that they themselves are unlikely to donate to a political campaign or fundraise in the near future, they seem to believe that participation in general is valuable. When they are asked more abstractly about whether they would theoretically donate to an underfunded challenger candidate or how much an average American should contribute to political causes, they indicate that some amount of donation is imperative. They also believe such participation is more important after the Supreme Court ruling rather than a hopeless cause. However, the findings from my experiment imply that regardless of how *Citizens United* is framed, it has little effect on the importance voters attach to political participation. Some analyses suggest that individuals with higher levels of political interest and political knowledge

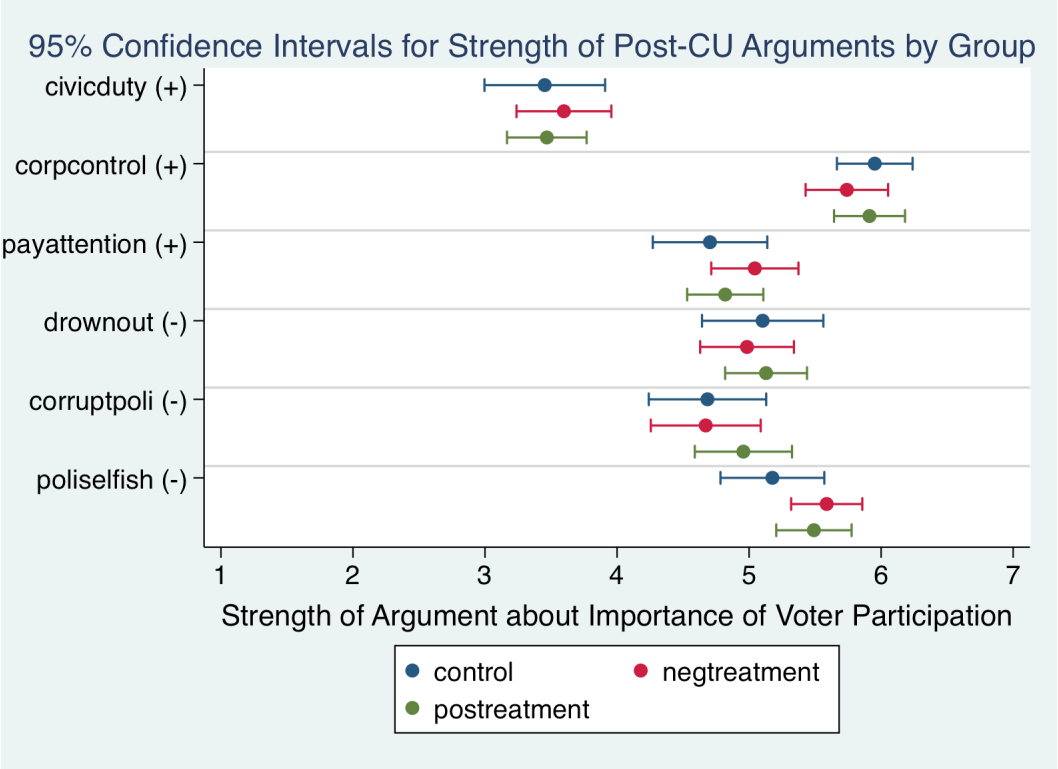
are more likely to discount both positive and negative messages about *Citizens United* because they have already formed strong opinions about political participation. On the other hand, when directly questioned about how *Citizens United* affects their likelihood of donating and voting, subjects answer that it marginally increases their likelihood to engage in political participation. This finding suggests that when directly and openly guided to think about if *Citizens United* should increase or decrease voter participation, they choose increase despite subconscious priming of that same message being too weak to significantly alter their opinions.

Question Two: What Arguments About *Citizens United*'s Impacts on Voter Participation Do Americans Believe?

The second question I aim to answer with this experiment is what arguments about *Citizens United*'s impact on voters are convincing to subjects. Subjects were presented arguments about "why voters might be more excited about contributing to political campaigns" and arguments about "why voters might be less excited about contributing to political campaigns" after *Citizens United*. They were then asked to rate the strength of each argument on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing "very weak," 7 representing "very strong," and 4 representing "neither weak nor strong." Mean ratings of each argument are presented in Figure 11, with the three positive arguments in the top half and the three negative arguments in the bottom half. The full text of each argument can be found in Appendix C.

Notably, the argument that "voters have a civic duty to donate in order to balance the influence of wealthy special interests" was the only argument that was rated below neutral as "somewhat weak." This may explain the lack of effect for the positive priming treatment, as subjects did not find the civic duty framing of *Citizens United* convincing. However, the argument rated as strongest was "corporations should not be able to control the political

Figure 11. Confidence Intervals for Strength of Arguments about the Importance of Voter Participation Post-Citizens United



process," suggesting high levels of discomfort with the level of influence that corporations have in the American political system—a finding consistent with the high cynicism reported in the first experiment in this paper. The remaining arguments were all rated between neutral and strong, with the consistency of "somewhat strong" ratings for the negative arguments compared to the variation for positive arguments suggesting that voters are more easily accepting of cynical views about voter participation. Framed correctly, voters may be convinced by arguments aiming to use *Citizens United* to galvanize participation, but not all optimistic language is viewed as persuasive.

The experimental groups do not appear to differ substantially, but I conduct a series of linear regressions to check for significant differences. I run the model

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negativetreatment_i + \beta_2 positivetreatment_i + u_i,$$

where Y represents ratings of the strength of each of the six arguments and u_i represents the unobserved disturbance term. Regression finds a barely significant coefficient on assignment to the negative treatment for the negative "politicians are selfish" argument: assignment to the negative treatment group predicts a 0.41 point increase in belief about the strength of the argument in comparison to the control group (p=0.091). Unweighted regression finds that assignment to the positive treatment group predicts a 0.27 point increase in rating of the strength of the positive "civic duty" argument compared to the control group (p=0.065). It also finds a marginally significant coefficient for the negative "small donations" argument, where assignment to the negative condition predicts a 0.23 point increase in rating of the strength of that argument compared to the control (p=0.098). Finally, I find a significant effect for the negative "politicians are selfish" argument in the unweighted regression as well, with assignment to the negative treatment predicting a 0.21 point increase in rating of the argument's strength compared to the control (p=0.067). These results are all in the expected direction, where assignment to the negative treatment leads subjects to find negative arguments more convincing and assignment to the positive treatment leads them to find positive arguments more convincing.

In subgroup analysis, I use a series of models of the form

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 Z_i + \beta_4 Z{*}negtreatment_i + \beta_5 Z{*}postreatment_i + u_i,$$

where Y represents ratings of the strength of each argument, Z represents partisanship, income, education, political knowledge, political interest, age, registered to vote, voted, donated, and volunteered for a campaign, and β_4 and β_5 represent the interactions between Z and each of the treatments. I find a significant interaction effect for the positive "civic duty" argument (Table 20, Appendix E) between the negative treatment (β_1=-0.60) and income (0.13, p=0.084). For the positive "corporate control" argument (Table 21, Appendix E), I find an interaction effect of 0.70

(p=0.041) between the positive treatment (β_2=-1.51) and political interest. I also find a significant interaction effect of 1.14 (p=0.05) between the negative treatment (β_1=-1.23) and registering to vote, as well as a significant interaction of 0.85 (p=0.088) between the negative treatment (β_1=-0.86) and having voted. Unweighted, the political interest effect does not hold, but the interactions between the negative treatment and registering to vote (0.72, p=0.042; β_1=-0.78) and having voted (0.67, p=0.017; β_1=-0.67) remain significant. These results suggest that among those who previously registered to vote and voted, reading the negative treatment had no impact on their ratings of the strength of the corporate control argument as the interaction causes the treatment effect to approach 0. Their previous commitment to political participation may signal that they already have well-formed opinions about corporate influence that are not likely to be moved by an experimental treatment. For the positive "pay attention" argument (Table 22, Appendix E), I find significant interactions between partisanship and both the negative (-0.38, p=0.003; β_1=2.17) and positive (-0.23, p=0.081; β_2=1.22) treatments. I also find that the treatment effect decreases 1.54 points (p=0.034) for those who receive the negative treatment (β_1=0.66) and have volunteered. Unweighted, the interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=0.79) and partisanship remains significant (-0.14, p=0.046), and there is a significant interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=-0.87) and age (0.03, p=0.006).

The finding of increased Democratic partisanship and increased age mitigating the effects of the treatments have appeared in previous questions as well (e.g. *Citizens United*'s effect on likelihood of donating and voting). The rationale for age has been previously discussed, but perhaps Democrats are more likely to have already heard about *Citizens United* because of the party's opposition to the ruling and therefore may not be swayed by the treatments because the information is not new to them. Alternatively, because partisanship was not found to be a

significant predictor of prior knowledge of *Citizens United* in the first experiment, Democrats may be less swayed by the treatment because they are exposed more generally to the party's criticisms of the influence of wealthy interests and do not consider *Citizens United* to be uniquely harmful.

The negative "small donations" argument has significant interaction effects between income and both the negative (-0.21, p=0.007; β_1=1.19) and positive (-0.12, p=0.092; β_2=0.83) treatments (Table 23, Appendix E). There are also significant interactions between political knowledge and both the negative (-0.74, p=0.017; β_1=1.63) and positive (-0.57, p=0.064; β_2=1.37) treatments. These findings show that the treatments have smaller effects on higher income individuals' likelihood to believe that small donations do not matter, perhaps because they are able to afford to donate more. Additionally, higher political knowledge also decreases the effects of the treatments on their likelihood of believing this argument potentially because they have heard about successful campaigns run on small donations (e.g. Obama's). Unweighted, there is a significant interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=-0.37) and having voted (0.77, p=0.019). The negative "corrupt politics" argument (Table 24, Appendix E) has a significant interaction effect between the negative treatment (β_1=-2.18) and partisanship (0.45, p=0.007) and between the positive treatment (β_2=1.49) and having voted (-1.39, p=0.014). When unweighted, there is a significant interaction between the negative treatment (β_1=0.51) and income (-0.09, p=0.061) and a barely significant interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=0.96) and political interest (-0.41, p=0.099). The idea that Democrats, prior voters, and the more politically interested are less receptive to the treatments is by now a familiar theme. For the negative "politicians are selfish" argument (Table 25, Appendix E), the interaction between the positive treatment (β_2=1.84) and registering to vote is -1.81 (p=0.002), and the interaction

between the negative treatment (β_1=0.66) and donating is -1.0 (p=0.069). The interactions between having volunteered and both the negative (-1.31, p=0.019; β_1=0.67) and positive (-1.11, p=0.043; β_2=0.52) treatments are significant. None of the interactions are significant when the data is unweighted.

I also use multivariate analysis to find what covariates predict higher ratings of each argument about *Citizens United*, emphasizing again that these results are observational rather than causal. The model I estimate is

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 partisan_i + \ldots + \beta_{19} volunteered_i + u_i,$$

where Y is the rating of each of the arguments' strength, and the regression includes the treatments and all the covariates in the full tables in Appendix D. Table 10 shows the results for the positive civic duty argument.

Table 10. Regression of Rating of Civic Duty Argument (+) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.114	0.183
	(0.38)	(1.23)
postreatment	-0.0502	0.219
	(-0.18)	(1.48)
politicalinterest	0.165	0.228*
	(1.05)	(2.13)
age	-0.0195*	-0.0179***
	(-2.46)	(-3.40)
black	0.632	0.708*
	(1.21)	(2.11)
asian	0.515	0.650*
	(1.04)	(2.13)
donated	0.841*	0.843***
	(2.54)	(4.76)
Constant	3.259***	2.986***
	(4.69)	(6.49)
Observations	857	857

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Age has a negative coefficient of -0.02, which means that being one year older predicts a very substantively small decrease in rating of the strength of the civic duty argument. This may demonstrate that older individuals are more disillusioned with politics. On the other hand, having previously donated to a campaign predicts a 0.84 point increase in the rating of the strength of this argument, consistent with previous findings that people who have donated to campaigns in the past generally believe in the importance of participation.

Table 11. Regression of Rating of Corporate Control Argument (+) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.0457	-0.0950
	(-0.23)	(-0.81)
postreatment	0.0635	-0.0451
	(0.33)	(-0.39)
partisan	0.142**	0.144***
	(3.05)	(5.58)
income	0.0364+	-0.00201
	(1.70)	(-0.13)
education	-0.0337	-0.0893*
	(-0.51)	(-2.30)
poliknow	0.154	0.174**
	(1.52)	(2.74)
politicalinterest	-0.305+	0.0999
	(-1.91)	(1.19)
age	0.00709	0.0109**
	(1.13)	(2.63)
asian	-0.708*	0.00479
	(-2.33)	(0.02)
nativeam	-1.377***	-0.830*
	(-3.40)	(-2.43)
Constant	5.317***	4.501***
	(10.28)	(12.40)
Observations	858	858

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11 reports the results for the positive argument about corporate control. Here, partisanship and Native American have significant coefficients. A one-point increase in

partisanship (moving towards the Democratic end) predicts a 0.14 point increase in rating of the strength of this argument. This is reasonable given Democratic rhetoric about the undue influence of business and wealthy interests in politics. Being Native American, however, predicts a 1.38 point decrease in rating of the strength of this argument. Perhaps there is some reasoning that Native Americans see corporate power as too great to battle because of their consistent political and economic disenfranchisement, but this result should be replicated as there is not a very straightforward theory for this finding. For the positive argument about paying attention, there is only a marginally significant coefficient on income: a one-unit increase in income predicts a 0.04 point increase in the rating of the strength of the argument, which is very substantively small.

The negative argument about small donations only has one significant coefficient. Previously donating to a campaign predicts a 1.0 point decrease in the rating of the strength of this argument ($p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals who donated before do not believe that large donations drown out the importance of small donations. No coefficients are significant in the regression for the negative corrupt politics argument. Table 12 shows the results for the negative selfish politicians argument. Here, the negative treatment effect becomes significant with all of the covariate controls added in this regression. The treatment effect is a 0.57 point increase in the rating of the strength of this argument ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that subjects may have made a connection between the growing role of money in politics after *Citizens United* and politicians selfishly seeking to fundraise for their campaigns. Additionally, the coefficients on income, black, Native American, and previously donated are significant. As previously discussed, it is possible that the significant negative coefficients on black and Native American may represent differing perspectives from political minority groups, but there is little theoretical

Table 12. Regression of Rating of Selfish Politicians Argument (-) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.565*	0.224+
	(2.49)	(1.92)
postreatment	0.330	0.101
	(1.37)	(0.87)
income	-0.0453+	-0.0436**
	(-1.79)	(-2.83)
poliknow	0.00349	0.109+
	(0.03)	(1.73)
politicalinterest	0.134	0.202*
	(0.89)	(2.41)
age	0.0132*	0.00490
	(2.27)	(1.19)
black	-1.033*	-0.605*
	(-2.30)	(-2.31)
nativeam	-0.733*	-0.626+
	(-1.97)	(-1.85)
donated	-0.521*	-0.430**
	(-2.06)	(-3.10)
volunteered	0.249	-0.375**
	(0.92)	(-2.61)
Constant	5.706***	5.155***
	(8.44)	(14.33)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

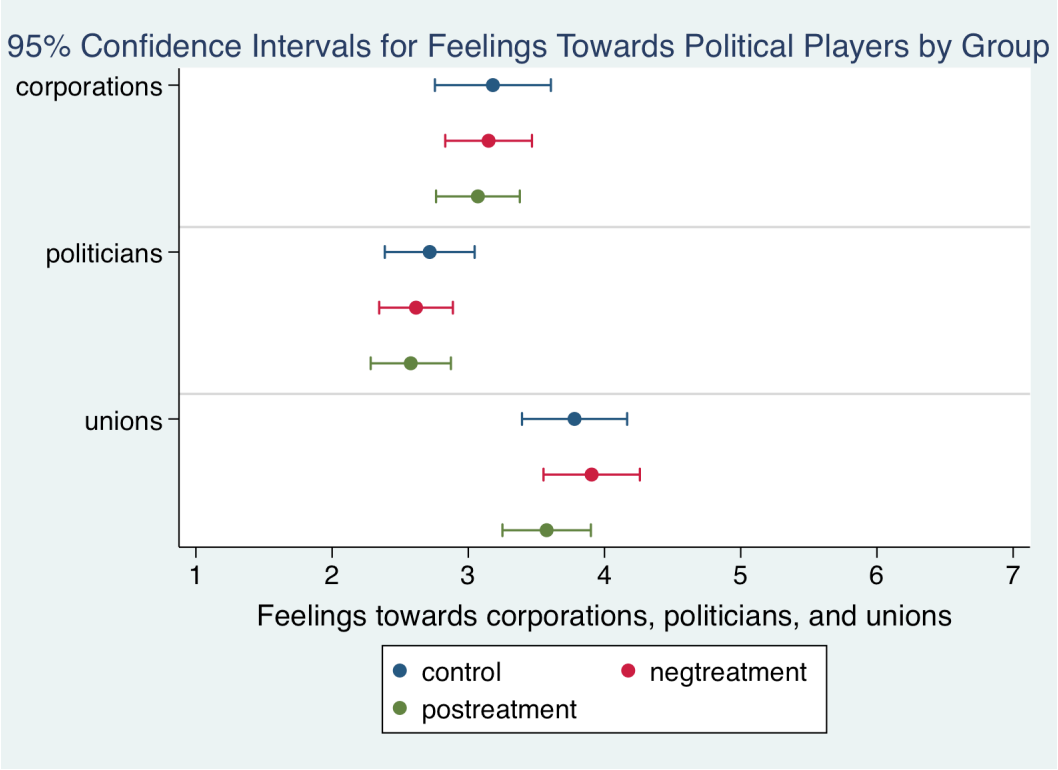
reason in this case for these two groups to be less likely to believe that politicians are selfish. On the other hand, greater income and having previously donated to a campaign predict lower ratings of the strength of the selfishness argument, which could reasonably be attributed to higher income groups being content with politics because they are more well-off and previous donors not believing politicians are selfish as expressed by their willingness to give to them.

Question Three: What Do Voters Think About Political Players and the Political Process?

The third issue this survey explores is how people think about different political players and the political process. I ask respondents to describe their feelings towards corporations,

politicians, and unions (Figure 12). Their responses are rated on a seven-point scale from "very cool" (1) to "very warm" (7).

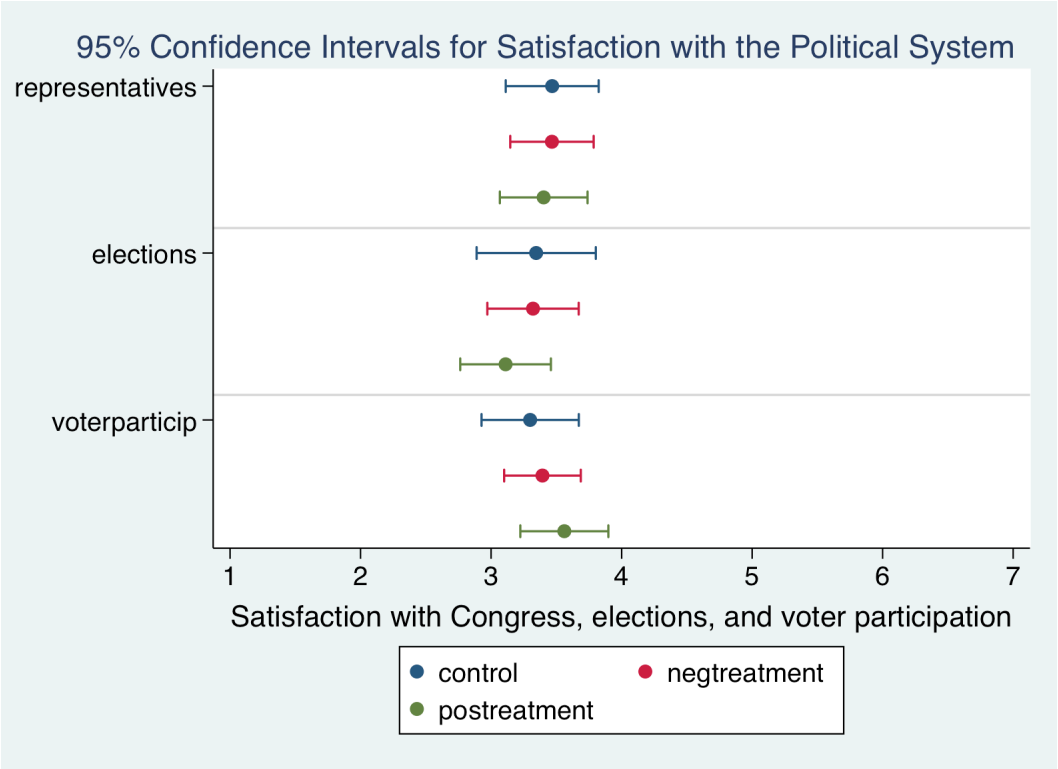
Figure 12. Confidence Intervals for Feelings towards Corporations, Unions, and Politicians



Corporations, politicians, and unions all receive ratings on the "cool" end of the scale, with unions closest to neutral and politicians furthest towards the cool end. The treatments do not appear to have an effect on subjects' feelings towards these political actors, likely because of strong preconceived stereotypes about the three actors. The insignificance of the treatments is confirmed by regression. It is also notable that politicians are perceived more negatively than corporations and unions, a finding that is consistent with the idea that people are extremely cynical about politics but may think of corporations and unions outside of the political context, tempering their disapproval towards corporate and union involvement in the political realm. To confirm this hypothesis, I ask several questions about how satisfied respondents are with the American political process. First, respondents were asked in general how satisfied they are with

their representatives in Congress, the way political elections in the U.S. work, and the amount of voter participation in the political process. Their answers are coded on a seven-point scale from "very dissatisfied" (1) to "very satisfied" (7). Figure 13 reveals and regression confirms slight dissatisfaction with all of the measures and no significant differences between the experimental groups.

Figure 13. Confidence Intervals for Satisfaction with Representatives in Congress, the Way Elections Work, and the Amount of Voter Participation



Considering how negative the sentiment was towards politicians, subjects are surprisingly only somewhat dissatisfied with their representatives in Congress. This may be because people think more positively about their own representatives than representatives from other districts, Congress as an institution, and politicians as a whole. The finding of some dissatisfaction with the amount of voter participation in the political process is also interesting because it can be interpreted in two ways. Subjects could be unhappy with the amount of opportunity voters have

to participate or they could be unhappy with how much voters take advantage of opportunities to participate. The first theory would explain why respondents' self-reported likelihood to donate and fundraise for political campaigns is low, whereas the second theory would be more consistent with subjects' attachment of a reasonable amount of importance to political participation. I test this by investigating if self-reported measures of political interest, political knowledge, and prior participation affect respondents' satisfaction with the amount of voter participation in the political process, hypothesizing that subjects are more likely to be unhappy with the amount of opportunities voters have to participate if they themselves are already active participants in the political process. If this is true, I would expect that political interest, knowledge, and prior participation would not predict greater satisfaction because those individuals who tried to express interest in politics remain disillusioned. The regression model I run to test this hypothesis is

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 poliknow_i + \beta_4 politicalinterest_i + \beta_5 registeredvoter_i + \beta_6 voted_i + \beta_7 donated_i + \beta_8 volunteered_i + u_i,$$

where Y represents satisfaction with the amount voter participation. The regression results are consistent with my hypothesis, as none of the coefficients on political knowledge, political interest, or previous participation are significant predictors of satisfaction with voter participation in the American political process. This is also confirmed by a regression that includes an aggregate scale of cynicism measures (discussed in the following paragraph of this section) as well as the political covariates:

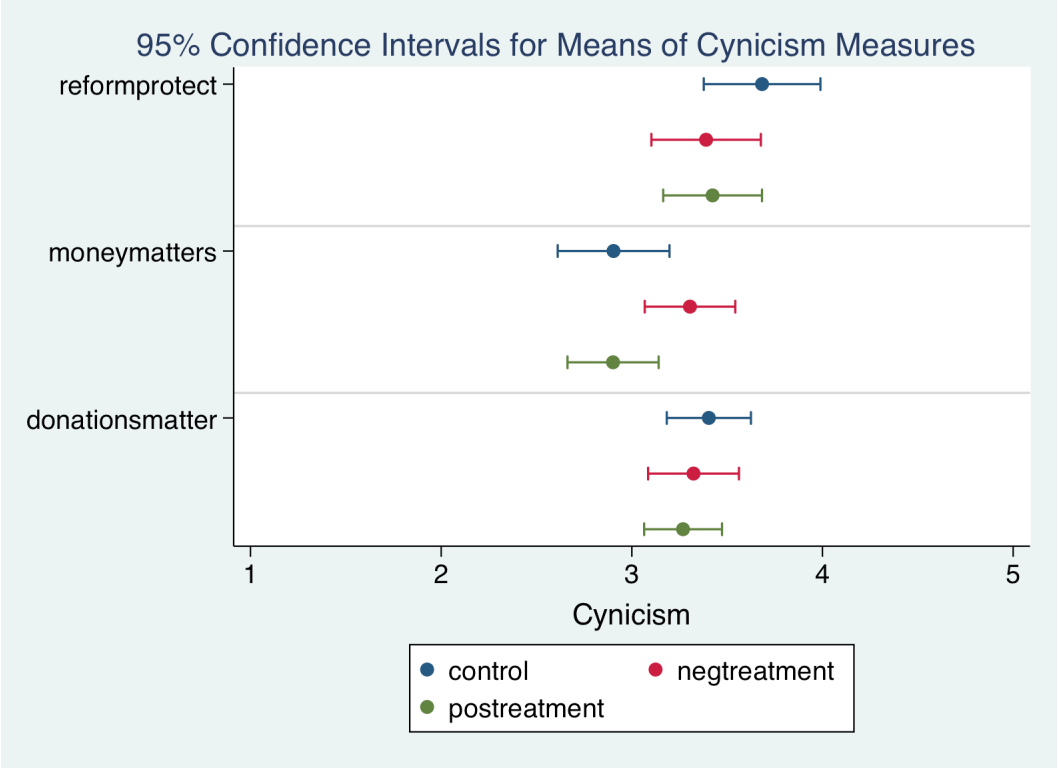
$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negtreatment_i + \beta_2 postreatment_i + \beta_3 poliknow_i + \beta_4 politicalinterest_i + \beta_5 registeredvoter_i + \beta_6 voted_i + \beta_7 donated_i + \beta_8 volunteered_i + \beta_9 cynicismscale_i + u_i$$

Subjects who are more cynical about politics are less satisfied with voter participation in the political process, with a one-unit increase in cynicism predicting a 0.35 point decrease in

satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). However, these findings are merely observational support for my hypothesis that subjects are unhappy with the amount of opportunities for voter participation; because the political knowledge, interest, and participation covariates are not randomly assigned, they cannot be causally attributed to changes in satisfaction.

I also include three questions from the first survey experiment in this survey to see if there are any different effects on political cynicism as a result of the non-neutral *Citizens United* frames. These questions are measured on the same five-point scale as originally used, with cynicism increasing as the scale increases (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Confidence Intervals for Cynicism Measures



In comparison to the first experiment, there is slightly higher cynicism for *reformprotect*, lower cynicism for *moneymatters*, and slightly lower cynicism for *donationsmatters*, although the results all hover in the same 3 to 4 point range. Interestingly, the difference between the negative and positive treatments seems to be significant for *moneymatters*, which asked

respondents to place their beliefs between "money is the only thing that matters in elections" and "issues are the only things that matter in elections." Those who received the negative framing about *Citizens United*'s effects on voter efficacy are more likely to believe that "money is the only thing that matters in elections," which is essentially the message emphasized in the negative treatment. In comparison, the control and positive treatment groups lean towards issues being more important in elections. A regression of the form

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 negativetreatment_i + \beta_2 positivetreatment_i + u_i,$$

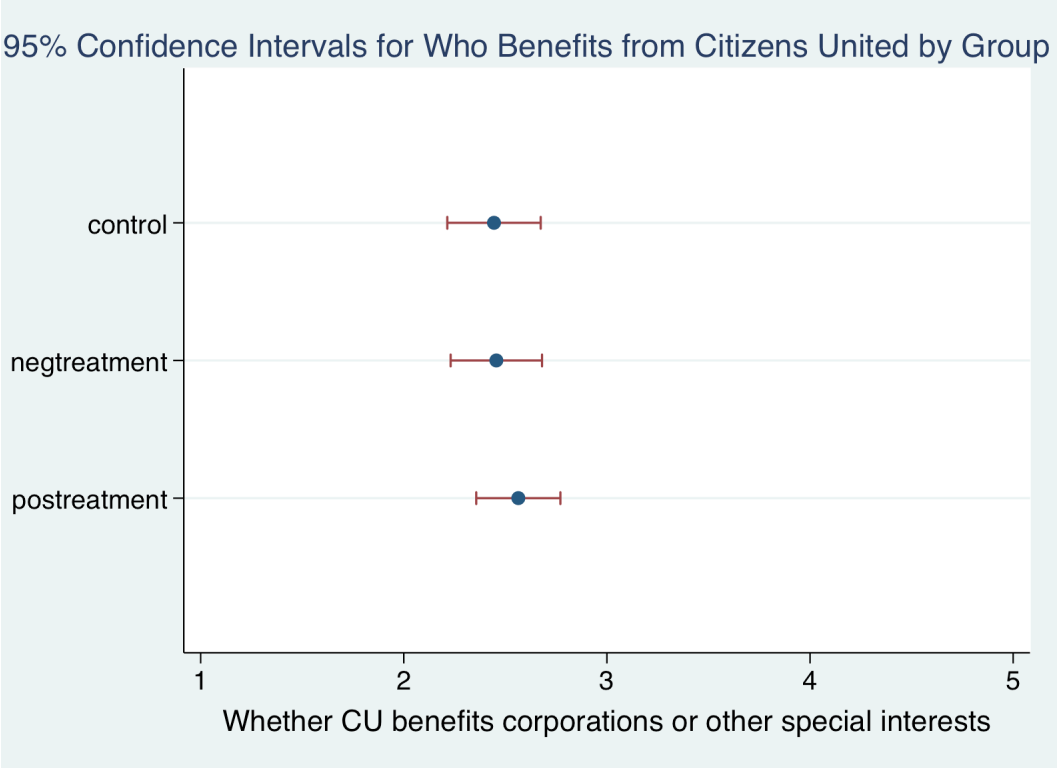
where *Y* represents each of the three cynicism measures, confirms this difference, as well as another set of regressions that use the negative treatment as the reference group. Assignment to the negative treatment group predicts a 0.40 point increase in cynicism on the *moneymatters* dimension compared to the control (p=0.37) and a 0.40 point increase compared to the positive treatment as well (p=0.019). When unweighted, the regression finds a significant difference between the negative and positive treatments for *moneymatters*, with assignment to the negative treatment predicting a 0.20 point increase in cynicism compared to the positive treatment (p=0.019).

Question Four: How Do Voters Perceive the Effects of *Citizens United*?

The survey closes with a series of questions asking directly about *Citizens United*'s impacts on the political process. I ask respondents who they believe *Citizens United* benefits, with 1 representing "only big corporations" and 5 representing "other special interests like unions." I expect most respondents to select an answer in the middle but with some leaning towards corporations because they are often assumed to be the wealthiest players in the political process. This hypothesis is true, as most respondents place their beliefs between benefitting both

sides equally and benefitting corporations more (Figure 15). Regression finds no significant differences between groups.

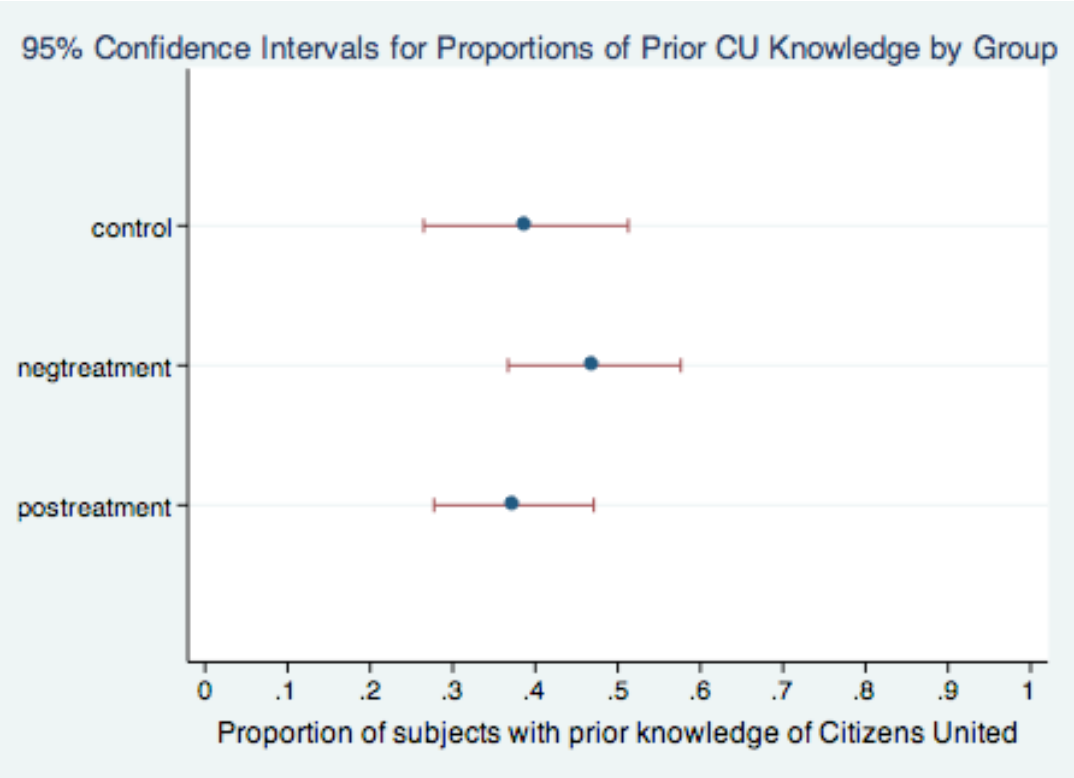
Figure 15. Confidence Intervals for Beliefs about Who Benefits from Citizens United by Group



The last question I investigate in this survey is also taken from the first experiment, asking respondents about their prior knowledge of *Citizens United* and whether they believe the decision had an effect on the fairness of elections. I add another question about whether they agree or disagree with the ruling. I hypothesize that more respondents will report prior knowledge of *Citizens United* both because of memory bias induced by them receiving information about it at the beginning of the survey and because *Citizens United* was a recurring topic of public discourse during the 2012 election cycle. My hypothesis that more respondents will report prior knowledge holds true: just over 40% of all respondents say they heard of *Citizens United* before taking the survey, compared to a third in the first experiment. The

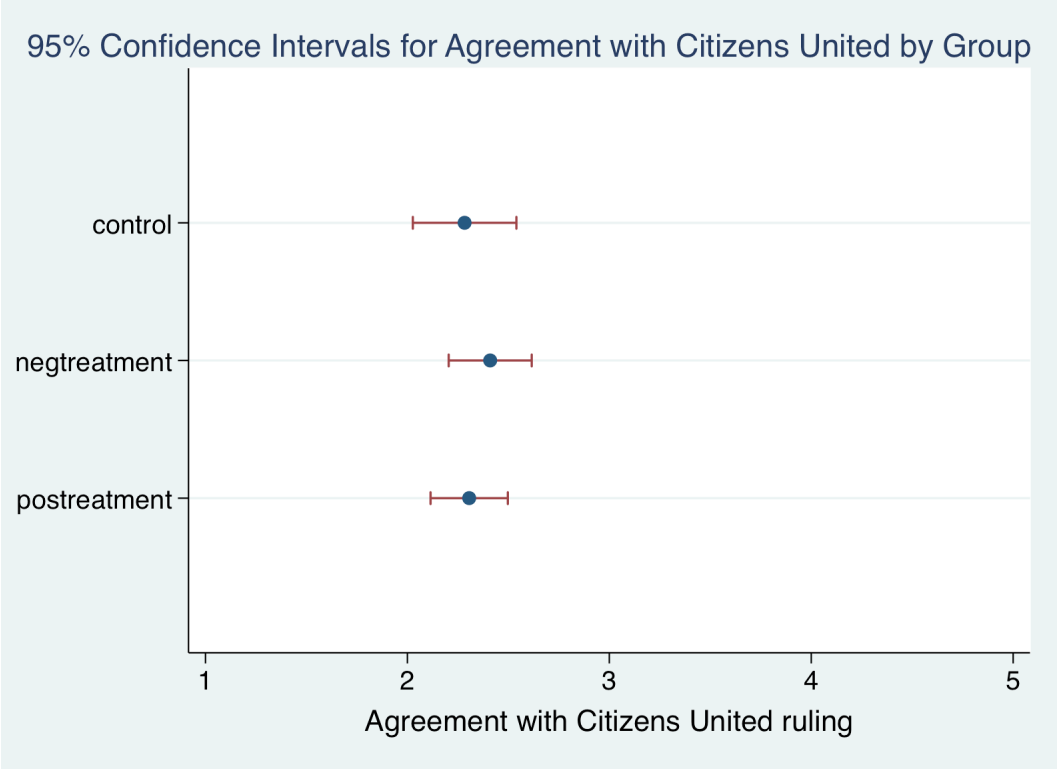
differences between the experimental groups are not significant (Figure 16). Regression confirms this lack of significant differences.

Figure 16. Confidence Intervals for Proportions of Respondents with Prior Citizens United Knowledge by Group



In this survey, rather than only asking respondents who claimed prior knowledge of *Citizens United* about their opinions on the impact of the ruling, I ask all subjects follow-up questions because they were all given different information about the decision in the priming paragraphs. First, I ask whether respondents agree or disagree with *Citizens United*. Answers are coded on a five-point scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." The mean for all three groups is between neutral and disagree (Figure 17). Regression finds that the three groups do not significantly differ in their agreement with *Citizens United*. Similarly, when asked whether they believe that "the ruling in *Citizens United* has had a positive, negative, or no effect on the fairness of elections," a majority (64%, unweighted due to coding)

Figure 17. Confidence Intervals for Agreement with Citizens United by Group



say it has had a negative effect. Only 6% say it has had a positive effect, while 11% say it has had no effect and 19% are unsure. This result is less dramatically negative than in the first survey, which found 85% negative, 4% positive, 4% no effect, and 8% unsure. This could be for two potential reasons: perhaps respondents who saw positive frames of *Citizens United* decided that it did not have a negative impact on the fairness of elections, or perhaps respondents without prior knowledge of *Citizens United* were more inclined to say that it had no effect or that they were unsure. I test this by disaggregating the results by assignment to each of the groups and by prior knowledge of *Citizens United*.

The differences between the experimental groups are not very large: in the control group, 68% of respondents believe that *Citizens United* has had a negative impact on the fairness of elections, compared to 61% in the negative treatment group and 65% in the positive treatment group. The difference between those with and without prior knowledge is much starker. Among

those who had prior knowledge of the ruling, 82% think it has had a negative impact on elections, 3% think it has been positive, 8% think it has had no effect, and 7% are unsure. These figures are very similar to the findings from the first experiment. Among those without prior knowledge, 51% believe it has had a negative impact, 8% a positive impact, 13% no impact, and 28% are unsure. Given that none of the groups were given information lauding the positive effects of *Citizens United*, it is unsurprising that most respondents whose knowledge of the decision comes exclusively from this survey either believe it has had a negative impact on electoral fairness or remain unsure.

10.4. Discussion

The general concerns with the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk to recruit respondents for this experiment and the limitations of survey research have already been discussed in the first experiment's section of this paper, so I concentrate here on the issues specific to this experiment. For internal validity, I conduct three attention checks and embed timers in the pages with required reading. The first attention check was placed immediately after the priming paragraphs and told respondents to select a particular answer if they were reading carefully. 64% of respondents answered this check correctly. The second attention check was placed after the vignette paragraph, and respondents were asked which candidate in the vignette is supported by wealthier donors. 94% of respondents correctly selected the incumbent. The third attention check was placed towards the end of the survey, between the cynicism questions and the prior knowledge question. Respondents were again told to select a particular answer if they were reading attentively, and 73% of respondents answered this question correctly. These proportions indicate that most respondents were paying attention to the survey and not just skimming through to receive payment. I also time how long respondents spent reading the priming paragraphs and

the vignette. The mean amount of time spent on the control page was 36 seconds, while the time spent reading the negative and positive treatments were 70 and 72 seconds respectively. Respondents spent an average of 35 seconds reading the vignette. These times seem reasonable for the length of the paragraphs, and respondents whose times were unrealistically short (just a few seconds reading the priming paragraphs) were removed from the sample because they could not have been properly treated. I also emphasize the main points of each treatment and the vignette by underlining key sentences to help respondents focus on the intended central meanings.

For external validity, in order to make my sample of subjects more representative of the entire American population, I weight my data based on demographic characteristics. However, the differences between the weighted and unweighted results suggest that the original sample was not very representative of the American population at large. The differences in significance found between the weighted and unweighted analyses are likely because the magnitude of many of the effects is very small, so weighting can shift the results substantially and significantly. Replication with another sample is necessary to confirm the results of the study, which is why in most cases I focus on drawing conclusions from findings that are significant in both the weighted and unweighted models.

The results of this study are fairly consistent with my findings from the first experiment: information about *Citizens United*, no matter how it is framed, does not dramatically sway previously held opinions. When it comes to affecting individuals' plans for future behavior (as measured with the community participation questions), individuals with higher levels of political knowledge, greater political interest, and a previous record of political participation seem particularly likely to discount information they receive about *Citizens United* in their decision-

making as they already have strong opinions about the importance of participation. Subjects who are older, more Democratic, and have higher incomes also tend to discount the experimental treatments. Rather than *Citizens United* playing a major role in shaping subjects' beliefs about voter participation, their beliefs are predicted by levels of political interest and previous participation: those who are more knowledgeable, interested, and previously participatory believe that participation is more important. Overall, however, voters believe that political participation is valuable and worthwhile. When directly instructed to consider how *Citizens United* might move their beliefs about participation rather than simply primed to have that consideration in their subconscious, they say that it marginally increases their likelihood of donating and voting.

This overt direction to voters to consider the impact of *Citizens United* on the importance of participation must be framed carefully, however. While subjects found negative arguments about why *Citizens United* might make voters less excited about participation to be strong across the board, they were less uniformly compelled by positive arguments about why *Citizens United* might make voters more eager to participate. They did not find an appeal to voters' civic duty to counterbalance wealthy interests compelling, but they believed that preventing corporations from controlling the political process was a very strong argument. In evaluations of the strength of these arguments, subjects who received the positive treatment found the positive arguments more convincing, while subjects who received the negative treatment found the negative arguments more convincing. This suggests that perhaps different frames of *Citizens United* can affect how voters process related arguments about political participation even if the frames do not dramatically sway their conclusions about what they wish to do.

Finally, this experiment finds that a growing number of people are aware of *Citizens United v. FEC*, and those who have heard of the decision view it very negatively. Those who receive new information about the ruling for the first time remain somewhat unsure of its effects on the fairness of American elections, but they are much more likely to say it has a negative impact than a positive one. Most Americans disagree with the ruling after being given basic information about the decision and its effects. If this trend continues of growing awareness paired with negativity among those who are aware of the ruling, the tide of public sentiment may create elevated pressure on political actors and the courts to roll back *Citizens United*.

This study contributes some empirical findings to a literature that is largely devoid of any experimental data to establish a causal effect of *Citizens United* on shaping voter attitudes towards political participation. It mitigates some of the concerns about decreased voter turnout since the court ruling, but it also suggests that campaigns who rely on fundraising and turnout appeals that employ *Citizens United* as a tool for encouraging voter participation must choose their language carefully in order for it to be effective.

Chapter Four: The Effect of *Citizens United* on Voter Attitudes

"No doubt, *Citizens United* is a proper target. But we need to remember that on January 20, 2010 -- the day before *Citizens United* was decided -- *our democracy was already broken*."

-Lawrence Lessig, 2012

11. Conclusion

Citizens United v. FEC has been criticized on many fronts: for its impact on campaign spending patterns, its effect on partisan balance, its potential for drowning out the voices of individual voters, and more. This paper focuses more narrowly on how *Citizens United* affects perceptions of corruption as argued by Lessig and the logical extension of such perceptions that translate into decreased voter participation. On the surface, I find strong support for the idea that the American electorate is very disillusioned with the political process and cynical about undue corporate influence in politics. I also find overwhelming evidence that Americans disagree with the Supreme Court's ruling and believe it has had a negative impact on the fairness of U.S. elections. However, a deeper look using randomized experiments to prime voters with different information about *Citizens United* reveals a different picture.

Despite critics' belief that *Citizens United* would dramatically turn voters away from political participation, the decision itself seems to have very little marginal impact on voter attitudes because of their already strongly held cynicism and dissatisfaction before the ruling occurred. My findings validate Wilkinson's (2010) rebuttal of the idea that changes in campaign finance regulations can substantially alter the level of perceived corruption by voters. Rather, the most important signs of whether voters are likely to be cynical or believe political participation is

less important are characteristics like income, political knowledge, political interest, and previous political participation. Some individuals are more likely than others to discount information about *Citizens United*, such as those with greater political knowledge and interest, precisely because they have a broad range of considerations in mind beyond only *Citizens United* when forming their perspectives on the political system.

It does seem possible that *Citizens United* could be used to convince voters that political participation is more, rather than less, important. Exposure to different methods of framing information about *Citizens United*'s impact on voters can alter people's reactions to subsequent arguments about the importance of voter participation after the court ruling. However, not all positive language is considered equally compelling, unlike negative arguments that are seen as universally believable given voters' predisposition toward cynicism. Furthermore, the expectation that voters will process information about *Citizens United* subconsciously or as a meaningful part of their reservoir of political knowledge when deciding if they wish to engage in political participation seems to be false. When directly posed with the suggestion that *Citizens United* can or should impact their attitudes towards voter behavior, however, subjects respond with a cautious positivity, indicating that the decision slightly increases their proclivity to donate and vote.

Beyond the unexpected finding that *Citizens United* may not be as influential as often hypothesized, the other takeaway from these studies is that how voters think about political participation and the political process is often complex and somewhat jumbled. They have highly negative sentiments towards politicians, yet they are only mildly dissatisfied with their representatives in Congress. They believe the average American should give a substantial yearly donation to political campaigns, but they indicate little willingness to donate themselves. They

claim that *Citizens United* increases their likelihood to donate and vote, but that finding is not consistently demonstrated when different, more subtle measures are used. Altogether, the majority of subjects seem to display a great deal of arbitrariness in their expressed attitudes towards political participation, a finding that could be explained by a number of models in the literature on issue preferences. For example, many voters could lack stable, well-crystallized issue preferences as Converse (1964) argues. Alternatively, the results could follow Zaller and Feldman's (1992) model arguing that most citizens have a mix of partially consistent ideas and respond to surveys with a sample of items that happen to be on their minds when they are answering. It could also be the case that the wording of the different questions in my surveys elicited different responses (Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber 1978). Ultimately, most subjects' attitudes are unlikely to be heavily driven by the *Citizens United* treatments given all their other potential considerations in answering the survey questions. Rather, only the most politically involved are likely to be truly passionate about *Citizens United*, and they are the individuals who are so committed to their political beliefs that they are unlikely to change their attitudes based on the priming information provided in these studies. Given the complicated pattern in voters' responses to these surveys, I hope this paper is only the beginning of a rigorous empirical investigation into what voters think about *Citizens United* and how they are affected by the court ruling.

The constitutional question in the regulation of corporate independent expenditures is an empirical question that can be adjudicated in more than abstract terms. If voters do not lose trust or decrease their involvement in the political discourse as a result of the ruling, its opponents' claims of a First Amendment violation when speech is chilled are weak; if voters do in fact change their attitudes and behavior as a result of disillusionment and powerlessness, then their

First Amendment claims are powerful. Only close attention to the results of future elections and investigation into this undoubtedly important question can lend true credibility to arguments over *Citizens United v. FEC*. Of course, there are a number of different dimensions of *Citizens United* that are just as important as its impact on voter attitudes. Given the findings of this paper, which provide a strong hint that its effects on perceptions of corruption and voter participation are weak, perhaps critics of *Citizens United* would do well to investigate these other aspects of the ruling and focus their attacks on criticisms that are grounded in empirical evidence. Conversely, those who hope to rescue the American political system from growing perceptions of corruption must remember that while overturning *Citizens United* might be consistent with their goals, it would be merely one step in a much longer process.

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Appendix A: Experiment One Survey Questions

Informed Consent
Purpose:
We are conducting a research study to examine the political attitudes of Americans. Its purpose is to survey individuals about their beliefs about the United States' political system in order to gain a better understanding of voters.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will involve reading a short paragraph and then completing a survey. We anticipate that your involvement will require 5-7 minutes. You will receive $0.50 for participating.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no known risks associated with this study beyond those associated with everyday life. We hope that our results will add to knowledge about American political attitudes. We also hope that you will benefit from gaining some information about American politics.

Confidentiality:
All of your responses will be anonymous. Only the researchers involved in this study and those responsible for research oversight will have access to the information you provide.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer any individual question.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator, Stacey Chen, at stacey.chen@yale.edu.
If you would like to talk with someone other than the researchers to discuss problems or concerns, to discuss situations in the event that a member of the research team is not available, or to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Yale University Human Subjects Committee, Box 208010, New Haven, CT 06520-8010, 203-785-4688, human.subjects@yale.edu. Additional information is available at http://www.yale.edu/hrpp/participants/index.html

To participate in the study, you must be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen.

Agreement to Participate:
I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to have any questions about this study answered, and agree to participate in this study.

- I agree to participate.
- I do not agree to participate.

Demographics

What is your year of birth?

_____

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- No high school diploma
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Post-graduate degree

What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? (check all that apply)

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Mixed
- Other

Which state do you live in?

_____

What is your household income?

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $69,999
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,999
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Other

If Democrat:
Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

- Strong Democrat
- Not very strong Democrat

If Republican:
Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- Strong Republican
- Not very strong Republican

If Independent:
Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic party, closer to the Republican party, or equally close to both parties?

- Closer to the Democratic Party
- Closer to the Republican Party
- Equally close to both parties

Political Interest and Knowledge
How interested are you in politics and current events?

- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not at all interested

Have you ever: (check all that apply)

- Registered to vote
- Voted in an election
- Donated to a political campaign
- Volunteered on a political campaign

Whose job is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not?

- The President
- Congress
- The Supreme Court
- Unsure

Which party is more conservative at the national level?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- Unsure

Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the House of Representatives right now?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- Unsure

Control Group
Please read the following paragraph carefully.

The 2012 election will be between incumbent Democratic president Barack Obama and a Republican challenger. It will be held on November 6, 2012. The Republican candidate is currently being chosen through the Republican primaries, during which voters in each state cast ballots for candidates. The winner of each state receives delegates to the Republican National Convention, at which the final Republican candidate will be chosen. The Republican National Convention will be held during the week of August 27, 2012.

Treatment Group
Please read the following paragraph carefully.

The 2012 election will be between incumbent Democratic president Barack Obama and a Republican challenger. It will be held on November 6, 2012. The Republican candidate is currently being chosen through the Republican primaries, during which voters in each state cast ballots for candidates. Since the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010, corporations are now allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Political Cynicism Questions
All of the questions in this section provided answer choices on a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. The order in which they were presented was randomized for each respondent. To make the paper's analysis more intuitive, all answers except for reformprotect were recoded opposite the given scale in order to make 1 represent the least cynicism and 5 the most cynicism.

[trust]
Some people say that you can never trust the government in Washington to do what is right. Others say that you can just about always trust the government in Washington to do what is right. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 represents the belief that you can never trust the government to do what is right, 5 represents that you can always trust the government to do what is right, and in between means you can sometimes trust the government to do what is right), where would you place yourself?

[govtrunby]
Some people say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. Others say that it is run for the benefit of all the people. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 means that government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, 5 means that government is run for the benefit of all the people, and in between representing the belief that government is run by a combination of a few big interests looking out for themselves and for the benefit of all the people), where would you place yourself?

[votematters]
Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make all the difference to what happens. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 means that voting won't make a difference to what happens, 5 means that voting can make all the difference, and in between representing that voting can make some difference), where would you place yourself?

[financeoverhaul]
Some people believe that the way political campaigns are financed in this country needs to be completely overhauled. Others believe that the way political campaigns are financed is basically fine the way it is. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief that campaign finance needs to be completely overhauled, 5 representing the belief that it is basically fine the way it is, and in between representing that it needs some changes), where would you place yourself?

[reformprotect]
Recently, there has been a lot of talk about campaign finance reform. Some people say that it is most important to protect government from excessive influence by campaign contributors. Others say that it is most important to protect the freedom of individuals to financially support political candidates and parties. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing that it is most important to protect the freedom of individuals to financially support candidates and parties, 5 representing that it is most important to protect the government from excessive influence by campaign contributors, and in between representing that both protecting the freedom of individuals and protecting government from excessive influence by campaign contributors are somewhat important), where would you place yourself?

[moneymatters]
Some people say that money is the only thing that matters in elections. Others say that issues are the only things that matter in elections. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 means that money is the only thing that matters in elections, 5 means that issues are the only things that matter in elections, and in between representing the belief that a combination of money and issues matters in elections), where would you place yourself?

[corpinfluence]
Some people say that corporations have too much influence over policymaking, while others say that corporations have too little influence over policymaking. Others say that corporations have a fair amount of influence over policymaking. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 represents the belief that corporations have far too much influence over policymaking, 3 represents the belief that corporations have a fair amount of influence over policymaking, and 5 representing the belief that corporations have far too little influence over policymaking), where would you place yourself?

[polilisten]
Some people say that politicians listen only to big business, while others say that politicians listen only to the people. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief that politicians listen only to big business, 5 representing the belief that politicians listen only to the people, and in between representing the belief that politicians listen to a combination of the people and big business), where would you place yourself?

[donationsmatter]
Some people say that only large donations by a few corporations and the rich matter in elections. Others say that only small donations by many individuals matter in elections. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief that only large donations by a few matter, 5 representing the belief that only small donations by many matter, and in between representing the belief that a combination of large donations by a few and small donations by many matter), where would you place yourself?

Attention Check
Some people care a lot about politics. Others do not care very much about politics. Please select four if you are reading this and ignore the rest of the question. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing that you do not care very much about politics, 5 representing that you care very much about politics, and in between representing that you care somewhat about politics), where would you place yourself?

Prior Knowledge of *Citizens United*
Had you heard about the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) that allowed corporations to spend unlimited amounts on political expenditures before this survey?

- Yes
- No

If Yes:
Do you believe that the ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* has had a positive, negative, or no effect on the fairness of elections in the US?

- Positive effect
- Negative effect
- No effect
- Unsure

Secret Code

This question was used to deter individuals from clicking through the survey and not answering the questions. On Mechanical Turk, potential participants were warned that they would receive a secret code at the end of the survey in order to receive payment.

Please choose a secret word. You'll have to enter it in the Mechanical Turk site to complete the survey and receive payment. Write it in the box.

_____

Appendix B: Results from Holder-Winfield Field Experiment

General Statistics

Group	Total Sent	Opened	Bad/Bounced	Donations	Unsubscribed
Control	370	79	44	3	1
Treatment	365	94	49	2	5

Click Statistics

Group	Website Link	Donation Link 1	Donation Link 2	Facebook Link	Unsubscribe Link
Control	1	0	5	3	1
Treatment	0	4	3	1	7

Appendix C: Experiment Two Survey Questions

Informed Consent
Purpose:
We are conducting a research study to examine the political attitudes of Americans. Its purpose is to survey individuals about their beliefs about the United States' political system in order to gain a better understanding of voters.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will involve reading a short paragraph and then completing a survey. We anticipate that your involvement will require 7-10 minutes. You will receive $0.50 for participating.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no known risks associated with this study beyond those associated with everyday life. We hope that our results will add to knowledge about American political attitudes. We also hope that you will benefit from gaining some information about American politics.

Confidentiality:
All of your responses will be anonymous. Only the researchers involved in this study and those responsible for research oversight will have access to the information you provide.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer any individual question.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator, Stacey Chen, at stacey.chen@yale.edu.
If you would like to talk with someone other than the researchers to discuss problems or concerns, to discuss situations in the event that a member of the research team is not available, or to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Yale University Human Subjects Committee, Box 208010, New Haven, CT 06520-8010, 203-785-4688, human.subjects@yale.edu. Additional information is available at http://www.yale.edu/hrpp/participants/index.html

To participate in the study, you must be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen.

Agreement to Participate:
I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to have any questions about this study answered, and agree to participate in this study.

- I agree to participate.
- I do not agree to participate.

Demographics

What is your year of birth?

_____

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- No high school diploma
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Post-graduate degree

What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? (check all that apply)

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Mixed
- Other

Which state do you live in?

_____

What is your household income?

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $69,999
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,999
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Other

If Democrat:
Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

- Strong Democrat
- Not very strong Democrat

If Republican:
Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- Strong Republican
- Not very strong Republican

If Independent:
Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic party, closer to the Republican party, or equally close to both parties?

- Closer to the Democratic Party
- Closer to the Republican Party
- Equally close to both parties

Political Interest and Knowledge
How interested are you in politics and current events?

- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not at all interested

Have you ever: (check all that apply)

- Registered to vote
- Voted in an election
- Donated to a political campaign
- Volunteered on a political campaign

Whose job is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not?

- The President
- Congress
- The Supreme Court
- Unsure

Which party is more conservative at the national level?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- Unsure

Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the House of Representatives right now?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- Unsure

Control Group
Please read the following paragraph of important facts very carefully.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Negative Treatment
Please read the following paragraph of important facts very carefully.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Corporations, unions, and special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections since 2010. Their independent expenditures (money spent independently of candidates and parties but often in support of a particular candidate or party) have grown substantially since *Citizens United*, making them more influential than ever.

As a result, some say that voters have less control over the political process and their grassroots campaign donations and votes matter less. As big contributions grow, they worry that wealthy special interests will make the voice of voters irrelevant no matter what they do. Critics have even accused *Citizens United* of creating corruption in the political system.

Positive Treatment
Please read the following paragraph of important facts very carefully.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that laws restricting the money corporations and unions are allowed to spend on political messages are unconstitutional. Now, corporations and unions are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on political messages. Additionally, SuperPACs, which are organizations that accept unlimited donations from corporations and individuals without requiring transparency about their donors, have multiplied and become influential.

Corporations, unions, and special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections since 2010. Their independent expenditures (money spent independently of candidates and parties but often in support of a particular candidate or political party) have grown substantially since *Citizens United*, making them more influential than ever.

However, grassroots campaign donations from individual voters remain extremely important to candidates and political parties. In fact, some say that it is even more important now than before *Citizens United* for voters to actively participate in the political process by contributing to campaigns and voting. A number of candidates who were supported by big corporate money in the 2012 election cycle still failed to win, suggesting that other interests like unions and voters are able to balance the political process if they are motivated to do all they can.

Attention Check 1
Some people believe that democracy as a system of government is very good. Others believe that democracy as a system of government is very bad. Please select four if you are reading this and ignore the rest of the question.

On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing that you believe that democracy is very good, 5 representing that you believe that democracy is very bad, and in between representing that you believe the system is partially good and partially bad), where would you place yourself?

In/Out-Group Attitudes
How would you describe your feelings toward:

- Corporations
  - Very Cool
  - Cool
  - Somewhat Cool
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Warm
  - Warm
  - Very Warm
- Politicians
  - Very Cool
  - Cool
  - Somewhat Cool
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Warm
  - Warm
  - Very Warm
- Unions
  - Very Cool
  - Cool
  - Somewhat Cool
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Warm

- Warm
- Very Warm

In general, how satisfied are you with:

- Your representatives in Congress
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Dissatisfied
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- The way political elections in the United States work
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Dissatisfied
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- The amount of voter participation in the political process
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Dissatisfied
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied

Vignette

Please read the following paragraph very carefully.

Consider the following scenario:
Imagine there is a moderately important political race between an incumbent candidate who currently holds office and a challenger candidate looking to unseat him. <u>You would like the challenger to win.</u> Both candidates are fundraising for their campaigns. The incumbent is supported by wealthy special interests such as corporations, and there is also a great deal of third party spending in support of his campaign. The challenger is mostly dependent on smaller contributions from individual voters. The amount of funds the incumbent has raised from his big donors exceeds the amount the challenger has raised from his small donors, allowing the incumbent to spend more on his campaign efforts.

Vignette Comprehension Check

According to the paragraph, which candidate is supported by wealthier donors?

- Incumbent
- Challenger

In the scenario you just read about, how likely would you be to contribute to the challenger's campaign?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Very Likely

Community Participation

In the next 12 months, how likely is it that you will:

- Donate blood
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely
- Donate money to a political campaign
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely
- Donate to a charity
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely
- Fundraise for a political cause
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely

- Attend a religious institution
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely
- Vote in a political election
    - Very Unlikely
    - Unlikely
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Likely
    - Very Likely

How much money do you think the average American voter should contribute to political causes per year?
Please enter your response as a number only, leaving out the $.

_____

Effect of *Citizens United* on Behavior
Does learning about *Citizens United v. FEC* make you more likely to donate to a political campaign, less likely to donate to a political campaign, or have no effect on how likely you are to donate to a political campaign?

- Much more likely to donate
- More likely to donate
- Somewhat more likely to donate
- No effect
- Somewhat less likely to donate
- Less likely to donate
- Much less likely to donate

Does learning about *Citizens United v. FEC* make you more likely to vote, less likely to vote, or have no effect on how likely you are to vote?

- Much more likely to vote
- More likely to vote
- Somewhat more likely to vote
- No effect
- Somewhat less likely to vote
- Less likely to vote
- Much less likely to vote

Political Cynicism and Perceptions of *Citizens United*

All of the questions in this section provided answer choices on a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. The order in which they were presented was randomized for each respondent.

Some say that after *Citizens United v. FEC*, voter participation is a hopeless cause. Others say that it is more important than ever for voters to donate to political campaigns and vote to counterbalance the influence of corporations.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief that voter participation is a hopeless cause, 5 representing the belief that it is more important than ever for voters to donate to political campaigns and vote, and in between representing a mix of the beliefs), where would you place yourself?

[reformprotect]
Recently, there has been a lot of talk about campaign finance reform. Some people say that it is most important to protect government from excessive influence by campaign contributors. Others say that it is most important to protect the freedom of individuals to financially support political candidates and parties.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing that it is most important to protect the government from excessive influence by campaign contributors, 5 representing that it is most important to protect the freedom of individuals to financially support candidates and parties, and in between representing that both protecting the freedom of individuals and protecting government from excessive influence by campaign contributors are somewhat important), where would you place yourself?

[moneymatters]
Some people say that money is the only thing that matters in elections. Others say that issues are the only things that matter in elections.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 means that money is the only thing that matters in elections, 5 means that issues are the only things that matter in elections, and in between representing the belief that a combination of money and issues matters in elections), where would you place yourself?

[donationsmatter]
Some people say that only large donations by a few corporations and the rich matter in elections. Others say that only small donations by many individuals matter in elections.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief that only large donations by a few matter, 5 representing the belief that only small donations by many matter, and in between representing the belief that a combination of large donations by a few and small donations by many matter), where would you place yourself?

Some people say that *Citizens United v. FEC* only benefitted big corporations. Others believe that *Citizens United v. FEC* only benefitted other special interests like unions.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing the belief *Citizens United v. FEC* only benefitted big corporations, 5 representing the belief that *Citizens United v. FEC* only benefitted other special interests like unions, and in between representing that Citizens United v. FEC benefitted both big corporations and other special interests like unions), where would you place yourself?

Attention Check 2
Some people do not care very much about politics. Others care very much about politics. Please select two if you are reading this and ignore the rest of the question.
On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 representing that you do not care very much about politics, 5 representing that you care very much about politics, and in between representing that you care somewhat about politics), where would you place yourself?

Prior Knowledge of *Citizens United*
Had you heard about the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) that allowed corporations to spend unlimited amounts on political expenditures before this survey?

- Yes
- No

Do you agree or disagree with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Do you believe that the ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* has had a positive, negative, or no effect on the fairness of elections in the US?

- Positive effect
- Negative effect
- No effect
- Unsure

Arguments For and Against Political Participation
Whether each respondent saw the arguments in favor of political participation or against political participation first was randomized.

A number of arguments have been made for why, after Citizens United v. FEC, voters might be more excited about contributing to political campaigns. Please rate the quality of each of the following arguments.

- Voters have a civic duty to donate in order to balance the influence of wealthy special interests. *[civicduty]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong
    - Strong
    - Very Strong

- Corporations should not be able to control the political process. *[corpcontrol]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong
    - Strong
    - Very Strong
- With more societal and media attention dedicated to elections, everyone should become more involved in the political process. *[payattention]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong
    - Strong
    - Very Strong

A number of arguments have been made for why, after Citizens United v. FEC, voters might be <u>less</u> excited about contributing to political campaigns. Please rate the quality of each of the following arguments.

- Small voter donations don't matter when wealthy corporations and special interests drown them out with large donations. *[drownout]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong
    - Strong
    - Very Strong
- The political process has become more corrupt because of big money, so voter participation isn't worth it. *[corruptpoli]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong
    - Strong
    - Very Strong
- Politicians are only looking out for themselves and working to raise campaign funds rather than caring about the interests of voters. *[poliselfish]*
    - Very Weak
    - Weak
    - Somewhat Weak
    - Neither Weak nor Strong
    - Somewhat Strong

- Strong
- Very Strong

Secret Code

This question was used to deter individuals from clicking through the survey and not answering the questions. On Mechanical Turk, potential participants were warned that they would receive a secret code at the end of the survey in order to receive payment.

Please choose a secret word. You'll have to enter it in the Mechanical Turk site to complete the survey and receive payment. Write it in the box.

_____

Appendix D: Full Regression Tables from Experiment Three

Table 5. Regression of Donation to Challenger Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.0840	-0.105
	(-0.30)	(-0.78)
postreatment	-0.424	-0.181
	(-1.56)	(-1.34)
partisan	-0.00686	0.00782
	(-0.12)	(0.26)
income	0.0364	0.0198
	(1.46)	(1.11)
education	0.00908	-0.0899*
	(0.11)	(-2.02)
poliknow	-0.0514	0.0263
	(-0.46)	(0.36)
politicalinterest	0.489**	0.457***
	(2.97)	(4.72)
age	0.0136+	-0.00301
	(1.80)	(-0.63)
male	-0.0287	-0.278*
	(-0.12)	(-2.57)
white	-0.648+	-0.219
	(-1.96)	(-0.91)
black	-0.699	-0.114
	(-1.50)	(-0.37)
hispanic	-0.389	-0.459+
	(-1.10)	(-1.71)
asian	-0.624	0.103
	(-1.31)	(0.37)
nativeam	-0.169	0.216
	(-0.45)	(0.55)
mixedrace	-0.405	0.304
	(-1.12)	(0.63)
registeredvoter	0.291	0.497**
	(0.89)	(2.69)
voted	-0.156	-0.0976
	(-0.61)	(-0.65)
donated	0.683**	1.096***
	(2.91)	(6.82)
volunteered	0.0261	0.0857
	(0.09)	(0.52)

Constant	3.386***	3.602***
	(4.82)	(8.65)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6. Regression of Donation Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.212	-0.0241
	(-0.88)	(-0.22)
postreatment	-0.165	0.0722
	(-0.73)	(0.66)
partisan	0.0312	0.0314
	(0.63)	(1.30)
income	0.0513*	0.0416**
	(2.05)	(2.86)
education	-0.0553	-0.0355
	(-0.77)	(-0.97)
poliknow	-0.0537	-0.0827
	(-0.51)	(-1.39)
politicalinterest	0.679***	0.480***
	(4.54)	(6.08)
age	0.00697	0.00321
	(1.12)	(0.83)
male	-0.0873	-0.0608
	(-0.48)	(-0.69)
white	-0.0202	-0.0526
	(-0.06)	(-0.27)
black	0.406	-0.213
	(0.84)	(-0.86)
hispanic	-0.0768	-0.210
	(-0.21)	(-0.96)
asian	-0.596	-0.00907
	(-1.39)	(-0.04)
nativeam	1.324+	-0.144
	(1.81)	(-0.45)
mixedrace	0.446	-0.0681
	(0.76)	(-0.17)
registeredvoter	-0.156	0.0486
	(-0.50)	(0.32)
voted	0.0643	-0.125
	(0.26)	(-1.02)
donated	1.649***	1.364***
	(5.92)	(10.40)

volunteered	-0.185	0.185
	(-0.61)	(1.37)
Constant	0.491	0.922**
	(0.71)	(2.71)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7. Regression of Fundraising Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.0401	-0.0511
	(0.21)	(-0.46)
postreatment	0.183	0.0723
	(1.02)	(0.66)
partisan	0.0128	0.0356
	(0.32)	(1.47)
income	0.0143	0.00903
	(0.66)	(0.62)
education	-0.0367	-0.00978
	(-0.63)	(-0.27)
poliknow	-0.0761	-0.0880
	(-0.73)	(-1.48)
politicalinterest	0.565***	0.439***
	(3.94)	(5.57)
age	-0.00624	-0.00761+
	(-1.25)	(-1.96)
male	-0.0579	-0.0471
	(-0.39)	(-0.53)
white	-0.167	-0.170
	(-0.63)	(-0.87)
black	-0.000983	-0.343
	(-0.00)	(-1.38)
hispanic	-0.400+	-0.458*
	(-1.71)	(-2.06)
asian	-0.343	-0.0237
	(-1.13)	(-0.10)
nativeam	2.210*	-0.0305
	(2.36)	(-0.10)
mixedrace	0.722*	0.111
	(1.98)	(0.28)
registeredvoter	0.0842	-0.0206
	(0.32)	(-0.14)
voted	-0.0948	-0.173
	(-0.42)	(-1.40)

donated	0.922***	0.664***
	(4.05)	(5.06)
volunteered	-0.0366	0.291*
	(-0.14)	(2.14)
Constant	1.116*	1.576***
	(2.00)	(4.62)
Observations	853	853

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 8. Regression of Voting Likelihood on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.481	-0.0515
	(-1.44)	(-0.32)
postreatment	-0.181	0.0230
	(-0.59)	(0.14)
partisan	-0.0811	-0.00292
	(-1.13)	(-0.08)
income	0.00405	0.0360+
	(0.11)	(1.68)
education	0.209*	0.144**
	(2.08)	(2.68)
poliknow	0.394**	0.138
	(2.64)	(1.57)
politicalinterest	0.917***	0.757***
	(3.75)	(6.50)
age	0.00972	0.00860
	(1.04)	(1.50)
male	-0.286	-0.332*
	(-1.04)	(-2.54)
white	-0.444	-0.105
	(-1.06)	(-0.36)
black	-0.684	-0.412
	(-1.28)	(-1.13)
hispanic	0.102	-0.211
	(0.24)	(-0.65)
asian	-1.171*	-0.284
	(-1.97)	(-0.85)
nativeam	1.765*	0.0796
	(2.11)	(0.17)
mixedrace	0.126	0.264
	(0.17)	(0.46)
registeredvoter	0.222	0.725**
	(0.58)	(3.26)

voted	0.826*	1.113***
	(2.14)	(6.13)
donated	0.210	0.0818
	(0.59)	(0.42)
volunteered	0.0572	0.429*
	(0.13)	(2.14)
Constant	0.679	0.185
	(0.86)	(0.37)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 9. Regression of How Much an Average American should Donate per Year on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.490	-0.0440
	(-1.47)	(-0.27)
postreatment	-0.214	0.0176
	(-0.70)	(0.11)
partisan	-0.0875	-0.00582
	(-1.22)	(-0.16)
income	-0.00552	0.0327
	(-0.14)	(1.51)
education	0.223*	0.146**
	(2.21)	(2.70)
poliknow	0.430**	0.151+
	(2.80)	(1.69)
politicalinterest	0.908***	0.752***
	(3.67)	(6.42)
age	0.00766	0.00793
	(0.81)	(1.37)
male	-0.288	-0.323*
	(-1.05)	(-2.46)
white	-0.345	-0.0604
	(-0.81)	(-0.21)
black	-0.577	-0.358
	(-1.07)	(-0.97)
hispanic	0.169	-0.174
	(0.39)	(-0.53)
asian	-1.079+	-0.240
	(-1.80)	(-0.72)
nativeam	-0.117	-0.0596
	(-0.25)	(-0.12)
mixedrace	0.207	0.296

	(0.28)	(0.51)
registeredvoter	0.184	0.699**
	(0.48)	(3.12)
voted	0.881*	1.143***
	(2.23)	(6.19)
donated	0.229	0.0923
	(0.65)	(0.48)
volunteered	0.0354	0.429*
	(0.08)	(2.14)
Constant	0.651	0.157
	(0.83)	(0.31)
Observations	853	853

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 10. Regression of Rating of Civic Duty Argument (+) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.114	0.183
	(0.38)	(1.23)
postreatment	-0.0502	0.219
	(-0.18)	(1.48)
partisan	-0.0647	0.0104
	(-1.04)	(0.32)
income	0.0389	0.00756
	(1.18)	(0.38)
education	-0.0557	-0.0267
	(-0.65)	(-0.54)
poliknow	-0.0852	0.0565
	(-0.73)	(0.70)
politicalinterest	0.165	0.228*
	(1.05)	(2.13)
age	-0.0195*	-0.0179***
	(-2.46)	(-3.40)
male	0.266	0.0743
	(1.17)	(0.62)
white	0.296	0.308
	(0.68)	(1.16)
black	0.632	0.708*
	(1.21)	(2.11)
hispanic	0.304	-0.0103
	(0.70)	(-0.03)
asian	0.515	0.650*
	(1.04)	(2.13)

nativeam	0.569	-0.379
	(0.94)	(-0.88)
mixedrace	0.676	0.807
	(1.05)	(1.52)
registeredvoter	0.404	-0.140
	(1.30)	(-0.69)
voted	0.187	0.00486
	(0.61)	(0.03)
donated	0.841*	0.843***
	(2.54)	(4.76)
volunteered	0.103	0.0993
	(0.26)	(0.54)
Constant	3.259***	2.986***
	(4.69)	(6.49)
Observations	857	857

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11. Regression of Rating of Corporate Control Argument (+) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	-0.0457	-0.0950
	(-0.23)	(-0.81)
postreatment	0.0635	-0.0451
	(0.33)	(-0.39)
partisan	0.142**	0.144***
	(3.05)	(5.58)
income	0.0364+	-0.00201
	(1.70)	(-0.13)
education	-0.0337	-0.0893*
	(-0.51)	(-2.30)
poliknow	0.154	0.174**
	(1.52)	(2.74)
politicalinterest	-0.305+	0.0999
	(-1.91)	(1.19)
age	0.00709	0.0109**
	(1.13)	(2.63)
male	0.0227	-0.0167
	(0.13)	(-0.18)
white	-0.347	0.165
	(-1.31)	(0.79)
black	-0.426	-0.216
	(-0.99)	(-0.81)
hispanic	-0.245	-0.0664

	(-0.75)	(-0.28)
asian	-0.708*	0.00479
	(-2.33)	(0.02)
nativeam	-1.377***	-0.830*
	(-3.40)	(-2.43)
mixedrace	-0.842	0.0846
	(-1.47)	(0.20)
registeredvoter	0.238	-0.0243
	(0.85)	(-0.15)
voted	-0.0982	-0.0239
	(-0.32)	(-0.18)
donated	-0.131	-0.143
	(-0.52)	(-1.02)
volunteered	0.245	0.0159
	(0.88)	(0.11)
Constant	5.317***	4.501***
	(10.28)	(12.40)
Observations	858	858

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 12. Regression of Rating of Selfish Politicians Argument (-) on Treatment Groups and Covariates

	Weighted	Unweighted
negtreatment	0.565*	0.224+
	(2.49)	(1.92)
postreatment	0.330	0.101
	(1.37)	(0.87)
partisan	-0.0163	-0.00215
	(-0.32)	(-0.08)
income	-0.0453+	-0.0436**
	(-1.79)	(-2.83)
education	-0.0810	-0.0222
	(-1.16)	(-0.58)
poliknow	0.00349	0.109+
	(0.03)	(1.73)
politicalinterest	0.134	0.202*
	(0.89)	(2.41)
age	0.0132*	0.00490
	(2.27)	(1.19)
male	-0.101	0.0248
	(-0.58)	(0.27)
white	-0.466	-0.170
	(-1.30)	(-0.82)

black	-1.033*	-0.605*
	(-2.30)	(-2.31)
hispanic	0.0383	0.0250
	(0.10)	(0.11)
asian	-0.287	-0.214
	(-0.73)	(-0.90)
nativeam	-0.733*	-0.626+
	(-1.97)	(-1.85)
mixedrace	-0.161	-0.188
	(-0.37)	(-0.45)
registeredvoter	-0.434	-0.222
	(-1.52)	(-1.39)
voted	0.176	0.121
	(0.68)	(0.93)
donated	-0.521*	-0.430**
	(-2.06)	(-3.10)
volunteered	0.249	-0.375**
	(0.92)	(-2.61)
Constant	5.706***	5.155***
	(8.44)	(14.33)
Observations	859	859

t statistics in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix E: Tables of Interaction Effects for Subgroup Analyses in Experiment Three

Tables 13 and 14 display the interaction effects for all covariates that were tested as examples of full results. For the remainder of the tables, I only display results for covariates that have a significant interaction effect in either the weighted or unweighted model.

Question One: Does *Citizens United* Affect Voter Beliefs About the Importance of Political Participation?

Table 13. Interaction Effects for Vignette Likelihood of Donation to Challenger

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	.2273065	.2053134	.1155332	.1011548
	(.1455938)	(.1346139)	(.07542)	(.0758318)
income	-.0354022	.0442357	-.0015367	.0273845
	(.0778573)	(.0731617)	(.0453638)	(.0448148)
education	-.0956101	.0137188	-.0214898	.0885992
	(.2182876)	(.2081149)	(.1126878)	(.1111034)
poliknow	.2106247	-.3358205	.0743649	-.1467115
	(.3159013)	(.3372781)	(.1803233)	(.1842165)
politicalinterest	-.0121696	.0157493	-.3404798	-.2241839
	(.4462773)	(.4379958)	(.2316522)	(.2287586)
age	.0174001	-.0129404	.0211502+	.0040282
	(.0153677)	(.0184511)	(.012064)	(.0119175)
registeredvoter	-.3173549	-.4400707	.2697051	.1643267
	(.9412931)	(.9990918)	(.417928)	(.4336443)
voted	-.8198671	.0162582	-.1402263	.3425404
	(.7125466)	(.7543799)	(.3332283)	(.3509717)
donated	.2948982	.6696248	.2957348	.3048208
	(.7019042)	(.6421312)	(.3554024)	(.3454288)
volunteered	-.0690429	1.142341+	-.695974+	.1300783
	(.7956347)	(.6852363)	(.401903)	(.3936044)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 14. Interaction Effects for "Likelihood of Donating to a Campaign" Community Participation Measure

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	-.196217	-.1196992	-.0287494	.0281293
	(.1531806)	(.1370459)	(.0653374)	(.0656942)
income	.0402246	.1241422	-.0228548	.0174317
	(.085996)	(.0760681)	(.0387755)	(.0383063)
education	.1184297	.2076476	.064377	.1138291
	(.2016672)	(.1838971)	(.0967284)	(.0953684)
poliknow	-.2555823	-.6272279+	-.190737	-.2947904+
	(.3547891)	(.3329984)	(.1551535)	(.1585033)
politicalinterest	-.2722926	-.737474*	-.4208666*	-.4941226*
	(.3912565)	(.3319309)	(.1952823)	(.192843)
age	-.0131377	-.0143448	.0018775	-.0064075
	(.019426)	(.0181232)	(.0104037)	(.0102773)
registeredvoter	-.5112537	-.9357008+	-.1212385	-.0408791
	(.5466816)	(.5208192)	(.3622655)	(.3758886)
voted	-.551932	-.5044875	-.0162316	.1728692
	(.5315183)	(.5439945)	(.2873117)	(.3026102)
donated	.5134897	-.1968206	.0752018	-.1500295
	(.6874775)	(.7102563)	(.2887429)	(.2806399)
volunteered	-.2972792	-.2191199	-.4752139	-.3924544
	(.9084868)	(.9012616)	(.3395505)	(.3325393)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 15. Interaction Effects for "Likelihood of Fundraising for a Political Cause" Community Participation Measure

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	-.2258198*	-.2258664*	-.052476	-.0307933
	(.1027351)	(.1092459)	(.0614151)	(.0616525)
education	-.0360508	.1201237	.0046824	.1848793*
	(.1414997)	(.1401926)	(.0898263)	(.08847)
age	.0064058	.014805	.0179334+	.0182879+
	(.0151769)	(.0158101)	(.0096678)	(.0095415)
registeredvoter	-.5357794	-.7832102+	-.6080076+	-.3809035
	(.3692616)	(.4202774)	(.3409294)	(.3522085)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 16. Interaction Effects for "Likelihood of Voting in a Political Election" Community Participation Measure

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
income	-.2066173+	-.058174	-.132137*	-.0292986
	(.1059912)	(.1018125)	(.0577203)	(.0570218)
poliknow	-.8097822*	-.7861324*	-.0535904	.0702712
	(.3891434)	(.3945419)	(.227395)	(.2323045)
politicalinterest	-.2491616	-1.014004*	-.2084595	-.0231683
	(.4019725)	(.4700724)	(.2873673)	(.2837777)
registeredvoter	-.37113	-1.86729+	-.1624726	.027113
	(.8775483)	(1.02102)	(.5187075)	(.5382136)
donated	-.9904754	-1.409788+	.0555716	-.4652662
	(.7504345)	(.7258648)	(.4683585)	(.455215)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 17. Interaction Effects for Citizens United's Impact on Likelihood of Donating

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	-.0385319	-.1064218	.1069729*	.0364597
	(.1093638)	(.098781)	(.0541368)	(.0544324)
income	.1009074*	.0812976+	.0218673	-.0098554
	(.0464625)	(.0485095)	(.0327146)	(.0323187)
volunteered	-.4405955	-.3292479	-.5091968+	-.4251805
	(.6347213)	(.5340502)	(.2909176)	(.2849107)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 18. Interaction Effects for Citizens United's Impact on Likelihood of Voting

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
education	.2546257	.3228233*	.0686955	.1223038
	(.1576197)	(.1317344)	(.091707)	(.0904663)
registeredvoter	.7976099+	.0045297	.3464655	.4664883
	(.4610199)	(.5461653)	(.3412339)	(.3541224)
voted	.0276768	.7823516+	.2771844	.7404769**
	(.4849415)	(.4724465)	(.2676655)	(.2819984)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 19. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Importance of Voter Participation Post-Citizens United

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
age	-.002371	.0002777	.0151931+	.0067879
	(.013798)	(.0135315)	(.0090222)	(.0089126)
volunteered	-.5785252	.0018391	-.6423157*	-.1529199
	(.6136815)	(.5381621)	(.3035718)	(.2973035)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Question Two: What Arguments About *Citizens United*'s Impacts on Voter Participation Do Americans Believe?

Table 20. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Positive "Civic Duty" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
income	.1305164+	.044281	.0645884	.0505032
	(.0753728)	(.0749658)	(.0479841)	(.0474123)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 21. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Positive "Corporate Control" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
politicalinterest	.1452343	.7016886*	.0835211	.0352596
	(.3417079)	(.3423489)	(.199958)	(.1974698)
registeredvoter	1.138703+	.231189	.7195843*	.1279736
	(.5802402)	(.6668696)	(.3538944)	(.3672318)
voted	.8485004+	.2514886	.6732565*	-.0625523
	(.4975929)	(.4678273)	(.280676)	(.2956632)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 22. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Positive "Pay Attention" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	-.3784294**	-.2293894+	-.1360562*	-.0770623
	(.1284572)	(.1311699)	.0679753	(.06854640)
age	.0174323	.0023386	.0295603**	.0129373
	(.0177146)	(.019267)	(.0108152)	(.0107004)
volunteered	-1.537083*	-.7001119	-.3472324	-.2716223
	(.7251412)	(.5431205)	(.368456)	(.3608912)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 23. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Negative "Small Donations" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
income	-.212693**	-.1235937+	-.060248	-.059143
	(.0787805)	(.0733215)	(.0444536)	(.0439199)
poliknow	-.7427655**	-.5681879+	-.0369931	-.0924754
	(.3113382)	(.3060548)	(.1768253)	(.1806398)
voted	-.4409191	-.6536504	.7683912*	.1213643
	(.6700676)	(.712249)	(.3257629)	(.3430968)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 24. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Negative "Corrupt Politics" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
partisan	.4483687**	.174631	.0598564	-.0639205
	(.1644608)	(.1442536)	(.0799191)	(.0803424)
income	-.122904	-.0630364	-.0892691+	-.0466588
	(.0820574)	(.0780406)	(.0476521)	(.0470778)
politicalinterest	-.4823322	.590993	-.2960846	-.4068411+
	(.4513859)	(.4090338)	(.2495014)	(.2466279)
voted	-.0620986	-1.390263*	.3352422	-.5611941
	(.6714765)	(.5669318)	(.3492388)	(.3672474)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 25. Interaction Effects for Rating of the Strength of Negative "Politicians are Selfish" Argument

Covariate	Weighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Weighted Interaction with *postreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *negtreatment*	Unweighted Interaction with *postreatment*
registeredvoter	-.7010221	-1.81229**	.0251874	-.2708307
	(.6182985)	(.5925547)	(.3485022)	(.3616364)
donated	-.9982294+	-.6870699	-.0272695	-.4812187
	(.5488826)	(.607482)	(.3057923)	(.2972535)
volunteered	-1.310938*	-1.110853*	-.1025002	-.1397109
	(.5578512)	(.5485791)	(.3356504)	(.3287547)

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix F: Sample Statistics of Covariates Tested for Interactions for Experiment Three

These summary statistics are provided for use in interpreting the magnitude of interaction effects.

Covariate	Mean	Standard Error
partisan	4.940248	.0621732
income	5.363141	.1018307
education	4.016393	.0422484
poliknow	2.398037	.026089
politicalinterest	2.161396	.0197642
age	33.2349	.4017123
registeredvoter	.8767721	.0108605
voted	.7884406	.0134944
donated	.1810251	.012722
volunteered	.1461287	.0116712