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Polarization in American Presidential Politics;

Looking for the effects of *Citizens United* and increased campaign spending

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Introduction

Political Science research on polarization is on the rise. The importance of polarization research is directly related to civic engagement and democracy. Brehm and Rahn (1997) reinforce this importance, "suggesting links between interpersonal trust, civic engagement, and confidence in government, such that low confidence levels in government could potentially harm interpersonal trust as well as civic engagement." Past research has focused on polarization in Congress, political elites, or political parties and examined the consequences of polarization instead of the causes. Prior research also examines polarization over a large time frame, but does not study or explain polarization as a process. I focus on polarization in the electorate, not the elite; I identify the causes of polarization, as opposed to its effects; and I examine polarization as a process unfolding across time. The scope of my research includes two presidential elections-two elections occurring before the *Citizens United* v Federal Election Commission (2010) decision, and two presidential elections occurring after *Citizens United*. It is my assumption—building on Brehm and Rahn (1997)—that campaign finance, party loyalty, and government trust are interrelated causes of polarization. As stated by David M. Primo and Jeffrey Milyo (2005), "it is surprising that no study has directly examined the connection between existing campaign finance laws and how citizens view their government." My research on polarization directly fills this gap in the literature.

For the purposes of this research I examine affective polarization, "the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view partisans negatively and copartisans positively" (Campbell et. All 1960 60; Green, Palmquist, Schickler 2004). Trust is defined as "the faith individuals have in the government" (Citrin and Muste 1999). The effects of campaign finance is examined by comparing pre-*Citizens United* (2010) elections with post-*Citizens*

United elections. Specifically, I believe the *Citizens United* ruling allowing political action committees (PACs) more freedom regarding campaign contributions caused society to have less trust in government. More money contributed by PACs that is visible to the public results in less trust. Therefore, the concept of campaign finance is defined by the relative amount of PAC contributions to candidates and the amount of money raised in presidential campaigns. Research suggests that individuals trust PACs less than individual donors and became skeptical of political corruption when large amounts of money are in the mix. "Hence, when corporate contributions are limited, individuals cheer, but when individual contributions are limited, individuals jeer" (Primo and Milyo 2005).

Theory

Polarization

Studies often observe state candidates and incumbents, or elections to the US House or Senate. Furthermore, polarization is studied as elite polarization leading to electorate polarization. Because of political officials being polarized, the electorate picks up polarization cues and becomes polarized as well, based on party identification. Affective polarization is mostly studied using individuals as units of observation. Much of the literature operationalizing affective polarization utilizes the social identity theory, in which individuals with party identifications are studied in two groups, the in-group and the out-group. Some studies suggest individuals strongly identify with the in-group and because of this strong identification, very negative attitudes and feelings are held regarding the out-group. It is the individual's strong connection with the in-group that causes such hostility and negativity towards the outgroup. On the contrary, other scholars suggest the negative attitudes and feelings individuals possess towards the out-group drives them towards the in-group. Taking the opposite track, these studies

argue it is not the strong identification with the in-group but rather the opposition with the out-group that causes affective polarization. Although these studies suggest different directions of causality between in-group and out-group identification and the out-group antipathy, they nonetheless establish a relationship between groups' rising affective polarization and the political identification of individuals.

Campaign finance

Linkages between affective polarization and campaign finance can also be found in the literature. Much of the debate revolves around political trust or efficacy and campaign finance laws or campaign spending. Some research concludes that limits on individual donations have little impact while corporate limits make a significant difference. There is not enough evidence to understand whether campaign finance restrictions have a positive impact on democracy or civic engagement. There are good reasons to expect, however, that de-regulating campaign finance could have a negative impact on democracy. In fact, multiple law cases and court opinions point out the negative impacts of campaign finance laws.

> Of almost equal concern as the danger of actual quid pro quo arrangements is the impact of the appearance of corruption stemming from public awareness of the opportunities for abuse inherent in a regime of large individual financial contributions. In CSC v. Letter Carriers [413 U.S. 548, 1973] ... the Court found that the danger to 'fair and effective government' posed by partisan political conduct on the part of federal employees charged with administering the law was a sufficiently important concern to justify broad restrictions on the employees' right of partisan political association. Here, as there, Congress could legitimately conclude that the

> avoidance of the appearance of improper influence 'is also critical . . . if confidence in the system of representative Government is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent.

Despite this logic, empirical studies neglect to investigate the relationship between democratic integrity and legal reforms of the campaign finance system (Primo and Milyo 2005). Research on polarization, however, suggests possible mechanisms connecting this system to citizen perceptions of democracy.

Media

One route is through media coverage of elections. Findings suggest that partisan media exposure correlates with political identification and affective polarization. Media is argued to play a large part in political attitudes and actions. Furthermore, media is argued to prime individuals and mold their perceptions based on the coverage digested in their media network. Exposure to political bias can influence individuals to become distinctly negative towards the opposition. Media exposure, campaign advertising, and campaign targeting are all areas of study tied in with political identification and polarization.

Presidential Elections

The World Values Survey (2011) presents evidence that people are more likely to vote in national elections than local elections. In 2011, the World Values Survey in the United States found 57.8% always vote in national elections while only 37.8% always vote in local elections. Using the data, I assume more people are be knowledgeable of presidential elections and campaign finance associated with presidential politics. Additionally, because individuals are more likely to cast ballots in presidential elections, I assume the increased participation in voting is related to the impression that presidential elections are extremely consequential, a sense

created by media coverage. Presidential campaigns earn excessive media exposure and this reporting often emphasizes how much each campaign has raised or expectations regarding campaign fundraising. Average Americans are exposed to campaign fundraising excessively through media therefore familiarity with campaign spending is heightened.

Trust in Government

Many studies examine public trust in government. The National Election Survey has been asking individuals to identify their level of trust in government since 1958. Pew Research Center has developed an extensive study, beginning in 1958, titled Deconstructing Distrust, that examines public attitudes toward the federal government. In a 2015 study, Pew Research Center finds "[o]nly 19% of Americans today say they can "trust the government in Washington to do what is right" "just about always" (3%) or "most of the time" (16%) (Public Trust in Government, 2015). This recent study, alongside other various studies conducted by the Pew Research Center, shows the discourse of public trust in government. The research surveying public view of government in the last ten years has reaped the same results, low public trust in government. Considering the data from the various studies between 1948-2015 on public trust in government conducted by Pew Research Center, I assume public trust in government is low. Also, considering studies performed by Pew Research Center on opposing political parties and trust in government, I assume individuals are most trustful of government when their own political party is in control. Specifically, Republicans are more likely to be distrustful of the government when a Democrat is serving as President. Similarly, Democrats are more likely to be distrustful of government when a Republican is serving as President.

Political Spending

Past research has proven individuals in the electorate are more skeptical of "big money" in politics as opposed to individual donations. For this study, I am examining how individuals use the lens of money-in-politics to evaluate candidates and partisans. I am assuming this "big money" translates to political action committees. Just as average Americans in the electorate are skeptical of large corporations donating money to campaigns, average Americans are skeptical of political action committees donating large sums of money to candidates or campaigns. This skepticism grows when large sums of money are not closely monitored. Due to the *Citizens United* (2010) decision, PACs are allowed to make larger contributions and experience less restrictions all around, increasing campaign fundraising. While disclosure laws are still intact and enforced, paths for "dark money" boosting campaigns and setting campaign fundraising records become more accessible and obvious. Individuals associate large sums of money from these sources with corruption, leading to distrust. Distrust in "big money" leads to distrust in opposition campaigns and officials with ties to the "big money," leading to polarization among the electorate.

Hypotheses

My first hypothesis (Hypothesis A) states citizen's familiarity with and understanding of money allows them to judge candidates, political parties, and governments on the amount and sources of money associated with each. Hypothesis B states the 2010 *Citizens United* decision caused society's trust in government to decrease by increasing the amount of money being contributed by suspect sources; i.e., PACs. Hypothesis C states that when society has low trust in government, individuals tied to or identifying with political parties become more distrustful and

overly negative of opposition political party affiliates, increasing affective polarization. This research is designed to confirm or reject that increased PAC spending in presidential campaigns, due to the (2010) *Citizens United* decision, directly decreased society's trust in government and this distrust in government caused more negative views between political affiliates, increasing affective polarization.

Methods

Unlike studies before, I examine the role of *Citizens United* (2010) testing for connections among campaign spending, trust, and polarization in the context of American presidential politics. To examine such connections mixed methods are used, basing the quantitative data in the established literature, and conducting the qualitative data originally. To establish these connections using mixed methods, I examine whether people are aware of campaign spending and how they become aware as well as whether sources of campaign spending influence citizen's perception of trust, leading to affective polarization. If average Americans are aware of campaign spending through media's coverage of campaign finance associated with candidates and political parties, distrust appears and increases affective polarization. The relationship is as follows: people are familiar with campaign spending through media. The familiarity allows them to then judge candidates and political party based on campaign funds and sources of the funds. The *Citizens United* (2010) ruling increased campaign funds through PACs, seen as corrupt sources, leading to decreased trust and affective polarization. To test this relationship surveys and focus groups are operationalized.

Survey

Using a Likert scale, the survey (See Appendix) was designed to capture respondents' awareness of *Citizens United* (2010), exposure to presidential elections, and attitudes towards

individual vs PAC campaign contributions. Based on past studies and my research thus far I predicted individuals would be less likely to trust candidates who receive money from PACs and more likely to trust individuals who receive money from individual donors. Survey participants were first asked to identify their ethnicity, age, and political identification. This information allowed me to compare the data I originally collected with the national population. Question 1 measured individuals' amount of trust in candidates who receive large sums of money from political action committees by asking "Presidential Candidate A received a substantial amount of money from a political action committee. Presidential Candidate A can be trusted." The framing of this question directly asked the participant to evaluate the trustworthiness of candidates associated with PAC finance and eliminated a primed comparison between PAC finance and individual donor finance. Question 2 measured individuals' amount of trust in candidates who receive money from individual donors by asking "Presidential Candidate B received a substantial amount of money from an individual donor. Presidential Candidate B can be trusted." The framing of this question directly asked the participant of the trustworthiness of candidates associated with individual donor finance and eliminated a primed comparison between PAC finance and individual donor finance. If respondents were less likely to agree that candidates are trustworthy when the question cites PACs as the funding source, Hypotheses A—stating individuals judge candidates and political parties based on the source of money associated with campaigns—is affirmed.

Question 3 determined whether individuals are familiar with the *Citizens United* (2010) decision by asking participants "I am aware of the impact regarding the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* (2010)." The framing of the question strategically just refers to the decision by name and avoids explaining the opinion and description of the court in this matter. The omission

of the facts eliminated priming participants to answer as if they are aware of the decision due to the explanation on the survey.

If individuals were familiar with the decision, it suggests that Hypotheses A stating individuals are familiar with money is supported. If the survey showed individuals were not aware of the *Citizens United* decision, the hypotheses was weakened. Although citizens might not be aware of the exact decision, familiarity of money could still exist. Question 4 measured respondent's exposure to campaign spending in presidential races by asking if "much of the news coverage in the 2016 presidential race included money being raised and spent by candidates." The framing of this question allowed assessment of whether or not participants were influenced by media regarding presidential elections only, eliminating irrelevant coverage of other elections for the purposes of this study. If respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" it was inferred individuals become aware of campaign spending through media, further strengthening Hypotheses A. Questions 5 measured affective polarization by asking respondents how they feel about the opposition asking to provide an answer for " I do not trust individuals with different political beliefs than my own". The framing of this question allowed a determination of whether or not participants were willing to trust individuals who have differing political views, already established in previous polarization studies, with the opposition. If respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that they are distrustful of individuals with different political beliefs, it would suggest affective polarization exists among the electorate. Furthermore, if individuals answer "strongly disagree" or "disagree" to question 1(candidate with PAC contribution can be trusted), "strongly agree" or "agree" to question 3(aware of the *Citizens United* (2010) decision), and associated distrust with the opposition to question 5, Hypotheses C establishing correlation between distrust, PACS, *Citizens United* (2010), and affective polarization are confirmed. To

measure the association among these variables, I use both lambda and gamma to measure the proportional reduction of error.

The survey was sent electronically to MUW students via student email, while other surveys were printed and distributed in class and to random individuals at a grocery store. By issuing the survey online and in class, the sample included only individuals enrolled in the at Mississippi University for Women. According to US News, the student population for MUW undergraduate students is approximately 2,745 with approximately 19 percent of the population as male students and 81 percent female students. While the female population is inherently larger than the male population, non-responses to the email should ensure a more representative sample. Male representation was ensured through the survey given in person in other locations such as community sites.

The survey sample size is approximately 55 individuals. The sample is of adequate size but primarily pulled from the Golden Triangle area of northeastern Mississippi. Although the sample was pulled from a concentrated location, I increased the representativeness of the sample by paying attention to varying race, age, and political affiliation throughout the research (see Appendix). In analyzing the survey, I compare the original collected data to the data produced by the US Census in specific categories and locations as well as the US electorate as a whole. (See Below).

Chart 1: Sex and Ethnicity, Mississippi Specific

MISSISSIPPI	Total	2,203	2,170	1,725	78.3	2.3	79.5	2.2	1,470	66.7	2.6	67.7	2.6
	Male	1,026	1,010	780	76.0	3.5	77.2	3.4	657	64.0	3.9	65.0	3.9
	Female	1,177	1,160	945	80.3	3.0	81.5	3.0	813	69.1	3.5	70.1	3.5
	White alone	1,377	1,355	1,070	77.7	2.9	79.0	2.9	918	66.7	3.3	67.8	3.3
	White non-Hispanic alone	1,345	1,339	1,056	78.5	2.9	78.8	2.9	907	67.4	3.3	67.7	3.3
	Black alone	782	777	632	80.9	4.4	81.4	4.4	537	68.7	5.2	69.1	5.2
	Asian alone	18	13	8	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	6	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
	Hispanic (of any race)	41	23	18	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	15	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
	White alone or in combination	1,394	1,371	1,081	77.6	2.9	78.9	2.9	923	66.2	3.3	67.3	3.3
	Black alone or in combination	791	786	639	80.8	4.4	81.3	4.4	544	68.8	5.2	69.2	5.2
	Asian alone or in combination	22	18	10	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	6	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)

Chart 2: Total Population of all States

Table 4a. Reported Voting and Registration of the Citizen Voting-Age Population, for States: November 2016
(In thousands)

			Registered					Voted				
STATE	Total Population	Total Citizen Population	Total registered	Percent registered (Total)	Margin of Error [1]	Percent registered (Citizen)	Margin of Error [1]	Total voted	Percent voted (Total)	Margin of Error [1]	Percent voted (Citizen)	Margin of Error [1]
UNITED STATES	245,502	224,059	157,596	64.2	0.3	70.3	0.3	137,537	56.0	0.3	61.4	0.3
ALABAMA	3,717	3,651	2,526	68.0	2.5	69.2	2.5	2,095	56.4	2.7	57.4	2.7
ALASKA	518	502	358	69.1	2.6	71.3	2.6	308	59.4	2.8	61.3	2.8
ARIZONA	5,196	4,585	3,145	60.5	2.2	68.6	2.3	2,769	53.3	2.3	60.4	2.4
ARKANSAS	2,216	2,116	1,456	65.7	2.7	68.8	2.6	1,241	56.0	2.8	58.7	2.8
CALIFORNIA	29,894	24,890	16,096	53.8	1.0	64.7	1.0	14,416	48.2	1.0	57.9	1.0
COLORADO	4,242	3,895	2,893	68.2	2.4	74.3	2.3	2,707	63.8	2.5	69.5	2.5
CONNECTICUT	2,759	2,483	1,763	63.9	2.6	71.0	2.6	1,586	57.5	2.7	63.9	2.8
DELAWARE	729	669	487	66.8	2.6	72.8	2.5	417	57.2	2.7	62.3	2.8
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	553	512	420	75.9	2.4	82.1	2.2	380	68.7	2.6	74.3	2.5
FLORIDA	16,202	14,428	9,604	59.3	1.3	66.6	1.3	8,578	52.9	1.3	59.5	1.3
GEORGIA	7,626	7,048	4,892	64.1	1.8	69.4	1.8	4,246	55.7	1.9	60.2	1.9
HAWAII	1,064	974	530	49.8	2.7	54.4	2.8	460	43.3	2.7	47.3	2.8
IDAHO	1,224	1,150	790	64.5	2.7	68.7	2.7	714	58.3	2.7	62.1	2.8
ILLINOIS	9,723	8,970	6,665	68.5	1.6	74.3	1.5	5,719	58.8	1.7	63.8	1.7
INDIANA	4,988	4,795	3,298	66.1	2.2	68.8	2.2	2,795	56.0	2.3	58.3	2.3
IOWA	2,394	2,292	1,657	69.2	2.6	72.3	2.5	1,454	60.7	2.7	63.4	2.7
KANSAS	2,142	2,029	1,438	67.1	2.8	70.9	2.8	1,243	58.0	3.0	61.3	3.0
KENTUCKY	3,348	3,246	2,253	67.3	2.7	69.4	2.7	1,850	55.3	2.8	57.0	2.9
LOUISIANA	3,463	3,353	2,446	70.6	2.5	73.0	2.4	2,067	59.7	2.6	61.6	2.7
MAINE	1,058	1,038	830	78.5	2.5	80.0	2.5	754	71.3	2.8	72.7	2.8
MARYLAND	4,623	4,158	3,114	67.3	2.3	74.9	2.3	2,737	59.2	2.4	65.8	2.5
MASSACHUSETTS	5,374	4,967	3,660	68.1	2.1	73.7	2.0	3,315	61.7	2.2	66.7	2.2
MICHIGAN	7,624	7,332	5,434	71.3	1.7	74.1	1.7	4,713	61.8	1.8	64.3	1.8
MINNESOTA	4,190	3,985	3,055	72.9	2.3	76.7	2.2	2,738	65.3	2.4	68.7	2.4
MISSISSIPPI	2,203	2,170	1,725	78.3	2.3	79.5	2.2	1,470	66.7	2.6	67.7	2.6
MISSOURI	4,626	4,486	3,333	72.1	2.2	74.3	2.2	2,906	62.8	2.4	64.8	2.4
MONTANA	798	790	581	72.8	2.3	73.5	2.3	521	65.2	2.4	65.9	2.4
NEBRASKA	1,407	1,336	1,008	71.7	2.6	75.5	2.6	893	63.4	2.8	66.8	2.8
NEVADA	2,234	1,975	1,371	61.4	2.7	69.4	2.7	1,195	53.5	2.8	60.5	2.9
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1,044	1,012	763	73.1	2.5	75.4	2.5	698	66.9	2.7	69.0	2.6
NEW JERSEY	6,862	5,958	4,165	60.7	1.9	69.9	2.0	3,665	53.4	2.0	61.5	2.1
NEW MEXICO	1,547	1,396	916	59.2	2.5	65.6	2.6	765	49.4	2.6	54.8	2.7
NEW YORK	15,506	13,751	9,142	59.0	1.3	66.5	1.4	7,869	50.7	1.3	57.2	1.4
NORTH CAROLINA	7,631	6,960	5,194	68.1	1.8	74.6	1.7	4,700	61.6	1.9	67.5	1.9
NORTH DAKOTA	583	564	424	72.8	2.4	75.2	2.4	362	62.1	2.6	64.2	2.6
OHIO	8,811	8,499	6,128	69.5	1.6	72.1	1.6	5,408	61.4	1.7	63.6	1.7
OKLAHOMA	2,923	2,746	1,861	63.7	2.8	67.8	2.8	1,555	53.2	2.9	56.6	3.0
OREGON	3,185	2,929	2,147	67.4	2.6	73.3	2.6	1,942	61.0	2.7	66.3	2.8
PENNSYLVANIA	9,980	9,596	6,909	69.2	1.5	72.0	1.5	6,008	60.2	1.6	62.6	1.6
RHODE ISLAND	836	766	538	64.4	2.7	70.3	2.7	464	55.5	2.8	60.6	2.9
SOUTH CAROLINA	3,733	3,598	2,575	69.0	2.5	71.6	2.4	2,233	59.8	2.6	62.1	2.6
SOUTH DAKOTA	631	612	437	69.3	2.7	71.4	2.7	362	57.3	2.9	59.1	2.9
TENNESSEE	5,057	4,872	3,251	64.3	2.2	66.7	2.2	2,630	52.0	2.3	54.0	2.3
TEXAS	20,172	17,378	11,724	58.1	1.2	67.5	1.2	9,626	47.7	1.2	55.4	1.3
UTAH	2,096	1,969	1,398	66.7	2.3	71.0	2.2	1,234	58.9	2.4	62.7	2.4
VERMONT	500	488	351	70.2	2.8	71.9	2.8	305	61.0	3.0	62.5	3.0
VIRGINIA	6,343	5,829	4,399	69.4	1.9	75.5	1.9	3,973	62.6	2.0	68.2	2.0
WASHINGTON	5,592	5,104	3,906	69.9	2.0	76.5	2.0	3,382	60.5	2.2	66.3	2.2
WEST VIRGINIA	1,434	1,425	913	63.6	2.8	64.1	2.8	723	50.4	2.9	50.8	2.9
WISCONSIN	4,465	4,354	3,323	74.4	2.2	76.3	2.1	3,068	68.7	2.3	70.5	2.3
WYOMING	436	427	304	69.7	2.7	71.1	2.7	277	63.5	2.8	64.8	2.8

Chart 3: Ages, Mississippi Specifics

SOUTH	TOTAL	Total 18 years and	91,973	84,157	58,840	69.9	12,336	14.7	12,982	15.4	50,522	60.0	21,044	25.0	12,591	15.0	64.0	54.9
		18 to 24 years	10,655	9,687	5,365	55.4	2,380	24.6	1,942	20.0	4,062	41.9	3,765	38.9	1,860	19.2	50.4	38.1
		25 to 44 years	31,659	27,430	18,203	66.4	4,850	17.7	4,377	16.0	15,035	54.8	8,206	29.9	4,188	15.3	57.5	47.5
		45 to 64 years	31,386	29,308	21,437	73.1	3,451	11.8	4,420	15.1	19,041	65.0	5,964	20.3	4,303	14.7	68.3	60.7
		65 to 74 years	11,015	10,686	8,375	78.4	970	9.1	1,342	12.6	7,635	71.4	1,716	16.1	1,335	12.5	76.0	69.3
		75 years and over	7,258	7,046	5,460	77.5	684	9.7	901	12.8	4,748	67.4	1,393	19.8	905	12.8	75.2	65.4
	SOUTH ATLANTIC	Total 18 years and	48,875	44,626	31,597	70.8	5,686	12.7	7,343	16.5	27,987	62.7	9,449	21.2	7,190	16.1	64.6	57.3
		18 to 24 years	5,427	4,913	2,871	58.4	1,020	20.8	1,021	20.8	2,272	46.3	1,644	33.5	997	20.3	52.9	41.9
		25 to 44 years	16,212	13,949	9,370	67.2	2,153	15.4	2,426	17.4	8,019	57.5	3,609	25.9	2,321	16.6	57.8	49.5
		45 to 64 years	17,023	15,840	11,649	73.5	1,674	10.6	2,517	15.9	10,628	67.1	2,725	17.2	2,487	15.7	68.4	62.4
		65 to 74 years	6,134	5,947	4,638	78.0	510	8.6	799	13.4	4,308	72.4	846	14.2	793	13.3	75.6	70.2
		75 years and over	4,078	3,977	3,069	77.2	329	8.3	579	14.6	2,760	69.4	626	15.7	591	14.9	75.2	67.7
	EAST SOUTH CENTRAL	Total 18 years and	14,324	13,939	9,755	70.0	2,185	15.7	1,999	14.3	8,045	57.7	4,010	28.8	1,884	13.5	68.1	56.2
		18 to 24 years	1,725	1,663	938	56.4	428	25.7	297	17.9	706	42.5	684	41.2	272	16.4	54.4	40.9
		25 to 44 years	4,705	4,486	3,024	67.4	800	17.8	662	14.7	2,427	54.1	1,436	32.0	624	13.9	64.3	51.6
		45 to 64 years	5,020	4,941	3,555	72.0	680	13.8	705	14.3	3,029	61.3	1,256	25.4	656	13.3	70.8	60.3
		65 to 74 years	1,727	1,711	1,365	79.8	152	8.9	194	11.4	1,196	69.9	319	18.6	196	11.5	79.1	69.3
		75 years and over	1,148	1,138	872	76.7	124	10.9	141	12.4	687	60.4	315	27.7	135	11.9	76.0	59.9
	WEST SOUTH CENTRAL	Total 18 years and	28,775	25,592	17,487	68.3	4,465	17.4	3,641	14.2	14,489	56.6	7,585	29.6	3,518	13.7	60.8	50.4
		18 to 24 years	3,503	3,111	1,555	50.0	932	30.0	624	20.0	1,083	34.8	1,436	46.2	591	19.0	44.4	30.9
		25 to 44 years	10,742	8,994	5,808	64.6	1,897	21.1	1,289	14.3	4,590	51.0	3,161	35.1	1,243	13.8	54.1	42.7
		45 to 64 years	9,343	8,528	6,233	73.1	1,097	12.9	1,198	14.0	5,385	63.1	1,984	23.3	1,160	13.6	66.7	57.6
		65 to 74 years	3,154	3,028	2,371	78.3	308	10.2	349	11.5	2,131	70.4	552	18.2	346	11.4	75.2	67.6
		75 years and over	2,032	1,931	1,519	78.7	231	12.0	181	9.4	1,301	67.4	452	23.4	178	9.2	74.8	64.0

Chart 4: US population- Sexes and Age

All races		Population	US Citizen													Total Population	
			Total Citizen Population	Reported registered		Reported not registered		to registration [1]		Reported voted		Reported did not vote		No response to voting [2]		Reported registered	Reported voted
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
BOTH SEXES	Total 18 years and over	245,502	224,059	157,596	70.3	32,622	14.6	33,841	15.1	137,537	61.4	53,860	24.0	32,662	14.6	64.2	56.0
	18 to 24 years	29,320	26,913	14,905	55.4	6,650	24.7	5,358	19.9	11,560	43.0	10,171	37.8	5,182	19.3	50.8	39.4
	25 to 44 years	83,698	72,610	48,629	67.0	12,467	17.2	11,514	15.9	40,994	56.5	20,682	28.5	10,933	15.1	58.1	49.0
	45 to 64 years	83,799	77,544	57,394	74.0	9,063	11.7	11,087	14.3	51,668	66.6	15,065	19.4	10,810	13.9	68.5	61.7
	65 to 74 years	28,832	27,839	21,908	78.7	2,502	9.0	3,429	12.3	20,219	72.6	4,239	15.2	3,381	12.1	76.0	70.1
	75 years and over	19,852	19,154	14,759	77.1	1,941	10.1	2,454	12.8	13,095	68.4	3,703	19.3	2,356	12.3	74.3	66.0
MALE	Total 18 years and over	118,488	107,554	73,761	68.6	17,068	15.9	16,724	15.5	63,801	59.3	27,681	25.7	16,071	14.9	62.3	53.8
	18 to 24 years	14,822	13,530	7,200	53.2	3,579	26.5	2,752	20.3	5,409	40.0	5,448	40.3	2,673	19.8	48.6	36.5
	25 to 44 years	41,264	35,431	22,718	64.1	6,733	19.0	5,980	16.9	18,783	53.0	11,021	31.1	5,628	15.9	55.1	45.5
	45 to 64 years	40,642	37,516	27,229	72.6	4,853	12.9	5,434	14.5	24,364	64.9	7,899	21.1	5,253	14.0	67.0	59.9
	65 to 74 years	13,428	13,018	10,245	78.7	1,211	9.3	1,561	12.0	9,473	72.8	2,003	15.4	1,541	11.8	76.3	70.5
	75 years and over	8,333	8,059	6,369	79.0	692	8.6	997	12.4	5,772	71.6	1,310	16.3	976	12.1	76.4	69.3
FEMALE	Total 18 years and over	127,013	116,505	83,835	72.0	15,553	13.3	17,117	14.7	73,735	63.3	26,179	22.5	16,591	14.2	66.0	58.1
	18 to 24 years	14,498	13,382	7,706	57.6	3,070	22.9	2,606	19.5	6,150	46.0	4,723	35.3	2,509	18.7	53.2	42.4
	25 to 44 years	42,435	37,178	25,911	69.7	5,734	15.4	5,533	14.9	22,212	59.7	9,662	26.0	5,305	14.3	61.1	52.3
	45 to 64 years	43,157	40,028	30,165	75.4	4,210	10.5	5,653	14.1	27,304	68.2	7,167	17.9	5,557	13.9	69.9	63.3
	65 to 74 years	15,404	14,821	11,663	78.7	1,291	8.7	1,868	12.6	10,746	72.5	2,236	15.1	1,840	12.4	75.7	69.8
	75 years and over	11,519	11,095	8,390	75.6	1,249	11.3	1,456	13.1	7,324	66.0	2,392	21.6	1,379	12.4	72.8	63.6

Focus Groups

In addition to surveys, I also conducted experimental focus groups to explore the relationship between campaign finance, distrust in government and affective polarization. Three experimental focus groups were conducted. Two of the experimental focus groups received a treatment, and the other focus group did not. Each focus group contained three to five individuals. Twelve individuals were observed and three group conversations were analyzed. To study affective polarization, a social environment must exist. The social environment was best approximated by focus groups, by pairing individuals with contrasting political views in groups.

I began the focus groups by explaining the consent to participate and how to sign the proper form. I then proceeded by giving directions and asking everyone to engage in a group discussion about two fictional candidates. I only intervened in the group discussion to continue

the conversation or to bring others into the conversation if dominance was taken by one or more individuals. Otherwise, I did not engage but instead monitored the conversation. During the focus groups, I did take notes but, to maximize coverage and accuracy, I also used a recorder provided by the History, Political Science, and Geography department at the University. My advisor, Dr. Rainey was also present during two of the three the focus groups to assist in note taking. By having another individual take notes, I ensured the data was not subjective to personal bias. Prior to the focus groups, I tested the recording technology. In addition, I practiced taking notes when several individuals were engaged in conversation to adequately be prepared to note the attitude, tone, and language used by individuals during the focus groups.

The focus groups were designed using both individuals and conversations as units of observation. Throughout the focus group, I examined whether individuals were suspicious of money in politics. More specifically, I considered if PAC contributions were associated with corruption and distrust. The group conversations provided evidence as to whether PAC spending is associated with corruption and affective polarization. The conversations also suggested mechanisms by which the associations emerge. During the conversations, I monitored using tone, attitude, and language. Each of these aspects serve as categories. Tone consists of moderate (clear and calm), shy (weak and unclear), aggressive (loud and demanding). Attitude consists of uninterested (not engaged in conversation), very interested (actively engaged in conversation), and moderately interested (in and out of conversation). Language consisted of civil (words or phrases that show consciousness of others perspectives and attitudes) and harsh (words and phrases that show lack of regard for oppositions perspectives and attitudes).

Focus groups were presented with candidates individually whose race, gender, and qualifications were held steady. Candidate A was a white male, who received a law degree from

Yale School of Law and is currently a United States senator. Candidate A was a Republican. Candidate A did not support abortion, is supportive of gun rights, and believed in instating a tough immigration policy. Candidate B was a white male, who received a law degree from Yale School of Law and is currently a United States senator. Candidate B was a Democrat. Candidate B was pro-choice, not in support of gun rights arguing for limitations, and argued for more immigration policies.

Once presented with candidate A, addressing the control group I proceeded by asking control group- What do you think of this candidate? Is this candidate trustworthy? If yes, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is to be trusted. If no, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is not to be trusted. What qualities make the candidate trustworthy? Is there anything that differentiates either of the candidates? I expected individuals to have moderate or shy tone, be moderately interest and use civil language. Once presented with candidate B addressing the control group I proceeded by asking the same questions; What do you think of this candidate? Is this candidate trustworthy? If yes, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is to be trusted. If no, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is not to be trusted. What qualities make the candidate trustworthy? Is there anything that differentiates either of the candidates?

The two treatment groups, received the same two candidates whose race, gender, and qualifications were held steady and were presented with each candidate individually not simultaneously. However, in addition to different party labels and stereotypical issues and stances associated with the specified party, large sums of money was attached to both candidates. Candidate A was a white male, who received a law degree from Yale School of Law and is currently a United States senator. Candidate A was a republican. Candidate A did not support

abortion, was supportive of gun rights, and believed in instating a tough immigration policy. Candidate A received a large sum of his campaign finance from Political Action Committees, while about 10 percent had been received by individual donors. I then proceeded by asking; What do you think of this candidate? Is this candidate trustworthy? If yes, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is to be trusted. If no, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is not to be trusted. What qualities make the candidate trustworthy? Is there anything that differentiates either of the candidates, perhaps any monetary difference? How do you think each candidate's campaign finance reflects their trustworthiness?

The treatment groups were then presented with candidate B. Candidate B is a white male, who received a law degree from Yale School of Law and is currently a United States senator. Candidate B is a democrat. Candidate Bis pro-choice, not in support of gun rights arguing for limitations, and argued for more lenient immigration policies. Candidate B has received a large sum of his campaign finance from Political Action Committees, while about 15 percent has been received by individual donors. I then proceeded to ask the same questions as previously done with Candidate A. What do you think of this candidate? Is this candidate trustworthy? If yes, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is to be trusted. If no, explain to the group why you feel the candidate is not to be trusted. What qualities make the candidate trustworthy? Is there anything that differentiates either of the candidates, perhaps any monetary difference? How do you think each candidate's campaign finance reflects their trustworthiness?

The treatment was to prove whether money and the sources of money are linked to citizen's perception of trust and affective polarization. It was expected that individuals would use aggressive tone and harsh language when presented with money. In addition, I expected citizens to link distrust to the money and sources of such money. It was also expected; respondents would

likely justify the amount of money associated with the candidate of their political affiliation. For example, republican respondents justify the republican candidates' campaign money but express distrust of the opposing political party due to the amount and source of money associated with the candidate.

During the focus groups, I looked for any change in attitude, tone, or language when money is introduced into the conversation. If individuals exhibited changes of tone, attitude, or language when discussing money, the inference was drawn to support Hypotheses A and B. If individuals became distant or resentful towards one another, Hypotheses C suggesting when society has low trust in government, individuals attached to political parties become more distrustful and overly negative of one another, leading to increase affective polarization. If fewer individuals expressed change in less categories, the hypotheses was weakened. If more individuals exhibited change in most or all categories, the hypotheses were strengthened. The focus groups were operationalized to examine whether any linkages exist between campaign spending and citizens' trust. Additionally, the focus groups determined if campaign spending and distrust of candidates with PAC contributions led to affective polarization.

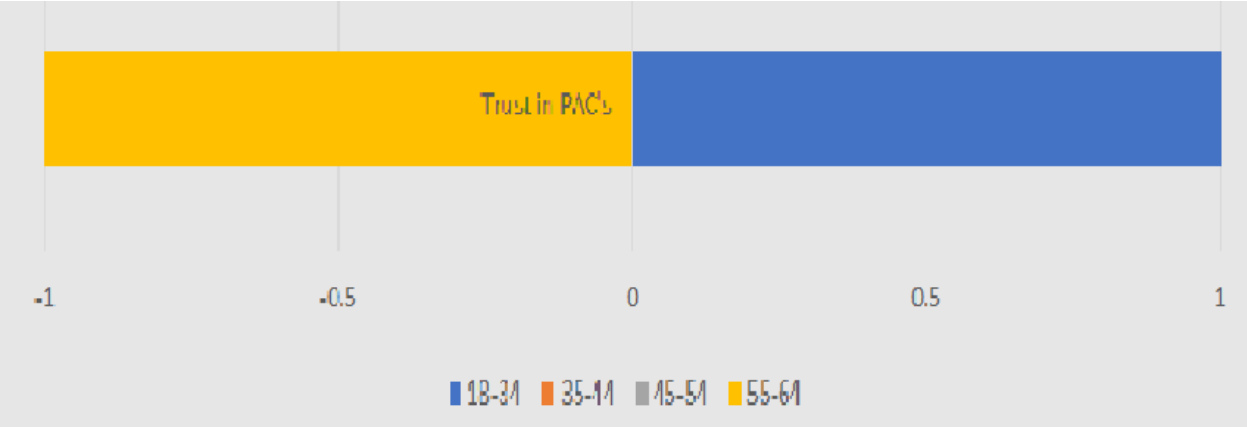
Results

Survey

The results for the survey were collected from 56 completed surveys. In order to measure the support of my hypotheses, I grouped and analyzed the surveys using three categories, age, ethnicity, and party identification. Age was broken down by categories including 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65-74. Ethnicity was broken down into categories including Asian, Black, White, and other. Party Identification was broken down by categories including Democrat, Republican, Independent, and none. I also created a key scale using numbers,

replacing Strongly A with a positive 2, Agree with a positive 1, Neither Agree or Disagree with a 0, Strongly Disagree with a negative (-2), and Disagree with a negative (-1). Using these categories and scale, I calculated the average, mode, and standard deviation for each question.

Question 1 asking respondents to determine if Candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance is linked to Hypothesis B stating the 2010 *Citizens United* decision caused society's trust in government to decrease by increasing the amount of money being contributed by suspect sources; i.e., PACs. I assumed more individuals would answer Strongly Disagree or Disagree that candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PAC's could not be trusted. Not breaking down by category, using the surveys collectively, the average was 0.42871, and the mode and median both were 1. These results indicate individuals do not necessarily distrust candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PAC's. It is important to note however that older generations and younger generations answer to this question differs. From the chart below, regardless of party ID, older individuals are more likely to disagree that candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PAC's can be trusted, while younger individuals are more likely to agree that candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PAC's can be trusted.



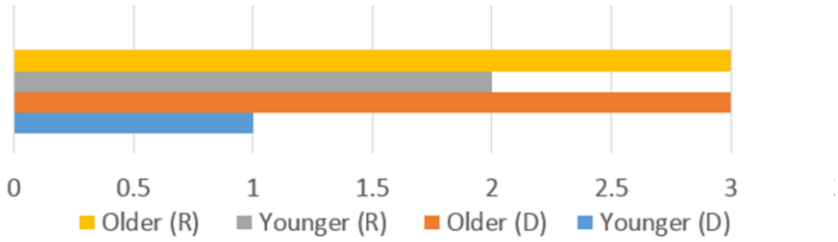
Question 2 asking respondents to determine if candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from individual donors can be trusted is also linked to Hypothesis B stating the 2010 *Citizens United* decision caused society's trust in government to decrease by increasing the amount of money being contributed by suspect sources; i.e., PACs. I assumed more individuals would be more trusting of candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from individual donors than those who trust candidate who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PACS. Using the surveys collectively, the average was actually -0.19643, with a mode of 0, and median of 0. Most respondents did not agree or disagree that individuals who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from individual donors can be trusted.

Question 3 asked respondents if they were aware of the 2010 *Citizens United* decision linking to Hypothesis A stating that a citizen's familiarity with and understanding of money allows them to judge political parties and governments on the amount and sources of money associated with campaigns and political parties. Using the surveys collectively, the average was 0.232143, with a mode and median of 1. Most individuals agreed that they were aware of *Citizens United*. These results indicate citizens are aware of amount and sources associated with political candidates and do use such to judge.

Question 4 asking respondents to agree or disagree that much of the news coverage on the 2016 presidential race included money being raised and spent by candidates also directly related to Hypothesis A stating that a citizen's familiarity with and understanding of money allows them to judge political parties and governments on the amount and sources of money associated with campaigns and political parties. Using the surveys collectively, most people agreed the past election did spend much media time covering the money raised and spent by

candidates. Using the surveys collectively, Question 4 receive an average of 0.607143, with a mode and median of 1.

Question 5 asked respondents to agree or disagree that they trust individuals with different political beliefs. Question 5 directly related to Hypothesis C, stating that when society has low trust in government, opposing political parties become more distrustful and overly negative of one another. Using the surveys collectively, the average of Question 5 was -0.5143, with a mode of 0, and median of -1. Most people either disagreed or neither agreed or disagreed that they trusted individuals with different political beliefs. It is important to note however age also caused differentiation in answers to Question 5. As you can see in the chart below, older individuals were more likely to say they did not trust individuals with different political beliefs while younger individuals did not seem to distrust individuals with different political beliefs.



The results show, Question 3 and Question 4, received no negative averages across all categories. Age was the most influential factor, above ethnicity and party ID. Older individuals are more skeptical of candidates who receive large sums of campaign finance from political action committees and more likely to say they distrust individuals with different political beliefs. Younger individuals are more likely to trust candidates who receive large sums of campaign finance from political action committees and less likely to distrust individuals with different political beliefs. Question 4 was the most agreed to question across each category.

These results indicate that citizens are aware of campaign finance in presidential politics allowing them to judge candidates on such, supporting Hypotheses A and Hypotheses B stating citizens are aware of the decision of Citizens United decision, pertaining to campaign funds through political actions committees and due to this familiarity, citizens can judge political candidates on campaign finance sources. It is interesting to find along party identification, Democrats are more agreeable to trusting candidates receiving money from political actions committees, while Republicans are not agreeable to trusting candidates receiving money from political action committees.

Focus Groups

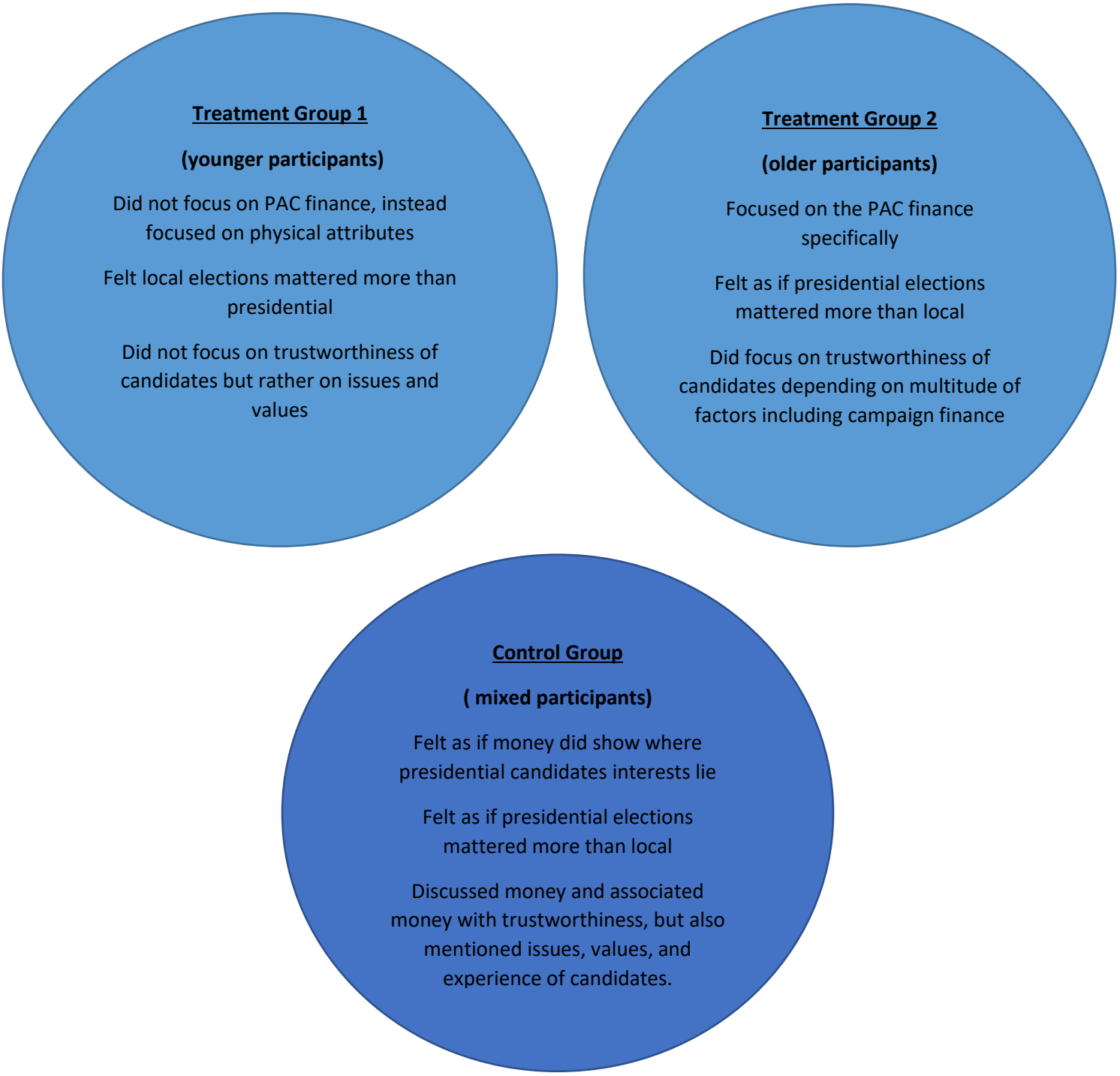
The focus groups consisted of two treatment groups and one control group. One treatment group consisted of younger individuals, while another treatment group consisted of older individuals. The first treatment group consisted of one moderate, one shy, and one aggressive participant. The language the first treatment group was very interesting. The participants discussed many aspects of each candidate, even using physical qualities to make assumptions about each candidate. The language did include money; however, the focus of money was not just on political action committees and linked to distrust. In the first treatment group, participant number 2 stated where individuals get their money from matters. The participant continued to explain wherever the candidate receives money is where their interest is going to lie. All participants in treatment group one felt as if money was important. In treatment group, one coming to a conclusion about a candidate, participants placed money in the top three along with morals/values, background and experience. This dialogue in the first treatment focus group supports Hypothesis A stating citizen's familiarity with and understanding of money allows them to judge candidates, political parties, and governments on the amount and sources of money

associated with each. When asked about the importance of presidential elections versus local elections, participants in treatment group one felt as if local elections mattered more than presidential. Participants stated the candidates and state government is more accessible to citizens deeming local elections more important.

Participants in the control group also felt as if money mattered. Even though the control group received no information on campaign finance, money was still included in the conversation. Participants in this group stated the origin of money received set the political agenda for the candidate. Much like treatment group one, participants felt that candidates interest lie wherever they receive finance from. The control group also tied this tied interest in money to class, meaning some candidates appeal to different types of classes (low, middle, high) based on money. Control group participants discussed a variety of factors, also including whether they felt Presidential elections mattered more than local elections. One participant stated that even though they might not matter more, the President of the United States takes on the title "Leader of the Free World" and due to this, importance of Presidential elections is heightened. The language in the control group also supports Hypothesis A stating citizen's familiarity with and understanding of money allows them to judge candidates, political parties, and governments on the amount and sources of money associated with each.

Participants in the second treatment group, consisted of all moderate individuals and was a group of older individuals. Participants in the second treatment group, stated their dislike of political candidates getting funds from PAC'S. Participant three stated they would rather vote for someone who has five or ten dollar donations, supporting middle America than wealthy individuals giving multitudes of money through PAC's. The other participants agreed with such statements. The language of the second treatment group provides support for Hypothesis B

stating the 2010 *Citizens United* decision caused society's trust in government to decrease by increasing the amount of money being contributed by suspect sources; i.e., PACs. When questioned on whether presidential or local elections are more important, participants in the second treatment group felt as if both were important, however presidential elections take precedence due to so much information produced.



As you can see from the charts above, results from the focus groups also correlate with the idea that age does matter in perceptions of PAC's and polarization. The younger focus group and older focus group had differing conversations especially in terms of campaign finance and trust of candidates, just as examined in the data of survey respondents.

Parameters

Parameters for this research included sample size, time, and comparative data. The sample size for the research was low and concentrated in a small location and centered in only one state. This study adhered to a very tight timeline and such time constraints only allow so much collection and analysis of results. Other parameters include individual's knowledge, especially in regard to the *Citizens United* decision. Only asking individuals in they were aware of the decision, neglected me from being able to actually assess their knowledge on the subject. I also did not screen for citizens, who are registered and do actively vote in Presidential elections.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was designed to confirm or reject that increased PAC spending in presidential campaigns, due to the (2010) *Citizens United* decision, directly decreased society's trust in government and this distrust in government caused more negative views between political affiliates, increasing affective polarization. The assumed correlation between the (2010) *Citizens United* decision and societies trust in government was not evident in this study. However, it was evident that older generations are distrustful of candidates who receive substantial amounts of campaign finance from PAC's and are more likely to be polarized. It was also evident through both the survey and focus group that citizens are aware of money in politics and do use the awareness and familiarity to judge political candidates (Hypothesis A).

The findings of the study helped fulfill a gap in academic literature, bridging many fields of study. In order to move forward in the political sphere, we must first identify how far apart we really are and why. Assessments on how average Americans vote and why echoed in this study provide relevant information for future studies, and political evaluations in presidential and other elections. In the future, I would like to expand this research and redesign the survey to include financial information, educational background, and pop quiz questions on *Citizens United* and other campaign finance concepts in the survey to see if any changes occur. Additionally, I would like to conduct more focus groups and arrange them with differing economic backgrounds and education to see if any changes occur.

Appendix A

Please specify your ethnicity:

White

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

Native American or American Indian

Asian

Other

What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75 and older

I would identify with or consider myself most like

Republicans

Democrats

Independents

None

Please answer the following questions:

A political action committee is also referred to as a PAC. A political action committee is a group formed to raise money for campaigning purposes to benefit a specific candidate.

1. Presidential Candidate A received a substantial amount of money from a political action committee. Presidential Candidate A can be trusted.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

2. Presidential Candidate B received a substantial amount of money from an individual donor. Presidential Candidate B can be trusted.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

3. I am aware of the impact regarding the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* (2010).

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

4. Much of the news coverage on the 2016 presidential race included money being raised and spent by candidates.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

5. I do not trust individuals with different political beliefs.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

I would like to participate in a focus group-

Yes

No

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