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**Political *Quid Pro Quo* and the Impact of Perceptions of Corruption
On Democratic Behavior**

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by

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Abstract

Political *Quid Pro Quo* and the Impact of Perceptions of Corruption On Democratic Behavior

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Since its ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo*, the U.S. Supreme Court has expressed concern regarding corruption or the appearance of corruption stemming from political *quid pro quo* arrangements and the deleterious consequences it may have on citizens' democratic behavior. However, no standard has been set as to what constitutes "the appearance of corruption," as the Court was and continues to be vague in its definition. As a result, campaign finance cases after *Buckley* have relied on public opinion polls as evidence of perceptions of corruption, and these polls indicate that the public generally perceives high levels of corruption in government. The present study investigates the actual impact that perceptions of corruption have on individuals' levels of political participation. Adapting the standard socioeconomic status model developed most fully by Verba and Nie (1972), an extended beta-binomial regression estimated using maximum likelihood is performed, utilizing unique data from the 2009 University of Texas' Money and Politics survey. The results of this study indicate that individuals who perceive higher levels of *quid pro quo* corruption participate more in politics, on average, than those who perceive lower levels of corruption. This suggests that at least part of the Supreme Court's rationale for upholding the FECA contribution limits in *Buckley v. Valeo* was unfounded. A similar test was performed using questions from the 2008 American National Election Study that have been used as proxies for corruption in previous studies, with inconclusive results. The more precise measure in the Money and Politics survey relates directly to the role of money in politics and provides better information than the ANES proxies have in the past, as those have been found to be related to factors other than money in politics.

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Introduction

Since the turn of the 20th century, federal campaign finance laws have been enacted to prevent the aberration of electoral politics due to the excessive power and influence donors gain through large campaign contributions to political candidates. The targets of these campaign finance laws are wide-ranging, including corporations, labor unions, interest groups, legislators, and even individuals. After the passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act and its amendments in the 1970s, and the Supreme Court decision in *Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976, the Court has demonstrated a concern for corruption stemming from political *quid pro quo* arrangements. While the Court argued that the bribery-like behavior present in *quid pro quo* transactions is worrisome due to the corruption of legislators, it also introduced a second argument that simply the appearance of corruption is troubling for democracy and the political process. The Court's rationale for avoiding even the appearance of corruption is based on the fear that the integrity of our democratic political system will be undermined if the public perceives an individual, a corporation, or special interests gain political favor from giving large campaign contributions to those running for public office (*Buckley v. Valeo* 1976). Thus, the Court's logic for upholding the FECA contribution limits, while striking down the expenditure limits as an unconstitutional breach of First Amendment free speech rights, was a narrowly-constructed corruption-prevention rationale. In the eyes of the Court, campaign contributions and political *quid pro quo* come closest to the idea of corruption one can find in the political arena today.

However, the Court makes many speculative linkages when it presumes campaign finance regulation mitigates the threat corruption or its appearance poses to our democratic society. More serious is the assumption that perceptions of corruption undermine citizens' confidence in our government's integrity, leading to lower citizen participation. This idea was first introduced in the Court's opinion in *Buckley*, and made even more explicit in the opinion of Justice David Souter in *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC, et al.* (2000). When discussing perceptions of corruption, he wrote:

The public interest in countering that perception was, indeed, the entire answer to the overbreadth claim raised in the *Buckley* case. *Id.*, at 30. This made perfect sense. Leave the perception of impropriety unanswered, and the cynical assumption that large donors call the tune could jeopardize the willingness of voters to take part in democratic governance (528 U.S. 377, at 390).

Such language suggests that the Court recognizes a direct relationship between perceptions of corruption and citizens' participation in democratic behavior, and it is this relationship that is the focus of this study.

Since *Buckley*, campaign finance scholars have focused much of their attention on studies using data from the Federal Election Commission, but only a handful have investigated the effects of political money or campaign finance reforms on public attitudes. The few studies that comprise the latter group have looked at the connection between campaign spending and citizens' attitudes towards government, particularly trust and efficacy, or at how campaign finance laws affect citizens' perceptions of corruption or their attitudes towards government (Coleman and Manna 2000; Persily and Lammie 2004; Primo 2002; Primo and Milyo 2006).

An area of study even more undertilled is the link between perceptions of corruption and actual political participation as suggested by *Shrink*. Little is known as to whether the Supreme Court's rationale for upholding campaign contribution limits is valid—whether perceptions of corruption stemming from political *quid pro quo* negatively affect an individual citizen's democratic behavior¹. It is this relationship that I investigate in this study. If a democracy is truly “rule by the people”, then citizens' participation in electoral politics is crucial for the health of our democracy. When only a few citizens participate, democracy suffers; conversely, greater citizen participation in the political decision-making process is reflective of a healthier democratic system.

Implied by the Supreme Court's decision in *Buckley* is the idea that campaign finance reforms reduce opportunities for actual corruption or mitigate perceptions of corruption in the political process. By lowering the appearance of corruption, the Court hopes to avoid the negative effects to democracy that come with the loss of trust and efficacy, and thus avoid political disengagement by the public. However, one must question whether the Court's fears have a factual underpinning, as there is no evidence to suggest this assumption is true. In fact, recent political events suggest that perceptions of corruption may in fact promote and enhance democratic behavior. The Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, along with other Occupy movements around the world, was sparked by public perceptions of corporate corruption and greed overwhelming the democratic process. In short, perceptions of corruption stimulated political participation,

¹ Welch and Hibbing (1997) look at the relationship between corruption and vote choice in Congressional elections, and find that campaign violations do not have a statistically significant impact on vote choice. A study performed by Peters and Welch (1980) investigates the impact of charges of corruption on net turnout

as people actively took part in protests and rallies to signal their discontent with the status quo.

Given the Court's concern with the appearance of corruption, I seek to determine whether greater perceptions of corruption actually lead to lower levels of participation among individuals. In this study, I provide an analysis of this question by modifying the standard socioeconomic model of participation and applying it to data from a special survey conducted by researchers at the University of Texas in 2009. For the purposes of analysis, I presume that lower perceptions of corruption are desirable for democratic participation and seek to ascertain whether higher perceived levels of corruption negatively affect democratic behavior. Similar models are run using questions from the 2008 American National Election Study, using proxies for corruption that have been employed in previous studies. I expect that the measure for the appearance of corruption used in the Money and Politics survey, which more precisely links to the role of money in politics, provides greater purchase and better information than proxies for corruption have in previous studies, as those have been found to be related to factors other than money in politics.

Buckley v. Valeo and Corruption

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 and its 1974 amendments were the first comprehensive set of campaign finance regulations enacted by Congress. The 1974 amendments created the Federal Election Commission, which was designed to administer and enforce election laws. The amendments also set contribution and expenditure limits on unions, corporations, and individuals, and created tighter disclosure rules.

In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), the Supreme Court ruled that the expenditure limits set by the FECA were unconstitutional since they impinge upon a citizen's rights to free speech as determined by the First Amendment. The Court justified its decision because money, while it does not equal speech, is necessary for engaging in political speech in a meaningful way since virtually any political communication requires money to be spent in order for campaign messages to reach the political marketplace. However, the decision in *Buckley* upheld the contribution limits outlined in the FECA, citing a compelling government interest in preventing "corruption and the appearance of corruption, spawned by the real or imagined coercive influence of large financial contributions on candidates' positions and on their actions if elected to office" (*Buckley v. Valeo* 1976, 27). The integrity of our democratic political system, in the Courts' eye, is undermined when large contributions are *quid pro quo* exchanged for political favor because the appearance of improper influence by contributors on policymakers' decisions may erode confidence in our system of representative government (*Buckley v. Valeo* 1976).

The concept of *quid pro quo* was the definition of corruption set in *Buckley* (and reaffirmed in *Citizens' United v. FEC* in 2010), vaguely defined as the undue influence on officeholders or candidates stemming from large political contributions. In other words, the standard way to determine whether corruption occurs is when a legislator strays from her constituents' interests when making a political decision where, absent the money of a contributor or set of contributors, she would have voted or acted in some other manner. So the Supreme Court was particularly concerned about the corruption of the political process, with corruption being something akin to bribery. But because bribery laws already existed for members of Congress, the Court's opinion left corruption ambiguously defined as *quid pro quo* plus something that differentiates it from bribery.

The definition of corruption accepted by the Court has vacillated in various cases over the years, but most often refers to the "undue influence" gained on the part of campaign contributors on an elected officeholder's judgment (*FEC v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Commission* 2001, at 44). However, the Court has also described corruption as a subversion of the political process, where officeholders are influenced to act in a manner contrary to the interests of their constituents in exchange for financial gain for themselves or their campaigns. Court decisions after *Buckley* regarding campaign finance such as *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* (1990) and *McConnell v. FEC* (2003) expanded the definition of corruption in terms of the distorting effects that large aggregations of wealth have on the electoral process, and set limits on corporate expenditures and soft money based on this definition. However, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United* (2010) invalidated the antidistortion definition of

corruption for campaign finance regulation, returning to the original *Buckley* definition regarding *quid pro quo* exchanges as the only working definition of corruption to be used as the basis for any future campaign finance laws. Yet at no point did the Court have evidence that there was, in fact, any actual corruption occurring. In fact, Bradley Smith, a noted authority on campaign finance and former member of the FEC, concludes that “The idea that serious quid pro quo corruption exists is simply not supported by the empirical evidence available” (Smith 2001, 135).

Furthermore, the Court determined that simply the appearance of corruption is worrisome, citing that the avoidance of the appearance of improper influence is necessary to prevent the confidence in our system of representative government to be eroded to a “disastrous extent” (*Buckley v. Valeo* 1976, at 28). As a result, the Court ruled that campaign finance laws regarding contribution limits, with the intent of mitigating real or perceived corruption, will be upheld even if they violate First Amendment rights. From the language in *Buckley*, it becomes clear that maintaining the “integrity of our democratic political system” should be, in the eyes of the Supreme Court, the primary goal of campaign finance reform.

Advocates for campaign finance reform have used anecdotal quotes from legislators and public opinion polls as evidence that Americans perceive corruption in electoral politics. Perhaps it is due to the lack of empirical evidence of actual corruption, or the lack of a standard set for determining the appearance of corruption, that the Court allows public opinion regarding the appearance of corruption to stand as the basis for their campaign finance decisions. It is, after all, public perceptions of corruption that the

Court fears will undermine democratic behavior. However, use of such public opinion polls is problematic because while the public perceives high levels of corruption in government, these perceptions of corruption have been found to be largely unrelated to the campaign finance system (Persily and Lammie 2004).

Additionally, Persily and Lammie note that while constitutional law hinges on public opinion, public opinion does not need to be informed to perceive corruption. For example, the public's perceptions of corporate money in elections has been found to be greatly influenced by the media, who in the past have focused excessively on corporate contributions rather than on contributions from individuals (which are the largest source of campaign contributions), when corporate PAC contributions prior to *Citizens' United v. FEC* (2010) were neither an important nor a growing source of campaign funds for federal candidates (Ansolabehere, Snowberg, and Snyder 2005; Milyo, Primo, and Groseclose 2000). In essence, public perceptions of the role of corporate money in elections are rather distorted.

Campaign Finance and Public Opinion

According to a number of public opinion polls, the American public believes that political contributors exert undue influence over the policy choices of elected officials. The findings in these polls have been used as evidence in court by campaign finance advocates to support reform efforts (Persily and Lammie 2004; Primo 2002). Figure 1 demonstrates that approximately 80 percent of survey respondents believe that corruption in the U.S. Congress is a serious problem. Similarly, sixty-eight percent of those surveyed believe that politicians regularly base their votes on a legislative bill on the preferences of their campaign contributors rather than those of their constituents (Figure 2).

Findings such as these have prompted researchers to study the connection between campaign spending and public opinion. Reform advocates make the claim that cleaning up the system will restore the public's faith in government, linking public cynicism to campaign finance. Examining the connection between attitudes such as trust in government and campaign spending, Primo (2002) suggests that we ought to see less spending and greater trust in government after campaign finance reforms are passed if this link exists, but finds no evidence to indicate that this relationship holds. However, his study actually investigated the relationship between trust and spending, not regulation and trust, and did not actually test whether campaign finance reforms lower the appearance of corruption.

Other studies find that campaign finance reforms do not have a large positive effect on attitudes of trust and efficacy, which one might expect given the Court's

Figure 1: Public Perceptions of Corruption In Congress

Source: University of Texas' Money and Politics Survey 2009

Figure 2: Perceptions of Frequency of Corruption In Congress

Source: University of Texas' Money and Politics Survey 2009

corruption-prevention rationale, and suggest that an individual's perception of corruption depends upon a number of factors unrelated to money in politics (Persily and Lammie 2004; Primo and Milyo 2006). This highlights a potential problem with the Court's logic regarding the constitutionality of FECA's campaign contribution limits in *Buckley v. Valeo*, and rulings on subsequent campaign finance-related cases have been based on evidence from public opinion polls regarding the public's perceptions of corruption.

Campaign finance advocates claim that cleaning up our democratic political system will restore the public's faith in government. However, perceptions of corruption and individuals' feelings of efficacy may have more to do with individual-level traits and the state of the national economy and less to do with the role of money in campaigns (Persily and Lammie 2004). Furthermore, campaign finance regulations should be expected to assuage the appearance of corruption, as has been their intent since *Buckley*; instead, researchers have determined that campaign finance regulations (with the exception of disclosure requirements) have neither increased public trust in government nor positively affected people's feelings of efficacy, which are presumably linked with perceptions of corruption (Primo 2002; Primo and Milyo 2006). Thus, contribution regulations have not been effective in curtailing public perceptions of corruption, regardless of whether or not corruption is actually occurring.

One study finds that campaign spending contributes to the quality of democracy by increasing public knowledge of candidates and their ideologies, increasing the competitiveness of elections (Coleman and Manna 2002). However, this same study finds that campaign spending does not have a substantive impact on attitudes such as trust in

government and feelings of efficacy, suggesting that campaign spending is not what causes public disaffection and withdrawal from politics. However, if perceptions of corruption stemming from the role of money in campaigns do have a negative impact on political behavior and participation, then the Court would be justified in their determination that large contributions promote the appearance of corruption and thus undermine American democracy.

What is important for the present study is whether perceptions of corruption undermine the public's faith in the democratic process, and whether this is reflected in citizens' democratic behavior. Therefore, I examine the connection between citizens' perceptions of corruption in their government and their levels of political participation. If the Court's rationale underlying their decision in *Buckley* is sound, then those who perceive higher levels of *quid pro quo* corruption in government should participate at lower levels than the rest of the public. While the Court may not have discarded the argument that corruption might incite participation, their decision to uphold contribution limits suggests that the negative effects of the appearance of corruption on democratic behavior outweighed the possible positive effects. However, as demonstrated by the Occupy Wall Street movement, perceptions of corruption may actually stimulate participation and democratic behavior. This indicates a potential problem with the Court's logic, and their decision in *Buckley* has had wide-reaching consequences in shaping campaign finance regulation for the past thirty-five years. If the Court's corruption-prevention rationale is faulty, then perhaps the perceptions of corruption associated with large campaign contributions from wealthy individuals, interest groups,

and corporations are a boon for democracy as people take to action to get their voices heard.

The Socioeconomic Model of Participation

Political participation refers to those activities undertaken by citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of governmental personnel, and/or the policies of government (Conway 1985). The most common form of citizen participation is voting, but there are many other activities an individual can engage in beyond voting including making campaign contributions, participating in rallies or protests, and contacting one's elected representative through a letter or phone call. Participation is at the heart of democracy in the United States, as traditional democratic theory assumes that citizens are interested in and participate in politics because participation is an instrumental act through which their needs and desires are communicated to and influence the government. One can assume that the more an individual citizen participates, the more likely that individual is to affect the behavior of the government.

A fact well-established in the literature on political participation is that citizens of higher social and economic status (SES) generally participate in politics at higher rates than those with lower socioeconomic status (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba and Nie 1972). Individuals with higher socioeconomic status have the time, money, and knowledge that enable them to participate in politics, and these individuals usually reside in social environments which encourage and reinforce positive participatory norms (Leighley 1995). As such, individuals with higher SES more often possess the psychological characteristics that contribute to greater participation, such as a greater concern with political issues and a higher feeling of efficacy, than those with lower SES.

However, scholars note that political participation in general has declined since the 1960s, despite rising education levels in the public (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Niemi and Weisberg 2001). It is possible that higher perceptions of corruption in the public are contributing to this decline in participation, as I will investigate further in this study.

According to the standard socioeconomic model of participation developed by Verba and Nie (1972), the social status of an individual largely determines whether he or she will participate in politics, mediated by the intervening effects of civic attitudes such as a sense of efficacy and a psychological involvement in politics. As such, education and income are widely known to be the two best predictors of political participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba and Nie 1972). Psychological involvement refers to the complex structure of attitudes and beliefs a person holds with respect to politics, including a general interest in politics and/or identification with a political party (Conway 1985). Other individual characteristics that are known to modify the workings of the standard SES model and its baseline expectations include age, race, and ethnicity, so I adapt the traditional SES model to include these characteristics. In sum, then, my model suggests that an individual's level of participation is primarily a function of education and income, slightly altered by other demographic factors, and mediated by an individual's sense of efficacy and interest in politics. If the Court's logic rings true, then one would predict that those who view higher levels of corruption in government would be less likely to participate in that system due to cynicism and lower feelings of efficacy.

Data and Design

The modified SES model will be tested using data from a national survey of public attitudes conducted with funds from the Texas Politics project at the University of Texas at Austin and the Center for Politics and Governance. The survey was conducted by YouGov/Polimetrix, which administered an internet-based survey of the adult population using a “matching” technique. YouGov first drew probability samples from the population of all adult Americans through a random-digit dialing technique, and then interviewed individuals from within their online pool who matched the original individuals on a number of dimensions including age, education, geographic location, gender, party identification, and race/ethnicity. This generated a representative sample of the population consisting of 2100 adult citizens who were asked to complete a survey of 110 questions, fielded over the internet. The margin of error for the survey, fielded October 13 to 22, 2009, was +/- 2.1 percentage points with a response rate of 86%.

(Appendix A)

An event count analysis is applicable when the dependent variable of a regression model is an index variable, constructed as a sum of binary survey items. Because survey items are finite, discrete, and non-negative, an extended beta-binomial (EBB) regression model estimated through maximum likelihood estimation is appropriate to use.

Underlying the extended beta-binomial regression is the assumption that respondents sharing the same attributes do not have the same probability of participating in politics (Lin, Helfer, and Morgan 2011). The EBB regression model weakens the binomial assumption that π , the probability of participating in a certain political act, is constant

among individuals and instead assumes that individual probabilities (π_i) differ among individuals with the same attributes because of random selection and stochastic variation. These average probabilities are assumed to follow a beta distribution since the beta distribution is continuous and restricted between 0 and 1. Reparameterizing π as a random variable following the beta distribution with parameters ρ and γ , and taking the product of the binomial and beta distributions, results in the beta-binomial mixed distribution. Collapsing this joint distribution over π and then substituting each occurrence of ρ with π results in the extended-beta binomial model (See Appendix B for an exposition of the extended beta-binomial model).

Thus, π_i varies among individuals with similar characteristics, allowing for heteroskedastic variation in the probability that an individual responds affirmatively to a set of questions regarding his or her political activities. The dispersion parameter γ governs the degree to which π_i varies among individuals. However, in order for this model to be appropriate, one must assume that the binary responses to the survey items are independently distributed Bernoulli random variables and that the probability π_i of participating in a political activity is identical for each activity (and thus the probability of answering yes to each participation question is identical) for each individual.

Using the individual as my unit of analysis, the dependent variable in this study is an index variable for political participation created from ten participation items inquiring whether a respondent had engaged in a certain political action within the past four years² (See Appendix C for question wording). These participatory acts include making a

² Coded 1= participated in that action, 0= did not participate in that form

campaign contribution, attending a political meeting or rally, discussing politics with friends and family, contacting an elected representative, contacting a newspaper or magazine for political causes, petitioning, voting in a primary election, volunteering for a campaign, or participating in some other way. While these participatory acts vary in terms of their difficulty, what matters for the purposes of this study is the total amount of participation engaged in by an individual and not the type of act in which she engages as these questions regarding activity serve as indicators of an individual's underlying propensity to participate in politics.

Figure 3: Distribution of Political Participation

A histogram of the dependent variable shows that more than three-quarters of the population participates in politics in some form (Figure 3). The average number of political activities the public reports having been engaged in is 2.84, where the most

Table 1: Participation Activities	% respondents engaging in activity
Discuss politics with friends and family	65
Vote in a primary	63
Contact elected representative	40
Signed a petition	29
Made a campaign contribution	27
Attend a political meeting or rally	22
Contact newspapers or magazines editors for political causes	12
Took part in a political protest	12
Volunteered for a political campaign	12
Participated in some other way	2
<i>Source: University of Texas' Money and Politics Survey 2009</i>	

common form of participation is discussing politics with friends and family followed closely by voting in a primary (Table 1).³ Volunteering for a campaign, contacting the media for political purposes, taking part in a protest, and participating in some other form round out the least common forms of participation.⁴

Because of their noted relationship to political participation, two independent variables in this model are education and income. Higher education levels are associated with the kinds of cognitive skills that facilitate political activity, as the better-educated generally know more about the workings of the political system, and are more aware of how the consequences of government action will affect their lives (Conway 1985). They are more easily able to find information necessary for participation such as who their

³ Self-reports of turnout are notoriously high, so this estimate may be exaggerated.

⁴ Most respondents who participated in some other form were involved in some type of paid campaign work, including campaign management.

elected officials are or where to go for a political meeting, and usually have more time to devote to politics. Poorer citizens, however, must spend more of their attention on obtaining the necessities of life and therefore have less free time to dedicate to politics.

One psychological involvement variable included in this model is political interest, or the extent to which an individual expresses interest in and is attentive to political matters. Obviously, individuals with low interest in politics are not as likely to participate in politics as those who are highly-interested. Other psychological involvement variables I include in this study relate to partisanship and ideology. Partisan affiliation is an indication of the degree to which an individual identifies himself with one of the two parties. More important to this study, however, is strength of partisanship, as those with stronger attachments to their parties are presumed to participate more since the strongly committed may derive greater personal satisfaction from participating (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Because of this, I folded the traditional 7-point partisan identification scale into a 3-part partisan strength variable comprised of strong partisans, weak partisans, and nonpartisans to determine whether strength of partisanship has an independent effect on participation⁵. For similar reasons, I include strength of ideology as a control variable as well, with the expectation that those who have stronger ideological leanings will also be more likely to participate.

Dummy variables for race and ethnicity are included in the model. Historically, blacks and Latinos have been found to participate less in activities other than voting due

⁵ Keith, et al. (1992) find that Independent leaners display a tendency to vote for the candidate of the party they feel closer to, and in many cases are more loyal to their party than weak partisans. As such, I recoded Independent leaners as weak partisans.

to a variety of factors including lower levels of education and lower-income employment (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In addition, Latinos may participate less than blacks or whites due to a language barrier (Conway 1985). Age is important to control for as well, as participation rates among the young are generally low and rise as an individual ages, and then drop off again with old age (Jennings and Markus 1988). This is due to the fact that as one ages, he or she presumably gains more experience, becomes familiar with the political process, and acquires the political knowledge and skills that foster participation.

My key independent variable of interest in this model is perceptions of corruption. The advantage of using the 2009 Money and Politics survey is that it includes a question that asks the respondent how often he or she thinks politicians base their votes on a legislative bill on the preferences of their campaign contributors rather than their constituents (see Appendix D). In other words, the question asks how often the individual perceives corruption stemming from political *quid pro quo*—precisely the type of corruption the Supreme Court has been concerned with since *Buckley*. I use these perceptions of corruption as a proxy for external efficacy, as the two are presumed to be linked (Primo 2002; Primo and Milyo 2006). As such, the most efficacious citizens are more likely to try to influence politics and political decisions than the least efficacious, as efficacy fosters political involvement. If one does not believe that his actions make a difference to political outcomes, then participation is a waste of time (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Citizens expect to gain benefits if they think the government is responsive to their demands, but those who think political leaders cannot or refuse to respond to their demands may not see a reason in voting or otherwise participating in the democratic

process. Based on these assumptions, I expect that, if perceptions of corruption affect political behavior and participation, those who perceive higher levels of corruption in government (and thus have lower feelings of efficacy) will exhibit lower levels of political participation. Such a finding would be evidence that the Court's fear of corruption undermining the democratic process is grounded in reality.

Three other models were run using questions from the 2008 American National Election Study that were as close to the idea of corruption as could be found in existing survey data. Previous studies of attitudes regard corruption in the United States have used some of these questions, which tap a more general idea of corruption and not the more specific type of corruption stemming from money in the political process. These three proxies for corruption include whether one trusts the government to do what is right, whether government wastes tax money, and whether those who run the government are crooked (see Appendix E). The dependent variable in these models is an index of political participation created from seven participation items in the ANES including making a campaign contribution, discussing politics with friends and family, attending a rally, wearing a campaign button or putting up a yard sign, voting in a primary, contacting one's representative, or volunteering for a campaign.⁶ As stated earlier, the Money and Politics corruption question is presumed to be a more precise measure of

⁶ It must be noted that the time intervals for the participation questions differed for the Money and Politics survey and the 2008 ANES. The time intervals for the Money and Politics Survey generally extended back four years, while the 2008 ANES asked about the most recent election cycle. However, given that 2008 was a high-involvement presidential election year and the survey was administered during a period when Americans were most likely to vote and participate in other ways anyway, the results were likely not affected by question wording.

corruption than these ANES proxies, in the sense that it is more closely linked to the notion of money in politics.

Results

Table 2: Determinants of Political Participation

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<i>Money and Politics</i>	<i>ANES</i>		
	<i><u>Quid Pro Quo Model</u></i>	<i><u>Trust Model</u></i>	<i><u>Waste Model</u></i>	<i><u>Crooked Model</u></i>
Education	.103*** (.015)	.141*** (.014)	.142*** (.014)	.141*** (.014)
Income	.047*** (.01)	.024** (.009)	.023** (.009)	.025** (.009)
Interest	.413*** (.023)	.235*** (.016)	.234*** (.016)	.235*** (.016)
Age	.027** (.01)	.013 (.008)	.012 (.008)	.012 (.008)
Black	-.093 (.051)	.104** (.034)	.107** (.034)	.103** (.034)
Latino	-.144** (.05)	.007 (.035)	.006 (.035)	.005 (.035)
Partisan Strength	.064** (.023)	.192*** (.022)	.194*** (.022)	.194*** (.022)
Ideological Strength	.103*** (.021)	.05* (.022)	.05* (.022)	.051* (.022)
Corruption	.06** (.021)	.03 (.023)	.017 (.027)	.011 (.021)
Intercept	-2.92*** (.112)	-2.53*** (.105)	-2.50*** (.109)	-2.48*** (.101)
Gamma	.095*** (.008)	.022*** (.006)	.023*** (.006)	.023*** (.006)
N	1450	1821	1819	1809
Log Likelihood	-2850	-2780	-2777	-2763
<p><i>Source: Data from the University of Texas' Money and Politics Survey 2009 and ANES 2008.</i> <i>Note: Standard errors in parentheses.</i> *p≤.05 **p≤.01 ***p≤.001</p>				

Table 2 presents the results for all models. The coefficients of the extended beta-binomial model are not linear and are therefore difficult to interpret substantively. The easiest way to understand their meaning is through example. Looking first at the coefficients for the *quid pro quo* model, a one-unit increase in education would lead to a positive increase in the *average* probability that an individual responds affirmatively to a political participation question. We talk in terms of averages because of the assumption that π_i is heteroskedastic due to stochastic variation. As such, π becomes the average of all individuals' π_i who have the same linear combination of attributes. Also, the gamma coefficient for the *quid pro quo* model is highly significant, indicating there is a small degree of heteroskedasticity of π in the model (and overdispersion is indeed an issue).

Not surprisingly, both education and income are highly statistically significant and in the expected direction. The dummy variables for Blacks and Latinos are also in the expected direction, but only the dummy for Latino reaches statistical significance. This suggests that, after controlling for SES, blacks are just as likely to participate as whites. However, the probability of participating drops for Latinos, holding all other factors constant.

With regards to the psychological involvement variables, interest in politics is also highly statistically significant and in the expected direction. Individuals who are more interested in politics have a higher probability of participating than those who are less interested. Stronger partisan ties and ideological leanings also increase an individual's probability of participating in the political process. Those who more closely

identify a political party or who have more clearly delineated issue preferences are more likely to be involved in politics than those who have weaker preferences.

The most telling result, however, is my measure for corruption. Because perceptions of corruption can be considered a proxy for external political efficacy, one would expect that those who perceive greater levels of *quid pro quo* corruption would exhibit lower levels of political participation given the Court's rationale. However, the corruption variable is statistically significant but runs in the opposite direction of what was expected. Those who perceive higher levels of *quid pro quo* corruption are actually *more* likely to participate in politics than those who perceive lower levels of corruption. While the coefficient seems relatively small in magnitude, its effect on political participation is still statistically significant and suggests that perceptions of *quid pro quo* corruption may in fact stimulate political participation. This could be because those who are interested in politics and who perceive corruption seek to change the political system through their actions. They may be driven to participate more precisely because they do not trust the government to follow the will of the people. In any case, these results provide evidence that perceptions of *quid pro quo* corruption do not have a negative effect on political behavior; rather, they may have a positive effect for democracy. These findings also indicate that the Supreme Court's rationale for justifying contribution limits in *Buckley* should be revisited.

The ANES data, however, provide rather different results. In all three models, the variables for corruption do not reach statistical significance. It could be that there is no connection between perceptions of corruption and participation but this is unlikely.

Rather, previous studies note that only a small portion of the public who are unhappy with the political process claim this dissatisfaction stems from perception that politicians are corrupt or that special interests “buy” political outcomes (Primo 2002). Persily and Lammie (2004) also use proxies for corruption from the ANES and determine that perceptions of these types of corruption stem from a person’s socioeconomic status, opinion of the president, opinion regarding the performance of the economy, and psychological predispositions rather than anything involving the role of money in politics.

So while the three questions I use from the ANES come close to the idea of corruption in government, none of explicitly use the word “corruption” and likely capture conceptions of corruption beyond the idea of *quid pro quo* that are more familiar to the public, such as patronage or extortion. Beliefs about the “crookedness” of elected officials may tap ideas regarding the honesty of politicians, whom some believe are prone to lies or other scandalous behavior. Distrust in government may expand beyond the idea of corruption to include individuals’ doubts as to whether government can solve problems or pass policy, particularly at a time when polarization in Congress is high and approval of Congress is low. Finally, government waste may tap into an individual’s level of conservatism and opinions regarding big government rather than his or her beliefs about corruption.

Thus, what makes the Money and Politics survey so unique and particularly insightful is that it directly measures citizens’ perceptions of how often *quid pro quo* occurs. The Money and Politics data provides a more accurate measure of the particular

brand of corruption that SCOTUS worries about with regards to campaign finance reform. This study demonstrates that the way corruption is measured can have profound effects on empirical results, which is concerning due to the Court's acceptance of public opinion polls as evidence in campaign finance cases.

Discussion

One criticism to my findings might be that citizens who participate in politics may perceive greater levels of corruption because they are actively involved in and are more aware of political happenings. It could be that, rather than perceptions of corruption affecting levels of participation, higher levels of participation might induce higher perceptions of corruption. This argument has intuitive appeal, considering studies which indicate that attentive individuals tend to be more skeptical of campaign finance regulations and generally overestimate the amount of money in politics (Ansolabehere, Snowberg, and Snyder 2005; Primo 2002). However, a key assumption of the SES model posits that attitudes precede behavior—in other words, it assumes that positive civic orientations are causally prior to acts of participation (Leighley 1995). Regardless of the direction in which the causal arrow points, the relationship between perceptions of corruption and political behavior is a positive one, which still works counter to the Court's logic for upholding campaign contribution limits.

The Court's decision to uphold campaign contribution limits has done little to stem public perceptions of corruption by any measure and, from a normative standpoint, may have had the unintended consequence of undermining the integrity of our political system even more so than does the appearance of corruption. Instead of preventing corruption, campaign contribution limits combined with unlimited expenditures set by the FECA have made the campaign finance system less visible. Negative ads and smear campaigns, coupled with the loss of candidate accountability due to independent

expenditures, may erode public trust when citizens find it difficult to determine which campaign messages to believe and have trouble figuring out who is funding them.

The Supreme Court's campaign against the appearance of corruption shifted money from what were once direct contributions to political campaigns to contributions to outside groups like SuperPACS. Yet these contributions to outside groups for independent expenditures are still campaign contributions in a sense, and contributing groups and individuals may still seek influence with a candidate on a policy. Influence stemming from independent expenditures may be worse than influence due to direct contributions because of lack of accountability for a message made on behalf of a representative, who can (and must) deny responsibility for any negativity due to FEC restrictions against coordination with outside groups.

The consequences of recent campaign finance reform has resulted in what Kang (2010) refers to as “reverse hydraulics”. Issacharoff and Karlan (1988) first proposed that political money is “hydraulic” in the sense that when restrictions are placed upon it, the result is the displacement of financial contributions towards less-regulated third parties to reach the same political ends as before. One of the unintended consequences of the FECA was the explosion of independent expenditures made by third parties in political campaigns in the form of issue advocacy, allowing these groups to skirt the imposed contribution ceilings.⁷ In reverse hydraulics, the removal of restrictions on independent expenditures made by corporations and unions (as per *Citizens United*) may cause money

⁷ As opposed to express advocacy. Express advocacy involves the use of certain keywords that call for the election or defeat of a political candidate. Issue advocacy refers to communications that avoid these key words, but can be interpreted to favor or disfavor a candidate.

to flow back to the more direct, previously regulated pathways. This allows groups like SuperPACS to collect corporate and union money for express advocacy in the form of independent expenditures to support political candidates.

According to Kang (2010), after *Citizens' United* the definition of corruption has been expanded beyond the corruption of legislators to include the political process itself. He suggests that instead of trying to restrict money coming into campaigns, we should instead attempt to check the influence of money that is already in the system. If FECA's contribution ceilings were removed and unlimited campaign contributions were allowed, while retaining or improving compelled disclosure laws, voters could more easily track who donated what and how much to a political campaign. Watchdog groups and the media would certainly alert the public to very large, questionable contributions and their potential influence, allowing an individual to scrutinize a legislator's actions and hold him or her accountable for any perceived impropriety resulting from those contributions.

Additionally, if these restrictions were lifted, issue advocacy groups would likely make the shift back to direct donations rather than continuing along the independent expenditure path if they were truly attempting to greater influence policy decisions. The results would lead to greater accountability on the part of candidates, increased transparency in government, and aid the democratic process. As a result, candidates would likely self-regulate their interests with the option of refusing donations or accepting only part of a donation, as taking too much money from one or a few interest groups and making questionable decisions would likely result in punishment by a representative's constituents in the form of not being re-elected.

Conclusion

This study has sought to shed light on whether the Supreme Court's fears of corruption and the perception of corruption are warranted. As a means of addressing this issue, this study has utilized a unique data set that directly measures perceptions of political *quid pro quo* corruption, and revealed the effect these perceptions have on individuals' political participation levels. Concerned with maintaining the integrity of democracy, the Court has ruled on the constitutionality of campaign finance laws and upheld contribution limits in an effort to reduce the degrading effect that that corruption has on our political system. However, as these results show, perceptions of corruption stemming from political *quid pro quo* do not negatively affect democratic behavior. To the contrary, perceptions of corruption appear to stimulate political participation in the American public. Because of this, I determine that the Court's rationale for upholding the campaign contribution limits originally established by FECA should be reconsidered.

My project is a contribution to the body of literature on the campaign finance debate. Previous studies consider the impact of perceptions of corruption on the attitudes and beliefs of American citizens. However, because people's attitudes have been found to be inconsistent with the realities of campaign finance, likely due to low levels of knowledge regarding the workings of campaign finance laws, the real question is whether these perceptions of corruption have a real impact on political behavior.

From a normative perspective, there has been little academic research suggesting how we can effectively increase public knowledge and change public perceptions about the role of money in politics. Regulation has had little impact on public perceptions of

corruption, so more regulation would not be sufficient. Our best bet for educating the public lies in the hands of the media, who appear to play a large role in shaping negative public opinion with regards to money in politics due to selective reporting and a penchant for the sensational. Given that the media's job is to sell news, their reporting habits are not likely to change, and public ignorance about the role of political money will likely continue. But as the results of this study indicate, perceptions of corruption held by the public may not be a bad thing for democracy, as they appear to stimulate democratic behavior. Paradoxically, public perceptions of corruption may be a boon, rather than a bane, for democracy.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: YOUTGOV/POLIMETRIX METHODOLOGY

(Blass, Roberts, and Shaw 2010)

Survey Panel Data

The PollingPoint panel is a proprietary opt-in survey panel comprised of over 1.6 million U.S. residents who have agreed to participate in YouGov/Polimetrix's Web surveys. At any given time, YouGov/Polimetrix maintains a minimum of five recruitment campaigns based on current events. Panel members are recruited by a number of methods and on a variety of topics to help ensure diversity in the panel population. Recruiting methods include Web advertising campaigns (public surveys), permission-based email campaigns, partner sponsored solicitations, telephone-to-Web recruitment (RDD based sampling), and mail-to-Web recruitment (Voter Registration Based Sampling).

The primary method of recruitment for the PollingPoint Panel is Web advertising campaigns that appear based on keyword searches. In practice, a search in Google may prompt an active PollingPoint advertisement soliciting opinion on the search topic. At the conclusion of the short survey respondents are invited to join the PollingPoint panel in order to receive and participate in additional surveys. After a double opt-in procedure, where respondents must confirm their consent by responding to an email, the database checks to ensure the newly recruited panelist is in fact new and that the address information provided is valid.

Additionally, YouGov/Polimetrix augments their panel with difficult to recruit respondents by soliciting panelists in telephone and mail surveys. For example, in the fall and winter of 2006, YouGov/Polimetrix completed telephone interviews using RDD sampling and invited respondents to join the online panel. Respondents provided a working email where they could confirm their consent and request to receive online survey invitations. YouGov/Polimetrix also employed registration based sampling, inviting respondents to complete a pre e-election survey online. At the conclusion of that survey, respondents were invited to become PollingPoint members and receive additional survey invitations at their email address.

Sampling and Sample Matching

Sample matching is a methodology for selection of “representative” samples from nonrandomly selected pools of respondents. Ideally suited for Web access panels, it could also be used for other types of surveys such as phone surveys. Sample matching begins by determining the target population. For general population studies, the target population is all American adults, and can be enumerated through the use of the decennial Census or another high quality survey, such as the American Community Survey. In other contexts, this is known as the sampling frame, though, unlike conventional sampling, the sample is not drawn from the frame. Traditional sampling, selects individuals from the sampling frame at random for participation in the study. This may not be feasible or economical as the contact information, especially email addresses,

is not available for all individuals in the frame and refusals to participate increase the costs of sampling in this way.

Sample selection using the matching methodology is a two-stage process. First, a random sample, called the target sample, is drawn from the target population. Details on how the target sample is drawn are provided below, but the idea is that this sample is a true probability sample and thus representative of the frame from which it was drawn. Second, for each member of the target sample, we select one or more matching members from our pool of opt-in respondents. This is called the matched sample. Matching is accomplished using a large set of variables that are available in consumer and voter databases for both the target population and the opt-in panel.

The purpose of matching is to find an available respondent who is as similar as possible to the selected member of the target sample, resulting in a sample of respondents who have the same measured characteristics as the target sample. Under the conditions described below, the matched sample will have similar properties to a true random sample, mimicking the characteristics of the target sample. It is “representative” of the target population (because of its similarities to the target sample).

When choosing the matched sample, it is necessary to find the closest matching respondent in the panel of opt-ins to each member of the target sample. Polimetrix employs the proximity matching method to find the closest matching respondent. For each variable used for matching, we define a distance function, $d(x,y)$, which describes how “close” the values x and y are on a particular attribute. The overall distance between a member of the target sample and a member of the panel is a weighted sum of the individual distance functions on each attribute. The weights can be adjusted for each study based upon which variables are thought to be important. For that study, though, for the most part, we have not found the matching procedure to be sensitive to small adjustments of the weights. A large weight, on the other hand, forces the algorithm toward an exact match on that dimension.

Sampling Frame and Target Sample

YouGov/Polimetrix constructed a sampling frame of U.S. residents from the 2006 American Community Survey, including data on age, race, gender, education, and party identification. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2006 ACS sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on party identification was matched from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Study. The target sample was drawn from U.S. residents in the sampling frame and was selected by stratification by age, race, gender, education, and by simple random sampling within strata.

Weighting

Because matching is approximate, rather than exact, and response rates vary by group, the sample of completed interviews normally shows small amounts of imbalance that can be corrected by post-stratification weighting.

Raking, first proposed by Deming and Stephan (1940), adjusts an initial set of weights to match a known set of population marginals, using a method of iterative proportional fitting (see Bishop, Fienberg and Holland, 1975 for details). In this procedure, the weights are adjusted sequentially to match the marginal distribution of each weight variable. The process proceeds until all marginals are matched. It does not require any information about the joint distribution of the variables. Weights were applied to the target sample based on age, race, gender, and education.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Derivation of the Extended Beta-Binomial Distribution

By weakening the binomial assumption that π is constant from individual to individual, I allow π vary as a random variable according to the beta distribution, or $\pi_i \sim \text{beta}(\rho, \gamma)$. The beta distribution has π as a random variable with two parameters ρ and γ (King 1998), and may be written as:

$$f_{\beta}(\pi_i | \rho, \gamma) = \frac{\Gamma(\rho\gamma^{-1} + (1-\rho)\gamma^{-1})}{\Gamma(\rho\gamma^{-1})\Gamma[(1-\rho)\gamma^{-1}]} \pi^{\rho\gamma^{-1}-1} (1-\pi)^{(1-\rho)\gamma^{-1}-1} \text{ for } 0 < \pi < 1, \text{ and where}$$

$$\Gamma(x) = \int_0^{\infty} z^{x-1} e^{-z} dz$$

while the binomial distribution is written as:

$$f_b(Y_i=y_i | n, \pi) = \binom{n}{y_i} \pi^{y_i} (1-\pi)^{n-y_i} \text{ for } y_i = 0, 1, \dots, n \text{ and } 0 \leq \pi \leq 1$$

To derive the extended beta-binomial probability distribution, allowing π to vary according to the beta distribution, I must first find the joint distribution f_j of the binomial and beta distributions:

$$f_j(y_i, \pi | \rho, \gamma) = f_b(y_i | \pi) f_{\beta}(\pi_i | \rho, \gamma)$$

The extended beta-binomial distribution is derived by collapsing the joint distribution over π :

$$f_{ebb}(y_i | \rho, \gamma) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_j(y_i, \pi | \rho, \gamma) d\pi$$

In the extended beta binomial distribution, ρ is the mean probability of the unobserved binary variables. Reparameterizing ρ as π , for $y_i=0, \dots, n$, the extended beta-binomial distribution is defined as:

$$f_{ebb}(y_i | \pi, \gamma) = \Pr(Y_i = y_i | n, \pi, \gamma) = \frac{n!}{y_i!(n-y_i)!} \prod_{j=0}^{y_i-1} (\pi + \gamma j) \prod_{j=0}^{n-y_i-1} (1 - \pi + \gamma j) / \prod_{j=0}^{n-1} (1 + \gamma j)$$

where $E(Y_i) = n\rho$ and $Var(Y_i) = n\rho(1-\rho)[1+(n-1)\gamma(1+\gamma)^{-1}]$

The log-likelihood function for the extended beta-binomial distribution is:

$$\ln L(\pi, \gamma | y) = \sum_{i=1}^n \ln \left[\frac{n!}{y_i!(n-y_i)!} \right] + \sum_{j=0}^{y_i-1} \ln[\pi + \gamma j] + \sum_{j=0}^{n-y_i-1} \ln[1 - \pi + \gamma j] - \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} \ln(1 + \gamma j)$$

Thus, π reparameterized as a random variable following the beta distribution is the average probability of an individual responding positively to an item while γ governs the degree to which π varies among individuals. When $\gamma=0$, the extended beta-binomial distribution reduces to the binomial and all the π s are constant (King 1998). Larger amounts of variation in π lead to larger values of γ .

APPENDIX C: CALCULATING THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The primary dependent variable, political participation, is an index created from ten participation items on the 2009 Money and Politics survey. These items asked whether the respondent had participated in any of the following activities over the previous four years: contributed to a political campaign, attended a political meeting or rally, participated in a demonstration or protest, discussed politics with friends and family, contacted elected representatives, contacted newspapers or magazine editors for political causes, signed a petition, voted in a primary election, volunteered for a political campaign, or participated in some other fashion. The plurality of those who had participated in some other action ($N=$) acted in some kind of management or supervisory role on a political campaign. Each participation item was recoded into a binary score; a positive response to an item was coded as a 1, while a negative response was coded as 0. The sum of these scores indicates a respondent's level of participation, and higher scores indicate higher levels of political participation. An individual with a participation score of 0 indicates that he did not participate in any political activities, while a score of 10 means that he participated in all activities mentioned in the study.

For the ANES 2008 data, the political participation index was created from seven participation items found in the survey. These items asked whether one had contributed to a political campaign, party, or other group during the 2008 election cycle; attended a political rally, speech, meeting, dinner, or something of the like for a particular candidate; wore a campaign button or put up a yard sign or bumper sticker; discussed politics with friends and family; had contacted their elected official within the past 12 months; voted in the 2008 primary, or had done any other work for a party or candidate. While the time window for these participatory acts was shorter than that asked in the Money and Politics

survey, this should not pose too great an issue since the greatest likelihood for participation comes during an election year, particularly that of a presidential election.

APPENDIX D: MONEY AND POLITICS SURVEY QUESTION WORDING

Interest

Generally speaking, would you say that you are extremely interested in politics and public affairs, somewhat interested, not very interested, or not at all interested?

Corruption

(Quid Pro Quo)

Some argue that the main source of political corruption in the U.S. Congress results from campaign contributors expecting politicians vote in certain ways on legislation. How often do you think politicians base their votes on a legislative bill on the preferences of their campaign contributors rather than their constituents? Would you say this never happens? Sometimes happens? Often happens? Or do you think it happens all the time?

Do you think corruption in the U.S. Congress is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a serious problem at all?

Participation

Have you contributed to any political campaigns in the last four years?

Have you participated in any of the following activities over the past four years?

Attend a political meeting or rally

Participate in a demonstration or protest

Discuss politics with friends and family

Contact elected representatives

Contact newspapers or magazines editors for political causes

Petition

Vote in a primary election

Volunteer for a political campaign

Other

APPENDIX E: 2008 AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION SURVEY QUESTION WORDING

Trust

(Version A)

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

(Version B)

How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way—always, most of the time, about half the time, once in a while, or never?

Waste

Do you think that people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

Crooked

Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked?

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