

## SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

I constructed a survey instrument containing 36 substantive questions and 10 demographic questions that will be used to analyze the accuracy of the Supreme Court's appearance of corruption rationale as outlined in *Buckley v. Valeo*. After receiving IRB approval in August, I fielded the survey through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online labor market that is commonly used by academic researchers to pilot surveys. Within three weeks, slightly more than one thousand workers on Amazon's Mechanical Turk completed the survey, providing me with a large pool of data with which to evaluate my survey. Though social psychologists have suggested that the worker pool on Amazon's Mechanical Turk is not entirely representative of the American populace, the data suggests that my sample contains enough within-group variation to allow for meaningful data analysis.

To briefly summarize, in the 1976 case *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of limits on individual campaign contributions contained in the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act. The Court argued that politicians might systematically grant campaign donors political favors in exchange for their contributions, and the mere threat or likelihood of that form of corruption is enough to corrupt the democratic process. Thus the focus of their argument is on public perception of government actions and thus on public opinion data. Furthermore, their claim gives rise to two distinct but dependent hypotheses. The first is that citizens who see evidence of large campaign contributions are more likely to perceive high levels of corruption. The second hypothesis claims that citizens who perceive high levels of corruption are more likely to withdraw from the political process. There exists very little empirical evidence supporting the Court's rationale, but I argue that a more precise survey instrument is needed to evaluate the Court's claims.

Accordingly, the survey instrument that I designed includes distinct measures of four factors known to influence attitudes toward corruption: socioeconomic status, predispositions to trust, strength of anti-government attitudes, and national evaluations. It also contains distinct measures of perceptions about campaign contributions, support for campaign finance reform initiatives, perceptions of the frequency and nature of corruption, perceptions of democratic health, and objective indicators of democratic health. Due the abundance of high dimensional data (close to 50,000 discrete data points), I will use principal component analysis, a statistical tool used for dimensionality reduction, to determine where the variation in my dataset lies. More clearly, principal component analysis outputs a list of which variables in the dataset account for the greatest amount of variation in the dependent variables. These outputs, known as the principal components, can then be used as the basis for a technique known as principal component regression. Because my survey contains distinct measures of the same concepts, it is likely that a number of my explanatory variables are close to being collinear. By using principal components as regressors, principal component regression can solve violations of the non-multicollinearity assumption by removing low-variance principal components from the analysis. The second method I will use to explore the data is an analytic tool known as stepwise regression. A form of model-building, stepwise regression works by slowly adding or removing regressors from a model to see how each individual change impacts the amount of variation explained by the model. With these tools, I hope to select the most discriminatory measures for inclusion in a larger survey and illustrate how survey design can dramatically impact the conclusions we draw from public option data.