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## **Campaign Finance Makes America Go 'Round: Individual Campaign Contributions and the Effects of Citizens United on the American Election System**

Geneva Sherman  
*Chapman University*, [sherm152@mail.chapman.edu](mailto:sherm152@mail.chapman.edu)

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# Campaign Finance Makes America Go 'Round: Individual Campaign Contributions and the Effects of Citizens United on the American Election System

Geneva Rey Sherman

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

## Introduction to Research

- The present study investigates what type of individual makes political campaign contributions based on yearly household income, education level, age, gender, registered political party affiliation and ethnicity and how Citizens United has changed the financial political landscape.
- This study is important because campaign money is correlated to the laws that pass through congress and the interests that are taken into consideration.
- Individual campaign donations represent a major percentage of funds raised and are heavily relied upon, despite the passage of Citizens United in 2010, but unlimited campaign contributions are being capitalized on by big interest especially in this current 2016 presidential election cycle.
- Using the most recent ANES time series study of the 2012 elections, current articles and journals, the data collected and analyzed will be able to determine correlations between campaign donations and the demographic variables, listed above, to provide the most credible representation of today's individual political donors and how big interest is now being represented in the political realm.

TABLE 1

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	B	Std. Error		
1	Age	-.071	.006	-.169	-12.67	.000
	Gender of Respondent	.035	.009	.053	3.960	.000

a. Dependent Variable: POST: R contribute money to specific candidate campaign

TABLE 2

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	B	Std. Error		
1	Level of highest education	-.036	.006	-.146	-5.790	.000
	Income	-.037	.009	-.104	-4.129	.000

a. Dependent Variable: POST: R contribute money to specific candidate campaign

TABLE 3

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	B	Std. Error		
1	Race and ethnicity group	.010	.007	.027	1.391	.164
	Party of registration	.020	.005	.083	4.324	.000

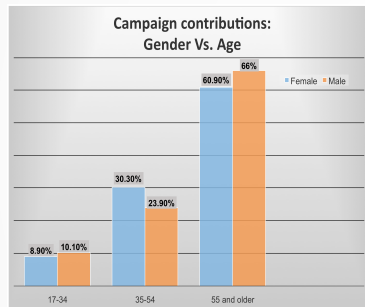
a. Dependent Variable: POST: R contribute money to specific candidate campaign

## Hypotheses:

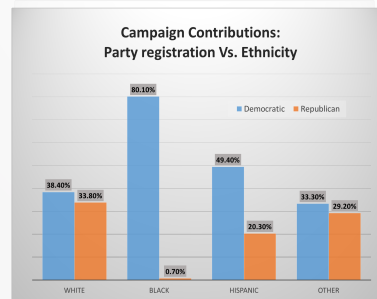
- H 1: Men 55 and older are more likely to donate to political campaigns than younger women.
- H 2: White republicans are more likely to donate to political campaigns than democrats of other ethnicities.
- H 3: People with a higher yearly income and high education are more likely to donate to political campaigns than lower educated people with a smaller yearly income.
- H 4: The Passage of Citizens United in 2010 will greatly undermine the democratic system by allowing wealthy individuals and corporations to, in effect, 'buy elections.'

## Data

H 1:



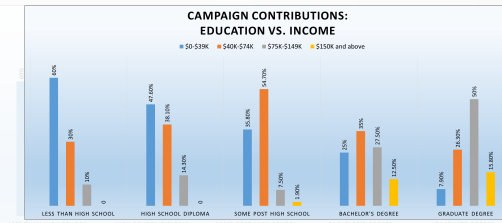
H 2:



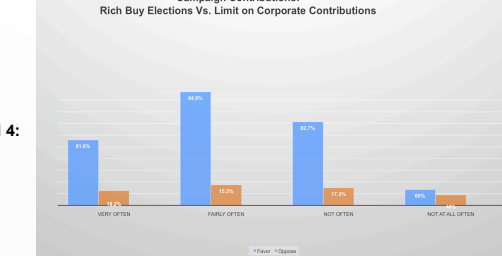
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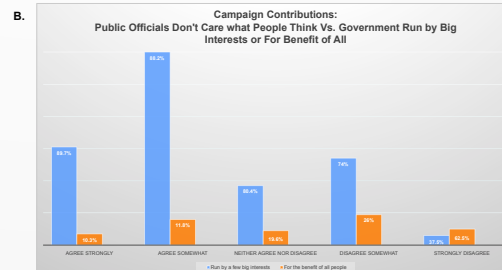
H 3:



A.



H 4:



## Findings

H 1: Gender Vs. Age

The gender gap has dramatically decreased as more women have become part of the political process. It has paved the way for other women to feel as though their voice and their opinion matters, therefore they are more politically active. While men still donated more than women overall, the gender gap has become much smaller and even surpassed men in the 35-54 year old category.

The baby boomer generation, that donates the most money, has aged and skewed the median age much higher now than ever before. As the H1 graph depicts, there is a near perfect linear slope correlating higher age with more campaign donations and visa versa.

H 2: Party Registration Vs. Ethnicity

Political party registration is highly correlated to campaign contributions, but it favors the democratic party more than the republican party.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, while having clear trends towards the democratic party, was found insignificant in determining whether people were going to donate to campaigns or not.

H 3: Education Vs. Income

While the H3 graph makes a clear correlation between income and education, with \$0-\$39K category having a perfect negative slope as education increases, \$150K and above category has a near perfect positive slope, and the \$40K-\$74K category having a perfect bell curve, it also confirms my hypothesis that wealthier and more educated one is, the more likely to donate to political campaigns.

H 4: Rich buy elections vs. limit on corporate contributions.

The H 4 A graph depicts most people believe that the rich buy elections fairly often with 41% of the total respondents in agreement. In conjunction, 81% of all respondents believe that their should be limitations for big interest donations. Going hand in hand with those findings, most people believe that the government is run by big interest and public officials don't care enough about what people think. Whether Citizens United has actually made a huge indent on the campaign finance system or not is almost irrelevant because the perception is just as damaging.

## Conclusions

In our current political environment the best indicators of one donating to a political campaign are male, 55 years old and above, registered with the democratic party, higher level of education and higher income.

There were a few surprises in the results of this study, including the fact that most individual donations are given by democrats, the post high school education with no degree donated the most with 33.5% and the income category that gave the most was \$40K-\$74K with 39.5%.

The passage of Citizens United has not effected the campaign finance system as much as people thought, but the perception that it is drowning out every day American voices is detrimental and most want limits on big interest contributions.