

**Citizen Perceptions of Public Safety Levies in Josephine County, Oregon:
A Test of Group Engagement Theory**

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Abstract: Group Engagement Theory describes the relationship between citizen perceptions of policy, individual identity and status judgements, and individual group engagement decisions. Utilizing a least likely crucial case methodology, this paper uses the case of Josephine County, Oregon to determine the validity of the Group Engagement Theory prediction that citizen identity and action are primarily driven by citizen perceptions of procedural justice. Josephine County has been struggling to raise funding through taxes for public safety services. Referenda in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 all failed to garner the support of the public resulting in cuts to public safety services. This research analyzed letters to the editor to a local newspaper to determine citizen opinions and engagement decisions. Through this analysis, this paper determined that concerns over the distributive fairness of policy instruments, the riskiness of policy, and the trust of individuals in the government all played a role in determining citizen engagement decisions. These results suggest a falsification of the prediction by Group Engagement Theory that the primary motivating factor of individual group engagement decisions is perceptions of procedural justice.

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