HOW MICROTARGETING AFFECTS VOTER ATTITUDES

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This is dedicated to my parents
for all of their support
throughout my education.

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ABSTRACT

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by Rachael Schuit

This project will discuss the ways in which campaigns have altered course over the last few decades. Campaigns have started to utilize information such as what kind of car people purchase or what magazines they subscribe to, to create ads that are targeted towards specific individuals. This paper will discuss what microtargeting is and some of the effects it can have on voters. An experimental design will involve two demographic groups, females and non-whites. Participants in these groups will be shown microtargeted ads and the hypothesis will examine if the ads have an effect on the attitudes of the viewers towards the candidates. After the details of the experimental design are discussed, a results section will follow.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past few decades there have been great advances in modern technology. People are now using smart phones that come with apps and most people spend at least some time browsing the Internet for news, entertainment or shopping. According to the Pew Research Center more than half of Americans are now using the Internet to find news. Also, about three-quarters of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine years old utilize the internet for news (Caumont, 2013, para. 3).

With these advances in technology the ways in which political campaigns operate has also changed course. Technology has allowed campaigns to find out more information about potential voters than ever before. Not only can campaigns find information about a person's income or their address, even past credit card purchases are available. The use of data mining, a practice by campaigns to look up information about voters such as what websites they visit, or what magazines they subscribe to, allows campaigns to avoid having one broad message for everyone and allows them to narrow their message depending on who the voter is. Steven Schier discusses the push towards activation over mobilization in his book *By Invitation Only.* Schier (2000) writes, "Activation employs telephones, direct mail, and Internet communication in a way that allows distinctively phrased messages of maximum possible impact. It does not seek to get most potential voters to participate in an election as does mobilization, but instead fires up a small but potentially effective segment of the public to help a particular candidate at the polls or a particular interest as it lobbies government" (pgs. 8-9). Schier (2000) also mentions that activation has changed the way elections operate because parties do not have to broadcast to a large majority anymore as they did in the past. Technology software like SPSS has been credited

with helping campaigns achieve success, specifically Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. "SPSS Predictive Analytics software gives political organizations the ability to use a precise mathematical-fact based science to create a one-to-one communication with voters based on in-depth based on in-depth personalized information culled from all available data" ("SPSS Declares a Win…", 2008, para. 10).

This new method of campaigning focusing on targeted voters identified by using technology – is called microtargeting. Microtargeting is defined as: "With more sophisticated technology to identify voters' concerns, some campaigns invested more resources in sending voters targeted mail or leaving robocall messages prior to the election, using field efforts primarily to mobilize voters on Election Day itself. This process is called "microtargeting"" (McKenna, Han, 2014, p. 31).

Given that microtargeting is prevalent and used as a new way to campaign, a following question would be if microtargeting works. In other words, would the microtargeting bring its intended effect – that is, attracting voters to support their party? This study aims to examine the effects that microtargeting has on the college students. This research seeks to further understand if microtargeted messages towards specific groups of individuals such as women or minorities, influences their attitudes towards a candidate. It also seeks to examine if demographic characteristics like, socioeconomic status and ethnicity played a role in which candidate participants voted for. To look at this effect further, an experimental design with a post-test questionnaire will be distributed through Survey Monkey. Participants will be asked to view political ads prior to completing the questionnaire. This research will feature two groups' females and minorities, because campaigns often try to craft messages that appeal to these two groups.

This paper will begin with a literature review about the process of microtargeting and the ways in which data mining assists campaigns with microtargeting. There will also be a section on cases where microtargeting was successful and a section about campaigns that utilized microtargeting. After going through some of the literature on campaigns and microtargeting, the hypothesis and the methods section of the paper will be presented. In the methods sections things such as recruitment methods, how the political ads were chosen, and the manner in which the posttest was designed will be discussed. The results section of the paper looks at responses to Likert scale questions in relation to participants' attitudes toward Hillary Clinton and if they perceived her as caring about their demographic group. In addition, the results section will discuss demographic variables such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity in relation to vote choice. The final section of the paper will discuss the ways in which the research design can be improved for future replication.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Microtargeting Benefits and Drawbacks

Microtargeting usually begins when campaigns start looking at voter databases. Panagopulous (2016, p. 180) writes, "Campaign strategists calculated they could win by turning out reliable voters –their bases- even at the expense of neglecting undecided voters". The use of voter records also helps campaigns. As noted earlier, whom an individual voted for in the past is not on record; however, information on if they voted is part of a voter database (Brown, 2016, para. 3). The voter databases from both the Republican and Democratic parties provide supplemental information about voters. Supplemental information includes details about things like, occupation, magazine subscriptions, political and charitable contribution history, and home, auto, and boat ownership status (Brown, 2016, para. 3).

Microtargeting also offers benefits to campaigns. Campaigns are able to identify voters that are more likely to support the opposing candidate (Barocas, 2012, p. 31). Barocas also mentions that microtargeting allows candidates to address issues with voters on a more individual basis, which might be more divisive if presented to voting population as a whole. Brown (2016, para. 7) writes, "Volunteers can head out to the neighborhoods knowing what sorts of people they will meet and what to say in response to questions they are likely to be asked". It also helps campaigns cut down advertising costs, as they are able to identify voters, most likely to respond to their messages (Brown, 2016, para. 8).

However, microtargeting raises some concerns as it does not address eligible voters who are unlikely to vote. Barocas (2012, p. 33) notes that microtargeting causes campaigns to ignore

people who did not participate in previous elections because of the assumption that they will not be likely to vote in the upcoming election. In a sense, microtargeting allows campaigns to leave certain people out.

Utilization of Data Mining

Campaigns utilize the information they obtain from data mining to identify which voters to contact and which voters to avoid. The main purpose of using data mining and analytics in campaigns is to find out who will be most likely to vote for specific candidates and how to target messages to those constituents. It can also help in encouraging people to be involved in certain campaigns or getting them to donate money. Utilizing data mining for campaign purposes can also give very specific information about a voter that is helpful in predicting wins. Howard (2005, p.156) writes, "Digital technologies make possible a very refined science of campaigning, a science that permits ever more predictable electoral or legislative outcomes". The things that constituents purchase, from guns to birth control, can tell a great deal about how they might vote in an election. Data mining also makes a campaign's job easier in that it changes the way that they have to interact with voters. Instead of providing one broad message to try and appeal to everyone, campaigns make their messages specific to the individual voters that they are going to contact. The ability to access information has also became easier. Issenberg (2013, pgs. 247-248) writes, "The release of the data from the 2000 U.S. Census created a reservoir of free, up-to-date-information unavailable elsewhere, tract-level figures that in 1998 were nearly a decade old had been refreshed to account for years of movement and demographic change".

There are also certain methods that make predicting voter behavior easier. Campaign consultants utilize behavior scores, support scores, and responsiveness scores in order to try and

determine who is likely to vote for their candidate and potentially volunteer or recruit others to vote or volunteer. Nickerson and Rogers (2014, p.) write, "*Behavior scores* use past behavior and demographic information to calculate explicit probabilities that citizens will engage in particular forms of political activity". For instance, one form of past behavior a campaign might be interested in includes whether or not a person has donated to campaigns in the past (Nickerson and Rogers, 2014, p. 54). Campaigns are able purchase information regarding an individual's education level or home ownership status for a low cost. Furthermore other information such as what magazines an individual subscribes to can also be obtained (Nickerson and Rogers, 2014, p. 57). Support scores are also utilized to determine how likely an individual might be to support their campaign. However, these scores, "only predict the preferences at the aggregate level, not the individual level" (Nickerson and Rogers, 2014, p. 54). Campaigns utilize samples of voters to figure out how likely the sample is to support their candidate. For example, if a sample is calculated to have a support score of seventy-five it means that about seventy-five percent of the sample would support the campaign. Finally, "*Responsiveness Scores* predict how citizens will respond to campaign outreach" (Nickerson, Rogers, 2014, p. 54).

When contacting potential voters, campaigns access a wide variety of databases to reach them. Voter files at the Secretary of State are publicly available and can tell a campaign if a person voted, and even if they voted in person or by using an absentee ballot (Nickerson and Rogers, 2014, p. 56). Consumer databases help a campaign with retrieving up to date phone numbers so that they have the ability to make automated calls to multiple voters. Also, even though campaigns purchase some of the data they utilize, a great deal of their information is information that voters provided to them previously. Campaigns pull data from people who have volunteered, or been on an email list or donated before. Data is also collected from a voter's

online activity. Campaigns can obtain an idea of who will support them by looking at things such as who opens their emails or who clicks on links provided in those emails (Nickerson and Rogers 2014, p. 57).

Furthermore, campaigns look at what people buy to help them in crafting their messages. Wasserman and Melillo (2006) discussed how candidates from both the Democratic and Republican Parties targeted voters based on what they purchased at the store. In the 2004 election the GOP used a database called Voter Vault. Information obtained from Voter Vault allowed the GOP to microtarget their voters when campaigning. Wasserman and Melillo (2006) write, "The Vault for instance knows a voter's preferred brand of toothpaste and what gym he works out at. Such information allows the GOP to "microtarget" voters by dividing them into categories, each of which can then be then be targeted with tailored campaign messages" (p. 15) Everything from the kind of alcohol an individual drinks to the brand of car they drive, is thought to be helpful in predicting who they may vote for (Wasserman and Melillo, 2006, p. 15).

Effectiveness of Microtargeting and Successful Microtargeting

Additionally, it is important to look at the effects of microtargeting in campaign ads and how they affect a person's vote. The book *Air Wars* discusses political advertisements and how they affect a voter's perception of a candidate. One of the things this book mentions is that when a candidate advertises matters in their efforts to try and get voters. This book cites Bill Clinton's re-election campaign against Bob Dole in 1996 as one example of early advertising making a difference, particularly with undecided voters. While political communications experts might believe that waiting until closer to the election is fine for advertising, Clinton's 1996 campaign proves this assumption wrong. Clinton decided to begin his campaign advertising in 1995, about

fifteen months before the election. The Clinton campaign looked at how his tactic of early advertising affected voters in 1995. The campaign reported doing ten to fifteen points better in areas where they began advertising compared to areas where they did not advertise. It was also noted by the campaign that Clinton was doing better even in areas where he had less favorability when the advertisements were being shown (West, 2014, p. 44).

Once candidates are nominated to run for President, microtargeting may not be as effective with decided voters. However, during the primaries microtargeting may have positive effects. For instance, Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure, discovered that in Richard Nixon's election against George McGovern, ads did not have much of an effect on voters perceptions of candidates, because by September of the election year, many voters had already made up their minds about the candidates (West, 2014, p. 88). Furthermore, West (2014) writes, "as Patterson and McClure pointed out, other electoral settings display greater opportunities for advertising to have measurable effects. Nominating campaigns and Senate races show extensive shifts in voters' assessments of the candidate" (p. 88). Timing is an important factor when trying to consider how voters will react to a candidate.

In addition it is important to look at the way that campaigns view voters today. There are three groups of voters, voters that support a candidate, voters that are against a candidate, and undecided voters. Campaigns typically focus their advertising on the undecided voters. West (2014) writes, "Ads are developed to stir the hopes and fears of the 20 percent to 30 percent of the electorate who are undecided, not the 70 percent to 80 percent who are committed or hopeless (160). Therefore, most of the electorate is left out when it comes to microtargeting and those that are most influenced by microtargeted ads are voters that are undecided.

The use of data mining allows a campaign to gather information about a voter without ever having to contact that voter (Howard, 2005, p.155**).** Before technology was so prevalent, campaign volunteers used to have to go door to door and speak with voters directly. With the rise of data mining technologies, campaigns now have the ability to target specific voters that they think are likely to be receptive to their message. This is one of the reasons that the Obama campaign was so successful in both the 2008 and 2012 elections. A chapter in Sasha Isenberg's book, *The Victory Lab,* addresses how the data mining process for the Obama campaign began. One of the things utilized by the Obama campaign was the Voter Activation Network (VAN). This database helped campaign staffers to enter information about voters who were committed to supporting the campaign in order for these voters to be contacted again to encourage them to vote for Barack Obama. The use of VAN in the Obama campaign was piloted by Dan Wagner, a campaign staffer in Iowa. This database allowed campaigns to track voters regardless of their location. Issenberg (2013) writes, "In a mobile country, voters would no longer be traceable only as a name at a fixed address, but could be followed when they relocated, even across county or state lines, and their political behavior collected throughout" (245). Furthermore, prior to the Iowa caucuses, the Obama campaign started a program to target high school students who would be eighteen years old in time to vote. The program was called "BarackStars" and aimed to campaign to high school students. The program also encouraged students to participate in caucuses near their hometowns so that their support would be spread throughout different precincts in the state instead of concentrated solely in one area (Issenberg, 2013).

The Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service looked at how the Obama campaign utilized the data that they had in order to adjust their campaign. According to its website, "Oxford Analytica is a global analysis and advisory firm drawing on a macro expert network to advise

clients on strategy and performance in complex markets" ("About us", N.D., para. 1). For instance, when the Obama campaign sent out emails to potential voters, the emails received were more personalized depending on what was thought to appeal to that particular recipient. In the past voters would have gotten a more general message from a campaign; however, the information from data mining allowed campaigns to personalize their messages to prospective voters in an effort to increase the number of people supporting their campaign. The Obama campaign was also able to reach more people by utilizing existing data.

The Obama campaign also relied on homophily- which describes "people's propensity to associate with those similar to themselves" ("INTERNATIONAL: Big data….", 2013, para 8). One way that homophily was utilized was by looking at Facebook data. By viewing Facebook data the Obama campaign was able to find people that would likely support their campaign by looking at their current supporters Facebook friends. According to Oxford Analytica, "By using Facebook data, the campaign team found that 85% of these previously unreachable people were closely linked to contactable individuals, who were then asked to get in touch with their friends" (INTERNATIONAL: Big data….", 2013, para 8). Data mining also made fundraising easier for the campaign. The campaign offered an opportunity for women between the ages of forty and forty-nine years old to win a dinner with a celebrity. In order to get these women interested, the campaign figured out which celebrities would appeal to these women going so far as to look at the region of the country they lived in. For women on the East coast Sarah Jessica Parker was the appealing choice while on the West coast George Clooney was the best choice ("INTERNATIONAL: Big data….", 2013, para. 12).

Furthermore, Obama's campaign was able to determine who his likely supporters would be through things like data mining and by utilizing data mining techniques to target groups like

women and immigrants. Mark Halperin, a senior political analyst for *Time* magazine described

what helped make Obama's 2012 re-election campaign so successful in terms of data mining and

predictive analytics. Halperin credits Obama's use of technology in addition to his messages

appealing to voters as one of the reasons for his success. "Republicans besides having a political

message that didn't appeal to many women and minority voters, found themselves badly

outgunned on the technology front" (Towns, 2012, para. 6). The Obama campaign's purchase of

all of the data that was available almost certainly assisted them in narrowing in on which voters

to target. Furthermore, Obama's campaigns have used creative ways in order to try and get out

the vote for his campaign. Apps were used in order to reach out to supporters. For instance one

particular Facebook app allowed users to see if other people with the same first name as

themselves had voted. If users followed the link and allowed it to connect to their Facebook

account they were then asked to contact friends of theirs (or more specifically Facebook friends)

who lived in swing states and deliver a message encouraging people to go vote (Kaye, 2012,

para, 5). It is unlikely that Barack Obama's campaign would have been as successful as it was

without the heavy use of technology and predictive analytics.

The Obama campaign was not the only team to use data mining and analytics to try and

win an election. Chris Christie, the governor of New Jersey, has also utilized data mining and

analytics. In an article for the *Wall Street Journal*, Patrick O'Connor (2014) notes, **"When New**

Jersey Governor Chris Christie wanted to reach Hispanic Voters during his re-election campaign

last year, a team of outside data crunchers discovered that viewers of "Dama y Obrero", a

Spanish language telenovela about a woman torn between two men, would likely be more

receptive to his message than people who watch "Porque el Amor Manda" a romantic comedy"

(para 2). Campaigns also look to specific television channels when deciding where to air ads. For

instance O'Connor (2014) notes that the Christie campaign ran ads during Friday Night Wrestling on the SyFy channel in efforts to reach people who probably wouldn't vote, but would support Christie if they chose to vote (para 13). Mitch McConnell's campaign also utilized certain shows to try and gain swing voters. The McConnell campaign chose to air ads during the show "bones" because as O'Connor (2014) notes, "having determined that the show's viewers were highly likely to vote in the Kentucky race and could still be swayed to support a Republican candidate" (para 13).

Overall, technology has dramatically changed the way that political candidates campaign for office over the last couple decades. Campaigns that utilize techniques such as data mining are perceived to have an edge over the less technologically advanced candidates. This advantage is described as the source of Barack Obama's, successful electoral bids specifically his second campaign against Mitt Romney. Instead of just going door to door and talking to voters directly using a general message, campaigns now collect specific information on individual voters before ever speaking with them and then create a message that will appeal to each specific voter. Campaigns are also using information from their online supporters to contact friends of their current online supporters. However, this also means that there are people that might have been contacted by a campaign in the past, who are not being contacted or asked to participate in a campaign because their data shows that it would be unlikely they would support that candidate. These tactics have damaging effects on democracy, as some people are being excluded from the political process because a campaign feels it is a waste of time to contact them. The hypothesis that could be proposed is that exposure to microtargeted ads causes people to react positively towards a certain candidate.

In the 2004 Presidential race, the Bush campaign utilized knowledge from magazine subscriptions in order to microtarget voters in Michigan. Rackaway (2007, p. 468) writes, "By subsetting out snowmobile enthusiast, magazine subscribers, the Bush campaign could send a very specific message criticizing opponent John Kerry's environmental policy proposals and how they would affect snowmobile enthusiasts".

<center>Data Mining and Microtargeting in the 2016 Race</center>

During the 2016 Presidential race, candidates like Donald Trump utilized data mining to help identify which voters to reach out to. Members of the Trump campaign cited methods used by the Obama campaign as part of their inspiration. In a *Wall Street Journal* article Ed McMullen, the chairman for Donald Trump in South Carolina discussed how the Obama campaign influenced Trump campaign staffers. McMullen told the *Wall Street Journal*, "Obama taught us a lot. Republicans in the 2012 election cycle with Mitt Romney saw a system blow up on Election Day. You wouldn't believe the ineptitude. A lot of people made a lot of money for nothing" (Bauerline & Dawsy, 2016, para. 17).

The Trump campaign also utilized Cambridge Analytica, to help identify likely voters. Cambridge Analytica gathered information about potential voters through personality tests displayed on Facebook. Those who took the test were not told of its purpose which uses campaign ads based on their specific personality traits. According to CNN, the Trump campaign spent more than five million dollars in September of 2016, utilizing this firm's data mining capabilities (Soares, 2016, para. 2). The results of the personality test are then combined with data from credit card and cable companies. The combined data allows companies like Cambridge

Analytica to tailor ads and air them digitally or during television shows to specific voters (Soares, 2016, para. 6).

Additionally, the Clinton campaign utilized data mining and microtargeting techniques. Hillary Clinton's campaign utilized Elan Kriegel and his analytics team to help with microtargeting and data analytics. Goldmacher writes, "What cities Clinton campaigns in and what states she competes in, when she emails supporters and how those emails are crafted, what doors volunteers knock on, and what phone numbers they dial, who gets Facebook ads, and who gets printed mailers- all those and more have Kriegel's coding fingerprints on them (2016, para 3). According to Clinton's campaign advisors Kriegel was one of the highest paid members on the team (Goldmacher, 2016, para 4). Kriegel and his analytics team extensively studied which voters to contact and when to contact them. Goldmacher (2016) writes, that Kriegel and his team analyze, "not just whom to talk to, how to talk them and what to say- but when to say it. Is the best time to contact a voter, say, 90 days before the election? 60 days? One week? The night before?" (para 24). Also, when deciding where to place ads during TV programming Goldmacher writes that the campaign chose television shows that viewers with high probabilities of being persuaded to vote for Clinton watched (2016, para 3). The Clinton campaign utilized a large analytics team and mathematical algorithm's to determine where to spend the most campaign dollars.

CHAPTER III

HYPOTHESIS

Campaigns that utilize microtargeting aim certain messages towards different groups of people. The goal of utilizing more specified messages is to get people from certain demographic groups to support the candidate/campaign. The hypothesis for this experimental design is: Participants exposed to microtargeted ads will have a more favorable view of the candidate and think that the candidate cares about their demographic group. The goal of this hypothesis is to see if the literature is correct in asserting that microtargeted ads will have effects on voters and their attitudes towards a candidate.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHOD

An Experimental Design

In order to assess the effect that microtargeting would have on voters during the 2016 Presidential election year, a quantitative experimental design was utilized. This effort should be considered a pilot project in order to determine if this project should be implemented on a wider scale in the future. The response rate for the project was not very high and only a single college campus was able to be utilized for this study. It is also important to note that the goal of this study is to see whether or not microtargeting has an effect on college students, as this age group has grown up in the age of microtargeting tactics. The goal of the experimental design was to see if campaign ads would still have an effect on their voter attitudes. The experimental design involved four groups; two treatment groups and two control groups. As this experiment was designed to see the effect that campaign microtargeting would have on targeted voters' attitudes, the subjects involved in the study were females and non-whites. There was a control group for both the female and minority students as well as a treatment group for each.

The Hypotheses

The objective of this research is examine the effects of microtargeted campaign ads on a person's perception of the candidate. More specifically, the objective is to see how different groups respond to the microtargeted ads that their demographic group (i.e. female, Hispanic, African American etc.…) views. This study is based on the following predictions: H1 would be: Participants exposed to the microtargeted ads will have a more favorable opinion of the candidate and think that that candidate cares about their demographic group. The hypothesis was

developed to see if the existing literature discussing microtargeting from campaigns like Barack Obama's is correct in assuming that targeted ads affect people's perceptions of candidates and their votes.

Variables

The Independent variables for this research would be the political ads that were shown to the treatment groups and control groups. The dependent variable would be how the participants viewed the candidate after watching her ads. For instance, did they view Hillary Clinton as caring about their demographic group after watching her ads. Also, did they hold the belief that it is important for a candidate to show that they care about the particular group the participant belongs to.

Recruitment Methods

Subjects were recruited from Political Science courses and from Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) on Central Michigan University's campus. The recruited RSO's included: the Empowered Latino Student Union, the African Student Association, and the Asian Cultural Association. The Political Science Courses at Central Michigan University that were recruited from included: Women and Politics, Introduction to American Government, and Introduction to Political Behavior. Students in these classes and organizations were told that this survey was being completed as part of a Master's thesis and that it was in relation to microtargeting and political campaigns. A minimal amount of information about microtargeting was given in efforts to avoid the sensitizing effects it may have on student responses. Students also did not participate in a pre-test questionnaire in order to avoid its sensitizing effects on responses in the posttest. A sheet was passed around the room asking for students names and

emails addresses. Students indicating an interest to participate were given the option of being in one of the female groups or one of the minority groups. They indicated "F" for female or "NW" for non-white. Females were chosen as one group to study because campaigns on both sides often work to win them over. Non-whites were chosen because immigration is large issue in this country and affects Hispanic voters. Furthermore, non-whites were chosen because candidates often try to win over voters that are considered a part of minority groups like African Americans. Consent forms were not necessary as part of this experiment because Central Michigan University's Institutional Review board deemed this project did not constitute research on human subjects.

Choosing the Political Ads

As political ads constitute the treatment of this experimental design it was necessary to identify those that would be used for the treatment and control. For this on-line experiment, we chose to look at ads aired during the recent presidential election. Video ads that could be accessed on YouTube from the Hillary Clinton campaign were the only ads used, as the video ads from the Donald Trump campaign were not the type of ads you would typically see in a presidential election campaign. Given that the styles between Clinton's ads and Trump's ads were so inconsistent, it was difficult to find Trump ads that were similar to Clinton's ads. Clinton's ads sought to be positive about building a better America for all types of people. In contrast, Trump's ads were about what poor condition the United States was in. Trump's ads seemed as though they were meant to cause a panic. The ads put out by his campaign discussed things like a Muslim ban, and building a wall at the U.S. and Mexico border. These were not ads that were likely to microtarget towards minorities. The ads that were shown to women from

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Hillary Clinton's campaign included sound bites with Donald Trump's negative statements regarding women. Another ad includes Hillary Clinton narrating and features images and video from the women's movement. The ads viewed by the female treatment group included ads that suggested Hillary Clinton had a commitment to women. The ads shown to minority groups featured Hillary Clinton talking about creating an America that works for everyone and showed video of her with people of all races. The control groups for the females and non-whites were given the same ads. These ads could be considered more "neutral in their tone". The ads the control group saw featured Hillary Clinton talking about her mother and the importance of strong families. It also included a male voice narrating some of the work she did for children during her career, such as starting the Children's Defense Fund. The other ad featured sound bites and video clips of Donald Trump talking about sacrifices he's made and criticizing John McCain for being captured.

Designing the Post Test

In designing the post-test questionnaire it was important to not only ask questions regarding the ads viewed by participants, it was also important to pose demographic questions. The questions relating to the campaign ads viewed were asked at the end of the post-test questionnaire. Standard demographic questions were asked to help control for characteristics that might affect participants' support for a particular candidate. There were questions about things such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and party identification, as well as their parents' highest level of education, their involvement in student government or organizations, and their voting history.

Likert scale questions were utilized in order to help operationalize the dependent variable. Questions on the Likert scale were asked in order to see how participants reacted to the ads. For instance, one of the Likert scale statements that participants were asked to respond to was: "Hillary Clinton's campaign ads showed she cares about my demographic group". Another Likert scale question asked was: "Hillary Clinton's campaign ads made me more supportive of her campaign". There were seven options on the Likert scale. The number one represented strongly disagree, two represented somewhat disagree, three represented slightly disagree, four represented neutral, five represented slightly agree, six represented somewhat agree, and seven represented strongly disagree.

Distribution of the Post-Test Questionnaire

The questionnaires were distributed through an email on Survey Monkey. Every participant regardless of which group they were assigned to was asked the same questions. There were four different survey groups in Survey Monkey, accounting for the two treatment groups and the two control groups. A coin was flipped for each individual to determine if the person would be placed in the treatment or the control group. One half of the female list was placed into the treatment group for females while the other half of the female list was placed into the control group for females. The same process was repeated for the post-test questionnaire sent out to minorities. Four separate emails were sent out to each group briefly explaining the experiment again. Each of the emails contained a web link to the post-test questionnaire on Survey Monkey and web links to the ads for that particular group. Emails with links to the surveys and ads were sent out more than ten times to non-respondents, to try and get as many people to participate as possible.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Findings indicate that for some of the groups tested, micro-targeted ads did have an effect on how they viewed Hillary Clinton. A greater impact on attitudes was seen among participants in minority groups compared to participants in the female group. This will be discussed more in the following sections.

Reaction to Micro-targeted Political Ads

The reaction to the microtargeted was measured by asking participants to respond to statements using a Likert scale. There were seven points on the Likert scale with one being strongly disagree and seven being strongly agree.

College Minorities' Reaction to Micro-targeting

Table 1. Minority Reactions to Microtargeted Ads

	T Post M (*SD*)	C Post M *(SD)*	Mean Difference	*T*	*P*	*N*
Hillary Clinton's Ads showed she cares about my demographic group.	5.1 (*.994*)	2.5 (*1.690*)	2.6	T (4.078)	T (.001)**	10/8
Clinton's Ads made me more supportive of her campaign	4.30 (*1.160*)	2.75 (*1.669*)	1.55	T (2.325)	T (.034)**	10/8

T=Treatment C=Control

As reported in Table 1, viewing an ad had a clear effect in making young people think Hillary Clinton cared about them. However, the results were more significant in both treatment groups for the first Likert scale question asked indicating that while participants believed the ads showed that Hillary Clinton cared about the demographic group they were a part of (i.e. Hispanic, African American etc.…) it made them only somewhat more supportive of her campaign. It is important to note though that the reason for that could be because they were already planning to vote for her anyway and because the election had passed when they received the survey. Another important thing to note is that the mean was higher in the treatment group than in the control group than in the control group for both questions and the p value showed greater significance in the treatment groups. For instance, the treatment group computed a mean of 5.1 when asked if Hillary Clinton's ads showed she cared about their demographic group compared to a mean of 2.5 for the control group. When looking at the second Likert scale question regarding whether or not Clinton's campaign ads made participants more supportive of her campaign the treatment group again had a higher mean at 4.30 compared to 2.75 for the control group. This demonstrates that even though both groups (treatment and control) provided significant results in response to both Likert scale statements, the treatment group which viewed ads that were targeted more towards their demographic group had higher means, showing that there were stronger reactions to the ads viewed by the treatment group than to the ads shown to the control groups.

Table 2. Female Reactions to Microtargeted Ads

	T Post M (SD)	C Post M (SD)	Mean Difference	T	P	N
Hillary Clinton's Ads showed she cares about my demographic group	6.00 (1.225)	4.29 (.951)	1.714	T (2.739)	T (.021)**	5/7
Clinton's Ads made me more supportive of her campaign	4.50 (2.282)	4.00 (2.070)	0.5	T (.394)	T (.702)	4/8

In addition, Table 2 looked at the effects that microtargeted ads had on participants in the female group. An independent samples t-test was used to measure the reactions of participants in this group as well. While the female group yielded significant results in response to the first statement regarding Hillary Clinton caring about their demographic group, they did not yield significant results in regards to the statement about being more supportive of her campaign after viewing the ads. The means were once again higher for the treatment groups than for the control groups in response to both of the statements asked on the Likert scale. In response to the statement, "Hillary Clinton's ads showed she cares about my demographic group", the treatment group yielded a mean of 6.00 while the control group yielded a mean 4.29. In response to the second statement, "Clinton's Ads made me more supportive of her campaign the treatment group yielded a mean of 4.50 while the control group yielded a mean of 4.00. The results were not significant in response to the second Likert scale statement. Like the minority treatment group,

the female treatment group demonstrated that exposure to microtargeted ads caused a higher agreement with the statements made on the Likert scale.

Furthermore, demographic questions were asked to see if things like ethnicity or socioeconomic status played a role in which candidate a participant chose to vote for. The purpose of asking demographic questions was to see if for instance, people in the minority group that were Hispanic reported voting for Clinton. In some of her ads, Clinton was trying to target minority groups, including Hispanic voters. Thus, the demographic questions were asked to see if members of a minority group were affected by that and chose to vote for Clinton. Another reason that demographic questions were asked was to see if there were other factors contributing to attitudes towards candidates or vote outcomes. For instance, if someone was a registered democrat that may have made them more likely to think Clinton cared about their demographic group. To further examine this, I created crosstabulations in SPSS for both of the minority groups and both of the female groups.

Vote Choice and Ethnicity and Socio-Economic Status for Minorities

Table 3. Minority Ethnicity and Vote Choice

Who did you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?	American Indian or Alaska Native	Black or African American	Hispanic	Other	Total
Hillary Clinton	1	7	3	1	12
Gary Johnson	0	3	0	0	3
Total	1	10	3	1	15

As displayed in the crosstabulation above, most of the participants in the Minority groups voted for Hillary Clinton across all of the ethnicities. The only ethnicity where participants chose to vote for another candidate, in this case Gary Johnson, was African American. The next thing reviewed using crosstabulations was whether or not socioeconomic status seemed to have any impact on whom minority participants voted for.

Table 4. Minority Socio-Economic Status and Vote Choice

Who did you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?	Working	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
Hillary Clinton	1	2	9	0	12
Gary Johnson	0	0	3	0	3
Total	1	2	12	0	15

In this crosstabulation, it appears that most people supported Hillary Clinton. The only Gary Johnson supporters were in the middle class socioeconomic group.

Vote Choice and Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status for Females

Table 5. Female Ethnicity and Vote Choice

Who did you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?	White	Total
Hillary Clinton	4	4
Donald Trump	2	2
Other	2	2
Total	8	8

There were no respondents in either of the female groups (treatment or control) that

responded to the question asking who they voted for that were not white. However, half of the

respondents to the questions "Who did you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?" voted for

Hillary Clinton. Only two voted for Donald Trump and two voted for another candidate.

However, it is important to recognize that the sample size of responses to this question was only

eight. It is also important to note that no one in the either of the minority groups voted for

Donald Trump.

Table 6. Female Socio-Economic Status and Vote Choice

Who did you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?	Working	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
Hillary Clinton	1	2	1	0	4
Donald Trump	1	0	1	0	2
Other	0	0	2	0	2
Total	2	2	4	0	8

In looking at the crosstabulation for female voters in terms of socioeconomic status, there

were two working class voters, two lower class voters, and four middle class voters. Of the

working class voters one voted for Donald Trump while one voted for Hillary Clinton. Both of

the lower class voters chose to vote for Clinton. In the middle class, one voter voted for Trump,

while one voted for Clinton, and two voted for other candidates. It's difficult to examine the

relationship between socioeconomic status and voter choice because the sample size is so small.

In the next section, the potential reasons that the female groups had some Trump voters, while the minority groups did not will be discussed.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Gender and Vote Choice

Despite his rhetoric towards women, Donald Trump did receive support from some women, particularly white women. In this study, almost all of the participants in the female group were white. Michelle Cottle, discusses the support of white women for Donald Trump in an article for *The Atlantic.* Cottle discusses the distinctly different issues, women tend to have opinions on. She writes, "Sure there are the touchstone "women's issues" that motivate many gals (including reproductive rights, paid family leave, and equal pay). But there are also many women who are passionately pro-life or who don't get as fired up about say child care, as about taxes or immigration or national security" (Cottle, 2016, para 8). Furthermore, women, particularly white women, do not have the same sort of group consciousness that other groups have. Marianne Cooper, a sociologist at Stanford University's Clayman Institute for gender research, discussed the lack of gender political consciousness in an article with *Fortune Magazine.* Cooper defines, gender political consciousness as "one's ability to see his or her personal inequality and recognize its legitimacy" (Farber, 2016, para 3). Cooper further notes, that women in minority groups have a better ability to see gender in relation to other demographics. These demographics can include, race, social class, and sexuality. (Farber, 2016, para 4). Also, white women do not experience things such as racism the way women of minority groups such Hispanic or African American women do. This likely makes it more difficult for them to see a candidate such as Donald Trump as harmful. In relation to white women Cooper says, "Their color-blind framework and their 'sexism is normal' perspective made it harder to

see the misogyny or easier to downplay it to other concerns that they do have" (Farber, 2016, para 13).

Ronnie Michelle Greenwood looked at intersectionality and singularity in relation to group cohesiveness. People perceive themselves as part of a group when they feel that they have similarities with other members of that group. Greenwood notes that women's closeness to men both psychologically and physically to men also poses a challenge (2008, para 2). She writes, "when White women and women of color work together the differences among women may appear greater than the differences between women and men, especially for Black women who share the experience of racism with Black men" (Greenwood, 2008, para 3). Greenwood also notes that intersectionality recognizes that different characteristics such as race, gender, and social class are interlinked in developing an individual's perception of reality. Greenwood looks at how both intersectional consciousness and singular consciousness affect political consciousness. Intersectional consciousness is defined as, "a set of political beliefs and action orientations rooted in recognition of the need to account for multiple groups of identity when considering how the social world is constructed, when deciding what corrective goals to pursue, and when selecting the appropriate means for pursuing those goals" (Greenwood, 2008, para 12). Greenwood also defines singular consciousness as, "a set of political beliefs and action orientations rooted in the belief that a single axis of social relations, such as gender, race, or social class, is the source of the ingroup's illegitimate low status relative to a relevant comparison group" (2008, para 12). Greenwood concludes that if a diverse group of people are working together to affect change, it is easier if the members of the group have more intersectional consciousness. However, if a less diverse group of people are working together, then singular consciousness is more important (2008, para 39). Therefore, because minority

women have more factors contributing to intersectionality in comparison to white women it makes sense why White women may not vote for someone like Hillary Clinton even if Donald Trump says derogatory things about women.

Ethnicity and Vote Choice

In regards to the Hispanic/Latino vote, more Hispanics voted than ever before during the 2016 election ("Latinos Will Never…", 2016). While in this study, all of the Hispanics who responded to the question about who they had voted for, voted for Hillary Clinton, there were still Hispanics across the U.S. that voted for Trump. "According to the official exit poll, Trump performed roughly on par with Republican Mitt Romney, capturing 28 percent of the Latino vote, though that number is up for debate" ("Latinos Will Never….", 2016). A potential reason cited in *NPR's* article, "Latino's Will Never Vote For a Republican and Other Myths About Hispanics from 2016", that Hispanics and Latinos voted for Trump over Clinton is religion. Mario Bramnik, Pastor in south Florida, states the family and social values are important to Hispanics who belong to the Evangelical community ("Latinos Will Never…", 2016). In relation to the Hispanics in this study none of them voted for Donald Trump, however the sample size was small and only college students were surveyed, which could have made an impact. However, it is possible that the female group was the only group to see participants vote for Trump due to things like lack of a gender political consciousness and the fact that because they were white, they had not experienced discrimination in the ways that members of minority groups had.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

These findings, while preliminary suggest that microtargeting does have an effect on younger generations just as it does on older generations. After viewing ads, both females and minorities were more likely to believe that Hillary Clinton cared about people "like them". However, the ads made minorities more likely to support Clinton's campaign which was not the case with the females. The claim that white women and minority women react to microtargeted advertising differently would be strengthened by comparing their reactions to items on the post-test questionnaire. Given the way this project was implemented, the gender of those in minority treatment and control groups was not identified. This oversight should be corrected in any future research efforts. If the findings from this preliminary study were replicated in a broader study, it would support the claim that the way women and minorities respond to microtargeting would not shift as college students come of age and become more frequent voters. To be successful campaigns must recognize that white women are not a monolithic group and must find narrower identities to shape successful microtargeting.

Overall, the results from this study show that there is some validity to how microtargeting affects the attitudes of voters. Significant results were reported in the minority groups for both displayed in Table 1. For the female groups, significant results were only reported in response to the first question. After doing this project there are important things to keep in mind, especially if the study is to be replicated in the future. In this particular research project, the sample sizes for each group were not very large. In the future, it would be better to obtain larger sample sizes if at all possible in order to help achieve significant results. Additionally, timing is key. It would be interesting to do a survey like this earlier on in the campaign or maybe even during the primaries.

The reason for this is that most of the participants in this survey had already made up their minds by the time it was distributed. Conducting a survey like this during the primaries would be interesting because there would be more candidates to choose from and potentially more undecided voters. Microtargeting is more effective with undecided voters than with strong partisan voters. In this survey we were unable to control for people who may have been undecided close to the election. It would be interesting to do a survey like this with groups of voters who are undecided and compare them to groups that are decided.

Furthermore, it is important to make note of a few things regarding the results of this survey. All of the respondents were college aged. The results may have been different if voters from different age groups had been involved. Also, instead of just looking at females, it would be interesting to look at females who are married because married women, especially white married women tend to vote more Republican than single women. In addition, the participants, were all students from Central Michigan University, a university that has an overwhelmingly white student population. Even though minority groups were involved, larger sample sizes of Hispanics and Latinos, and African Americans could have been obtained in other cities. Finally, it is also important to note that this was an unusual presidential election year. Due to the nature of his ads, in comparison to Hillary Clinton's ads, Donald Trump's ads were not sent out with the surveys. In replicating this study it would be important to choose an election where both of the major candidates' ads could be sent out as part of the survey.

Through this project I learned how difficult it can be to do a survey like this. The questionnaires and ads were sent out to people that had indicated interest more than ten times. It is difficult to get people to respond to surveys that come through email and it is also difficult to get them to respond to every question which can cause the data to skew.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever voted before?   Yes____   No____
2. Did you vote in the 2016 Primary? Yes____   No____
3. If you voted for Democratic candidates, who did you vote for?
     Hillary Clinton____
     Bernie Sanders____
     Martin O'Malley____
     Roque De La Fuente____
     Did Not Vote____
     Did not vote for Democratic candidates____
     Other (please specify)_____
4. If you voted for a Republican candidate, who did you vote for?
     Jeb Bush____
     Ben Carson____
     Chris Christie____
     Ted Cruz____
     Carly Fiorina____
     Lindsey Graham____
     Mike Huckabee____
     John Kasich____
     George Pataki____
     Rand Paul____
     Marco Rubio____
     Rick Santorum____
     Donald Trump____
     Did not vote____
     Did not vote for a Republican candidate____
     Other (please specify)____
5. Were you involved in student government in high school?   Yes____ No____
6. Are you involved in student government at CMU?   Yes____ No____
Other (please specify)_____
7. Are you involved in Registered Student Organizations at CMU?
Yes____ No____
8. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, or something else?
Republican____ Democrat____ Other (please specify)_____
9. What is your parent's highest level of education?
High school____ Associates Degree____ Bachelor's Degree____ Master's Degree____ Doctoral
Degree____ Other (please specify)____
10. What is your parents' political party affiliation?
Republican____ Democrat____ Independent____ Other (please specify)____
11. How old are you?
12. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply.

American Indian or Alaska Native____ Asian____ Black or African American____
Hispanic____ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander____
White____ Other____

13. What is your family's socioeconomic status?
Working____ Lower____ Middle____ Upper____

On a scale of 1 to 7, answer the following questions. 1 represents strongly disagree and 7 represents strongly agree.

Campaign ads influenced my thoughts on who to vote for.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

It is likely I will donate or volunteer for specific campaigns in the future.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

It is likely I will watch television coverage of future Presidential Elections.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

It is important that candidates show that they care about issues that affect my demographic group (i.e. female, Hispanic, African American, etc…)
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

Hillary Clinton's campaign ads showed she cares about my demographic group.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

Hillary Clinton's ads made me more supportive of her campaign.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

Hillary Clinton's ads made me more supportive of her campaign.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

Voting in this election was important to me.
Strongly Disagree____ Somewhat Disagree____ Slightly Disagree____ Neutral____ Slightly Agree____ Somewhat Agree____ Strongly Agree____

15. If you voted in the 2016 Presidential Election, who did you vote for? Please write the candidates name below.

_____

VIDEO ADS
Ad for Minority Treatment Group
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMZtjCY7_Ws

Ads for Female Treatment Group
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZFB6gqPqe0&list=PLBuWKjr08agSHGFLJIQSlN4Bw1_8Y-iDa&index=2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-dwobZGirc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHGPbl-werw

Ads for Control Group
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5at389A1BkA&list=PLv13xg41K1p9u4si-w0CtwxJfYJ6C600P
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEqiNIPIPPQ

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