Gender Targeting in Political Advertisements

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What role does identity-based targeting play in voters' reactions to male and female political candidates? We extend Hillygus and Shield's (2008) idea of issue-targeted messages to theorize about how messages targeting gender identity will influence voters. Specifically, we argue that identity-based ads influence voters by priming identity and are thus different from issue-based ads. By invoking identity, these campaign missives both persuade voters of a candidate's positive traits and prime female voters' identity. Both of these results increase the likelihood that a female voter will support a candidate who uses an identity-based advertisement. We test our theories using an experimental design that provides women with an identity-based appeal. We find preliminary support for our theory and suggest extensions.

During the 2012 election, one of Barack Obama's presidential campaign videos featured his wife Michelle speaking directly to women: "This November, there is so much on the line for all of us, but especially for women. Our votes will determine whether we will keep fighting for equal pay in the workplace; whether we keep supporting women small business owners, and whether women will be able to make our own decisions about our bodies and our healthcare…" The First Lady went on to discuss the ways that female voters could get involved in the campaign and election, asking to women to move the country forward "not just for the next four years, but for the next generation and generations to come." The ad from Obama's campaign is but one of the hundreds of appeals aimed at women to come out of campaigns on both sides of the political spectrum in 2012 (Christensen 2012; Wilson 2012). Over the course of the last several election cycles, the US has seen a marked increase in campaigns' use of marketing techniques aimed at particular groups. These strategies provide fodder for journalists (with headlines like "Microtargeting: How campaigns know you better than you know yourself" (Brennan 2012)) and election analysts (Issenberg 2012) alike, but political scientists have yet to clearly understand whether or how such messages affect voters. In this paper, we use theories of campaign strategy to define and examine *identity targeting,* where a candidate constructs a message designed to appeal to members of a politicized group. Using a website targeted at women, we posit and test a theory of identity priming, where these identity-targeted ads prime group membership and result in changes in vote choice. We focus on the effects of targeting female voters for several reasons: women make up over half of the voting electorate and are thus an important group for any candidate or campaign to attract (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Schaffner 2005). Furthermore, recent attention has been drawn to the importance of courting

female voters (Abdullah 2012; Anderson, Lewis, and Baird 2011; Casserly 2012; Cassidy 2012), and women have been shown to use their identity in their vote decision (Brians 2005; Dolan 1998; Paolino 1995; Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Using an experimental design, we test the effects of identity targeting on women and the mechanism behind such effects.

Campaign Strategy

Downs' Median Voter Theory – that the fate of candidates ultimately lies in the hands of the voter in the very center of the electorate – implies that candidates would do best aiming their rhetoric towards this median voter (Downs 1957). Yet, candidates often campaign on issues that fail to fit this prescription. An alternative theory, that of issue priming, predicts that candidates will promote a message emphasizing those issues most associated with their political parties, such as health care for Democrats and military issues for Republicans (Johnston et al. 1992; Petrocik 1996). In this way, candidates can direct the attention of the electorate towards one or two advantageous issues. For example, Nixon called attention to domestic policies on which he and the public agreed in his reelection campaign (Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004). Thus, the prevailing theory of candidate behavior and its effect on voters shifted from that of campaigns appealing to the median voter to that which says that by focusing on particular issues that resonate with the public, candidates *prime* voters, or change the criteria that voters use when making an evaluation or choice (Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004).

The idea of priming may need to be updated, however, as U.S. campaigns become increasingly reliant on strategists who apply consumer-marketing techniques to political candidates (Bailey 2004; Issenberg 2012; Malchow 2003). Hillygus and Shield's (2008) theory of persuadable voters argues that campaigns seek out smaller groups of voters who disagree with their party on one or more key issues with the ultimate goal of persuading them to change their

vote. To identify these voters, strategists depend upon databases full of information – including voters' party identification, issue preferences, and consumer information. The campaigns then create messages aimed at gaining a particular group's support and narrowcast these messages to the group through customized media efforts such as direct mail, e-mail, text messaging, web advertisements, phone calls, and personal canvassing (Hillygus and Shields 2008). In identifying different groups of voters, campaigns assume that members of said group possess unique values or issue priorities or are subject to distinctive framing because of shared characteristics.

We refer to the strategy as *targeting*, defined as sending a message from an entity such as a corporation or a candidate tailored to a specific group with the intent of influencing the group to evaluate the entity favorably.[1] We distinguish between two different types of targeting. *Issue-based targeting* involves directing messages to voters based on particular issues that the campaign believes that they support. For example, Hillygus and Shields (2008) found that candidates use information from voter databases to devise campaign materials on specific issues such as stem cell research or abortion to convince cross-pressured partisans—those who disagree with their party on one or more issues—to change their vote choice.

The second possible route includes specific appeals using *identity-based targeting*. As far back as Madison's concern with factions, American politics has always been about *groups* of voters—whether the group is one with a particular psychological attachment to party (i.e., Campbell et al. 1960), a social stratum with certain preferences (i.e., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954), or a group with particular political interests such as women (Sapiro 1981). Ascribed characteristics, such as seniors or gender, or achieved characteristics, such as veterans or farmers, can serve as the basis for a group. Groups can even be created over the course of the

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[1] Such messages have been referred to as a 'dog whistle' – a sound that only a limited group can hear (Converse 1964).

campaign by the media or candidates, such as soccer moms or NASCAR dads (Jackson 2005). Social identity theory suggests that people may have an emotional attachment to their group (Huddy 2002) that can form through a long-standing relationship with a group identity or even through a so-called minimal group situation where an identity is created randomly (Tajfel 1970). These attachments – both long standing and those created over the course of a campaign – have been shown to have political consequences, such as shared interests and fears and preferences for a 'like' group member as well as a being key component of vote choice (Conover 1988; Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Jackson 2011; Miller et al. 1981). Therefore, because of the political importance of groups in American politics, targeted messages do not solely rely on a particular issue but can be designed to appeal to a specific group. We call this *identity-based targeting*.

Identity-based targeting could include issue-based targeting, but this is not sufficient for our definition. Identity-based targeting includes symbolic appeals to the particular group that are designed to promote a sense of shared group identity or interests beyond the closeness on a particular issue that the issue-based targeted messages are intended to create. These appeals can include naming that the candidate is in favor of the group, the inclusion of images of group members, or identifying that certain issue positions are in the interest of the group. Thus, if a campaign identified that women supported reduced military spending and sent a mailer to particular women that demonstrated the candidate's commitment to the cause of such reduced spending, this would be issue-based targeting. Identity based targeting requires that the ad include a message that makes it clear that the candidate is somehow aiming the rhetoric at women, such as the candidate's explicit statement that her actions are in the interest of women.

Recent campaigns have used identity-based targeting to illicit support from women. Barack Obama's 2012 *Women for Obama* campaign targeted women with appeals based on

equal pay, health care, and contraception, and featured Republican women who were voting for Obama in addition to female celebrities (including Beyoncé and Alicia Keys) (http://www.barackobama.com/women). Obama also used Mitt Romney's stances on key issues as fodder for attack ads, including Mitt Romney's support of Richard Mourdock, who said that "God intended" for women to get pregnant for rape. Romney's campaign used testimonials from women who had served in his cabinet about his sensitivity to the needs of working women and, in an ad entitled "Dear Daughter," outlined the poor economic condition of women under the Obama administration. The 2012 campaign is far from the first presidential campaign to use gender-based appeals. Eisenhower, in his 1956 presidential campaign, used a female spokesperson in an appeal to female voters that discussed the cost of living, family safety, and peace. Since then, campaigns have frequently invoked gender-based appeals, from Carter's 1980 ad use of Mary Tyler Moore to George W. Bush's campaign led by his wife and other female surrogates entitled, "W Stands for Women" In these campaigns, the (male) candidate expressly tried to appeal to women using more than just issues that concern women. By including other female surrogates and openly stating the appeal to women, as the majority of these ads do, the campaign intends to send a message that the candidate has a deeper relationship with female voters whereby he might be able to symbolically represent them (Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1967).

Effects of Identity-Based Targeting

The most important effect of identity-based targeting, particularly from the perspective of a political campaign, is that it changes votes. We focus here only on the effects of identity-based rhetoric in the intended group – in this case, women - in order to first clarify the effects of identity-based targeting in the intended group. While we recognize that targeted rhetoric might have a different effect on the 'outgroup' or the group it is excluding, the campaigns intent for

identity-based targeting is to gain votes. Consistent with this prediction, Hillygus and Shields (2008) find that the issue-targeted messages aimed at cross-pressured partisans did indeed cause them to alter their vote.

We argue that the key ingredient of identity-based targeting is a symbolic appeal to a group and the basis of this appeal involves more than just a targeted issue position or an image characteristic. We draw on social identity theory to contend that the mechanism behind the vote choice effect will be an alteration in a sense of group identity. By making a group both salient and clear, identity-based targeting capitalizes on the natural tendency of humans to feel a sense of "group consciousness" and sympathize with their in-group (Conover 1988). Similarly, Jackson (2005, 2011) posits that social identity or a sense of "closeness" (Conover 1984) with one's in-group can be dependent on contextual factors throughout the campaign.

The influence of groups on political behavior has been the subject of decades of research in political science (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Lewis-Beck 2008), but explorations of how group identities shape the ways that individuals interact with political appeals is understudied (Huddy 2002; Jackson 2005, 2011). A body of research also examines race-based cues in political advertising, although the majority of these cues are aimed out out-group members (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). In addition, very little research examines gender-specific ads. We are particularly interested in women's responses to ads aimed at women because they represent, in some ways, a least-case scenario group. Scholars often argue that women lack a cohesive group membership, while sometimes acknowledging that they do have a set of group interests (Sapiro 1981). While women display characteristics associated with other minority groups, women are integrated with the "other" (i.e. men) and thus may be unable to

develop a high degree of internal political efficacy or high levels of political mistrust. Gurin (1985) argues that women may not form group consciousness because they are socialized with men (as children, siblings, friends, and classmates) and "cleavage and conflict rarely develop between groups that share such fundamental values" (145). Indeed, given the race, class, partisan, ethnic, and ideological differences (among others) that influence women's attitudes, priming identity among women may prove exceedingly difficult.

We argue that ads aimed at particular groups are effective because they tap into specific identities of individuals, specifically by *priming* identity, where priming is defined as "systematic increases in the weights voters attach to particular political considerations" (Bartels 2006). Having their group clearly defined by campaign rhetoric would naturally direct people towards feelings of group consciousness[2] and "sympathy towards their in-group" (Conover 1988; 62). Identity-based targeting provides the salience and clarity of a group cue (Conover 1988) and encourages the recipient to "increase the weight" attached to identity in evaluating candidate traits and expressing preferences for candidates. As evidence supporting this prediction, Jackson (2011) finds that fictitious newspaper articles stating that Latinos were voting for a particular candidate served to prime identity and alter vote preference.

Alternatively, identity-based targeting might be simply a form of issue-based targeting. There have been many demonstrations of issue based-targeting, where the campaign identifies a particular issue, and it primes voters to consider that issue more in their overall evaluations of a candidate (e.g., Hillygus and Shields 2008; Johnston et al. 1992). In particular, Schaffner (2005) finds that in districts where women are a significant portion of the electorate, candidates emphasize women's issues, which then in turn improves the likelihood that women voters will

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[2] Tolleson-Reinhart 14 argues that group consciousness includes an identification with others that are similar, a positive affect towards them, and an understanding of interdependence with like-others.

vote for that candidate. If the group appeals of identity-based targeting are not as crucial as we believe, we may see the ad prime particular issues or image dimensions related to the communicated issues or image characteristics, as Schaffner (2005) does. However, as we argue earlier, we believe that these appeals prime *identity*, which improves candidate evaluations and the probability that a targeted individual will vote for the candidate.

In addition to priming effects, we must account for the possibility that any ad we test will have a persuasive effect of changing one's evaluations of the candidate sending the message (Bartels 2006; Kinder 2003). For instance, a voter encountering the "W Stands for Women" campaign might evaluate George W. Bush more highly on important image characteristics, such as leadership, competency, integrity, and empathy (Funk 1999; Kinder 1986; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). Said voter might change her mind as to how competent Bush would be at handling issues related to women or, perhaps even see him as more liberal than initially anticipated. Thus, we take into consideration that identity-based priming may alter these important ingredients to vote choice, in addition to priming identity discussed above.

Treatment and Methods

To test the effects of identity-based targeting, we chose to use a manipulation that maximized external validity, and, therefore, we used written content from a website of a male Republican candidate running for Congress in Pennsylvania. We developed a template of the website (see Figures 1 and 2) ascribed to "Congresswoman Patricia Johnson," and varied the content from an appeal to women (Treatment) to a discussion of transportation (Control). The websites were identical in every way except for the content in the main area and the photograph. The treatment condition had a few symbolic appeals: the headline "Women for Johnson" across

the top of the page and a photo of three women, including the political candidate.[3] In addition, the treatment extolled the experiences of the candidate as a former federal prosecutor who worked to train hairdressers to identify signs of domestic violence and highlighted that "Since coming to Congress, Patricia Johnson has taken the lessons she learned fighting domestic violence as a prosecutor and applied them to crafting legislation to further protect women from harm." The website goes on to point out how the Congresswoman has worked in Congress to pass the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and the Protecting Victims on Campus Act of 2012. The website contains an appeal for citizens to get involved in helping spread the word about Johnson's work.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

The control website discusses various transportation issues, including what Congresswoman Johnson has done for the state. The website discusses the Congresswoman's stance towards funding, in that "Patricia Johnson will not support any effort to increase fees or taxes without guarantees that revenue raised locally goes towards projects in our communities." Again, the website ends by asking the readers to get involved in the campaign.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

To maintain credibility of the websites, both look very similar to the actual website, including side materials, colors, and formatting. We purposefully removed any partisan information from the websites and the material was ambiguous enough to suggest a candidate of either political party.

The experiment was administered via mTurk, Amazon.com's online marketplace for hiring individuals to complete tasks. The survey was advertised as one where you look at a

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[3] We use a photo of a state Senator in Florida with two female constituents as the hypothetical candidate.

website from a political candidate and answer questions. The link on mTurk took participants to a survey on Qualtrics. Using Qualtrics, the study informed participants that, "The purpose of this research is to examine how voters respond to various political websites. You will be given a website and then asked about it. Completion should take no more than 10 minutes." The participants consented to participate. After consent, we verified that they were female and U.S. citizens. The software told males and non-citizens that they did not qualify for the survey and exited them from the experiment. Participants supplied the state where they live. They were then told "to look over a website from the Patricia Johnson campaign in <their state>. After looking at the website, please do your best to read directions and answer all of the questions that follow" and shown (through randomization) either the transportation or the women's issues website. The subjects then answered a series of questions about their impression of the candidates, their feelings towards and closeness with a set of groups, and their attitudes about policies. They then provided demographic information, including political information. As a final check, we asked the respondents to identify which issue (violence against women, transportation, or healthcare) was featured on the website. Participants were thanked, debriefed by a short memo detailing the purpose of the study, and given a code to receive payment from mTurk. While far from a perfect sampling method, mTurk's respondents have been shown to be more representative of Americans than convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012), but are more liberal, educated, and political involved (Richey and Taylor 2012). As such, our results should be used cautiously, although the random-assignment in the experimental method provides a higher degree of reliability.

We dropped all participants who identified as male, either at the beginning of the survey (18 respondents) or at the end (3 respondents). We also dropped anyone not a US citizen, not

living in the US, or anyone who did not answer the final question about website content correctly (18 respondents). Dropping these respondents left us with 48 respondents in the treatment group and 59 in the control group, although several respondents failed to answer some questions, leaving us with 105 total participants in most models.

Randomization:

The balanced-assignment randomization produced even samples between the treatments on demographics and political interest, knowledge, and ideology. A key difference emerges between the samples on party identification, where the treatment group is significantly more Republican. As a result, we control for party identification throughout the modeling. The basic descriptive statistics are available in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Results

To examine the effect of the identity-based targeting treatment, we asked respondents to rate, on a five-point scale, where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely, "If you were voting in the election today in the election, how likely would you be to vote for Patricia Johnson." Those in the women's issue treatment express a significantly higher likelihood of voting for Johnson ($\overline{X} = 3.78, 95\% \ CI \ [2.82, 4.75]$) compared to those in the transportation treatment ($\overline{X} = 3.78, 95\% \ CI \ [2.48, 4.20]$).[4]

It seems that identity-based targeting is effective in altering vote choice and we turn next to the mechanism behind this effect. We believe that identity will be the primary driver. In this model, group membership is primed by the targeted appeal and this causes an increase in support for the candidate. We also test whether the causal mechanism is the issue, not the identity. In

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[4] The difference holds up if the variable is converted to a dummy variable where those either likely or extremely likely to vote for Johnson are recoded as voting for Johnson.

this case, any issue-based appeal would work in a similar matter, regardless of who is the target

of the appeal. Finally, we consider that these ads are simply good ads and, as such, are

persuading the voters that the candidate possesses positive traits, which leads to the vote change..

Priming

We posit that the selective-targeted ad can also produce changes in voting behavior by priming

particular attitudes, perceptions, and feelings among the respondents. We test whether the

treatment simply primes concern for a particular policy area – and thus, could be applies to any

kind of issue-based appeal – or is more deeply connected to identity and primes a group

membership among the female subjects.

Identity Priming: Our main contention is that identity-based targeting will prime identity among

women and this effect will be the mechanism through which women prefer the candidate with

the targeted appeal. We test this by estimating the direct effects of the treatment and group

closeness with women, measured by asking the respondents to indicate on four point scale where

1 = not close at all and 4 = very close, "Below you will find a list of groups. Please read over

this list and indicate how close you feel towards the group. By 'close,' we mean the people who

are most like you in their ideas and interests and feelings… Women." We also interact the

treatment and the group membership (Closeness with women as a group * treatment). Given the

categorical nature of the dependent variable (vote), we use ordered logit to estimate the model.

We also control for party identification, as it was not randomly distributed across the two

treatments, and for participants' preference for spending on violence against women programs to

ensure we are not simply picking up differences in preference in the policy area.

Insert Table 2 about here.

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There is clear evidence of a group-priming effect. The interaction of treatment and Closeness with Women as a Group is significant and positive, while neither treatment nor Closeness with Women as a Group are significant on their own. We estimate the same model, but use closeness to feminists as the Group Closeness variable with very similar results (see the second column of results in Table 2).

Issue Priming: To examine the possibility that the mechanism behind the effectiveness of the appeals is not *identity* priming, but simply priming the issues in the ad more generally, we first evaluate whether the treatment or control increased individual concern for the specific issues on the website. We asked the respondents, "We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. For each problem below, indicate whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount." The treatment failed to produce significant differences in any of the issue areas, including violence against women ($Treatment: \overline{X} = 2.54, SD\ 0.49; Control: \overline{X} = 2.61, SD\ 0.62$), Transportation and Infrastructure ($Treatment: \overline{X} = 2.46, SD\ 0.65; Control: \overline{X} = 2.47, SD\ 0.62$), and Equal Pay for Women ($Treatment: \overline{X} = 2.58, SD\ 0.58; Control: \overline{X} = 2.49, SD\ 0.60$). Given that these responses might be related to party identification (as they relate to government spending), we also calculate the difference of means for Democrats alone and Republicans alone, without any substantial differences. Thus, preliminary evidence seems to suggest that the treatment compared to the control does not successfully produce issue-based changes among the subjects. These results are confirmed with an analysis of priming, as produced in the first column of results in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here.

We regress the treatment, issue preference for funding for violence against women (VAW)

policies, party ID, and an interaction of the treatment and issue preference onto the vote variable.

As displayed in the first column of results in Table 3, neither the issue preference nor the

interaction are significant for the violence against women policy area.

A second possibility is that voters are being primed not on their views about spending on

an issue, but instead on the candidate's capacity to handle an issue. We evaluated the subjects'

responses to the following questions: How well would you say Patricia Johnson would handle

the following issues? Violence against women and Transportation. The subjects indicated that

Johnson's capacity of handling violence against women

$(Treatment: \overline{X} = 3.71, SD\ 0.50; Control: \overline{X} = 2.72, SD\ 0.64)$, and transportation

$(Treatment: \overline{X} = 2.79, SD\ 0.50; Control: \overline{X} = 3.49, SD\ 0.70)$, were influenced by the

manipulations.

We test whether the ad primed participants' belief that Johnson could handle the issue of

violence against women (VAW) by (again) regressing participants' perception of the candidate's

ability to handle the issue, the interaction of this perception and the treatment, the treatment, and

party identification against the five-point vote variable. As with all the models in this paper, we

use ordinal logistic regression because of the categorical form of the dependent variable. We

present these results in the second column of results in Table 3.

Participants' perception of Johnson's ability to handle violence against women has a

positive, significant, direct effect on vote preference. However, there is no evidence of a priming

effect, as the interaction between the candidate assessment and the treatment remains

insignificant. Thus, the treatment may persuade participants that Johnson has an increased

expertise in an area, but does not prime this issue area as important for the vote. The persuasion

effect is not substantively insignificant, however. We test the substantive effects of the

persuasiveness of the treatment by estimating the model in Clarify and setting the mean of the

perception Johnson can handle the VAW issue to the mean of the variable in the treatment or

control group, while the other variables (treatment, party ID, handle issue*treatment) are held to

their overall mean. We collapse the two higher points on the scale (somewhat likely and

extremely likely) into a single probability for ease of interpretation. Those in the control group

have a 53% probability of indicating a likelihood of voting for Johnson compared to 75%

probability among those in the treatment group.

Priming and Persuasion?

An examination of the effect of the ad on participants' perceptions of Johnson's ability to handle

violence against women issues demonstrates that these ads also produce a persuasive effect. We

next test whether the identity priming holds up when we also account for the persuasiveness of

the ad. We test this by including traditional measures of candidate traits that may be influenced

by an identity-targeting ad. We first evaluate the effect of the treatment condition vis-à-vis the

control treatment on perceptions of favorability, compassion, and leadership, and well as feelings

towards the candidate on a traditional feeling thermometer scale. Those in the treatment

condition express higher rates of favorability ($\overline{X} = 5.19, SD = 1.45$) than those in the control

treatment ($\overline{X} = 4.63, SD = 1.02$); similar differences are found in perceptions of compassion

($Treatment: \overline{X} = 3.35, SD\ 0.64; Control: \overline{X} = 2.73, SD\ 0.69$), although there are no direct

effects on assessments of leadership ($Treatment: \overline{X} = 3.15, SD\ 0.68; Control: \overline{X} = $

$3.10, SD\ 0.61$). The treatment also increases assessments on the feeling thermometer scale

($Treatment: \overline{X} = 64.48, SD\ 21.88; Control: \overline{X} = 57.22, SD\ 20.54$). We next evaluate the

effects of these candidate traits on the vote variable in conjunction with the group priming

variables. To do so, we regress the treatment, group-membership, treatment*group-membership, the ability to handle VAW, perceptions of the candidate's favorability and compassion, and warmth towards the candidate on the feeling thermometer scale on the vote variable using ordered logit; the results are presented in Table 4. Given the insignificance of the treatment on perceptions of candidate leadership, we do not include that measure.

Insert Table 4 about here.

We find that the group membership priming continues to play a significant role in voting for the candidate, even when controlling for perceptions of the candidate's traits and ability to handle violence against women. In calculating substantive effects, we rely on a linear combination of estimators. By holding all other variables at their mean, and priming the women's group variable, we increase probability of voting for Johnson (either Somewhat likely or Extremely likely to vote for her) from 67% to almost 98% probability of voting for the candidate. The only other variable that comes close to producing a similar effect is when we change the favorability variable from the minimum to the maximum.

Conclusion

Our goal in this paper was to demonstrate the effects of identity-based targeting on the targeted group. In particular, we speculated not only that these ads, which are aimed at a particular group that includes a symbolic appeal to that group, would be effective, but that the mechanism behind their success would be priming identity. We did indeed find this to be the case. Priming identity, above all of the explanations we considered for why identity-based targeting might be significant, provides the most successful explanation.

The effects of identity-based targeting may pose some unique threats to descriptive representation in that candidates can claim solidarity with an identity that is not his or her own.

For example, a male candidate – George W. Bush – declared that he "stood for" women, despite the fact that he does not share this identity. From a descriptive representation standpoint, members of a unique minority group, such as women, should have an interest in having a representative who 'looks like' them in office (Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1967). As a candidate's appeal could be based on acting in the interest of an outgroup, identity-based targeting could influence voters towards choosing that candidate even if the candidate's issues are not in line with that group or does not represent the group descriptively. While voters with strong views of particular issue content would likely be unaffected (Zaller 1992), moderates who encounter a message with identity-based targeting might be influenced by such targeting, even if they disagree with the issue positions of the candidate. In this way, they might choose a representative because of this symbolic appeal to women, rather than on the normatively desirable factors of issues positions (Lau and Redlawsk 1997). Future research could test these claims and the implications of identity-based targeting for descriptive representation.

There are several extensions of this work that we propose for future consideration. First, we anticipate that this study would be replicated using candidates of the ingroup and outgroup or even a real candidate. We anticipate that, when an outgroup member communicates identity appeals lose some substantive effect, but continue to be effective overall. Second, this study does not address the effects on unintended recipients of identity-based targeting. In this example, men could easily be exposed to the identity-based targeting. We anticipate that the persuasive elements of the ad (including changing perceptions of the candidate's traits or the ability of the candidate to handle certain issues) would remain in effect and would continue to influence men's vote choice. We do not expect for men's identity to be primed, although we are agnostic about whether identity targeted ads may produce some feeling of closeness with the targeted group

among the non-recipients. By investigating how outgroup members might use or perceive these ads, additional research could complete the picture as to how these identity based appeals influence political attitudes and actions in the United States today. Third, there is also significant room for exploration of what forms of identity these ads might successfully prime. Does the identity targeting work more or less successfully if the group targeted grows narrower or is an achieved identity instead of an ascribed identity? We envision investigating whether ads targeted at subgroups of groups (such as young women, or working women) have a stronger effect on the targeted group and continue to affect the subgroup overall.

The 2012 election cycle saw an unprecedented number of political advertisements, with an increasing number of those ads targeted at specific groups of people. Campaigns used targeting to customize ads based on a wide variety of criteria, many of which include identity groups. We use one of these attempts at targeting in the form of a website aimed at soliciting support from women to evaluate the causal mechanism behind how these ads work. Given the number and reach of similar ads – from the Presidential race down to local elections – it is important to understand how, why, and if these ads are working. Our study suggests that we may see even more identity targeted advertisements, particularly given their effectiveness in eliciting vote support for a candidate.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Measure	Controls	Treatment	Overall	Sig
Income	Fifteen point scale from under $20,000 (1) to $150,000+ (15)	5.07	4.63	4.87	-
White	Dichotomous variable if the respondent indicated they are white	0.83	0.79	0.81	-
Party ID	Seven point scale from Strong Democrat (1) to Strong Republican (7)	3.22	2.65	2.96	+
Ideology	Seven point scale from Extremely Liberal (1) to Extremely Conservative (7)	3.22	2.83	3.05	-
Political Interest	Five point scale from Not at all interested (1) to Extremely interested (5)	3.15	2.94	3.06	-
Registered to Vote	Dichotomous variable (baseline is not registered to vote)	0.90	0.88	0.89	-
Vote in 2012	Dichotomous variable (baseline is did not vote in 2012; those that they were ineligible were recoded as missing)	0.25	0.19	0.23	-
Political Knowledge	0/1/2 questions (Who is David Cameron and which party has the majority in the House of Representatives) answered correctly	0.98	0.92	0.95	-
Vote	Five point scale from Extremely Unlikely (1) to Extremely Likely (5) to vote for Patricia Johnson	3.34	3.78	3.53	**
Favorable	Five point scale from Very unfavorable (1) to Very favorable (5)	4.63	5.19	4.88	*
Compassionate	Four point scale from Describes Not well at all (1) to Describes extremely well	2.73	3.35	3.01	**
Moral	Four point scale from Describes Not well at all (1) to Describes extremely well	2.93	3.23	3.07	**
Strong Leader	Four point scale from Describes Not well at all (1) to Describes extremely well	3.10	3.15	3.12	-
Handle Transportation	Four point scale from Describes Not well at all (1) to Describes extremely well	3.49	2.79	3.18	**
Handle Violence Against Women	Four point scale from Describes Not well at all (1) to Describes extremely well	2.73	3.71	3.17	**
Feeling thermometer: Feminists	Zero to one hundred warmth rating of Feminists	58.78	66.23	62.12	-
Feeling thermometer: Women	Zero to one hundred warmth rating of women	77.73	75.21	76.60	-

Feeling thermometer: Men	Zero to one hundred warmth rating of Men	71.19	65.00	68.41	-
Feeling thermometer: Patricia Johnson	Zero to one hundred warmth rating of Patricia Johnson	57.22	64.48	60.48	+
Gender Resentment	Five point scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5)	2.27	2.21	2.24	-
Group: Feminists	Five point scale from Not close at all (1) to Extremely close (5)	2.61	2.75	2.67	-
Group: Women	Five point scale from Not close at all (1) to Extremely close (5)	3.41	3.40	3.40	-
Group: Men	Five point scale from Not close at all (1) to Extremely close (5)	2.83	2.73	2.79	-
Group: People in your State	Five point scale from Not close at all (1) to Extremely close (5)	2.75	2.71	2.73	-
Policy: Violence against women	Three point scale of Spending Too little (1); About right (2); Too much (3)	2.61	2.54	2.58	-
Policy: Transportation	Three point scale of Spending Too little (1); About right (2); Too much (3)	2.47	2.46	2.47	-
Policy: Equal pay for women	Three point scale of Spending Too little (1); About right (2); Too much (3)	2.49	2.58	2.53	-

- n.s., + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Priming Group Membership Model

If you were voting in the election today in the election, how likely would you be to vote for Patricia Johnson				
Treatment	-4.327+	Treatment		-2.379+
	(2.424)			(1.259)
Closeness with Women as a Group	0.208	Closeness with Feminists as a Group		-0.333
	(0.396)			(0.270)
Closeness with Women as a Group * Treatment	1.629*	Closeness with Feminists as A Group * Treatment		1.293**
	(0.719)			(0.454)
Party ID	-0.0658	Party ID		-0.0474
	(0.119)			(0.125)
_cut1	-2.471			-3.985**
	(1.527)			(1.062)
_cut2	-1.061			-2.594**
	(1.469)			(0.968)
_cut3	0.447			-1.078
	(1.464)			(0.934)
_cut4	3.607*			2.013*
	(1.519)			(0.981)
N	105			105
Pseudo R^2	0.07			0.064

Ordinal logit used in all estimations
Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Priming Policy Preferences / Ability to Handle a Policy

If you were voting in the election today in the election, how likely would you be to vote for Patricia Johnson				
Treatment	-1.280	Treatment		-2.568
	(1.853)			(2.600)
Policy Preference VAW	0.517	Johnson Handle VAW		0.994*
	(0.526)			(0.424)
Policy Preference VAW * Treatment	0.983	Johnson Handle VAW * Treatment		0.757
	(0.714)			(0.757)
Party ID	-0.00122	Party ID		-0.0979
	(0.127)			(0.119)
_cut1	-1.644	_cut1		-0.665
	(1.625)			(1.232)
_cut2	-0.249	_cut2		0.788
	(1.572)			(1.192)
_cut3	1.291	_cut3		2.406+
	(1.582)			(1.230)
_cut4	4.418**	_cut4		5.565**
	(1.643)			(1.316)
N	105			105
R^2	0.067			0.0813

Ordinal logit used in all estimations
Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Priming and Persuasion

If you were voting in the election today in the election, how likely would you be to vote for Patricia Johnson

Treatment	-5.071+
	(2.838)
Closeness with Women as a Group	-0.328
	(0.485)
Closeness with Women as a Group * Treatment	1.669*
	(0.845)
Party ID	0.112
	(0.140)
Johnson Handle VAW	-0.194
	(0.443)
Johnson Compassion	0.814+
	(0.442)
Johnson Favorability	1.929**
	(0.347)
Johnson Feeling Thermometer	0.0197
	(0.0149)
_cut1	4.816*
	(2.384)
_cut2	8.232**
	(2.450)
_cut3	11.23**
	(2.604)
_cut4	16.48**
	(2.946)
N	105
R^2	0.406

Ordinal logit used in all estimations
Standard errors in parentheses
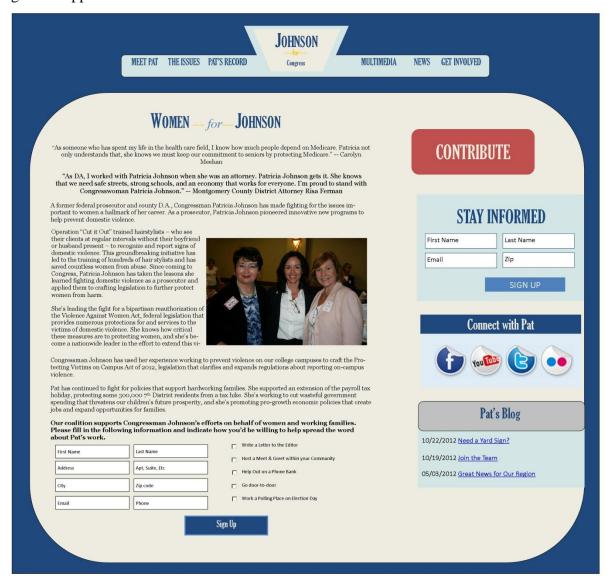+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Figures:

Figure 1: Appeal to women website

Figure 2: Transportation website