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"Operation Red Campus": An Experimental Analysis of CRNC Advertisements Targeting the Millennial Generation

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“OPERATION RED CAMPUS”: AN EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS OF CRNC
ADVERTISEMENTS TARGETTING THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Department of Mass Communication

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
I. Who Makes Up the Youth Vote.....	7
II. Voting in Midterm Elections.....	10
III. Experimental vs. Survey Research in Political Communication.....	13
3. METHODS.....	21
4. RESULTS.....	28
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	38
REFERENCES.....	48
APPENDIX	
A CRNC YOUTH MESSAGING RESULTS: PRE-MEASUREMENT TOPLINES....	51
B CRNC YOUTH MESSAGING RESULTS: POST-MEASUREMENT TOPLINES...53	
C PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	55
D POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	59
E DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES.....	63
F IRB APPROVAL.....	64
VITA.....	65

ABSTRACT

Using an experimental survey design, this study evaluated an advertising campaign developed by the College Republican National Committee targeting Millennials in the 2014 midterm elections. Three particular advertisements from “Operation Red Campus” were selected and tested using a pre-survey and two post-surveys. Due to data constraints, only the results of the first post-survey were used in this analysis. This campaign was designed in response to the Republican Party’s continued problems of low youth turnout and poor party perceptions. This thesis analyzes the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the CRNC to target 18-24-year-olds with this campaign, adding to the limited body of literature on the subject. Following the pre-survey, respondents were exposed to randomized clips of one of the randomized CRNC advertisements or a control advertisement for the television show from which they were based. I hypothesized that respondents would be able to identify that the ads in the treatment condition were political in nature and that those exposed to the treatments would exude more positive views of the Republican Party and less positive views of Democrats. Findings showed that while the CRNC advertisements did significantly decrease Democratic favorability, there was no significant change among Republicans. Additionally, the results showed that the ads produced no change in voting behavior toward Democrats but significantly changed voting behaviors away from the Republican Party. The implications of these findings are analyzed and discussed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Last year, the College National Republican Committee announced a new field program targeting college students in an effort to improve the GOP's standing going in to the midterm elections. The organization spent nearly \$2 million total on the campaign, which consisted of online advertising in targeted zip codes and fieldwork on designated college campuses. They identified 16 states of particular relevance in 2014 and 2016, in which they hired three regional political directors and 30 field representatives to put "Operation Red Campus" into motion. The ultimate goal of the campaign, according to CRNC Chairwoman Alexandra Smith, "Is to speak to young people in relevant themes and relevant language, but to also be on campus and to be online." My purpose with this thesis is to experimentally test and examine several of these advertisements to determine which messages and which strategies were effective in swaying attitudes and perceptions of the party/candidates.

The campaign was developed in response to Mitt Romney's crushing loss among young voters in the 2012 presidential election. While Romney won voters over the age of 30 by 1.8 million votes, he lost to those under 30 by nearly 5 million. This demographic proved decisive in Florida, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Ohio especially, where Obama won at least 61 percent of the youth vote. Many analysts suggested that had Romney achieved a 50-50 split, he could have flipped those states into his favor. As a result, both the CRNC and the Republican National Committee set out to conduct extensive research as to where the party went wrong in reaching this expanding, and increasingly crucial group of voters.

Both political parties face challenges in targeting the youth vote. The first, and arguably most detrimental of those, is low turnout. The issue of low turnout has generated multiple efforts

from both government and nonprofits to increase interest among young voters. Organizations like Rock the Vote and Vote or Die have used celebrity appeals among other things to create an entertainment quality in the electoral process in hopes of attracting the attention of youth voters. One major problem for communication researchers stems from the fact that despite many years of youth voting mobilization research and public communication campaigns, there is empirical evidence from field experiments that youth voter mobilization works... but none of it has been done on a large enough scale to influence the aggregate numbers – or at least not in a way that allows us to attribute the cause to these specific activities. This is an important point in this thesis, as the CRNC program faced the same problem. Additionally, most young adults (18-24) who register to vote actually vote in presidential years (CIRCLE, 2014). In midterm years, many registered young adults do not vote. Voter turnout among young Americans ages 18-29 in the 2010 midterm election was only 24%. According to a Harvard Institute of Politics survey released the week before the 2014 midterm elections, only about a quarter of eligible 18-29-year-old voters said they planned to vote. The actual reported turn out results closely mirrored these predictions, with about 10 million young people (21.5 percent) showing up to vote (CIRCLE, 2014).

An additional obstacle for the CRNC in developing this campaign was how to effectively reach their targeted audiences online. Jenkins (2006) said while advertisers and corporations have already shifted to new models of branding and consumer relationships, both practitioners and scholars of political communication seem behind the curve of social and technological change that has already swept popular culture. The awareness and ability young people have in dealing with technology creates new tools for organizations interested in turning out the youth vote (Iyengar & Jackman, 2004). Bennett and Iyengar (2012) also identified that the kind of

communication that reaches personalized young audiences tends to travel through multiple channels and may require interactive shaping in order to be credible and authentic. While traditional communication channels still reach an important segment of this demographic, the size of that segment continues to decline. Referring to this problem, Republican political strategist Dan Schur said, “In recent years, we've armed viewers with technological tools that have allowed them to avoid advertising whenever they choose, so getting a political message through to them is much more difficult.” Changes in social structure and media delivery channels raise the need to rethink what kinds of effects we want to measure and how to go about measuring them.

Both Republicans and Democrats have experienced many of the same problems in mechanics in targeting this age group. While the left seems to have an advantage in message delivery, the shift toward Democrats and away from the GOP with Millennials may simply reflect a shift in demographics within the age cohort. A report released by Pew Research Center this year showed that even those Millennials who do identify as Republicans or lean toward the GOP, are decidedly less conservative than older Republicans. Millennials ages 18-33 are the most liberal age group in the U.S. today, which leads to a greater likelihood of affiliating with the Democratic Party. The proportion of Millennials who identify as Republicans has fallen from 24 percent in 2004 to 17 percent today. In 2014, about half of Millennials (50 percent) are Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party, while just 34 percent affiliate with or lean toward the GOP. In short, not only are Millennials less likely than older generations to identify as Republicans, but even those who do express significantly less conservative values than their elders.

In December 2012, prior to the formulation of the CRNC's latest campaign, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus announced the Growth and Opportunity Project to make recommendations and put together a plan to grow the party and improve Republican campaigns in light of the 2012 presidential election cycle losses. After conducting focus groups with potential young voters, results showed they didn't expect the GOP to reach out to them, and described the party as "closed-minded, racist, rigid" and "old-fashioned." Even marginal gains amongst this group would likely go a long way in helping Republican candidates in 2014 and beyond. In a Fox News interview earlier this year, Smith said the group's research indicated that Millennials are "tuning out politics as usual" and don't pay attention to the typical political advertising. If Republicans wanted to get the message through to younger voters, they were going to have to find new ways to do it.

Party leadership knew there would be no one-size-fits-all solution to their problems. However, in preparation for the fall advertising campaign, the CRNC released two case study ads it hoped would resonate with college-age voters in the early months of 2014. The first was a 60-second online video targeting women ages 18 to 24 in Virginia, released in the fall of 2013 prior to the governor's race based on the MTV show, "Catfish." The second test case played out this spring in Michigan, in which the group paid for a similar ad modeled on the final rose ceremony of the ABC hit "The Bachelorette." In the spot, which cost the group \$60,000, the bachelorette was asked to choose between two men, a Democrat and a Republican. The Democrat, Mark, orders more food than he can afford to eat and spies on e-mails and text messages while the Republican, Rick, is portrayed as the more responsible, obvious choice. The ad reached more than 114,000 18- to 29-year-olds in targeted regions of the state and subsequent polling showed

people who actually watched the video were far more likely to vote for a generic Republican, as well as for Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder.

The CRNC launched its most ambitious endeavor into gubernatorial politics to date with its 16-state, million-dollar digital ad campaign the first week in October with ads that played off TLC's bridal reality show, "Say Yes to the Dress". The knock-off ad, "Say Yes to the Candidate," compares candidates to wedding dresses, with Republicans characterized as a "trusted brand." Similar to the show, the bride-to-be's mother comes across as an overbearing, out of touch, blatantly liberal Democrat with a taste for "expensive and outdated" dresses, representing certain candidates. All but identical ads were released in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Florida and Arkansas. The next series of ads, released October 6, played off the celebrity investor show "Shark Tank". Instead of referring to specific candidates, these ads portrayed generic, money-grabbing Democrats facing off against the savvy young investors. The first of the Shark Tank ads revolved around the mismanagement of healthcare, while the following two discussed student loans and the economy.

The third series of ads, released via the CRNC YouTube channel on October 20, were modeled after the popular TV show, "CSI" (Crime Scene Investigation). The College Crime Scene Investigation ad series featured three general "episodes" with similar state-specific episodes in target states including Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. All together, the CRNC produced 16 CCSI ads. The final series of ads, titled the "K Text" ads, were launched in eight states the week of October, 29 to reach young voters in the final days leading up to the election. These ads represented the final installment of the \$2 million advertising campaign in the following eight target states: Massachusetts, Hawaii, Rhode Island, Maryland, Kansas, Minnesota, Georgia, and Virginia. Existing CRNC target states, such as Colorado,

Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Florida also received a version of the “K Text” ad. The ad featured an all-too-familiar Millennial text conversation, in which the Democrat replies “K” to a substantive text message. Smith said the ads in the campaign showcased the way that the Democratic Party takes for granted their support from young voters while supporting unsustainable policies that bankrupt their generation’s future.

Given that today’s young voters will be voters for the next 50-plus years, politicians on both sides of the aisle are beginning to realize they require great attention. For many of these voters, their perceptions of the party came to be during the Barack Obama era, and those perceptions will help determine their worldviews going forward unless Republicans can figure out a way to change them. Through experimental testing of the CRNC’s advertisements, and through examination of pre- and post- survey results obtained from one of the case study ads the CRNC used in developing Operation Red Campus, I hope to shed light on the differences between survey research and experimental research methodologies and whether or not they lead to the same conclusions regarding ad effectiveness. It is my hope that this project will help in determining the implications of using both for political communicators going into the 2016 election cycle.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Who Makes Up the Youth Vote

Of all the headlines that emerged from the 2008 elections, perhaps none has more impact on the future of the direction of our country than the rise of the Millennial Generation. Recent analyses of young voters in America suggest that they can no longer be treated as one uniform group. One 2014 Pew Report, “Millennials in Adulthood,” described this generation as, “relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of government, in no rush to marry, and optimistic about the future.” Comprised of young Americans ages 18-29, this demographic has established itself as the most diverse in American history.

Aside from being both ethnically and racially assorted, they differ greatly in their views regarding government and politics. According to a 2012 CIRCLE report, we need to first understand the differences among this diverse segment of the population before attempting to speculate what the “youth vote” might be in the coming years. The political views of Millennials differ significantly across racial and ethnic lines. According to Pew Research, about half of white Millennials (51 percent) say they are political independents. The remainder split between the two parties with 24 percent Republican and 19 percent Democratic. Among non-white Millennials, about as many (47 percent) say they are independent. But nearly twice as many (37 percent) identify as Democrats while just 9 percent identify as Republicans. What’s important to note here is that these Independents haven’t broken in the Republican direction in the way that older Independents have done in the last few elections. All age groups are rejecting formal party

labels more frequently than ever before, but their underlying ideological behavior is different across age and racial groups.

Arguably, what's most important about these voters is not their current leanings toward Democratic candidates, but rather the deeply held progressive beliefs underlying their voting preferences. While they may be voting for Democrats by wider margins, there's no indication that they've fully bought into or support the Democratic agenda. It is also unclear whether that loyalty will translate into long-term party identifications. This generation is a pragmatic one – they want solutions to their problems, and most are willing to take ideas from either side. In short, young Americans are both accessible and winnable by both parties, depending on which side of the aisle can communicate that they adequately understand their values and concerns.

Within the last decade, we've seen a steady rise in the number of political Independents within this age group. However, in comparison to older American generations, the numbers have skyrocketed. According to a Pew Research study conducted in 2014, the number of self-identified Independents among Millennials increased eleven points in the years following the election of President Barack Obama. According to national exit polls, the young-old partisan voting gaps in 2008 and 2012 were among the largest in the modern era, with Millennials far more supportive than older generations of Barack Obama. However, between 2008 and 2012, the President's support among young voters fell from +34 to +23 (an eleven point drop), and while he still won their support by a wide margin, his margin slipped more than any of the older age groups. Today, at least half of 18-29-year-old voters now refuse to associate themselves with either major political party. While, generally, Millennials continue to view the Republican Party unfavorably, their disappointment in President Obama continues to rise, with hopefulness and

pride falling below fifty percent (Thirdway, 2014). As the president will no longer be on the ballot in the coming election, the long-term question for Millennials will become less about a particular candidate and more about Republican vs. Democrat. In general, they aren't particularly satisfied with either side of the argument, resulting in decreasing desire to associate as either major party.

Millennials today are still the only generation in which conservatives do not significantly outnumber liberals. In surveys conducted by Pew Research in 2014, 31 percent of Millennials say their political views are liberal, 39 percent are moderate and 26 percent are conservative. This trend toward liberalism is apparent in their views on social issues such as same-sex marriage and the legalization of marijuana. In some social realms, they are significantly less conservative than their elders. However, on other social issues including abortion and gun control, their views are not far off those of older adults. Another trend can be seen in their responses to a series of questions in the latest Pew Research survey regarding how they think of themselves. The results indicate that Millennials are much less inclined than older adults to self-identify as either religious or patriotic.

Millennials are now entering into the workforce at a time where economic growth rates are below historical averages, which could threaten their support for Democratic policies and provide an opportunity for Republicans depending on who they hold accountable and/or trust on the economy. Their difficult economic circumstances in part reflect the impact of the Great Recession (2007-2009) and in part the longer-term effects of globalization and rapid technological change on the American workforce (Pew Research, 2014). If Democrats hope to

continue to win this group by large margins, they must be able to demonstrate that government is capable of fulfilling its promises and functioning effectively.

Across the aisle, the anti-government agenda combined with a failure to provide constructive suggestions to solve big problems will likely gain Republicans little support from this generation. Millennials may be cautious about “big government solutions” in the wake of the perceived failures of the current administration, but an agenda based entirely on individual responsibility and market solutions is also unlikely to produce widespread support. Republican operatives hoping to sway Millennials can no longer stress that trust in big business and market-based solutions will solve their problems. For many, the market appears to have failed them and they are somewhat skeptical of large corporations and financial institutions. However, this is one area in which they are not that out of step with older adults. Millennials are about as likely as their elders to have a favorable view of business, though they are more likely to say they support an activist government. For Republicans, they may need to find an active government version of conservatism to convey in order to win them over.

II. Voting in Midterm Elections

“Operation Red Campus” was created with the ultimate goal of ensuring the success of Republican candidates in the 2014 midterm elections. While youth voter turnout is typically low in any election relative to other age groups, it is consistently lower in midterm elections. Even when the youth vote increased in presidential election years, it remained the same in midterms. Looking back at the 2010 midterms, only 24 percent of voters ages 18-29 showed up to the polls (CIRCLE, 2011). While these numbers declined slightly between 2006 and 2010, they remained similar to previous midterm elections, following a similar decline in adult turnout. Exit polls

also showed that the 2010 youth electorate was largely a subset of the 2008 electorate, with 13 percent saying they went to the polls for the first time and the remaining 87 percent of youth saying they were repeat voters. According to CIRCLE's (2011) estimates, these numbers suggest that the 2010 midterm elections did not bring out new voters, nor did it sustain the entire young electorate of the 2008 presidential election. However, the 2010 midterms revealed some important differences in turnout rates among the Millennial generation.

Turnout among young women ages 18-29 declined between 2006 and 2010, which shrunk the gender gap in voting that previously favored women. The turnout among young African Americans increased from the 2006 midterms, from 24 percent to 27.5 percent in 2010. This continues the trend from 2008, when young African Americans showed the highest turnout rates among any other youth racial/ethnic group since 1972. Education was another factor in the 2010 midterms, with college educated young people almost twice as likely to vote than those without college experience (14.2 percent to 30.8 percent). Young people with a college degree saw the greatest decline in voting rates compared to those with less education, with turnout dropping four points from 2006 to 2010 (41 percent to 37.4 percent). Most young adults (18-24) who register to vote actually vote in presidential years; but in midterm years, many registered young adults do not vote. The pattern is slightly different for college and non-college Millennials. In the 2010 election, young people ages 18-24 (currently in college) were more likely to vote than those young adults who were currently not attending college by nearly nine percentage points.

Looking at these numbers, and turnout numbers from previous elections, the CRNC designed its campaign specifically targeting college students, both on campus and online. However, the lack of turnout among young people was likely seen as an opportunity for

Republican strategists this past year. According to Lake Research polling, 34 million fewer voters show up in midterm elections, and about 24 million of them are Democratic-leaning voters. A significantly greater proportion of young Republicans (42 percent) said they were definitely going to vote in November than young Democrats (30 percent).

A Harvard Institute of Politics poll released prior to the November midterms found that compared to the last midterm election in 2010, traditional Republican constituencies were showing more enthusiasm than Democratic ones for participating in the upcoming elections and were statistically more likely to say they will “definitely be voting.” As a result of President Obama’s ample margin of victory among young voters in the last two presidential cycles, Republican operatives believed Democrats would not be as thoughtful about tackling the challenge of continuing to engage various subsets of young voters in the midterms. Even though the IOP poll found Obama’s job performance among 18-29 year-olds had fallen from 47 percent to 43 percent, the second-lowest rating in the IOP polls since he took office. Among 18-29 year-olds saying they would “definitely be voting in November,” the president’s job approval rating was 42 percent, with 56 percent saying they disapprove.

Taken together with the 2010 midterm elections, the 2014 midterms were predicted to demonstrate the strength of the Republican Party in low-turnout, midterm years. Perhaps the most significant development throughout the 2014 campaign season, with the CRNC campaign and others, was the ability of Republican candidates to break with hard right conservative tradition in an attempt to expand their base of potentially persuadable voters. This capacity, insofar as it is carried over into 2016, has the potential to break the pro-Democratic tilt of presidential elections and to force a major strategic re-evaluation by politicians and operatives in both parties.

III. Experimental vs. Survey Research in Political Communication

About a decade ago, a gradual and perhaps irreversible shift in political methodologies began to take place when two political scientists from Yale decided to conduct a study testing the relative effectiveness of basic political tools. Alan Gerber and Donald Green conducted the first controlled political experiment, which sent many campaign operatives into an uproar and a turf battle began within the political-consulting community between academics and hardened political professionals. The Democrats were the first to recognize and accept the potential importance of experimental methods. Gerber and Green pointed out that while polls show how the electorate moves over time, they cannot isolate the effect of any individual appeal. Similarly, while focus groups offer a strong impression of how some voters respond to certain stimuli, they only show the instant reaction of someone being paid to have one. Experiments, they discovered, provided a solution to the downfalls of these two long-standing and trusted methodologies (Issenberg, 2013).

After some success with experiments had been documented, Republicans slowly began to venture into the new data-driven political scene. Dave Carney, former White House political director to George H. W. Bush, invited Gerber and Green to conduct their experiments from within Gov. Rick Perry's 2006 re-election campaign war room. After spending nearly \$25 million on advertising in Perry's 2002 campaign, Carney wanted to conduct rigorous experimental testing in order to ensure donors that he was spending their money in the best ways possible. As Perry went on to an easy re-election in 2006, Carney decided to drastically re-structure his tactics based on the experimental findings. His broadcast strategy in 2010 was based off a 2006 experiment. That experiment isolated 18 TV media markets and 80 radio stations and randomly assigned each a different start date and volume for ad buys from a \$2

million budget. Carney estimated that the research saved Perry \$3 million in that year's primary campaign, and he still beat his opponent by 20 points (Gerber et. al, 2011).

However, with the election of President Barack Obama in both 2008 and 2012, it became clear that Republicans were lagging far behind Democrats in broadening their perspectives on how best to gauge and predict political behavior. Referring to Democrats going into the 2012 presidential election, Sasha Issenberg said, "No party ever has ever had such a durable structural advantage over the other on polling, making television ads, or fundraising" (Issenberg, 2012). He attributed the imbalance to the mutual unease between academia and conservative political professionals, which has limited Republicans' ability to update their campaign methods. The most significant technical and conceptual developments in modern-day politics are largely a result of the social sciences, whose more practically-minded scholars regularly collaborate with candidates and interest groups on the left. As a result of these alliances, members of the GOP have consistently fallen behind their Democratic counterparts since Bush's re-election. Once Bush left the political scene as a somewhat unpopular president, much of his team's institutional knowledge and approaches were also rejected. Meanwhile, Obama and his followers gained crucial insight that overturned conventional wisdom about how to persuade and mobilize voters.

Today, the most important methodological and conceptual advances have originated in academic circles, specifically through insights from behavioral psychology and the use of field experiments. Since 2004, countless numbers of Democratic advocacy groups and consulting firms have joined forces to launch a series of for-profit and non-profit private research institutions solely devoted to finding the most effective and cost-efficient campaign tactics. The most impressive among these has been the Analyst Institute, which was created to link the increasing supply of academics interested in running randomized-control trials to measure the

efficacy of political communication with the demand of Democrat, left-wing institutions seeking empirical methods to test their programs. These partnerships have created a new generation of political professionals at ease with both campaign fieldwork and the techniques of the social-science academy. However, experimental methodologies are not without their shortcomings and there are still many groups on both sides of the aisle reluctant to implement them.

For those on the right, survey and focus-group-based methodologies are still the most prevalent in political communication research. In today's increasingly self-selective media environment, survey researchers who rely on self-reported measures of exposure are finding it increasingly difficult to treat exposure as a potential cause of political beliefs or attitudes. As a result, it is imperative that any survey-based analyses isolate the effects of media exposure from political beliefs and behaviors. Self-selection also presents challenges to experimental research. According to Bennett and Iyengar (2008), actual exposure to political messages in the real world can no longer be treated as equivalent to random assignment in experimental conditions. They point out how easily political information and news can be avoided by choice. Therefore, exposure is really limited to only the politically engaged. Hovland (1959) found that manipulative control actually weakens the ability to generalize to the real world where exposure to politics is typically voluntary. Therefore, Bennett and Iyengar (2008) state the importance of experimental researchers using designs that combine manipulation with self-exposure.

In Iyengar's 2008 article, he disproved many of the criticisms against use of experimentation in political communication and provides ways in which new technology overcomes the concerns of skeptics. He argues that the principal advantage of using experiments over surveys is the researcher's ability to isolate and test specific components of messages in

ways that were unthinkable in politics as early as three decades ago. In the field of campaign advertisements, there are an infinite amount of causal factors, both verbal and visual, that could be at play when analyzing their effects. According to Iyengar, experiments not only shed light on treatment effects, but also enable researchers to test more complex hypotheses regarding the interaction of message factors with individual difference variables. Today, the ability to launch experiments online further strengthens the ability of communication researchers to conclude causal inferences by providing more precisely calibrated indicators of audience reactions to media messages. Online experiments, according to Iyengar, allow researchers to overcome the challenges of conventional experiments, and discover longitudinal indicators of campaign advertisement effects.

A major criticism of experimental design has been the lack of generalizability associated with results. According to Iyengar (2008), this is manifested in three levels: the realism of the experimental setting, the representativeness of the participant pool, and the discrepancy between experimental control and self-selected exposure to media. The widest criticism of experiments involves sampling bias and composition of the subject pool. Iyengar argues that today, traditional experimental methods can be rigorously and far more efficiently administered through online platforms. Not only are online samples more diverse than conventional ones, but the settings in which subjects encounter manipulations is more realistic, mirroring web surfing on their own.

Advances in experimental technology and online panels have made it so that participants in online experiments reasonably reflect the online user population. Another way researchers broaden the online subject pool is through recruiting participants from more well-known and frequently visited websites. In other words, if the population of interest is limited to American

Internet users, the results of experiments administered online can be more easily generalized than ever before, especially in respect to race, education and party affiliation. However, there is still the concern of generalizability to the population at large and the digital divide. Even so, Iyengar (2008) argued that the fundamental advantages of online experiments cannot be overlooked, and as technology continues to advance and diffuse further into our society, the generalizability gap between experimental and survey methods will continue to close.

Going into 2016 and beyond, one of the most prominent concerns of experimentation will be the increasingly self-selected nature of media audiences. If the current trend is any indication, technology will continue to proliferate media choice, providing the audience with greater ability to avoid news programming and political content. Iyengar (2008) concludes his argument by saying that the use of digital technology in administering online experiments is a “double-edged sword.” The obvious advantages are that researchers now have the ability to provide precisely controlled manipulations to an increasingly diverse pool of participants. However, as we continue to advance technologically, they will face ultimately face a drastically altered media environment where exposure to political content of any kind is driven by choice. In the future, he said two things would be necessary in order to ensure the quality of experimental results. First, assignment to treatment conditions in politically motivated experiments will ultimately have to depend on the participant’s personal preferences and second, estimation of treatment effects will require the use of more powerful statistical tools.

Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) discuss the political consequences that result in increased choice in the age of media saturation in which we live. A majority of our knowledge about the impact of media comes from studies that were conducted when viewers had significantly less options in content. Therefore, much of the research available to us on this subject is no longer

applicable. They cite both survey research and traditional laboratory experiments as being limited in their ability to test the effects of media in the new environment. In order to address those limitations, they developed a novel set of experimental designs, which built upon and augmented contemporary political communication experiments to investigate a wider range of potential media effects.

Differences in the extent to which audiences pay attention to the news, how much they know about politics, and differences in their evaluations of news media should be considered as quite important in any political media effects research (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013). Perhaps it should come as no surprise, they said, that there are huge gaps in attention, knowledge, and engagement between people who disregard the news and people who pay attention to it. The problem with previous studies on the subject is that the statistical controls applied were often insufficient in the face of selection bias. In addition to ideological orientations, demographic characteristics, and political engagement levels, audiences exhibit different patterns of trusting media outlets and use different criteria to select them as a result. According to these authors, without a convincing research design to account for this, results should not be taken as persuasive. Therefore, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) offered a theoretical model of selective exposure drawn from a set of expectations about how media choice shapes the reach and influence of partisan news shows.

While my study was not particularly concerned with partisan news, the work of Arceneaux and Johnson is still of great utility. Any advertiser must keep in mind that individuals do not randomly consume media programming, but instead, select into audiences. The Active Audience Theory proposed by Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) asserts that just because people select which television shows they want to watch, does not mean they are unaffected by them.

Selected programming may profoundly affect viewers, but not necessarily in the ways intended by the programs creators and the same program may have different effects for different viewers (pg. 78). In today's age, people can create a media environment that in no way challenges their own beloved views, which further enables political avoidance. However, when exposed to political messages, people will be motivated to defend pre-existing attitudes, and therefore, should be more likely to accept messages that are consistent with their predisposed beliefs.

Like Bennett and Iyengar, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) also discussed the shortcomings of survey design, which cannot conclusively prove causation. Randomized experiments, they said, offer a better strategy for isolating causal effects. However, their major limitation is that they identify the causal effect of political messages provided people are exposed to them or forced to watch. This takes audience choice out of the equation, relying on an operational hypodermic needle delivery of stimuli to participants. Still, they did not intend their findings to be a critique of previous experimental studies.

Randomized experiments using forced treatment stimuli, they said, are still extremely valuable to the scientific study of media effects because they allow researchers to isolate the causal effects of political media far better than observational studies (pg. 91). However, they argue that the rise of cable television, the Internet, and the fragmented media market produced as a result, have forced us to reconsider experimental designs and develop an expanded set of tools to study media effects. As a result, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) conducted a selective exposure design experiment, in which subjects were assigned at random to a forced treatment and control condition. The added wrinkle to their design was the inclusion of choice, where participants were given a remote control and allowed to flip among the stimuli presented in the forced conditions. This more closely mirrored the environment participants would likely

encounter in the real world. By comparing post-treatment outcomes in the choice condition to those in the control and forced treatment conditions, the authors argue that it is possible to gauge the effects of choice, and by extension, selective-exposure (pg. 95).

In today's world, the majority of the populace remains largely uninformed about politics, making campaign advertisements a major source of information. This is especially relevant in studying young voters, who are increasingly detaching themselves from political institutions and public affairs. Therefore, a thorough understanding of voters' reactions to ads has become fundamental in understanding and predicting the effectiveness of a campaign. While a drop-in online sample would provide more generalizability than the population of LSU students I intend to use for this experiment, the advantages of isolating cause and effect in the lab are great.

Given the current political environment, and the likelihood that the debate over methodologies will continue to rage, it is best that political communication researchers continue to employ a diverse range of techniques in determining which messages and strategies will be most effective. Experiments have a long and established history of effective usage in many disciplines, including hard sciences such as physics and biology, medicine, and social sciences such as psychology and economics. Unfortunately, they have been slower to attract a devoted following of practitioners in political science, resulting mostly from an overall lack of understanding. With this thesis, I hope to further the arguments of political communication researchers like Issenberg, Johnson, Arceneaux, Bennett and Iyengar for the use of experimental methods and shed light on the potential they hold for Republican candidates and interest groups going into 2016.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

For this thesis, I developed two broad research questions, which encompass the purpose of the study.

RQ1: Were these ads effective in changing the political attitudes and behaviors of the target age groups?

RQ2: Will experimental testing of the ads yield different results than those obtained through traditional survey methodologies?

Given these questions, I formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: Those in the experimental condition will be able to identify that the ads they viewed were of a political nature compared to those in the control.

H2: Those in the experimental condition will exude more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the Republican Party after viewing the ads than those in the control.

In attempts to answer my research questions, I created an experiment, which took place in the Media Effects Lab at Louisiana State University. Participants were drawn from the MEL's subject pool of college students ages 18-24. The student subject pool is recruited with course credit or extra-credit for participation in a variety of studies for courses in mass communication and political science. Participants in the experiment were exposed to two video clips, randomly selected from three control ads and three treatment ads. The treatment ads consisted of three CRNC advertisements from the Operation Red Campus campaign this past fall. The control ads consisted of actual television advertisements of the shows from which the political ads in the campaign were based. The survey was created in Qualtrics, and consisted of a battery of pre-test

questions prior to viewing and batteries of identical post-test questions that followed the viewing of each ad. The surveys included questions about political affiliations as well as general advertising effectiveness. The results were exported and analyzed using Stata.

The target age group for the Operation Red Campus campaign was 18-24 college students, so I used the same parameters for this study. While using the MEL subject pool only gave me access to LSU students and perhaps limited my study in terms of external validity, it provided a convenient opportunity to reach my target age group. Students can access the MEL using their student ID numbers and receive participation points toward their courses with the completion of each study. Studies that are estimated to take longer and/or require more sessions to complete are worth more points than sessions that require less time. Given these incentives, the MEL provides access to a large number of students in a relatively short amount of time. Students were told they would be taking a survey about general television advertising effectiveness to disguise the true purpose of the study. Participation for each and all questions was completely voluntary within the study, as noted in the introduction to the survey (and as required by IRB). To minimize privacy concern, the implied consent at the beginning of the study describes how all personal identifying information was unavailable to the researcher as the MEL only provides each student's corresponding ID number.

The study was created using Qualtrics software, which enables users to do various types of online data collection and analysis. Its web-based software allows researchers to create surveys and generate reports. The current study was set up in Qualtrics to show participants an 18-question pre-survey, which included general demographic questions about age, gender, and ethnicity as well as questions about each participant's media usage before delving into the political content. The questions regarding political affiliation were taken from or loosely based

on pre- and post-surveys conducted for the CRNC by Victory Phones in relation to the Bachelorette-inspired case-study ad that ran in Michigan in February, 2014 (see Appendices A & B). Those surveys were conducted via digital panel, live cell phone interviews, and automated IVR in targeted zip codes in Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids. By using the same questions in the current study, I hoped to compare and contrast the results in order to determine differentiations between the two methodologies.

The pre-survey included questions about party affiliation, view of both parties, interest in political campaigns, what determines voting in elections, important issues, and the 2016 election. The pre-survey questions were designed to gauge each participant's political inclinations before being exposed to any of the ads to determine whether or not attitudes shifted in any significant way following exposure. The questions consisted of mostly multiple choice with the exception of questions six and seven, which asked respondents to state their views of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. These two questions allowed respondents to use slider bars from 0-100 with 0 representing very unfavorable, 50 representing neutral and 100 representing a very favorable view. These scales were used to indicate a more precise reading of party favorability and aid in detecting slight changes following the viewing of the ads. The last four questions dealt with which party respondents saw themselves voting for in the upcoming 2016 presidential election. If respondents listed Republican, they skipped the following three questions and proceeded on to the first video clip. If respondents listed anything other than Republican (see question 15 in Appendix C), they went on to answer the following three questions regarding the certainty of their vote for that party, whether or not they would ever consider voting for a Republican, and whether or not they would ever consider voting for a Republican if they agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues.

Following the pre-survey, respondents were then exposed to their first randomly selected video clip, which was one of six (three treatment and three control) possible clips randomly selected by Qualtrics. The treatments were selected from ads from the CRNC's Operation Red Campus campaign. These ads were chosen for their lack of state, race or candidate specificity, making them most applicable and identifiable for students at LSU. The first treatment ad came from the campaigns CSI-inspired ad series, titled "CCSI: Conference Pt. 3." This ad was 30 seconds in length and touched on issues such as youth unemployment, high tax rates, and the jeopardized future of young Americans under Democratic leadership. The control ad used to mimic this treatment was an actual 20-second advertisement for CSI: Crime Scene Investigation that most closely represented the ad created by the CRNC.

The second treatment ad came from the Shark Tank-inspired ad series titled "Shark Vote – Obamacare." This ad was a minute in length and modeled an actual episode of the popular TV show focusing on downfalls of healthcare for young people under the Obama Administration. The control video for this ad was an actual 1 ½ minute long clip from the ABC show Shark Tank that closely mirrored what was shown in the ad, both in length and format.

The third and final treatment came from an ad that ran as part of the CRNC's pilot test for the Operation Red Campus Campaign, which ran in Michigan leading up to the Governor's race in February 2014. I chose this ad for my study not only because of its relevancy with college students, but because of the polling results I had already obtained and analyzed to use in comparison. The minute-long ad was based off the popular ABC show, "The Bachelorette," in which the Bachelorette is asked to choose between two men, a Democrat and a Republican where the Republican, Rick, is portrayed as the more responsible, obvious choice. The control clip for this ad was an advertisement for "The Bachelorette" season finale featuring Andi

Dorman and her final two contestants. The ad was a little over a minute in length and also closely mirrored the set-up and format of the CRNC advertisement.

In Qualtrics, I created three blocks for each of the shows (CSI, The Bachelorette and Shark Tank) consisting of one treatment clip and one control. The software was told to randomly select one video from one of the blocks once respondents had completed the pre-survey. After completing a post-survey, they would be randomly exposed to another clip, which they had not yet seen. This meant that respondents could have potentially been exposed to two control clips, two treatment clips, or one of each. With the second ad exposure, I compared the various potential combinations (two treatments, two controls, control-treatment, treatment-control), to see whether or not the repetition or ordering had any effect on results. Having two treatments will allow me to compare and contrast repetition relative to two controls. The ordering possibilities help with external validity of the study by allowing me to see whether or not the effect declined when mixed in with the actual/other advertisements as they would be seen in the real world.

Following the second clip, they were asked to re-take the same post-survey, which consisted of 15 questions. The post-survey was designed to establish whether or not participants had paid attention to the ads, in order to determine the overall effectiveness of the shows and content presented. It also consisted of many of the same questions seen on the pre-survey to determine whether or not a shift of attitudes had taken place in regards to political affiliations and beliefs following exposure to the ads. In order to measure attention, participants were asked to identify the TV show presented in the ad and list whether or not the ad was a television advertisement, political advertisement, or both (see questions 1 and 5 of the post-survey in Appendix D). To further measure this concept, those who listed that the ad contained political

content or both were asked to state which party they felt it promoted and which it criticized. They were also asked to list how often they watched shows such as the one presented and whether or not they would likely tune in to that show based on the video in order to determine the relevancy of the shows the CRNC chose to base their advertisements off of.

Question four of the post-survey employed a semantic-differential scale set-up to ask participants a slew of general advertising effectiveness questions regarding the clips they had just seen. Boxes “1” and “5” indicated strong feelings, boxes “2” and “4” indicated weaker feelings, and box “3” (the middle choice) indicated a neutral or undecided position on the question (see Appendix D). This question asked respondents whether or not they felt the ad was believable, high quality, convincing, reasonable, truthful, questionable, conclusive, ethical and accurate. These questions were also included to determine the overall effectiveness of the content presented in the ads in addition to serving as segues into the political content.

Following question six, the remainder of the questions were taken directly from the pre-survey. The same slider bars were used to gauge respondents’ views of the Democratic and Republican parties following each clip. They were also asked to indicate which Party they felt spoke to them most relevantly and effectively, whether or not the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for them, and which Party (Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Third Party) candidate they saw themselves voting for in 2016. The same rules applied where respondents were asked to state their certainty of this decision and those who had not listed Republican were asked whether or not they would ever consider voting for a Republican and whether or not they would ever consider voting for a Republican if they agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues. This question was re-worded and asked again to determine whether or not a candidate’s label or their position on specific issues is more important to Millennial voters.

I disregarded the second post-test data following exposure to a second randomly assigned ad, comparing only the answers from respondents' first post-test with the pre-test. The experiment did not have sufficient participants in the Media Effects Lab for meaningful analysis of the second ad exposure conditions.

Additionally, a third hypothesis I posited stating that respondents in the treatment group would exude more positive attitudes toward Republicans and less positive attitudes toward Democrats than those in the control, was discarded as a result of a Qualtrics error. In order to test this, respondents who answered that the clip they had just seen was either a political advertisement or both a television advertisement and a political advertisement, went on to the next question in the survey, which asked which party the ad promoted and which party it criticized. Respondents could choose from six answer choices: Pro-Democrat, anti-Republican (1); pro-Republican, anti-Democrat (2); pro-Democrat, pro-Republican (3); anti-Democrat, anti-Republican (4); neutral (5); or unsure (6). However, in looking at the results for this question, it showed that zero respondents had answered it. Whether this was an error on my part or the software's, the hypothesis was removed as part of the study and the question was discarded.

The survey closed on March 20 at 12 p.m. with a total of 104 respondents and a 5 percent drop out rate. The data was exported from Qualtrics and analyzed using Excel and SPSS. While standard descriptive statistics could be identified using Excel, SPSS was needed in order to conduct tests of statistical significance between the different sets of questions and groups in the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

There were several questions on the pre-test, which did not occur on either of the post-tests as general, descriptive baseline information. In beginning my analysis, I first looked at these five questions to determine where respondents were demographically and ideologically. Of the 104 students who took the survey, 17 were 18 years old (16.3 percent), 32 were 19 years old (30.8 percent), 21 were 20 years old (20.2 percent), 19 were 21 years old (18.3 percent), 11 were 22 years old (10.6 percent), 2 were 23 years old (1.9 percent) and 2 were 24 years old (1.9 percent). Respondents were composed of 88 females (84.6 percent) and 16 males (15.4 percent). This represents the significantly higher amount of female Mass Communication majors at LSU.

When asked to describe their party affiliations, 49 respondents listed Republican (47.1 percent), 23 listed Democratic (22.1 percent), 26 listed Independent (25 percent), three listed Libertarian (2.9 percent), and the remaining three listed Other/Third Party (2.9 percent). When asked about their level of interest in campaigns, 17 of respondents said they were very much interested (16.3 percent), 53 said they were somewhat interested (51 percent), 26 said they were not much interested (25 percent), and eight said they were not at all interested in political campaigns (7.7 percent). When asked what was more important to them in deciding who to vote for: A candidate's political party, or their individual position on issues, 64 of respondents said candidate position on issues (61.5 percent), five said candidate party (4.8 percent), 34 said both were about the same (32.7 percent), and one respondent said they didn't decide based on either (.96 percent).

The last two questions that appeared only on the pre-test asked respondents about issue salience and social/fiscal ideologies. When asked what was the most important issue to them,

and to check all that applied, the majority of respondents (58) said jobs and the economy, five said the environment, eight said lower taxes, 10 said health care, eight said personal debt, 11 said government spending and debt, 17 said social issues like marriage, 14 said abortion and four listed other. When asked to classify their political ideology as it related to social and fiscal issues, 14 respondents listed fiscal and social conservative (13.5 percent), 19 listed fiscal conservative but social moderate (18.3 percent), 10 listed fiscal and social moderate (9.6 percent), 19 listed fiscal conservative but social liberal (18.3 percent), 13 listed fiscal and social liberal (12.5 percent), and the remaining 29 respondents listed unsure (27.9 percent).

I calculated the mean responses for the nine questions that appeared on both the pre-test and on the post-tests in order to analyze any differences or movement that may have occurred as a result of the treatments. Prior to being exposed to any of the treatments, respondents had on average, 57.8 percent favorability toward Republicans and 45.8 percent favorability toward Democrats. When asked to indicate how much they agreed with the following statement: “Sometimes politics seem so complicated that people my age can’t really understand what’s going on”, 70.2 percent of respondents said they either agreed or strongly agreed, 6.7 percent said they neither agreed or disagreed, and 23.1 percent said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. When asked to identify which political party they felt spoke most relevantly and effectively toward their age group, 39 respondents chose Democrat (37.5 percent), 20 chose Republican (19.2 percent), 18 chose neither (17.3 percent), and 27 respondents chose unsure (26 percent).

When asked whether or not the Republican Party was, or could be the party for someone like them, 32 respondents said “Is the Party” (30.8 percent), 28 said “Could be the Party” (26.9 percent), 28 said “Probably Not the Party” (26.9 percent), 10 said they would need to know more

(9.6 percent), and six respondents said they were unsure (5.8 percent). Looking forward to the 2016 election, 19 respondents said they saw themselves voting for a Democrat (18.3 percent), 45 said they saw themselves voting for a Republican (43.3 percent), five said they saw themselves voting for an Independent (4.8 percent), and only one respondent said they saw themselves voting for a Third Party candidate (1 percent). The remaining 34 respondents said they were unsure (32.7 percent). Those respondents who did not select unsure to the previous question were asked to indicate how certain they were that the party they selected would be receiving their vote in 2016. Of the 70 respondents who were forwarded to this question, 29 said definitely (41.4 percent), 34 said probably (48.6 percent), seven said maybe (10 percent), and three said they were unsure (4.3 percent).

Those respondents who did not select Republican as the party they saw themselves voting for in 2016 were exposed to the final two questions. When these 59 respondents were asked if they would ever consider voting for a Republican, nine said they would almost always consider (15.3 percent), 14 said they would usually consider (23.7 percent), 25 said they might be willing to consider (42.4 percent), 10 said they probably would not consider (16.9 percent), and one respondent said they would never consider (1.7 percent). When asked the question a little differently, “Would you ever consider voting for a Republican if you agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues”, 27 of those 59 respondents said they would almost always consider (45.8 percent), 16 said they would usually consider (27.1 percent), 14 said they might be willing to consider (23.7 percent), two said they still would probably not consider (3.4 percent), and no respondents said they would never consider voting Republican if they agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues.

Four of the questions in the post-surveys asked about the TV shows from which advertisements were based. When asked at the beginning of the survey to fill in their favorite show, four respondents chose either “The Bachelor” or the “The Bachelorette”, one chose “Shark Tank”, and zero listed “CSI”. However, three respondents listed “Law & Order: SVU”, which is similar. A greater majority of respondents listed dramas such as “Scandal”, “House of Cards” and “Empire”. A combination of question responses from the two post-tests revealed similar results. When asked how often they tuned in to watch shows such as the one presented in the clip (either “CSI”, “The Bachelorette”, or “Shark Tank”) 67.5 percent of respondents said either never or occasionally while only 20.5 percent of respondents said once or more than once a week.

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to analyze the results for questions on the post-test asking how often respondents tuned in to the types of shows in the ads and how likely they were to watch the shows in the ads after viewing them. These questions were included in the study to gauge whether or not the shows in the advertisements were relevant and compelling among this age group. Also, I wanted to determine the advertising effectiveness aspects of the clips by asking respondents how likely they were to tune in to the shows after seeing them. Answer choices for how often they tuned in included the following: More than once a week (1), once a week (2), more than once a month (3), once a month (4), occasionally (5) and never (6). For that question, the higher the mean response, the less respondents claimed to tune in to that show. Answer choices for how likely they were to watch the show presented after viewing the clip included the following: Very likely (1), somewhat likely (2), somewhat unlikely (3) and very unlikely (4). For that question, the higher the mean response, the less likely they were to tune in.

For the CSI condition, when asked how often respondents tuned in to that show, the mean for the treatment group was between more than once a month and occasionally ($N = 17$, $M =$

4.18) and was not statistically significant ($p = .797$). When asked how likely they were to watch CSI after seeing the ad, the treatment condition mean was between somewhat unlikely and very unlikely ($N = 17, M = 3.24$) and was also not statistically significant ($p = .825$). For the Shark Tank condition, when asked how often they tuned in to the show, the treatment condition mean was 4.65 and the control was 3.56, which was marginally significant ($p = .09$). Particularly in an experiment such as this one with a small number of respondents, 90.8 percent confidence is a strong enough indication of making a difference. For the Shark Tank condition, there was a marginally significant difference when asked how likely they were to watch the show after viewing the clip and the group means for the treatment and control groups were between somewhat likely and somewhat unlikely ($M = 2.82; M = 2.13; p = .092$). For The Bachelorette condition, when asked how often they tuned in to the show, the treatment group mean was between once a month and occasionally while the the control group was between more than once and once a month ($N = 20, M = 4.70; N = 15, M = 3.73$). These results were not statistically significant ($p = .101$). However, an 89.9 percent confidence level in such a small sample indicates that the difference likely still means something here. When asked how likely they were to watch The Bachelorette after seeing the clip, the treatment group mean was between somewhat and very unlikely the control group was between somewhat likely and somewhat unlikely ($N = 20, M = 3.30; N = 15, M = 2.40$). These results were significant ($p = .029$). The independent samples t -test conducted among all respondents for how often they tuned in, showed mean scores in the treatment group for the tune in question were slightly higher than those in the control ($N = 54, M = 4.52; N = 49, M = 3.90$). These results were marginally significant ($p = .074$). For the likelihood to watch question, the test again showed mean scores were slightly higher in the treatment than the control ($M = 3.13; M = 2.59$), which was statistically significant

($p = .016$). This is interesting because it appears as though respondents in the treatment conditions were more likely to watch the show than those people who were exposed to the actual trailers. This could be that ads produced by the CRNC were more effective and/or compelling from an advertising perspective than the actual trailer advertisements I selected. However, it could also be that participants had guessed that the study was about politics and were therefore rating the ads higher, or that the means in the treatment group showed that those respondents were already more likely to tune in to those shows to begin with. Even so, I can confidently rule out the possibility that the treatment ads were not compelling, which is the most important aspect of the above tests.

In order to test my first hypothesis, I analyzed the results of question number five on the post-test: “What would you say was the nature of the clip you just saw?” Respondents could choose from five answer choices: Television advertisement (1), political advertisement (2), both (3), neither (4), and unsure (5). I recoded the variables so that the correct answer in the treatment group (political ad, or both) would be equal to one and everything else would be equal to zero. I included the “Both” answer choice as part of the correct answer given that it may have been somewhat confusing for respondents to determine. For the CSI condition, the difference between the treatment and control groups was significant ($M = .71$; $M = .06$; $p = .00$). For the Shark Tank condition, the difference between the treatment and control groups were marginally significant ($M = .71$; $M = .31$; $p = .083$). For The Bachelorette condition, the difference between the treatment and control groups was significant ($M = .76$; $M = .00$; $p = .00$). The overall results for this question showed a significant difference between the control and treatment groups ($M = .12$; $M = .73$; $p = .00$). This shows that overall, respondents in the treatment group were able to identify that the ads they watched were political in nature.

Another question asked on the post-test to gauge whether or not respondents were paying attention, asked respondents to identify which TV show the clip they had just seen was an advertisement for. The choices were Shark Tank (1), The Apprentice (2), CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (3), NCIS (4), The Bachelorette (5), Are You the One? (6), The Millionaire Matchmaker (7) and American Idol (8). I recoded the variables so that the correct answer in each condition was equal to one and everything else was equal to zero. The independent samples *t*-test for the Shark Tank condition, showed almost identical means between the treatment and control groups ($M = .937$; $M = .941$; $p = .932$). For the CSI condition, there was a significant difference between the control and treatment group means ($M = .89$; $M = .59$; $p = .00$). For The Bachelorette condition, there was also a significant difference in means between the control and treatment groups ($M = .87$; $M = .71$; $p = .026$). Overall, there was a marginally significant difference between the control and treatment groups for this question ($M = .90$, $M = .78$; $p = .09$). These results suggest that respondents thought the Shark Tank ad looked similar to the actual CRNC Shark Tank ad, while the other shows were less clear on the actual show that was being referenced. An interesting concept to consider would be whether or not Shark Tank was more effective in changing political attitudes because it was well disguised or whether that disguise actually undermined effectiveness. In looking at the difference in means for Democratic favorability among each show's treatment condition, those who saw the Shark Tank ad had a decline of 5.7, those who saw CSI had a decline of 1.6 and those who saw The Bachelorette had a decline of 7.2. While it appears as though the Shark Tank ad did result in a change in political attitudes here, it's difficult to determine whether or not the disguise played a larger role, given that those in The Bachelorette condition actually declined more. Table 1 below highlights these changes.

Table 1 - Advertising Effectiveness/Attention Question Results

Question	Overall			CSI			Shark Tank			Bachelorette		
	Treat	Ctrl	p	Treat	Ctrl	p	Treat	Ctrl	p	Treat	Ctrl	p
How often tuned in	4.52	3.90	.074	4.18	4.33	.797	4.65	3.56	.090	4.70	3.73	.101
Likelihood to watch	3.13	2.59	.016	3.24	3.17	.825	2.82	2.13	.092	3.30	2.40	.029
Nature of clip	.73	.12	.00	.71	.06	.00	.71	.31	.83	.76	.00	.00
Clip for which show	.78	.90	.09	.59	.89	.00	.937	.941	.932	.71	.87	.026

In order to analyze any statistically significant change between respondents' responses to those nine questions that appeared on both the pre-test and the post-tests, I ran independent samples *t*-tests. Beginning with the overall pooled results, a *t*-test was conducted to examine the change in respondents' views of the Republican and Democratic Parties from the pre-test to the post-test on a favorability scale of 0-100. For the Republican Party, there was a marginally significant effect, but in the wrong direction ($p = 0.086$). The treatment group rating changed $+0.24$ ($M = 59.54$; $M = 59.78$) and the control group rating changed -4.12 ($M = 55.96$; $M = 51.84$). Given that the change was in the control group, which didn't see any political content, this is likely due to random statistical noise. For the Democratic Party, the treatment did produce a statistically significant effect ($p = 0.010$): the treatment group rating changed -4.87 ($M = 44.31$; $M = 39.44$) and the control group rating changed $+0.69$ ($M = 47.44$; $M = 48.14$). Given that the advertisements in the treatment group were explicitly anti-Democratic, but not necessarily pro-Republican, these results are in accordance with what I expected to find (see Table 2).

For Republican favorability in the CSI condition, there was a marginally significant change between the treatment and control groups following exposure to the ad ($M = 59.8$; $M =$

49.7; $p = .18$). For Democratic favorability in the CSI condition, there was no significant change between the treatment and control groups ($M = 37.2$; $M = 45.7$; $p = .26$). For Republican favorability in the Shark Tank condition, there was no significant change between the treatment and control groups ($M = 63.6$; $M = 57.3$; $p = .508$). The Shark Tank condition had similarly insignificant change between the treatment and control groups for Democratic favorability ($M = 40.6$; $M = 49.8$; $p = .39$). The difference in Republican favorability ratings in The Bachelorette condition between the treatment and control groups was also not significant ($M = 56.5$; $M = 50.9$; $p = .501$). For Democratic favorability, the difference was again not significant between the treatment and control groups ($M = 40.3$; $M = 49.3$; $p = .33$). These results were all consistent with the pooled analysis, however, the sample sizes for each group were so small that significance levels were difficult to obtain.

Next I analyzed the difference of means between the groups for, “Which party do you feel speaks to your age group most relevantly and effectively.” This question contained four answer choices: Democrat, Republican, neither and unsure. In order to more efficiently analyze the results, two separate “dummy variables” were created, one for Democrat and one for Republican, with every other answer choice as 0. This question produced little change between treatment and control groups following exposure to the ads.

For the question, which asked respondents to indicate how much they agreed with the following statement about politics: “Sometimes politics seem so complicated that people my age can’t really understand what’s going on,” respondents were given five answer choices between strongly agree (1) and strongly disagree (5). The mean for the treatment group was almost identical to the mean in the control group in the pre-test ($M = 2.36$; $M = 2.33$). The post-test produced similar results ($M = 2.33$, $M = 2.18$). The t -test ran on the difference in the pre- and

post-tests for this question was not significant ($p = .302$). Therefore, it does not appear that there was any change in respondents' agreement with the statement in this question as a result of the treatment.

Another independent samples *t*-test was conducted to analyze the difference in means between the control and treatments groups on the pre- and post-tests for, "Do you feel that the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for someone like you?" There were five answer choices provided for this question: Is the party (1), could be the party (2), probably not the party (3), would need to know more (4) and unsure (5). For analysis purposes, choices four and five were combined, leaving a total of four possible answers. This question produced no significant results between the treatment and control groups. However, the question: "Looking forward to the 2016 Presidential Election, do you see yourself voting for a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Third Party Candidate," produced interesting results (see Table 2 below). The test run on the difference between the pre- and post- tests among the two groups showed that those who chose Democrat did not change at all in the treatment group and changed very little in the control group ($M = .00$; $M = .02$; $p = .40$). For those who chose Republican, there was a significant change in the treatment and control groups ($M = -.07$; $M = .02$; $p = .009$). This means, that those exposed to the treatment were less likely to say that they would vote for a Republican in 2016 than they were on the pre-test.

Table 2 - Significant Pre/Post-Test Questions

Question	Overall		
	Treat	Ctrl	p
Democrat Favorability	-4.87	.69	.010
GOP Favorability	.24	-4.12	.086
Looking forward to 2016 - Dem	.00	.02	.40
Looking forward to 2016 - GOP	-.07	.02	.009

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

My first hypothesis, which stated that those in the experimental condition would be able to identify that the ads they viewed were of a political nature compared to those in the control, was supported. Additionally, the majority of respondents were able to identify the show for which the ad was based. When asked how often they tuned in to shows such as the ones presented in the clips, the overall mean for respondents in both groups was 4.21, where one was equal to more than once a week and six was equal to never. Even though very few respondents listed any of the shows in this study as their favorite shows on television right now, these results verify that the shows chosen by the CRNC for this campaign were recognizable and easily identified among 18 to 24-year-olds.

Overall, the results of this study are in accordance with numerous political persuasion efforts studies that came before it. My second hypothesis, which stated that those in the experimental condition would exude more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the Republican Party after viewing the ads than those in the control, was partially supported. Democratic favorability moved significantly downward in the treatment condition in the post-test, however, there was no significant change among Republican favorability (other than the random decline among respondents in the control group). This makes sense given that the ads were mostly negative ads toward Democrats and weren't necessarily promoting Republicans in any explicit way.

The change among respondents on the question regarding whom they saw themselves voting for in the 2016 election was somewhat more surprising. I hypothesized that after seeing the ads, those in the treatment group would have both more positive attitudes and behavioral

intentions toward the Republican Party, but it turns out this wasn't necessarily the case for this study. Of all the respondents in the study, there was no change in the percentage of people who chose Democrats from the pre- and post-tests. For Republicans, there was a statistically significant change ($p = .025$) between the control and treatment conditions, but not the change I expected. There was a seven point larger decline in support for the GOP in the treatment than the control among all respondents from the pre-test to the post-test. There are several possible explanations for why this negative change may have occurred in Republican voting intentions. The most plausible is that those respondents who changed their minds from the pre-test to the post-test were turned off by the negative/attack nature of the advertisements. While attack advertising in politics has produced a wide array of mixed results in the literature regarding its effectiveness, it's possible that those respondents penalized the Republicans as the sponsor of these negative advertisements. This is why as of recently we've seen a shift in attack advertisements from actual candidates to third parties, who can't be directly associated with the backlash. However, just because people claim to dislike negativity, and may change their answers about voting on a survey, it doesn't necessarily mean that they will act accordingly on Election Day.

These results raise an important question for the CRNC and political professionals on both sides of the aisle. The main goal of this campaign was to shift Independents and Democrat-leaning Millennials in favor of the GOP. The goal was to gain support for Republican governors in the short-term but ultimately, Republican candidates in the 2016 presidential election in the long-term. While the campaign was largely hailed as a success, winning the 2015 Reed Award for Best Web Video of 2014 with "Shark Vote – Obamacare," the results of this experimental study show that it may not have been as successful as they thought in swaying votes. However,

it was successful in significantly diminishing Democratic favorability among this age group, which could ultimately effect their decisions next year.

Overall, the results of my study show that the ads in this campaign, while successful in significantly moving favorability, were unsuccessful in moving opinion enough to change the target population's threshold decisions. In other words, while respondents may have felt less favorable or positive toward Democrats after watching the treatments, they still feel strongly enough to align themselves with that party or choose those candidates in an election. While the reported goal of the campaign was to increase Republican vote share, it is likely that the suppression of Democratic turnout was considered a great success. Given that political attitudes are often embedded in long-term, socialized schema, they remain one of the most difficult aspects of public opinion to change. Political professionals and scholars alike are finding that now, perhaps more than ever, it's imperative to determine which messages, which mediums, and which strategies will be most efficient in turning out the youth vote in their favor going into 2016. However, there were several limitations with my study that may influence the applicability of the results.

While being an LSU student gives me access to the Media Effects Lab and its pool of participants, it also limits the results of the study in that respondents will consist homogeneously of LSU students. While this was beneficial and convenient in reaching my target audience, the results I obtained from this small subset of the student population may not accurately reflect the political attitudes and behaviors of young voters nationwide. For example, Louisiana's young voters traditionally are more conservative than their national counterparts. According to a 2012 Louisiana Public Square report, in 2004, Bush received 53 percent of Louisiana's young vote while Kerry received 45 percent. Nationally, the youth vote went 54 percent for Kerry and 45

percent for Bush. Given this fact, LSU students may feel it's more socially desirable to favor conservative candidates and/or policies. As I expected, the results showed stronger Republican identification among 18-24-year-olds than national averages show. Prior to being exposed to any of the treatments, 47.1 percent of my respondents identified themselves as Republican, 25 percent identified as Independent, and only 22.1 percent identified as Democrat. Additionally, when asked their views of the Republican and Democratic parties on a scale from 0-100 (very unfavorable to very favorable), respondents averaged 57.8 favorability for Republicans and 45.8 for Democrats.

Another aspect to consider, given my sample, is the male to female ratio. With 88 females (84.6 percent) and 16 males (15.4 percent), the results of this study may have been affected by gender differences. A study by James King and Jason McConnell (2003) found an illustrative effect of repeated exposure to negative campaign advertisements that was gender specific. Among women, results showed the sponsor initially benefitted from an enhanced image but suffered a decline in image when the voters became overexposed to negative advertisements. In general, women tend to have stronger emotional reactions to advertising than men. Therefore, they are more likely to be put off by political attack ads. Given that my sample was primarily female, the results of this study are in accordance with that overall sentiment. While I left this variable out of my analysis, further study should examine the effects of gender differences in greater detail.

The results from the pre- and post-advertising polls conducted by Victory Phones for the CRNC as part of their case study for "The Candidate" ad in Michigan, showed a different set of demographics. Respondents were 52.83 percent female and 47.17 percent male. Obviously, the

balanced ratios between males and females in this study were very different than what I encountered, which could have effected my results. Additionally, the ratio of Democrats to Republicans was very different. For the Michigan poll, 28.94 percent of respondents identified as Republican, 31.53 percent as Democratic, and 23.11 percent as Independent. While this still isn't representative of Millennial affiliations across the country as a whole, it's more representative than what I encountered with 47.1 percent of respondents identifying as Republican, 22.1 percent as Democratic, and 25 percent as Independent. I suspect that this could have had an effect on my results for party favorability.

For the pre-advertising poll in Michigan, 38.15 percent of respondents had a very or somewhat favorable view of the Republican Party. For the post-advertising poll, 36.53 percent of respondents had a very or somewhat favorable view (-1.62 percent). The pre-advertising poll showed 43.06 percent of respondents had a very or somewhat favorable view of Democrats and the post-advertising poll showed 41.48 percent had very or somewhat favorable views (-1.58 percent). While these slight decreases may appear odd or surprising, it could be a result of more respondents choosing "No opinion" on the post-advertising poll for both parties (+2.75 percent for Republicans and +4.14 percent for Democrats). Given that I used the same ad as part of my study, I expected to find similar results. For the most part, my results were similar in that members of the treatment group showed very little change between the pre- and post-tests after being exposed to the ad as far as Republican favorability ($M = 57.19$; $M = 56.5$). However, for the Democratic Party, the mean favorability scores dropped considerably among members of the treatment group from the pre- to the post-test ($M = 47.47$; $M = 40.30$).

One major limitation I found with the Michigan poll was that while it asked respondents in the post-advertising poll how likely they were to vote to re-elect Governor Rick Snyder if the election were held that day, the question was never asked in the pre-advertising poll. Therefore, the CRNC could have had no way of knowing whether their advertisement caused any change, positive or negative, in vote intentions for Snyder. I feel that this is an important addition to my study given that the ultimate goal of the CRNC and Republican candidates across the country is to win elections.

Additionally, while the Michigan poll obtained a total of 490 respondents via digital panel, cell phone interviews, and automated IVR from February 4 - February 17, 2014; I only obtained 104 respondents for the current study. Originally, I had hoped for at least 120, but even that would have been a relatively small sample. As a result, it was difficult to achieve significant differences between the two groups, especially when attempting to conduct tests among all six of the conditions in the study. This was likely a result of the short time frame (10 days) the survey was available for students to take through the MEL. In future studies, I would have the survey open several weeks prior to obtain more respondents, further enhancing the significance levels as well as the generalizability of results.

Another limitation was the time allotted for students to take the study. Given that I wanted to make the study as concise as possible, I was not able to test all the ads the CRNC released throughout the course of the campaign. It may be possible that some of the ads not shown would have had a greater impact on respondents than the three I chose. Additionally, longstanding concerns over the artificiality of experimental environments bring into question again the generalizability of the results. One of the most notable of these concerns involves the

self-selected nature of media audiences in consumption of political content. Given the current environment and the increasingly wide range of media choices, it may be that young people who are uninterested in politics and savvy Internet users can likely avoid political advertisements such as these. The implications of the findings in this study further suggest that the persuasive strategies that currently dominate Millennial rhetoric are not yet persuasive in changing the behaviors of their intended target audience. However, broader surveys of this age group will be needed to determine what exactly it is that's causing the decline in Republican vote intentions as a result of these advertisements.

Scholars disagree whether negative advertising mobilizes or demobilizes the electorate. Others argue that it depends on the content of the advertisements and individual characteristics of the viewer. In a meta-analytic assessment, Lau et. al (1999) found negative political ads did not appear more effective than positives ones, nor did they seem to have especially detrimental effects on the political system. They concluded that while participatory democracy may be on the decline in our country, the evidence suggested negative political advertising has relatively little to do with it. Contrary to the common belief that voters reserve a special disdain for negative ads, they observed no significant tendency for negative ads to evoke lower affect than other campaign advertisements. More important, they did not find consistent, yet alone strong, evidence that negative ads worked to the advantage of their sponsors and/or to the disadvantage of their targets. However, even a miniscule advantage to the sponsor could be enough to determine the outcome of a close race, and even an attack that fails to sway voters can cause the target to divert precious campaign resources in order to answer it. In conclusion, Lau et. al (1999) said while a well-conceived negative advertising campaign can prove vital to electoral

success, the same can be said, and with somewhat greater assurance, about a well-conceived positive advertising campaign.

A beneficial future experiment could test this by showing Millennial voters a series of three possible conditions: One pro-Republican ad and one anti-Democrat ad (such as the ones I used in this study), two pro-Republican ads, or two anti-Democrat ads. This would help in determining whether or not it was the negativity that swayed young voters away from the Republican Party in the post-test. The keystone of negative advertising, and likely the CRNC campaign, is to suppress more of your opponents' votes than you will lose by turning people off within your own party. The question for leaders of the Republican Party and the CRNC going forward will be whether they think the negativity against Democrats was worth the slight decline in Republican votes, or whether a campaign that strictly promotes the Republican Party and its candidates will be more effective.

According to Bennett and Iyengar's (2008) study, while researchers are now in a position to administer precisely controlled manipulations to an increasingly diverse pool of participants, they still face the challenge of overcoming the traditional weaknesses of experimentation as a result of the new, radically altered media landscape in which exposure to content is often driven by choice. As a result, they predicted that future political-communication related experiments would inevitably depend on participants' political preferences and the use of more powerful statistical tools would be necessary in estimating treatment effects. Given the current political environment, and the likelihood that the debate over methodologies will continue to rage, it is best that political communication researchers continue to employ a diverse range of techniques in determining which messages and strategies will be most effective. Before the Iowa caucuses,

almost all political analysts believed that the Obama strategy of targeting Millennials would be a failure. However, with the immense success of that campaign, political professionals are beginning to see that new strategies in the field are not only effective, but also imperative to the future of political communication. With this thesis, I hope to have demonstrated that regardless of the strengths of experimental research over survey research and vice versa, neither is perfect or without flaw in the increasingly challenging era of measuring public opinion. However, increased usage of experimental methods in advertising may increase the likelihood of Republican candidates swinging Millennials in their favor in 2016.

A major factor as to why Republicans and to some extent Democrats have put their youth messaging on the backburner revolves around one simple notion: The youth simply don't vote. Both scholars and political pundits tell us that today's Millennials are politically lazy and indifferent, caring more about the latest on Kim Kardashian's hair color than the state of their government. Many argue that the current trends mark a seismic shift in participatory democracy, which should be considered a major threat to American institutions and ideals. However, in *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, Russell Dalton offers an important response to this excessively harsh critique of younger Americans. He argues that the charges against the younger generation as being uncivil, disengaged and alienated, are false. Using a new set of national public opinion data, he shows that this group has simply changed their views on what good citizenship actually means. The new patterns of citizenship created by Millennials reflect a generation that is actually more engaged, more tolerant, and more supportive of social justice. These new norms are leading to what Dalton refers to as a renaissance of democratic participation that will require us all to reshape the way we think about contemporary democracy. Instead of focusing on the decline of "good" citizenship, we should

instead ask ourselves: “What does it mean to be a good citizen in America today?” Duty-based citizenship is becoming a thing of the past while the new norms of “engaged citizenship” are on the rise. Younger voters want a more direct approach to government affairs, increased tolerance, and a greater concern for the well-being of others both in the U.S. and around the globe. It would be a grave mistake for either party to write this group off based on the trends in numbers, which inspired this book. According to Dalton, “If we do not become preoccupied with the patterns of democracy in the past, but look toward the potential for our democracy in the future, we can better understand the American public and take advantage of the potential for further progress” (Dalton, 2007). This is precisely what I hope to address in my future studies.

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APPENDIX A
CRNC YOUTH MESSAGING RESULTS: PRE-MEASUREMENT TOPLINES

Q. Turning now to the major political parties, what is your view of the Republican Party?

Very Favorable
Somewhat Favorable
No Opinion
Somewhat Unfavorable
Very Unfavorable

Q. And what is your view of the Democratic Party?

Very Favorable
Somewhat Favorable
No Opinion
Somewhat Unfavorable
Very Unfavorable

Q. Have you recently seen, read, or heard anything about the Republican Party's effort to reach out to younger voters?

Yes
No
Unsure

Q. Thank you for your time so far, just a few more questions. Would you consider voting for a Republican?

Almost Always Consider
Usually Consider
Might be Willing to Consider
Probably Would Not Consider
Would Never Consider

Q. Ok, a little different way to ask the question: would you ever consider voting for a Republican if you agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues?

Almost Always Consider
Usually Consider
Might be Willing to Consider
Probably Would Not Consider
Would Never Consider

Q. What is more important to you in deciding who you will vote for: A candidate's political party, or their individual position on issues?

Candidate Party

Candidate Position on Issues
Both about the same
Don't decide based on Party or Issues

Q. What is the most important issue to you?

Jobs and the Economy
Environment
Lower Taxes
Health Care
Personal Debt
Government Spending and Debt
Social Issues Like Marriage
Abortion
Other

Q. Do you feel that the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for someone like you?

Is the Party
Could be the Party
Probably Not the Party
Would need to know more
Unsure

Q. How would you classify your political ideology, as it relates to Social and Fiscal issues?

Fiscal and Social Conservative
Fiscal Conservative but Social Moderate
Fiscal and Social Moderate
Fiscal Conservative but Social Liberal
Fiscal and Social Liberal

APPENDIX B
CRNC YOUTH MESSAGING RESULTS: POST-MEASUREMENT TOPLINES

Q. Turning now to the major political parties, what is your view of the Republican Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q. And what is your view of the Democratic Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q. Now turning to political advertising, have you recently seen, read, or heard about an online featuring a twenty-something female voter who must choose between two candidates who are pursuing her interest, similar to the television show: “The Bachelorette”?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q. Thank you for your time so far, just a few more questions. Would you consider voting for a Republican?

- Almost Always Consider
- Usually Consider
- Might be Willing to Consider
- Probably Would Not Consider
- Would Never Consider

Q. Ok, a little different way to ask the question: would you ever consider voting for a Republican if you agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues?

- Almost Always Consider
- Usually Consider
- Might be Willing to Consider
- Probably Would Not Consider
- Would Never Consider

Q. What is more important to you in deciding who you will vote for: A candidate’s political party, or their individual position on issues?

Candidate Position on Issues
Candidate Party
Both about the same
Don't decide based on Party or Issues

Q. If the election were today, how likely are you to vote to re-elect Governor Rick Snyder?

Very Likely
Likely
Unlikely
Very Unlikely
Don't Know
Not Sure

Q. What is the most important issue to you?

Jobs and the Economy
Environment
Lower Taxes
Health Care
Personal Debt
Government Spending and Debt
Social Issues Like Marriage
Abortion
Other

Q. Do you feel that the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for someone like you?

Is the Party
Could be the Party
Probably Not the Party
Would need to know more
Unsure

Q. How would you classify your political ideology, as it relates to Social and Fiscal issues?

Fiscal and Social Conservative
Fiscal Conservative but Social Moderate
Fiscal and Social Moderate
Fiscal Conservative but Social Liberal
Fiscal and Social Liberal

APPENDIX C
PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 What is your age?

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24

Q.2 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q.3 What is your race/ethnicity?

- African-American
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- White non-Hispanic
- Other

Q.4 What would you say is your favorite show on television right now?

(fill in)

Q.5 What would you say best describes your party affiliation?

- Republican
- Democratic
- Independent
- Libertarian
- Other/Third Party

<Use slider bar 0-100 for Q.6-7 and randomly rotate>

Q.6 Turning now to the major political parties, what is your view of the Republican Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q.7 And what is your view of the Democratic Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q.8 Would you say that you are very much interested, somewhat interested or not much interested in political campaigns?

- Very Much Interested
- Somewhat Interested
- Not much Interested

Q.9 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about politics: "Sometimes politics seem so complicated that people my age can't really understand what's going on."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q.10 Which Party do you feel speaks to your age group most relevantly and effectively?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Neither
- Unsure

Q.11 What is more important to you in deciding who you will vote for: A candidate's political party, or their individual position on issues?

- Candidate Position on Issues
- Candidate Party
- Both about the same
- Don't decide based on Party or Issues

Q.12 What is the most important issue to you?

- Jobs and the Economy
- Environment
- Lower Taxes
- Health Care
- Personal Debt

Government Spending and Debt
Social Issues Like Marriage
Abortion
Other

Q.13 Do you feel that the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for someone like you?

Is the Party
Could be the Party
Probably Not the Party
Would need to know more
Unsure

Q.14 How would you classify your political ideology, as it relates to Social and Fiscal issues?

Fiscal and Social Conservative
Fiscal Conservative but Social Moderate
Fiscal and Social Moderate
Fiscal Conservative but Social Liberal
Fiscal and Social Liberal

Q. 15 Looking forward to the 2016 Presidential Election, do you see yourself voting for a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Third Party Candidate?

Democrat
Republican
Independent
Third Party
Other
Unsure

<Unsure, Skip Q. 16>

Q. 16 How certain would you say that party will be receiving your vote in 2016?

Definitely
Probably
Maybe
Unsure

<Definitely Republican, skip Q.17-18>

Q.17 Would you ever consider voting for a Republican?

Almost Always Consider
Usually Consider
Might be Willing to Consider
Probably Would Not Consider

Would Never Consider

Q.18 Ok, a little different way to ask the question: would you ever consider voting for a Republican if you agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues?

Almost Always Consider

Usually Consider

Might be Willing to Consider

Probably Would Not Consider

Would Never Consider

APPENDIX D
POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 The clip you just saw was an advertisement for which TV Show?

- Shark Tank
- The Apprentice
- CSI: Crime Scene Investigation
- NCIS
- The Bachelorette
- Are You the One?
- The Millionaire Matchmaker
- American Idol

Q. 2 How often do you tune in to watch shows such as the one presented in the clip?

- More Than Once a Week
- Once a Week
- More Than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- Occasionally
- Never

Q.3 How likely are you to watch the TV show presented in the clip after watching it?

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Q.4 Please circle one number on each line below that best describes how you feel about the clip you just saw. Numbers “1” and “5” indicate strong feelings; boxes “2” and “4” indicate weaker feelings; and box “3” indicates that you are undecided.

I felt that the clip was...						
Unbelievable	1	2	3	4	5	Believable
Low quality	1	2	3	4	5	High quality
Convincing	1	2	3	4	5	Not convincing
Not credible	1	2	3	4	5	Credible
Unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5	Reasonable
Truthful	1	2	3	4	5	Deceptive
Questionable	1	2	3	4	5	Unquestionable

Inconclusive	1	2	3	4	5	Conclusive
Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	Ethical
Accurate	1	2	3	4	5	Inaccurate

Q.5 What would you say was the nature of the clip you just saw?

- Television Advertisement
- Political Advertisement
- Both
- Neither
- Unsure

<If Political or Both, continue to Q. 6>

Q.6 If the ad was political in nature, which party would you say the ad promoted and which did it criticize?

- Pro-Democrat, Anti-Republican
- Pro-Republican, Anti-Democrat
- Pro-Democrat, Pro-Republican
- Anti-Democrat, Anti-Republican
- Neutral (neither criticized or attacked either Party)
- Wasn't a Political Advertisement
- Unsure

<Use slider bar 0-100 for Q.7-8 and randomly rotate>

Q.7 Turning now to the major political parties, what is your view of the Republican Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q.8 And what is your view of the Democratic Party?

- Very Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Unfavorable
- Very Unfavorable

Q.9 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about politics: "Sometimes politics seems so complicated that people my age can't really understand what's going on."

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree or Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Q.10 Which Party do you feel speaks to your age group most relevantly and effectively?

Democrat
Republican
Neither
Unsure

Q.11 Do you feel that the Republican Party is, or could be the Party for someone like you?

Is the Party
Could be the Party
Probably Not the Party
Would need to know more
Unsure

Q.12 Looking forward to the 2016 Presidential Election, do you see yourself voting for a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Third Party Candidate?

Democrat
Republican
Independent
Third Party
Other
Unsure

<Unsure, Skip Q. 13>

Q. 13 How certain would you say that party will be receiving your vote in 2016?

Definitely
Probably
Maybe
Unsure

<Definitely Republican, skip Q. 14-15>

Q.14 Would you ever consider voting for a Republican?

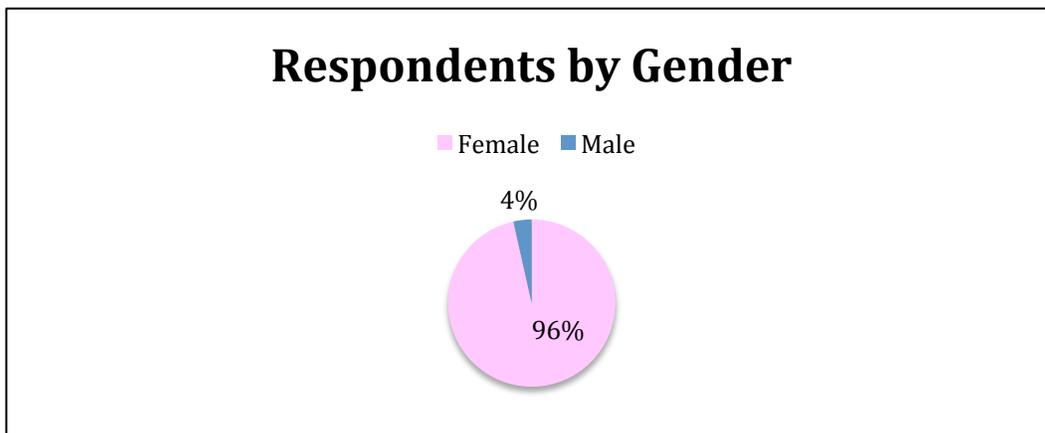
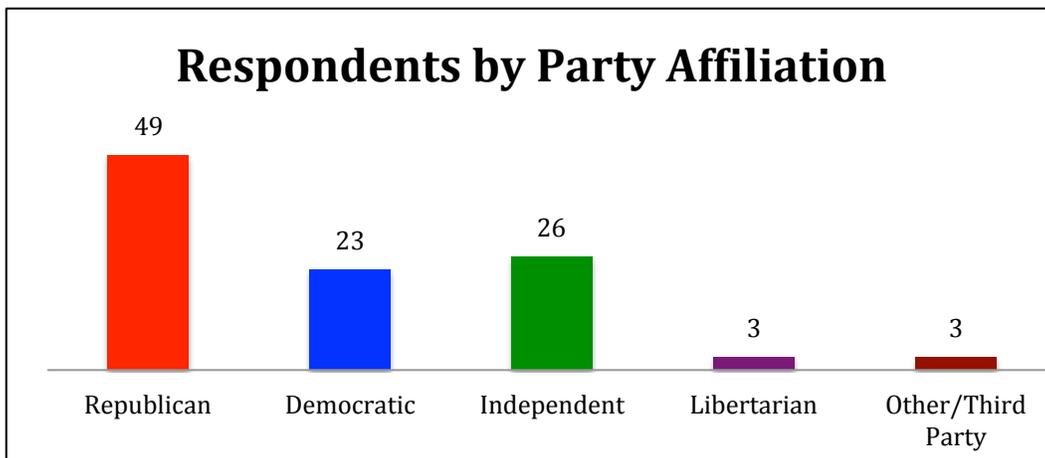
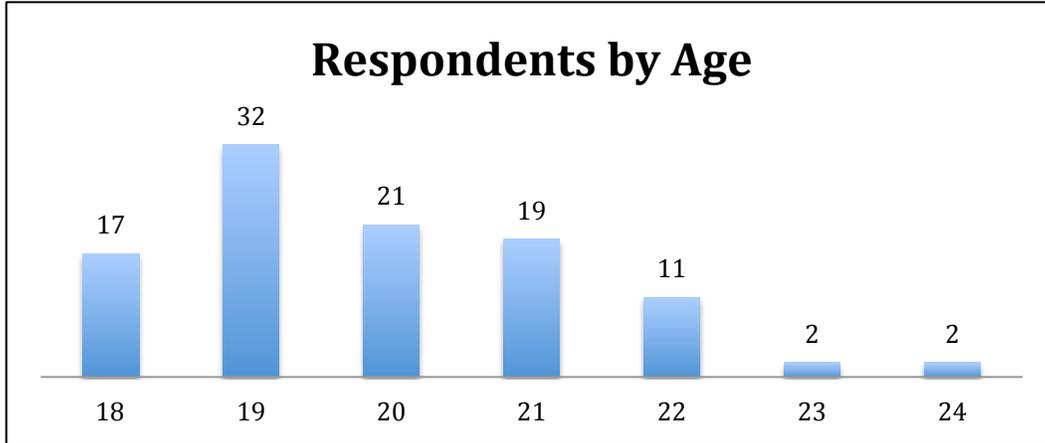
Almost Always Consider
Usually Consider
Might be Willing to Consider

Probably Would Not Consider
Would Never Consider

Q.15 Ok, a little different way to ask the question: would you ever consider voting for a Republican if you agreed with that candidate on a majority of issues?

Almost Always Consider
Usually Consider
Might be Willing to Consider
Probably Would Not Consider
Would Never Consider

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES



APPENDIX F
IRB APPROVAL



ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Ellen Schmidt
Mass Communication

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: February 19, 2015

RE: IRB# E9191

TITLE: "Operation Red Campus": An Experimental Analysis of CRNC Advertisements Targeting the Millennial Generation

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5963
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 2/19/2015

Approved Disapproved

Approval Date: 2/19/2015 Approval Expiration Date: 2/18/2018

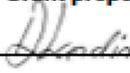
Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): _____

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman  _____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.

8. SPECIAL NOTE:

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

VITA

Ellen Mullee Schmidt was born in 1991 in Mansfield, Ohio, to the parents of Jim and Ann Schmidt. Upon graduating from St. Peter's High School in 2009, she attended Louisiana State University where she was an active member of the swimming and diving team for four years. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication from LSU in May, 2013. She entered The Graduate School in the Department of Mass Communication at LSU in August, 2013, expecting to receive a Master's of Art degree in May 2015. In the summer of 2014, she was employed as an intern at The Strategy Group for Media in Columbus, Ohio, which inspired the idea for this thesis.