

**TITLE: Interviews of political campaign staff**

**PROTOCOL VERSION DATE: July 17, 2023**

**VERSION: 0.1.1**

# PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI):

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# KEY PERSONNEL

**Name**: Anand Edward Sokhey

**Role in project**: Faculty advisor

# GENERAL RESEARCH STAFF

N/A

# OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to learn from political campaign consultants about the decisions they make about the use of color on campaign yard signs. I want to interview a handful of these practitioners to see whether they use particular colors and what sorts of factors influence those choices.

# BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Existing work in this area is extremely limited. There is some descriptive evidence suggesting that since the 2000 Presidential Election that Democrats use more blue on their yard signs and Republicans use more red on their yard signs (Elving 2014; Williams et al. 2022). In an experiment that I conducted, I found that voters express varying levels of support for candidates that use red or blue at different levels. I also have collected a number of yard signs from the past few election cycles and using machine learning techniques estimated the proportion of the colors red and blue on yard signs in those cycles and found that in districts that have a historical Republican advantage, candidates use the color Red more, candidates running districts with a historical Democrat advantage use more blue and candidates in districts that are “toss-ups” are less likely to use the colors red and blue overall. The purpose of these interviews are to talk with practitioners to tie these pieces of evidence together to demonstrate that this empirical evidence is not simply a set of coincidences, but rather that the color put on yard signs are a very strategic decision.

# PRELIMINARY STUDIES

N/A

# RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN

Participants will be selected by contacting our personal networks and through google searches of political campaign professionals. They will be contacted via email asking whether they would be willing to respond to a few questions. There is no randomization. I have included the list of questions I will ask interviewees in my submission. Participants will be asked these questions via email if they agree to allow me to “anonymously quote their responses.” I am hoping to collect responses from an upwards of 5-10 individuals.

I will use these responses to generate either paraphrased summaries of what a number of my participants have said as well as providing anonymized direct quotes from responses that provide concise and representative answers to my questions. I plan for this to take a two weeks to a month after sending the email for me to receive responses from a handful (about 5) practitioners.

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| --- | --- |
| **Name of procedure/instrument/tool** | **Purpose (i.e., what data is being collected?)** |
| **Email contact/Interview** | Anonymous quotations from expert practitioners |
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# FUNDING

N/A

# ABOUT THE SUBJECTS

I aim to have a maximum of 10 political campaign professionals respond to my questions about the decisions involved in the use of colors on campaign yard signs. The population that I am drawing from is anyone who has been paid to work on a political campaign in the United States or who is employed as a consultant for political marketing and political campaigns.

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| **Subject Population(s)** | **Number to be enrolled in each group** |
| **Campaign professional** | 10 |
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# VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

NA

# RECRUITMENT METHODS

To recruit participants, the study personnel will use their personal and professional networks as well as using google search to find those employed as campaign consultants, those who have worked on political campaigns at the local, state, or national level in the United States. We will then obtain their emails through their consultancy firm websites, the campaign’s official website, or through LinkedIn. The email addresses we will address our initial contact will only be those that are publicly shared.

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| **List recruitment methods/materials and attach a copy of each in eRA** |
| 1. **Email Materials included in ERA** |
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# COMPENSATION

N/A

# INFORMED CONSENT

In initial email contact, I will include an informed consent form. I will ask that participants confirm in their response via email that they have viewed the informed consent form and that they agree to provide responses that I may quote anonymously. I have included the specific language for the email and informed consent in the submission in ERA.

# PROCEDURES

In my initial contact via email, I will introduce myself and what the purpose of the interview is for. I will include the informed consent and will ask that if they are willing to respond to my questions that they confirm in their reply that they have read the informed consent form and that they are willing for the possibility of me anonymously quoting them in my write up of the project.

Once they have replied and have, in writing, indicated that they have read the informed consent form and agree to allow me to quote their responses to my questions, I will send them a follow-up email within 24 hours of their response with my questions.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Visit #** | **Procedures/Tools** | **Location** | **How much time the visit will take** |
| Initial contact email | * Informed consent form * Request that they indicate they have read informed consent * Request that they allow me to anonymously quote their responses to follow up email | Email | < 5 minutes |
| Follow-up email | * Questionnaire | Email | ~ 10 minutes |
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# SPECIMEN MANAGEMENT

NA

# DATA MANAGEMENT

All contact with the participants are via email. I will send these emails with my University email account which is secured by CU’s SSO. I will save PDF versions of the emails onto my password protected computer that is stored in a locked office. The responses and email conversation will only be located in these two places. I will not share the emails with anyone, even under peer review out of concern for my inability to guarantee confidentiality and privacy for my interviewees.

# PROVISIONS TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY INTERESTS OF PARTICIPANTS

The data collected from interviewees are entirely voluntary. I will conduct these “interviews” via email rather than in-person or over a video-conferencing software to ensure that my interviewees can respond to the questions expressly included in my email and to not feel pressure to address extemporaneous questions, to ensure that I do not pressure participants to respond to a question they are uncomfortable discussing, and to give them space and time to formulate a response that they are comfortable with having quoted anonymously in my write-up of the project.

# WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants may be withdrawn if they do not agree to me being allowed to anonymously quoting their responses, do not confirm they have read the informed consent, or do not respond to my questions in a timely manner (more than a week after I send my email).

# RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

I do not anticipate any risks to my participants.

# MANAGEMENT OF RISKS

# POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to the subjects.

The study hopes to contribute to our collective understanding of how colors may convey politically-relevant information to individuals. I hope that this will explain the effects of political polarization coming from such information, how voters can use such simple sources of information to make decisions about which candidates to vote for, and how the choice to use particular colors in politics may cue (either accurately or inaccurately) policy preferences of candidates.

# PROVISIONS TO MONITOR THE DATA FOR THE SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS

N/A (no anticipated risks)

# MEDICAL CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

N/A

# COST TO PARTICIPANTS

Participation should take less than cumulative (30 minutes). Participants should have access to a device connected to the internet and an email account for me to be able to contact them and to respond to my questions.

# DRUG ADMINISTRATION

N/A

# INVESTIGATIONAL DEVICES

N/A

# WORKING WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

N/A

# SHARING OF RESULTS WITH PARTICIPANTS

In my contact with participants, I will communicate with them that I am happy to share any results from the study and the write-ups for the project.

# REFERENCES

Elving, R. (2014). The color of politics: How did red and blue states come to be? *National Public Radio.*

Williams, A. M., Horsting, T., & Ramirez, M. D. (2022). What’s in a campaign logo? exploring differences in candidate self-presentation through campaign logos. Journal of Political Marketing. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2022.2040691>