

SEGMENTING CLINTON AND OBAMA VOTERS

It was February 19, 2008. One week earlier, Barack Obama had taken the lead in the delegate count during the Democratic Party's presidential primaries, the winner of which would face the Republican Party's nominee in the general election to become the next president of the United States (POTUS).

On that day in February, Hillary Clinton, Obama's primary opponent, began running ads in Ohio aimed at middle-class, blue-collar voters. One ad, "Night Shift," closed showing Clinton at her desk: "She understands. She's worked the night shift, too." But had Clinton ever worked the night shift? Her spokesperson said it was a "rhetorical reference" to working late nights as a lawyer, First Lady, and senator.¹

Clinton was not alone in her awkward appeals to voters in key demographics. Months earlier at a campaign stop in Iowa, Obama noted that while produce prices had risen in grocery stores, farmers had not benefited from increases in crop prices: "Anybody gone into Whole Foods lately and see what they charge for arugula? I mean, they're charging a lot of money for this stuff." At the time, there wasn't a single Whole Foods in the state of Iowa.²

What did these missteps say about the candidates' campaign strategies? Were they targeting the right voters? Had they crafted the right messages for these segments? One key in answering these questions was to analyze votes that had already been cast.

This case was prepared by Associate Professor Kenneth C. Lichtendahl Jr. and Rohit Gupta (MBA '13). It was written as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation. Copyright © 2013 by the University of Virginia Darden School Foundation, Charlottesville, VA. All rights reserved. To order copies, send an e-mail to sales@dardenbusinesspublishing.com. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, used in a spreadsheet, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the permission of the Darden School Foundation.

¹ Ariel Alexovich, "New Clinton Ad: 'Night Shift," New York Times, February 19, 2008.

² Jeff Zeleny, "Obama's Down on the Farm," *New York Times*, July 27, 2007.

Demographic Data

In November 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau issued its *County and City Data Book*,³ which contained extensive demographic information by state, county, and city. The Census Bureau grouped the 50 U.S. states into four regions (see **Exhibit 1**). Within the United States, there were a total of 3,141 counties.

On its website, the Census Bureau released the 2007 data tables from the *County and City Data Book*. These tables contained information commonly used by marketers to segment a population—gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, income, employment status, knowledge of languages, government dependency, disabilities, home ownership, mobility, population, population density, and region.⁴ Key demographic data by county were extracted from these tables and placed in a student spreadsheet file, UVA-QA-0807X.

Vote Data

Candidates for the Democratic nomination won delegates—both pledged delegates and superdelegates—through a complicated process followed closely by many news organizations and depicted in many different ways.⁵ On its website, CNN displayed an interactive graphic where candidates were depicted as donkeys in a foot race; visitors could roll a cursor over a candidate's donkeys and the current delegate total would appear.⁶

Politicians cared about votes the way marketers cared about sales. Because voting results dictated delegate commitment, major news outlets carefully trackedtotals by county. A visitor had access to county vote data (also included in the student spreadsheet) by rolling a cursor over a state's map.⁷

As of February 19, 2008, of the 2,868 total counties for which county-level vote data would eventually become available, there were 1,131 counties left to report. An estimated 2,490 delegates were already committed, and 2,118 were needed to secure the party's nomination; there were still 1,744 delegates to be awarded in upcoming states' primaries and caucuses. (See **Exhibit 2** for a list of past and upcoming primaries and caucuses.) Later that evening, the results

³ County and City Data Book: 2007, 14th ed. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

⁴ County and City Data Book: 2007, "State and County Data Tables," available at http://www.census.gov/statab/ccdb/ccdbstcounty.html (accessed May 27, 2013.)

⁵ Pledged delegates were committed to a candidate in proportion to the votes cast for that candidate in the state's primary or caucus. Superdelegates (almost 20% of the total number of delegates) were free to commit to any candidate at any time.

⁶ "Election Center 2008: Results," CNNPolitics.com, http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/primaries/results/scorecard/#D (accessed May 27, 2013).

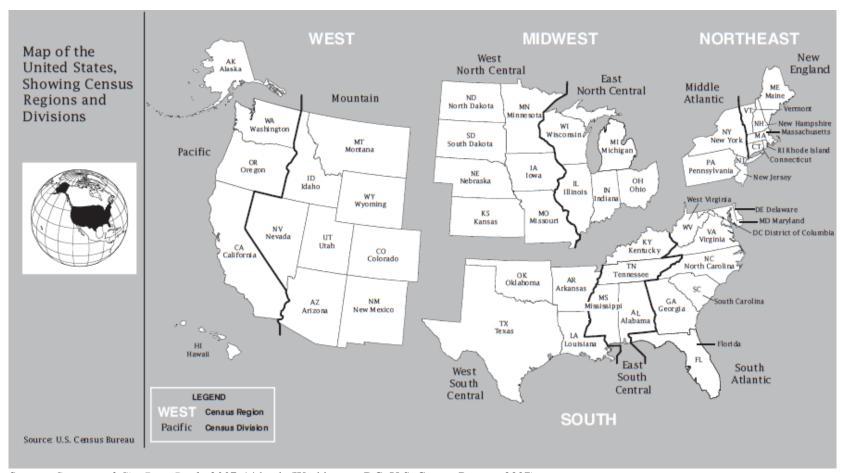
⁷ Several primaries and caucuses were excluded from the county-level vote data set because either Obama's name did not appear on the ballot, vote data was not reported by county, or a U.S. county was not represented.

of Hawaii's caucus and Wisconsin's primary would be announced. In these two states, and in over 1,000 counties in other states, it remained to be seen who would vote for Clinton and who would vote for Obama. Because of a weak Republican field, whoever won the most votes in these remaining primaries was likely to become the next POTUS.

Exhibit 1

SEGMENTING CLINTON AND OBAMA VOTERS

U.S. Census Bureau's Regions and Divisions for 2007



Source: County and City Data Book: 2007, 14th ed. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Region West

Midwest

Midwest

Northeast South Northeast

South

West

South Territory

Northeast

Territory

Midwest

South

South

South

West

Territory

West Midwest

Exhibit 2

SEGMENTING CLINTON AND OBAMA VOTERS

Past and Upcoming Democratic Party Primaries and Caucuses in 2008

Date State Name State Code Election Type Region Jalan Iowa IA Caucus* Midwest 19-Feb Hawaii HI Caucus* 8-Jan New Hampshire NH Primary* Midwest 19-Feb Wisconsin WI Primary 19-Jan Nevada NV Caucus West 4-Mar Oloio OH Primary 26-Jan South Carolina SC Primary South 4-Mar Rhode Island RI Primary 29-Jan Florida FL Primary South 4-Mar Texas TX Primary 5-Feb Alabama AL Primary South 4-Mar Texas TX Caucus 5-Feb Arkanasa AR Primary South 8-Mar Wyoming MY Caucus 5-Feb Arizona AZ Primary West 22-Apr Pennsylvania PA Primary 5-Feb Ca											
3-Jan Iowa IA Caucus Midwest 19-Feb Hawaii HI Caucus R-Jan New Hampshire NH Primary Northeast 19-Feb Wisconsin WI Primary Midwest 4-Mar Ohio OH Primary Midwest 4-Mar Ohio OH Primary Midwest 4-Mar Rhode Island RI Primary Right RI Primary South 4-Mar Rhode Island RI Primary RI RI RI RI RI RI Primary RI RI RI RI RI RI RI R	Past Primaries and Caucuses						Upcoming Primaries and Caucuses				
8-Jan New Hampshire NH	Date	State Name	State Code	Election Type	Region		Date	State Name	State Code	Election Type	
15-Jan Michigan* MI Primary Midwest 4-Mar Nohole Sland RI Primary Primary South 4-Mar Nohole Island RI Primary South 4-Mar Texas TX Primary South 4-Mar Vermont VT Primary S-Feb Alaka* AK Caucus West 4-Mar Texas TX Primary S-Feb Alaka* AK Caucus West 4-Mar Texas TX Caucus Texas TX Texas TX Caucus Texas TX Caucus Texas TX Caucus Texas TX Texas TX Texas TX Caucus Texas TX	3-Jan	Iowa	IA	Caucus ^a	Midwest		19-Feb	Hawaii	HI	Caucus	
19-Jan	8-Jan	New Hampshire	NH	Primary ^b	Northeast		19-Feb	Wisconsin	WI	Primary	
26-Jan South Carolina SC Primary South 4-Mar Texas TX Primary 29-Jan Florida FL Primary South 4-Mar Texas TX Primary S-Feb Alaska** AK Caucus West 4-Mar Texas TX Caucus S-Feb Alashama AL Primary South 8-Mar Wyorning WY Caucus S-Feb Arkansas AR Primary South 11-Mar Mississippi MS Primary S-Feb Arkansas AZ Primary West 2-Apr Pennsylvania PA Primary S-Feb California CA Primary West 3-May Guam*** GU Caucus G-May Indiana IN Primary S-Feb Connecticut CT Primary Wortheast G-May North Carolina NC Primary S-Feb Delaware DE Primary South 20-May West Virginia WV Primary S-Feb Illinois IL Primary Midwest 3-Jun Montana MT Primary S-Feb Massachusetts MA Primary Midwest 3-Jun South Dakota SD Primary S-Feb Minnesota MN Caucus Midwest S-Feb Mew Acico NM Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary South S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary Northeast S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary Northeast S-Feb New Mexico NM New Mexico	15-Jan	Michigan*	MI	Primary	Midwest		4-Mar	Ohio	OH	Primary	
9-Jan Florida FL Primary South 4-Mar Vermont VT Primary S-Feb Alaska** AK Caucus West 4-Mar Texas TX Caucus S-Feb Alabama AL Primary South 8-Mar Wyoming WY Caucus S-Feb Arkansas AR Primary South 11-Mar Mississippi MS Primary S-Feb Arkansas AR Primary South 11-Mar Mississippi MS Primary S-Feb Arkansas AR Primary West 22-Apr Pennsylvania PA Primary S-Feb Arkansas AZ Primary West 22-Apr Pennsylvania PA Primary S-Feb California CA Primary West 3-May Guam*** GU Caucus S-Feb Colorado CO Caucus West 6-May Indiana IN Primary S-Feb Connecticut CT Primary Northeast 6-May North Carolina NC Primary S-Feb Delaware DE Primary South 20-May West Virginia WV Primary S-Feb Georgia GA Primary South 20-May West Virginia WV Primary S-Feb Illinois IL Primary Midwest 3-Jun Puerto Rico*** PR Primary S-Feb Mansachusetts MA Primary Northeast S-Feb Missouri MO Primary Midwest S-Feb New Jersey NJ Primary West S-Feb New Jersey NJ Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary South S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary South S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary West S-Feb New Mexico NM Primary South S-Feb New S-Feb	19-Jan	Nevada	NV	Caucus	West		4-Mar	Rhode Island	RI	Primary	
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12-Feb District of Columbia*** DC Primary South 12-Feb Maryland MD Primary South	9-Feb	Washington	WA	Caucus	West						
12-Feb Maryland MD Primary South	10-Feb	Maine	ME	Caucus	Northeast						
·	12-Feb	District of Columbia***	DC	Primary	South						
12-Feb Virginia VA Primary South	12-Feb	Maryland	MD	Primary	South						
	12-Feb	Virginia	VA	Primary	South						

^{*} Obama's name did not appear on the ballot. He boycotted the primary because it violated Democratic Party rules.

Data source: "Election Center 2008: Results," CNNPolitics.com, http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION /2008/primaries/results/scorecard/#D (accessed May 27, 2013).

^{**} Vote data not reported by county.

^{***} Demographic data not included in data set because the district/territory did not contain a U.S. county.

^a Voting in a caucus is done openly by raising hands or breaking into groups.

^b Primary voters cast secret ballots for the candidates of their choosing.