

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.

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 tracked totals 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).

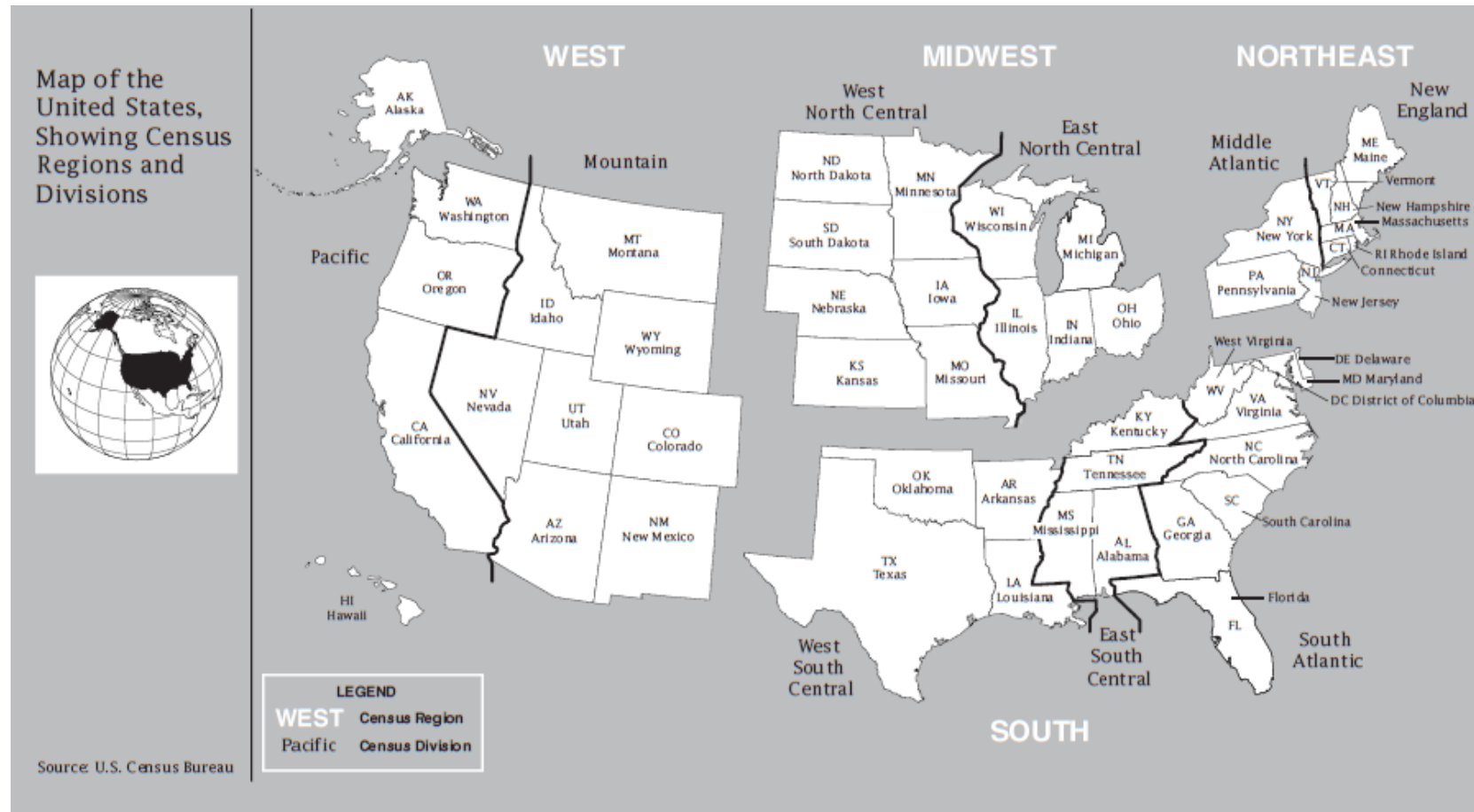
⁷ Several primaries and caucuses were excluded from the county-level vote data set because either Obama’s name did not appear on the ballot, vote data was not reported by county, or a U.S. county was not represented.

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).

Exhibit 2

SEGMENTING CLINTON AND OBAMA VOTERS**Past and Upcoming Democratic Party Primaries and Caucuses in 2008**

Past Primaries and Caucuses					Upcoming Primaries and Caucuses				
Date	State Name	State Code	Election Type	Region	Date	State Name	State Code	Election Type	Region
3-Jan	Iowa	IA	Caucus ^a	Midwest	19-Feb	Hawaii	HI	Caucus	West
8-Jan	New Hampshire	NH	Primary ^b	Northeast	19-Feb	Wisconsin	WI	Primary	Midwest
15-Jan	Michigan*	MI	Primary	Midwest	4-Mar	Ohio	OH	Primary	Midwest
19-Jan	Nevada	NV	Caucus	West	4-Mar	Rhode Island	RI	Primary	Northeast
26-Jan	South Carolina	SC	Primary	South	4-Mar	Texas	TX	Primary	South
29-Jan	Florida	FL	Primary	South	4-Mar	Vermont	VT	Primary	Northeast
5-Feb	Alaska**	AK	Caucus	West	4-Mar	Texas	TX	Caucus	South
5-Feb	Alabama	AL	Primary	South	8-Mar	Wyoming	WY	Caucus	West
5-Feb	Arkansas	AR	Primary	South	11-Mar	Mississippi	MS	Primary	South
5-Feb	American Samoa***	AS	Caucus	Territory	9-Apr	Virgin Islands***	VI	Caucus	Territory
5-Feb	Arizona	AZ	Primary	West	22-Apr	Pennsylvania	PA	Primary	Northeast
5-Feb	California	CA	Primary	West	3-May	Guam***	GU	Caucus	Territory
5-Feb	Colorado	CO	Caucus	West	6-May	Indiana	IN	Primary	Midwest
5-Feb	Connecticut	CT	Primary	Northeast	6-May	North Carolina	NC	Primary	South
5-Feb	Democrats Aboard***	DA	Primary	Overseas	13-May	West Virginia	WV	Primary	South
5-Feb	Delaware	DE	Primary	South	20-May	Kentucky	KY	Primary	South
5-Feb	Georgia	GA	Primary	South	20-May	Oregon	OR	Primary	West
5-Feb	Idaho	ID	Caucus	West	1-Jun	Puerto Rico***	PR	Primary	Territory
5-Feb	Illinois	IL	Primary	Midwest	3-Jun	Montana	MT	Primary	West
5-Feb	Kansas**	KS	Caucus	Midwest	3-Jun	South Dakota	SD	Primary	Midwest
5-Feb	Massachusetts	MA	Primary	Northeast					
5-Feb	Minnesota	MN	Caucus	Midwest					
5-Feb	Missouri	MO	Primary	Midwest					
5-Feb	North Dakota**	ND	Caucus	Midwest					
5-Feb	New Jersey	NJ	Primary	Northeast					
5-Feb	New Mexico	NM	Primary	West					
5-Feb	New York	NY	Primary	Northeast					
5-Feb	Oklahoma	OK	Primary	South					
5-Feb	Tennessee	TN	Primary	South					
5-Feb	Utah	UT	Primary	West					
9-Feb	Louisiana	LA	Primary	South					
9-Feb	Nebraska	NE	Caucus	Midwest					
9-Feb	Washington	WA	Caucus	West					
10-Feb	Maine	ME	Caucus	Northeast					
12-Feb	District of Columbia***	DC	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.

** 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.

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