

# Cialdini's Principle of Liking and the 2016 Presidential Election

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# Question:

- What was the impact of celebrity endorsements on the 2016 presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?

# Areas Covered:

- Context on area of study
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion of the results
- Conclusion

# Context: Meaning Transfer

- Persuasiveness of celebrity endorsements- most of the research is focused in the business world.
- Meaning Transfer
- Elina Halonen-Knight and Leila Hurmerinta (2010)
  - the purpose of celebrity endorsements is to transfer the celebrities reputation onto the business that they are endorsing

# Context: Heuristics

- Celebrity influence in the political sphere research focuses on heuristics
- Kevin Arceneaux and Robin Kolodny study on group endorsement's effects on uneducated voters
  - Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) contend that when specific groups endorse candidates, voters use these as heuristic signs on who to vote for (p. 767).
- Grofman and Norrander (1990)- endorsements help voters make decisions on who to vote for by providing information to uneducated voters
  - Group as a reference or "cue"

# Context: Precedent

- 2013 study by Craig Garthwaite and Timothy J. Moore analyzing Oprah's impact on 2008 Democratic Primary elections
  - Garthwaite and Moore (2013) developed a strategy which tracked Oprah's magazine sales and cross referenced this to the voter statistics of who voted for Obama
  - Developed and provided an empirical way to measure celebrity influence on political elections

# Methodology: Communication Principle

- Cialdini's principle of liking to analyze the endorsements of celebrities and their impact on the 2016 election.
- Liking: people are more likely to be persuaded by those that they like
  - Physical attractiveness
  - Similarity
  - Compliments
  - Contact and cooperation
  - Conditioning and association
- Goal: to gain compliance with someone

# Methodology: Using Liking

- Choose three celebrities for each candidate
  - analyzing their likability
  - comparing to results of the election



# Results: Election

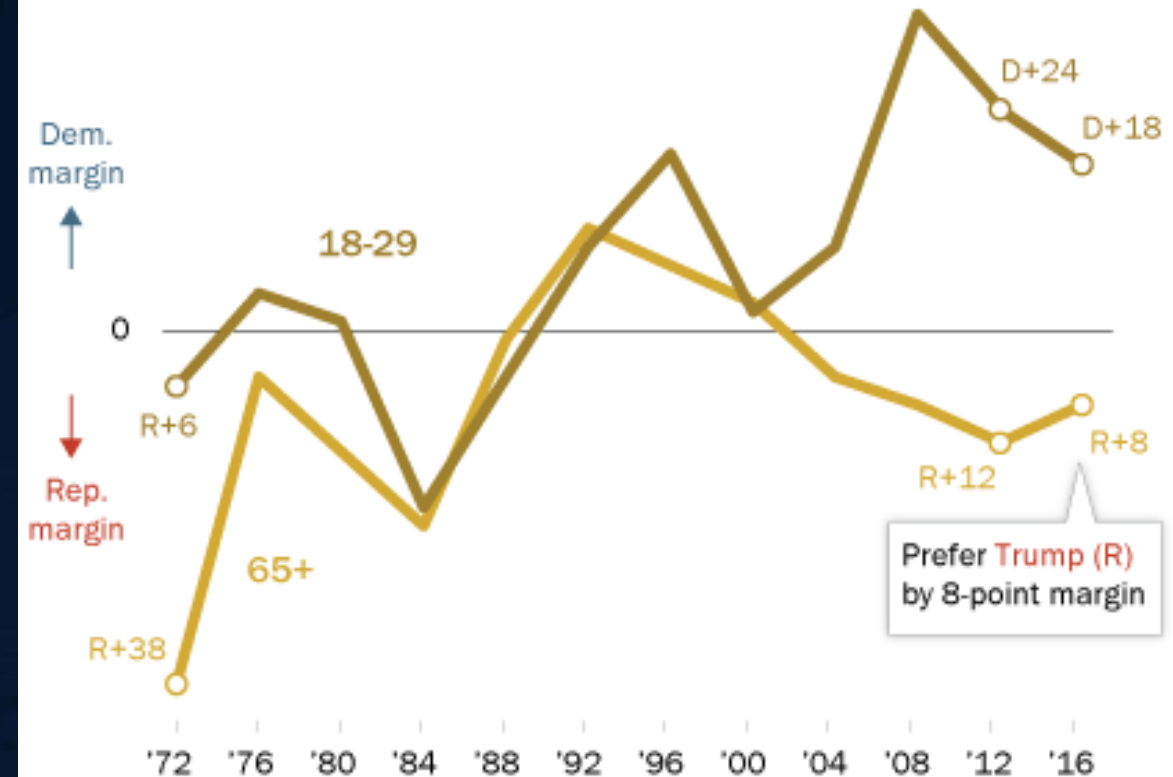
- Donald Trump won the electoral college
  - 304 votes for Trump against the 227 cast for Clinton (Federal Election Commission, 2017).
- Popular vote was in favor of Clinton (Federal Election Commission, 2017)
  - Clinton won this by capturing 48.18% of voters versus Trump's 46.09% (Federal Election Commission, 2017)
- 7 million more votes cast in the 2016 election than 2012.
  - .4% increase from the 2012 election to the 2016 election in the percentage of the voting-age population (File, 2017).

# Results: Election

- The youngest demographic of voters were in favor of Clinton (Tyson & Maniam, 2016).
  - Dix, Phau, and Pougnet (2010) conducted a study on celebrity influence on youth that found this demographic to be the most susceptible to celebrity influence

## Democratic advantage among the youngest voters declines in 2016

Presidential candidate preference, by age



Note: From 1972 through 1988 oldest age category is 60 and older.

Source: Based on exit polls conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, as reported by CNN. Data from prior years from national exit polls.

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# Results: Election Voting Rate

- The voting rate for this age group increased by 1.1% from the 2012 election going from 45% to 46.1% in 2016. (File, 2017).
- decline in voting rate in all but oldest demographic of 65 and older
- Rate among 18 to 29 years of age from 2008 to 2016 from 51.1% to 46.1% (File, 2017).

Figure 4. Reported Voting Rates by Age: 1980-2016

(Percents)



# Results: Likeability- Clinton

- Katy Perry
  - Tied for the record for the most number-one songs from a single album, is a Grammy-nominated singer, and had her song “Roar” as one of the featured songs of the 2016 Olympic games (Cunningham, 2020)
- LeBron James
  - Changed teams to play for the Miami Heat in 2010, value of the Cleveland Cavaliers dropped from 475 million to 355 million (Rovell, 2018)
- Lena Dunham
  - Listed as one of TIME’s most 100 influential people of 2013 and award-winning director of the TV show *Girls* (Danes, 2013)

# Results: Likeability- Trump

- Willie Robertson
  - *Duck Dynasty* actor and which broke the record for most viewers for a non-fiction show on cable (Mullins, 2013)
- Scott Baio
  - Popular actor in the show *Happy Days* which ran from 1977-1985 (Britannica, 2019).
- Antonio Sabato Jr.
  - Former actor that appeared on the famous soap opera *General Hospital* in the 1990s

# Discussion

- Celebrities had limited success in influencing the 2016 presidential election.
- Despite possessing the endorsements of more likable celebrities, Clinton was unable to persuade enough voters to defeat Trump
  - Age range typically influenced by celebrities did vote for Clinton
- Based on the trends produced by prior elections and demographic analysis of the 18-29 age group and the endorsements of the likable celebrities, the support for Clinton is lower than what would be expected.

# Discussion

- Result should be that this age group should be more persuaded to vote for Clinton and this is confirmed.
  - Clinton received 55% of the ages 18-29 vote compared to Trump's 37% (Tyson & Maniam, 2016)
- Compared to the previous two elections, Clinton performed notably worse
  - 18-point advantage compared to the 24 point and 34 point advantages held by Barack Obama in 2012 and 2008
- Why: the young adult population is that the millennial generation makes up 28% of the adult population in 2018
  - 57% of this millennials described as liberal and 31% holding mixed views (Pew Research Center, 2018).

# Discussion: Explanation

- Limits of Cialdini's principle of liking
  - Nam-Hyun Um (2017)- celebrities did impact whether people would go to purchase the product they were advocating for, but not necessarily their opinion of the company.
  - Craig Frizzell (2009)- if citizens view a source as respectable, then they will value its information, but not necessarily change their opinion on the issue



# Discussion: Contributions

- Significance- contributed to the understanding of celebrity influence in politics by analyzing this type of persuasive tactic by utilizing Cialdini's principle of liking
  - Celebrity influence and the principle of liking have been applied to political research before, but not together
  - This research can be used by future campaigns to develop more effective strategies

# Conclusion

- The impact of celebrity endorsements on the 2016 presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton was minimal.
- Future Research:
  - Focus on which type of public figures could be better for endorsements
  - What the indirect benefits of celebrity endorsements are and how can they be measured (Garthwaite & Moore, 2013, p. 383)

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