Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of Victoria, 2017)

“Understanding the “Micro” in Micro-Targeting: An Analysis of the 2018 Ontario Provincial Election”

Department of Political Science

Thursday, December 13, 2018
10:00 A.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A357

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Colin Bennett, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Matt James, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Penny Bryden, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Catherine Costigan, Department of Psychology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

There is a breadth of research on micro-targeting in American elections, while the practice is under-researched in Canadian federal elections. Additionally, there is no academic commentary on micro-targeting at the Canadian provincial election level. This thesis draws on this gap in literature to investigate how micro-targeting is used at the provincial campaign level by parties and candidates. My research was conducted through an analysis of emails, Facebook ads and Facebook posts by the Liberal, Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Party candidates in 8 ridings in the 2018 Ontario election. I drew hypotheses about the types of “micro” appeals in provincial micro-targeting from the work of Kreiss (2017), Giasson and Small (2017), Marland and Matthews (2017), Munroe and Munroe (2018), Delacourt (2015) and Carty, Cross and Young (2000). From this research, I argue that provincial micro-targeting is nowhere near the level of specificity that is found in Canadian federal elections, let alone American elections. Parties rely on appeals to very broad groups and areas, such as occupations and “the North.” Parties do not use the information contained in voter management databases to target campaign appeals on social media or other media, and instead rely on these systems more for get-out-the-vote activities. This thesis contributes to the growing research on micro-targeting and the use of Facebook for political campaigning, while also remaining conscious to the fact that these technologies are constantly changing and advancing.