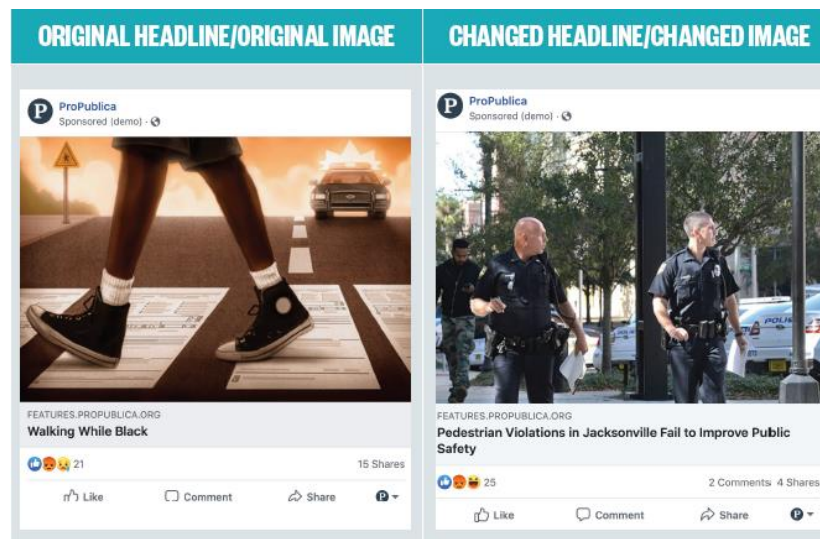


IMAGES THAT GENERATE CLICKS AMONG BOTH CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS

REPORT EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM EST DECEMBER 17, 2019

Austin, TX – December 17, 2019 – Many newsrooms serve audiences with diverse political viewpoints. To study how conservatives and liberals react to certain articles, the [Center for Media Engagement](#) teamed up with [ProPublica](#), a nonprofit news organization focused on investigative journalism.

We designed this study to determine whether headlines and images can be crafted in ways that appeal to both conservatives and liberals. In collaboration with ProPublica, we tried to narrow the interest gap by changing the article photos and headlines on four Facebook ads. We found that articles using straightforward photos, instead of illustrations with symbolic meaning, got more clicks from conservatives and liberals. Headlines that were re-written to appeal to partisan moral values, however, decreased clicks among both groups.



“This study shows us that images have a big impact when it comes to getting Facebook clicks,” says researcher Caroline Murray. “Newsrooms should use straightforward photos, which appeal to readers on both sides of the political aisle.” Although reframing the headlines to try to appeal to different moral values seemed to make the articles less interesting to both conservatives and liberals, this finding may not apply in all situations. We recommend continuing to explore whether there are headlines that generate more cross-partisan appeal.

This research was funded by the News Integrity Initiative at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. To read more about the findings, access the full report on our website: <https://mediaengagement.org/research/images-that-generate-clicks>

###

The Center for Media Engagement, part of the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, provides research-based techniques for engaging digital audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at mediaengagement.org.