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How Campaigns Influence and/or Control Mass Media

While 2006 may be recalled as a year of redemption for Democrats, it is likely they will always remember 2004 as a year of lost opportunity. In 2004, they faced President Bush, a popular wartime president who seemed vulnerable on any score of domestic issues, and who was also susceptible to criticism about the war in Iraq and whether it really had anything to do with 9/11 or prosecuting a war on terrorism. In John Kerry, Democrats seemed to have settled on a candidate with an impressive record of public service and with a well-chronicled military past that included two tours in Vietnam, and service that earned him a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts (which are awarded to soldiers injured in the line of duty). Kerry was a four-term member of the U.S. Senate, and coming out of the Democratic convention appeared positioned to unseat an incumbent president who was suffering through a series of mini-crises and bad news revelations throughout the summer preceding the general election.

Of course, we all remember the end of this story. President Bush won reelection handily—by enough to claim a mandate. Unlike 2000, there would be no contesting the results of the 2004 race. All of which begged the question: What went so horribly wrong for the Kerry campaign between the end of the Democratic National Convention and election day? Or to put the same question in terms more affirming of President Bush: What went so right for the president in that same period?

Barely three years past the president's victory, we may be too close in time to have sufficient perspective for knowing exactly what happened and why, but some factors are identifiable. The Bush campaign in 2004 was only too aware that a primary reason Kerry had been selected as the Democratic

Party nominee was because of his military background and the fact that he might be able to use that pedigree to blunt the president's wartime commander-in-chief ethos. In fact, both Kerry and Bush had similar backgrounds—education at Yale University and families with roots in New England. But a key difference between them was that Bush had spent his service during Vietnam by participating stateside in the domestic Air National Guard (never seeing combat in Southeast Asia), whereas Kerry had volunteered for not one, but *two* tours of duty in Vietnam, even though he likely could have used connections or deferment to avoid the military all together.

A key strategy of the president's reelection campaign, therefore, was to try and distinguish John Kerry from President Bush in ways that showed the Massachusetts senator in a negative light. Rather than shying away from Kerry's military record, the Bush campaign focused on it—and the fact that when Kerry returned from Vietnam, he became a peace activist. The president's campaign wanted voters to see Kerry's post-Vietnam activism as unsupportive of American troops who were still in Vietnam—and hopefully for voters to also link that idea with Kerry as a U.S. senator today, who was at last feeling free to criticize U.S. military policy with respect to Iraq and Afghanistan. The idea was to acknowledge that Kerry had been a soldier who served his country, but also one whose politics diminished and undermined the morale of U.S. military service men and women. Repeatedly the president asked voters in his speeches, in his news interviews, in his debates, and in his television advertisements: How can a man who wants to be commander-in-chief of the military forces of our country be the same man who criticizes military campaigns and undermines the morale of soldiers? In ways that will be discussed later, the president was attempting to identify and define his opponent for voters who were still undecided or perhaps leaning to Kerry. His campaign successfully linked this argument to claims that Kerry was indecisive and constantly changing his mind. In his speeches and his advertisements, he defined his Democratic opponent with words such as “wrong,” or “troubling,” describing his ideas as “wacky,” while continually reminding voters that Kerry had “waffled” on key issues.¹

The president still faced a key obstacle with this strategy, however: Senator Kerry had, after all, volunteered for service. He had been wounded in combat. He had been awarded numerous citations. For the Bush campaign, the question was how to discredit or undermine Kerry without appearing to attack a decorated war hero?

The answer to that question involves the blending of mass media strategies—in this case, new media and old media, and the convergence that occurs when news media continues to give profile to a claim asserted in a political advertisement.

The previous chapter addressed different frames for understanding mass media and the manner by which they affect political communication. Left untouched in that discussion was the question facing candidates, campaign consultants, or managers: What strategies are in play for dealing with free media (news) or paid media (advertising)? How exactly does new media (here, the Internet) affect this process? In the coming sections, I will answer the questions about strategies for free and paid media, and how these are used to blend in new media for a political campaign, and I will also try and explain how the Bush campaign successfully accomplished their election result without appearing to attack a war hero.

To this end, let's begin with a discussion about *strategies for influencing news media*, especially as relates to the typical kinds of coverage a political campaign may encounter over the time an election takes to run its course. Next, we'll address *strategies and tactics for political advertising*, contrasting both affirmative and negative attack ad approaches, and consider how these can be used for manipulating *news media coverage*, extending the message of the ads beyond the time they appear in broadcast or print. Finally, we'll consider how new media like campaign Web sites create fresh opportunities for news coverage of negative advertising.

Strategies for Influencing Free Media

As indicated in Chapter 8, there is little question that news media and political candidates and campaigns occupy an odd symbiotic relationship; quite simply, each needs the other to succeed. For news media, coverage of a political campaign is part fulfillment of an unspoken yet understood obligation to inform the public and help educate the voting electorate, while at the same time providing a profitable opportunity to grab readers, listeners, and viewers for a news story that may last for a significantly long time. News media are still a business, first and foremost, and elections can deliver audiences that buy newspapers, listen to radio news, or (far more likely than the other two) tune in to watch television news. Political candidates and their campaigns, on the other hand, need news media for the service they provide in helping to publicize a candidacy—a service that comes basically free of cost. To some extent, because of this symbiosis, each manipulates the other in election times. Most assuredly, candidates with limited financial resources know they must rely on attracting news coverage to help generate stories and bring public awareness and attention to their campaign. Even candidates with the ability to pay for their own campaigns (who can, in effect, pay for their own advertising) understand that

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news coverage does more than just provide profile and attention, it also bestows an imprimatur of legitimacy on a candidate. Ross Perot, for example, could afford his own candidacy for president in 1992 and 1996, but there is little doubt that the media coverage of his campaign and his new political party helped to make him into a third-party candidate that voters would take more seriously. By comparison, Lyndon LaRouche, who has been a perennial candidate for president—and also someone with the means to pay for advertising—has seldom if ever been taken seriously by political reporters and journalists, and thus hasn't posed a strong threat to either Democratic or Republican candidates.

In my own experience, while working as a political commentator for ABC news during the California gubernatorial recall election, I can recall being confronted by a man I knew from the swim club I belonged to in the San Francisco bay area. He was one of the 130 or so candidates to have qualified to run for governor on the special ballot, assuming Governor Gray Davis was recalled. He had put almost \$1 million of his own money into local advertising to try and generate public interest in his candidacy. But midway into the campaign, no one had heard of him, and when the televised debates were held, invitations to debate were limited to serious candidates as determined by their standing in the polls. On the night of the first debate in northern California, this man was not invited to participate, but he showed up with other uninvited candidates to protest on the street outside the building where the debate was to be held.

When he recognized me entering the auditorium with other members of the press (this had become a national and eventually an international news story because of Arnold Schwarzenegger), he both pleaded with and angrily lectured me for not doing stories about him. How would he ever be seen as a serious candidate, he argued, if he never got any coverage? I understood his complaint, but the decision to cover his candidacy was not mine; it belonged to the assignment editor who (like all other assignment editors) wanted to limit coverage to established candidates with a realistic chance of winning. In such a situation, if I had proposed doing a news story on him or any of the lesser known candidates, I very likely could have made outrageous demands about where and when the interview would take place, or what kind of subject matter the interview would cover, and he very likely would have gone along with it. I could have manipulated him into talking about issues (e.g., sensitive questions about race relations) that other candidates would have shied away from. I could have—but in this case, I did not. If I had, however, I'm quite certain he would have complied with my demands in exchange for the coverage. Of such leverage is manipulation by news media sometimes produced.

That kind of manipulative power can also be wielded (on occasion) against established candidates who seek an opportunity to clarify a statement or position to the voting public by using news media. For example, in many campaigns candidates will sometimes be confronted by investigative journalists who have uncovered a potential story, either through digging, or more likely through some kind of leak or tip-off from an interested third party. Perhaps, as in the case of then candidate Bill Clinton's alleged affair with Gennifer Flowers, the reporter (or reporters) who is about to break the story will contact the media representative or press spokesperson for the campaign and suggest that such a story is about to be published or broadcast, and offer the candidate an opportunity to comment and tell his or her side of things. This kind of an offer is a double-edged sword, leaving the candidate in an uncomfortable and manipulated position. Reject the offer to comment, and the story will run with a proviso that the candidate issued a "no-comment" when asked to respond. That always makes the candidate look guilty. Or, comply with the request and risk making the story more than it might have become. If the story is indeed well documented and researched, candidates often have little choice but to comply and end up being coerced into providing information for the story.

In Clinton's case, he initially denied allegations of the affair until Flowers produced audiotape proving as much. Both Governor Clinton and his wife then went on the offensive, seeking out media coverage to tell their side of the story. In the process, the popular television news program *60 Minutes* scored a major coup by being able to interview both Clintons speaking on camera regarding the affair, fidelity, and the state of their marriage. Clinton, of course, went on to survive this particular story and won election in 1992, but the episode demonstrates how news media can sometimes manipulate even powerful candidates. It should not be missed in this example, however, that while the Clintons were to some degree coerced into discussion of a private, sensitive, and potentially career-ending topic, they still managed to control the damage and perhaps even benefited themselves in the long run. Their example demonstrates how it is that candidates can and do have strategies for dealing with news media coverage. Candidates can manipulate, too. How does this work in practice?

To answer this, let's consider first the old adage that campaigns and candidates will always be better off by *staying in front of a news story, rather than chasing behind it*. In practice, what this means is that candidates are better served by trying to shape and direct news coverage of their campaign, instead of the other way around. As a general rule, this approach better serves a candidate who wants to communicate the campaign message through free media coverage in the news. It can also better

serve a campaign caught in a potential scandal, forced to react to a story. Better to shape and frame how the story will be told than to be forced into explaining after the fact, which may appear as defensive and potentially an admission of something that could prove threatening to a campaign.

Candidates who want to stay in front of news stories and shape the coverage of their campaign often employ different strategies to manipulate news media. These include *making use of timing and deadlines*, as well as *controlling reporter access to candidates*, *staging newsworthy events*, and employing the techniques learned from *media training*. We consider each of these in turn.

DEADLINES AND TIMING OF COVERAGE

To begin with, both print and broadcast media have deadlines for collection of information, creation of a story, and oversight by an editor. Beyond that point, the story cannot really stand revision because of the proximity to printing time (for newspapers and magazines) or broadcast (for television and radio). This is fairly common throughout the industry, although 24-hour news coverage by cable and satellite television has allowed for some changes, since continuous news coverage means that earlier filed stories can be revised over time. Still, with respect to standard print and/or radio and television news, the rule is the same: Reporters have “dropdead” deadlines, when a story has to be filed. For most daily newspapers, this may be at 4:00 PM, or thereabouts; for most evening broadcast news (e.g., for that shown at 6:00 PM), it may be no later than 3:00 PM. This is so, even in an era of live television, because reporters need to shoot video, write a story, and then edit the video and pull the story together, all before an editor allows the package to go forward. This can take several hours—even for a medium with as up-to-the-moment coverage as television.

Candidates who want to shape what reporters say or don't cover can strategically *time* the release of information for a news story in such a way as to ensure that the story will not run on time, or only with the limited information that is released. In practice, this means that campaigns can time the release of potentially damaging or embarrassing information late in the day to ensure that it may not make the daily newspapers for the following edition, or the early evening television news programs on the same day. Timing the release of a potentially significant story close to a deadline forces reporters and their editors to choose between not running a story until later (when the news may be less significant, or, as it is called in the business, when it becomes “stale”), or running it close to the deadline, but without the ability to verify the version of facts shared by the campaign or

candidate. The latter of these can be particularly manipulative, since the facts as reported (if the story runs without verification) will be solely based on the construction provided by the campaign/candidate.

Equally so, campaigns or candidates can release potentially embarrassing information on certain days of the week, designed to minimize the damage that may be caused. A simple tactic here is to release this kind of information on a Friday, after the deadlines have passed, effectively ensuring that the story may only be covered on weekends. Equally so, for particularly sensitive information, the release may actually occur during the weekend (e.g., on a Saturday), when the audience for television and radio news programs will be smaller and articles for the Sunday edition of large newspapers may already be complete. Here the hope may be that the information may not generate enough of a story for the evening news on Saturday, or the small print article in Sunday papers and later become old or stale news by Monday, when a larger reading, viewing, and listening audience returns.

A different timing strategy calls for coinciding the release of embarrassing information with coverage of a major and different developing story. These can be difficult to do because from week to week and day to day it isn't always clear what stories will dominate coverage in advance. Some stories (e.g., game 7 of the World Series, or the Academy Awards telecast) can be eyeballed on a calendar well in advance, such that the release of embarrassing campaign information at the same time might relegate any story about the campaign information to a lesser status, such as page 10 in the newspaper, or perhaps 20 minutes deep into a 30-minute newscast. Readers and viewers are less likely to take these kinds of stories seriously if they perceive that other dominant stories are more important.

LIMITING AND CONTROLLING REPORTER ACCESS

A different kind of strategy involves the relationship between reporters and campaign sources, including the candidate herself. Reporters need to talk to primary sources, and the ability to actually interview a candidate or a significant campaign operative (e.g., a campaign manager) greatly enhances the veracity of information in a story about the campaign, and also elevates the stature of the reporter in the news community. The same phenomenon works in reverse; never being able to talk to a primary source like a candidate or a campaign operative diminishes the status of reporters, who in turn face intense pressure from producers and editors who wonder why other reporters get their questions answered or their interviews granted? Because of this dynamic, a very common method for manipulating news

media calls for the limiting of access to a candidate or campaign source. In simplest terms, candidates and campaign sources reward reporters who write favorable or at least fair stories about the campaign, and occasionally punish those who consistently write critical stories, by freezing them out in press conferences or restricting their access to the sources. At first, the punished reporter may see this as evidence that his or her journalism was on mark and effective, but over the long term of a campaign, being frozen out will eventually lead to a reassignment. Reporters who want to stay in the campaign coverage may be influenced by this.

STAGING NEWSWORTHY EVENTS

Candidates and campaigns can also influence media coverage by staging newsworthy events, also sometimes referred to as *pseudoevents*.² In a political campaign context, a staged and newsworthy event is essentially a made-up event, designed primarily to draw free news attention to a candidate by luring news reporters to the event. Of course, to accomplish as much, a campaign media specialist must be sure that whatever the event is contains the elements that would be considered newsworthy by those in news media. As indicated before, this means there must be an element of conflict inherent in the event, and, at least for television, also the possibility of a story that can be told both verbally and visually.

Some events easily lend themselves to staging. For example, many of the normal functions an incumbent performs can often become staged news events that draw coverage. These might include speeches to various audiences, such as civic organizations students and teachers at schools, or groups of soldiers out in the field. Likewise it might include (for mayors, governors, and presidents) elaborate but essentially unnecessary signing ceremonies for new bills and acts that become law when signed into effect by the appropriate executive. While these types of staged events do reinforce the image of incumbency, they may not always be sufficiently interesting for an audience more drawn to conflict and interesting visual possibilities.

In that vein, more interesting staged events can be seen in examples like that from previous presidential elections. For example, President Bush was sure to notify the traveling media of his visit to Florida for an on-site inspection of the damage caused by three separate hurricanes (Charley, Frances, and Jeanne) in September 2004.³ The event, which arguably was within his job description as president, still afforded the president an official excuse to visit Florida as part of a fact-finding mission, covered in depth by state and local media, while also allowing the president an opportunity to publicly promise federal assistance for disaster victims. At first blush, this might not

appear to have been a staged event, but the reality of the situation is that there were no real facts to find. The damage of the hurricane was already documented, and outside of the president seeing some of this for himself, there was little to be learned from his visit in person. On the other hand, Florida was a key state for the president in 2000 and one he sorely needed for the 2004 race. Staging an event like a personal inspection allowed the president an opportunity to connect with voters via free media coverage.

Similarly, and while still in the same campaign, Democratic challenger John Kerry was having a tough time in Ohio in the last few weeks of the campaign, with pollsters telling him he needed to connect with state voters on a number of key issues, including gun control. The Kerry campaign's response was to stage an event in a local hunting trip that media representatives were allowed (and encouraged) to cover.⁴ Senator Kerry, already facing opposition from the National Rifle Association (which was running negative ads against him in key states such as Ohio), wanted to use the staged event to visually remind Ohio voters of what he often claimed in his stump speech—that he, too, owned guns, and used them for hunting. Twenty-five reporters covered the hunt, but from a distance, as Kerry and hunting friends, all clad in camouflaged jackets and carrying hunting rifles, disappeared into a duck blind in the middle of a cornfield. Some time later, they emerged together, and the Democratic nominee said he had bagged an unsuspecting goose.

Of course, staging events for media coverage is not without political risks. For example, in 1988 Democratic challenger Governor Michael Dukakis, eager to demonstrate his technical knowledge and familiarity with military weaponry, staged a media event with a visit to the General Dynamic plant in Michigan, where he was filmed and photographed riding in the turret of an M1 Abrams tank. Dukakis, who was not a tall man, looked small in the turret, an impression reinforced by the overly large size of the ill-fitting helmet he wore while the tank went through its maneuvers. The event had the effect of drawing media coverage, but the visuals were not flattering to the candidate, and later they became part of a negative advertising campaign by Republicans.

Similarly, in 2004 President Bush made what was initially considered to be a strategic and clever staged appearance when he copiloted a plane that landed on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. During the flight to the carrier from the mainland, Bush had even taken the controls to perform some maneuvers. Another pilot landed the plane—a Navy SB-3 Viking—and the president later emerged from the plane, dressed in flight clothes, support vest and parachute, while carrying his helmet. From there, he posed with many uniformed servicemen and later gave a speech in

which he declared major military actions in Iraq were finished, while a banner behind him declared: “mission accomplished.” News coverage replayed the video and/or photographs of the smiling president looking the part of a victorious warrior,⁵ but it turned out that his claims were a little premature. As the summer wore on, Howard Dean’s candidacy (which by then had faded) made it possible for Democrats to openly ask questions about the war in Iraq. And with a growing dead body count, and evidence that our services might be in Iraq for as much as 5 to 10 years, the staged event became a common reference for John Kerry and others, who wanted to chide the president for claiming success prematurely.

MEDIA TRAINING TECHNIQUES

An additional dimension to manipulating free news coverage of a candidacy can be found in the way media training techniques are employed by campaigns. The techniques outlined below are those I learned from my time as a media techniques consultant for political candidates and business spokespeople, who often had to deal with the media. They include: *speaking in sound bites*, the *strategic use of repetition*, knowing *when to deny*, and the application of *bridging for impromptu answers*.

As a prefacing comment, it is worth noting that for broadcast and cable news media, candidates will always be at the mercy or discretion of the reporter who must often edit his or her own video before the smaller parts (including candidate statements and interview answers) are combined to make a news story. It is in the editing of this material that a broadcast reporter demonstrates understanding of the subject matter, and also where the theme of the story is shaped and formed. That is a reporter’s job. A candidate’s job, by contrast, is to make sure that the main message he or she is trying to get across does not end up lost in that editing process. To that extent, two of the following media techniques below deal with how candidates can avoid having their message lost in the reporter’s editing function.

The first of these techniques—*speaking in sound bites*—is derived mostly from the experience of dealing with broadcast news media. Television news stories—sometimes referred to in the jargon of broadcast news as “packages”—can range from one minute to two-and-half minutes. Within that time, a reporter must frame his or her story, provide firsthand accounts of stories from witnesses, show video and/or audio that demonstrates the story, possibly interview the subjects of the story (like a candidate or a campaign staffer), and also provide reporter narrative to assist with combining the elements of the story together. The number of quotes that may come from a witness or from an interviewee will not be that large—maybe four or

five all together—and then each quote will only be on screen for a short time—say 15 to 20 seconds. These shorter periods featuring a witness or interviewee speaking are referred to as *sound bites*, and they are often the product of editing based on decisions the reporter makes about how to use something heard in the statement or the interview answer. That means, as well, that the actual bite may only be a percentage of what was said in a longer answer, but in this case the reporter has decided that these particular words adequately summed up the perspective he or she was trying to tease out of the subject. The difficulty for reporters is that many people—even experienced candidates—often give long answers, even to very specific and narrow questions from a reporter. Truthfully, this occurs because the longer answer also allows the candidate or speaker to talk and think through the answer at the same time. In this way, the candidate is literally thinking out loud. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, since it does eventually help the candidate or interviewee to get around to his or her real point, but the problem arises when a reporter and the station editor have to make some decisions about where to begin and end the sound bite. Will their cuts allow the viewer to really understand what the speaker was saying? Is it possible that their editing decisions take the sound bite out of context?

Candidates and media-savvy individuals understand that their own message clarity can be enhanced if they end up making statements for broadcast that cannot really be edited or cut in time. The obvious way to do this is to always make answers or statements in sound bite form, which is to say, in length and time that are already packaged perfectly for the reporter to use without having to edit.

Equally so, candidates and campaign staff who speak to the media often find that their answers will not be edited so heavily if they engage in the *strategic use of repetition*. In practice, this means that the candidate essentially gives the same answer to every question—or at least, most of the questions. Doing it this way limits what the reporter can use, if he or she wants to accurately quote the candidate. Experienced political reporters immediately recognize this and will often counter by continuing to ask the same question in different words, or ask other questions, before returning to the one the candidate gave the same responses to. The latter of these countermeasures by reporters is an attempt to catch the candidate off guard. In my experience, however, if the candidate is disciplined about repeating the same answer (in so many words), eventually, the reporter will be forced to use it.

On occasion, candidates will find themselves confronted by reporters seeking comment on a breaking story that may be embarrassing to the candidate and/or the campaign. This kind of story may be what comes from opposition research, leaked from the opposing candidate's campaign in the manner

described in Chapter 2. Here the candidate is faced with three alternatives: He or she can confirm the story, which may legitimize it and give it legs to stay current for days and weeks to come. Or, the candidate may engage in the more traditional use of refusing comment on the story. Alternatively, depending on how serious the story and reporter appear to be, the candidate may simply rely on a careful but assertive use of denying the story.

How does one know *when to deny*? Faced with embarrassing facts that may soon appear in a story, candidates and campaigns will sometimes confirm the details, and then (in an attempt to stay in front of a story) simply hope to ride out whatever public reaction/storm ensues. This is a risky public relations strategy, however, because quickly conceding the accuracy of the story legitimates it and can invite other reporters to then do similar stories. Failing to comment (with the simple words: “no comment”), on the other hand, is often reported and read by the public as an admission that something may be wrong. If the candidate, on the other hand, perceives that the reporter only suspects there may be a story—and is only fishing for a response to confirm his or her intuition—the more strategic response often will be to forcefully and assertively deny the whole thing. As the old saying goes: When in doubt—deny, deny, deny. Candidates can only get away with this, of course, if in fact the reporter(s) is just fishing with questions, looking to provoke a reaction.

Closely aligned with this is the tactic known as *bridging in an impromptu answer*.⁶ This usually occurs in a press conference, or possibly in an interview when a candidate is asked a question that he or she either cannot answer, or possibly, for political reasons, does not want to address. In such a situation, a candidate may simply state that she can’t answer the question—or she might engage in the technique of bridging. If the candidate opts to bridge in her answer, she begins by restating the question about subject X, and then uses it to bridge to a discussion about subject Y. This is different from ignoring the question, or simply changing the subject, because bridging requires that a speaker openly state her intention to use the original question to explore a different and related topic, ostensibly because the different topic (subject Y) subsumes the original question (subject X). An example of this might look like the following:

Reporter: “Senator Smith, your presidential campaign material emphasizes your promise to ‘hold all nations who allow terrorists safe refuge accountable for their actions.’ In the past, we have invaded countries that did this—like Iraq and Afghanistan. If it were shown that terror cells were operating in Saudi Arabia—an ally of this country—would you militarily intervene there too?”

This is obviously a loaded question, and one that would likely get the candidate in trouble no matter how it was answered. In this situation, the candidate might simply want to bridge, steering clear of saying something foolish about military invasion of our allies, and perhaps speaking to a related topic. The bridging might look like this:

Senator Smith: “Matt, I’m glad you asked that question, because it speaks to the larger question about how we defend our country from terrorism. You want me to talk about invading *specific countries*, but I think the real answer here has to do with what kind of *global* solution we have to a variety of problems that allow terrorism to foster in the first place. These include problems of poverty, starvation, malnutrition, disease, injustice, an absence of democracy, as well as hopelessness, sorrow, and resignation—the conditions that allow terrorism to appeal to people in other countries in the first place. When you add in the problem that sometimes terrorism succeeds because some governments overreact, while others negotiate, you can see that a global, multifaceted strategy is called for. My administration will not approach terrorism in small pieces, but rather will work with other countries to develop a global strategy that addresses both the causes and the right ways of reacting to terrorism.

In this answer, the imaginary candidate was narrowly cornered into addressing the question of invading one of our allies, but used bridging to speak to a slightly different, yet related topic (a global strategy that addresses causes and appropriate reactions to terrorism).

On occasion, some politicians use bridging to avoid answering questions all together, or as a vehicle to keep emphasizing their main message—and this isn’t always ethical. Bridging is unsuccessful as a technique for manipulating free media coverage if two important precepts are ignored by a candidate. First, when bridging, it is critical that a candidate announce (in so many words) an intention to bridge. When this is ignored, and the candidate answers a question by simply talking about something else, the resulting non sequitur will be patently obvious for all to see, and a reporter with follow-up questions will likely return to the original question and try to force the candidate to respond.

Second, when bridging, it is also important that the candidate select a topic to address that is at least rationally related to the original question. This much allows the candidate to claim that the bridge is reasonable—just an enlarging or even a more precise focusing of the original question. By choosing obviously related topics to address, the candidate again avoids a non sequitur—or worse, a charge that he or she is intentionally changing the subject.

Strategies for Paid Media: Political Advertising

As indicated elsewhere in this book, money plays a huge role in American campaigns at almost any level—local, regional, state, or national. The dependency of candidates on money is a primary reason lawmakers can never really be incented (against their own self-interest) or trusted to pass laws for meaningful and foolproof campaign finance reform. While money goes in many directions within a campaign, the single most expensive line item in any campaign budget will invariably be the amount required to fund paid media, also known as political advertising.⁷

Oftentimes, terms like *advertising* and *marketing* are used interchangeably in political campaigns, and while both are used to bring a candidate's message home to audiences, they do actually refer to different and distinct means and activities. So that I am clear here, by advertising I refer to targeted and campaign-specific messages that are prepackaged, produced, and distributed to mass audiences via newspapers and magazines, broadcast and cable television, broadcast or satellite radio, or on the Internet—any of which promote the candidate's message. Marketing materials, by contrast, refers to handouts, billets and flyers, handheld signs, posters, and billboards that usually (in print) promote the candidate's message. While campaigns will spend plenty on both, the political advertising I reference in this chapter concerns mostly broadcast and cable television advertisements, radio advertisements, and to a lesser extent, newspaper advertisements. Since the time that television began to play a more dominant role in American campaigns, it was clear that more of any campaign budget would become devoted to broadcast television advertising.⁸ For example, it is estimated that the major presidential contenders spent some \$325 million dollars in the 1984 race,⁹ a number that would grow to \$500 million by the 1988 election,¹⁰ and continue growing through the 1990s and into the new millennium. By 2004, it was clear that television advertising spots were the biggest single expense item in any presidential campaign.¹¹ One private study of the amount spent in the 2004 election placed the budget for television advertising at one and a half billion dollars,¹² almost 56% of the budget for all political media spending in that election year. That the same patterns of spending may be observed in other forms of campaigns (e.g., congressional, statewide, large city mayoral) begs the question: When so many methods of political communication are available, why the focus on television advertising?

THE UNIQUE IMPACT OF TELEVISED POLITICAL ADS

Televised political ads provide more and different impact than any other medium or means for political discourse, including speeches, debates, and/or news coverage in print, radio, Internet or even television.¹³ What is it about televised political ads that is so different from these other possible source providers?

To begin with, television generally (both in programming content and advertising) combines both the audio and visual modes of mass media in ways that uniquely appeal to viewers. More than just the written or spoken words of newspapers or radio broadcasts, and beyond the visual possibilities of photographs in newspapers or Internet Web sites, television combines both the spoken and written word with both photographic stills and running video. Television viewers typically consume this medium passively, within a low-affect cognitive state. Television advertising itself is often displayed in short formats (typically 15 or 30 seconds long) with simplified external messages and strong visual components. The most successful of these are the kind that can be easily digested in a passive state of viewing. Moreover, the fact that the messages come at viewers with speed itself invites a kind of shallow processing of the message, with little or no critical perspective of the logic or integrity of the persuasive claims. Within each spot, the main message of the commercial is often repeated various times in succession, either directly (by repeating a slogan) or indirectly (by restating the message numerous times, and through slightly different word choice). This repetition aids viewer memory retention of the advertising message, but in a way that does not outwardly appear as redundant.¹⁴ In these ways, television advertising distinguishes itself from both live speeches, print media like newspaper articles, or broadcast media like radio.

Additionally, the televised political ad is often shown many times within a given period (even on the same night) in a saturation approach designed to catch most viewers. Viewers do not seek the advertisements out in the same way they might seek the information of a newspaper article after reading a headline, or even a television news story after listening to an anchor tease the story; rather, televised advertisements simply appear on the screen. From the time we are very young, we are conditioned to expect their appearance between the content of the programming we are watching—that much we do expect—but viewers never know what ads will appear, or when. Given that political ads appear unannounced, repeating themselves to make sure their message is remembered, and that viewers consume them in a rather shallow, noncritical manner, the probability that televised political

ads might influence, persuade, and manipulate a passive audience becomes rather great.

Televised political ad spots are typically categorized as *affirmative* or *positive*, as contrasted with *attack* or *negative*, and in their direction, they usually emphasize an issue or image content about a candidate.¹⁵ How are these different? An affirmative or positive advertisement is one that seeks to persuade an audience to support a candidate or a key ballot initiative because of the virtues or merits (image or issue positions) of that candidate or issue. The ad literally affirms the candidacy by telling the audience what the candidate can offer. In simplest terms: *Vote for me because I can do X, Y, and Z for you!* This contrasts with negative or attack ads that sell the audience on the premise of supporting a candidate by convincing them that the candidate's opponent is a bad or foolish choice, either because of something personal about the individual, or because of an issue position the audience would disagree with. These ads support one candidate by literally attacking and negating the opposition; in simplest terms: *Vote for me because the other guy is worse!*

While both types of political advertisements have been in use for more than half a century on television, affirmative ads were slightly more prevalent up through the late 1980s, after which time a distinct trend to negative political spots became noticeable, and their presence in campaign communications became more dominant.¹⁶ That dominance remains to this day, which raises a different kind of question: Why negatively sell a candidacy instead of doing the opposite?

The simple answer to this question is one that political consultants who work for both parties can agree upon, as demonstrated in the words of Ed Rollins (who worked mostly with Republican candidates):

Here's the ugly truth they never teach you in civics class: Negative ads work. It's easier to defeat your opponent than to get elected yourself. Not all that long ago campaigns were issue-driven. Now they're character-driven. Party labels are essentially meaningless. Issues don't matter as much as the message, and the message doesn't count anywhere near as much as the messenger. So the campaign trains its sights on the messenger. You go out and tarnish their personality; you run ads that beat the living daylight out of them.¹⁷

See how similar the assessment is coming from Joe Trippi, who ordinarily works with Democratic candidates:

First, you have to understand: negative ads work. Perhaps it's human nature, but if you believe that Thomas Jefferson is a traitor, or that

Michael Dukakis is a wimp, or that George W. Bush is a blithering idiot, you are less likely to vote for him. The problem is that as TV inexorably decreased the attention span of Americans, political consultants realized they had no choice but to go with the one most effective ad, the one that “sticks.” This created the downward cycle in our political process because negative ads cause people to react viscerally, not just to the person they’re aimed at, but to politicians as a whole.¹⁸

So why do candidates who demean and protest the practice of negative campaigning still bother with negative attack ads? Why risk the wrath of voters or the scorn of journalists for “going negative”? Like both Rollins and Trippi said: Because the ads work, they get the job done. In the light of day, the harsh reality of politics always supplants the idealism and promise of a competitive and pluralistic democracy. We measure success by victory; there is no award (or reward) for runner-up status. Negative attack ads can help candidates win close races. As long as they do that, candidates and campaigns will always use them.

TACTICS FOR NEGATIVE ATTACK ADS

Once the decision to spend the large amounts of money necessary to run negative television ads has been made in a campaign, the question becomes how to get the best bang for the buck(s). Typically, these kinds of advertisements traffic in the comparison and contrast of images and issues, either explicitly or implicitly. How is this accomplished?

Televised political ads are a carefully edited composite of visual images, visual text, voice-over narration, musical score, and color choice. Of these, the visual elements have the greatest impact, especially with viewer retention. Used strategically, the visual images also provide a key opportunity for candidates who wish to make negative comparisons and contrasts with opponents. In the past, scholars such as Kathleen Hall Jamieson have referred to the tactics necessary for doing this as *identification* and *apposition*, while consultants like Rollins and Trippi (i.e., those who actually create the spots) have used terms like *defining the opponent* to describe the same kind of comparison and contrast.

Identification and Personal Imagery. *Identification* can be described in three distinctly different ways. First, there is *personal imagery*. This can be used for either affirmative or negative advertisements. A candidate may desire to employ this tactic in an affirmative/positive advertisement, using visual, text, or narrative voice-over to suggest an association between himself or herself and another famous, virtuous, and/or popular individual

(e.g., Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr.); the audience will then identify one person with the other. In this way, they may be seen as possessing similar values, political views, life experiences, core beliefs, and personality characteristics. For example, in the 2000 Republican primaries, GOP candidate Senator John McCain employed this technique, inviting the audience to identify him with another revered and beloved Republican. Feeling the need to reestablish his Republican credentials with voters in California, New York, Washington, D.C. Ohio, and Washington state, McCain stared into the camera in this ad and declared: "I'm a proud *Reagan* Republican. I'll tear up the 44,000-page tax code!" (Emphasis added.)¹⁹

In a similar way, the 1996 presidential campaign featured an affirmative ad for the Clinton Administration with none other than former Reagan-era Press Spokesman James Brady, speaking from his wheelchair, on camera and in support of Clinton. Brady had been severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Reagan, and in the years after the attack had worked with his wife to lobby Congress to pass stronger gun control laws. He agreed to support President Clinton—a Democrat—because of Clinton's willingness to sign the gun control measure known as the "Brady Bill" into federal law. By this time, Brady was a sympathetic figure for Democrats, and through his connection and sacrifice for Reagan, a similarly sympathetic figure for Republicans as well. His appearance in the advertisement (called "Seconds") invited viewers to associate Clinton with a former official in the Reagan Administration, also suggesting that the Democratic incumbent could enlist bipartisan support for his reelection.²⁰

Personal imagery can be used with identification in negative attack ads just as well—and often with far more damaging results for those targeted in the ad spots. For example, one attack ad run by Jesse Helms as he attempted to secure his reelection bid for the U.S. Senate in 1990 is often remembered for its racial subtext in the way it attacked Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt. As we will explore in more detail later in this chapter, racial subtext has been used before in negative ads like this. But often overlooked in the critique of this scurrilous and effective attack ad is the clever use of associating Gantt (a moderate Democrat) with the GOP's favorite liberal Democratic target—then and now. In the ad run by Helms (often referred to as "Hands"), the viewer sees plaid-shirted arms and white hands, with a simple gold wedding ring on the left hand, holding a letter. A voice-over narrative says: "You needed that job, and you were the best qualified. But they had to give it to a minority because of a racial quota. Is that really fair? Harvey Gantt says it is. *Gantt supports Ted Kennedy's racial quota law that makes the color of your skin more important than your qualifications.*" (Emphasis added.) At this point in the advertisement, side-by-side

photographs of Gantt and Kennedy appear, overlapping the letter, and still between the two hands. The photo of Gantt makes his skin look darker than it is in real life—perhaps a visual emphasis for his racial heritage. The photo of Kennedy, shot from the ground up, depicts the Massachusetts senator in an unflattering pose, with several folds of skin beneath his chin, and looking dazed and disoriented. Beyond the racial subtext of both the visual and verbal message, this ad invites the viewer to identify Gantt with Kennedy in an obviously negative fashion. The Charlotte mayor, who had led in the polls in the final weeks of the campaign just before the ad was run, eventually lost to Helms 52.5% to 47.5%.²¹

Running a negative attack ad is not without risk, however; going negative can invite condemnation and ridicule for a candidate, which partially explains why it may become more fashionable in future campaigns for surrogate organizations to launch the most negative of advertisement spots. For example, the advocacy group known as Moveon.org, dedicated to defeating President Bush in the 2004 election, sponsored a contest to encourage new and fresh advertising ideas from anyone; the catch was that the advertising had to target President Bush and make a case for his defeat in the election. The contest, called *Bushin30seconds*, required entrants to create 30-second political ads; it was expected that the contest would attract a few hundred entries at most, but instead it drew more than 1,500, of which 150 were recognized, six were listed as finalists, and one in particular was awarded the top prize.²² During the contest, two of the entries (which were not judged as winners) invited comparisons of President Bush and failed Nazi leader Adolph Hitler. In one of these two ads, actual footage of Hitler was shown, depicting the Nazi leader speaking, juxtaposed with scenes of a parade, German soldiers in battle, German planes and tanks in combat, and later, troops marching in goose-step efficiency. A voice-over narrative stated: “A nation warped by lies—lies fuel fear—fear fuels aggression—invasion. Occupation.” Hitler was seen again on-screen, this time with his arm raised in salute, and slowly his picture faded and President Bush appeared, also with his arm raised, at what looked to be his inaugural celebration. The same voice-over added: “What were war crimes in 1945 is foreign policy in 2003.”

Predictably, the presence of the ads on the Moveon.org Web site brought an avalanche of protest and criticism from both Republicans and Jewish American advocacy groups. RNC Chair Ed Gillespie referred to the ads as “political hate speech,”²³ while various Jewish groups objected to the comparisons with Nazi leaders in an American political advertisement. In response, Moveon.org removed the ads from its Web site, explaining that these were only two of the submissions. News accounts of the ads,

however, kept their message and ensuing controversy about them alive for more time.

Identification and Association With an Idea or Policy. A second way that identification can work in these political advertisements is through the use of *association with an idea or policy*. Here the advertisement message invites the audience to identify a candidate with an idea or policy, again associating one with the other. As with personal imagery, this advertising tactic can be employed in both positive/affirmative ads, as well as in negative/attack ads. For example, in 1984 the campaign for incumbent Republican President Ronald Reagan ran an advertisement called “Morning Again in America.” The ad features what looks like any small town in the United States, as people appear to be reemerging from the doom and gloom of the previous administration. Men and women go back to work. Children go to school. Construction and rebuilding abounds. A family celebrates a wedding. An old-fashioned parade appears on a main street as people watch and cheer. A voice-over narrator says: “It’s morning again in America. Today, more men and women will go to work than ever before in our country’s history. With interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980, nearly 2,000 families today will buy new homes, more than at any time in the past four years. This afternoon 6,500 young men and women will be married, and with inflation at less than half of what it was just four years ago, they can look forward with confidence to the future. It’s morning again in America, and under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?”

The imagery in the ad was about rebuilding, rebirth, awakening to better times, encouraging viewers to make an association between this period of economic and community feel-good revival, and the sitting president, Ronald Reagan.

Of course, while it is indeed possible to use this kind of identification tactic in an affirmative and positive advertising context, it has become more common to see this employed negatively. For example, in the 2004 presidential race, both President Bush and Senator Kerry used this technique to try and create negative identification and association by their voting audiences. In one advertising spot called “Bush’s Mess,” the Kerry campaign attempted to tie President Bush to a series of military and foreign policy failures in Iraq specifically, and in fighting the war on terror generally. The ad features slightly muted color videotaping of President Bush, speaking in the right upper hand of the screen, while the rest of the screen space is dominated by a set of more boldly colorized rotating graphic texts—all in all a series of seemingly random statements, echoed

by a woman's voice-over narrative. Together the graphics and narrative suggest that *American troops are attacked in Iraq 87 times a day*, that *the United States only possesses 530 doses of licensed anthrax vaccine*, and that President Bush *relied on Afghan Warlords to get bin Laden*, but that *bin Laden got away!* The ad then closes with a direct quote from Bush himself suggesting "I don't think that much about him. I truly am not that concerned about him." The seemingly random ideas are intended to demonstrate that Bush has failed to defend this country, the troops abroad, and/or successfully prosecute the war on terror. At least, that is the way Kerry wanted the audience to identify Bush.

For his part, the president employed similar tactics against Kerry, to humorous effect, in an ad spot called "Windsurfing." In this ad, the Bush/ Cheney team made use of video of Kerry windsurfing—from an event likely staged by Kerry's campaign for news photographers (Kerry had also allowed himself to be photographed hunting and skiing as well). The use of identification in "Windsurfing" was, ironically enough, derived from a similar advertising spot run by Bush's father against Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential race. The 1988 ad, called "Tank," used footage of Dukakis riding in an M-1 tank. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Dukakis had done this as part of a staged event (a visit to the factory where the tanks were built) designed to draw free media attention and combat the impression that he was weak on defense. The Massachusetts governor was not a big or tall man—and the largeness of his helmet, and the way he barely poked out of the tank's turret, contributed to an image of smallness of stature, approaching (inviting?) parody. The Bush people used that footage to construct their own ad, arguing that Dukakis was in point of fact weak on defense. By juxtaposing sounds of gears grinding and a creaky engine working hard, they played and rewound the tape of Dukakis in the tank, making it look as if the tank was going back and forth, with no direction or purpose, while a voice-over narrative claimed "Michael Dukakis has opposed virtually every defense system we've developed." Words then appeared superimposed on the screen, depicting weapons systems Dukakis had allegedly opposed, including missile systems, warning systems against nuclear attack, and the stealth bomber. The ad, which contained several factual inaccuracies, was both funny and devastating—because it amounted to the opposite message Dukakis had intended to convey in the first place.

In a similar way, George W. Bush's use of the video of Kerry windsurfing in the 2004 race appropriated the imagery the Democratic candidate had hoped to convey with his staged event (projecting an image of athletic vigor and vitality) and instead reinforced the negative theme the Bush

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campaign had been arguing for some time. Aware that Kerry's Vietnam credentials could undermine President Bush's status as a wartime president, the Bush campaign had worked diligently to identify and define Kerry as a *flip-flopper*, constantly changing his positions, seemingly unable to stick with any decision.

The windsurfing ad gave them one of their best opportunities to make this case with the electorate. In the ad, shot with what looks and feels like the grainy video of a home movie camera, Kerry is shown windsailing from left to right, while the music of Johann Strauss's *Blue Danube* plays in the background. Every so often, the music cues a shift in the video, showing Kerry suddenly changing directions, and going the opposite way. While this happens, the words *Iraq War* appear over Kerry's head, and to his left the word *supported* pops up. A voice-over narrative states: "In which direction will John Kerry lead? Kerry voted for the Iraq war. Then opposed it." On screen, the music cues a shift the windsailing direction. The word *opposed* pops up, just to his right. The voice-over states: "then supported it." The music cues a shift again in the direction, while the voice intones: "and now opposes it again."

The cycle of music, juxtaposing words of *supported* and *opposed* and shifting video, repeats itself with other issues, including "support our troops," "education reform," and "increasing Medicare premiums."

At the end, the narrator's voice claims: "John Kerry. Whichever way the wind blows."

Apposition: Contrasting Candidates and Values. Apposition has been described as a campaign's use of a commercial to "make their candidate's name a synonym for everything the electorate cherishes and transform the opponent into an antonym of those treasured values."²⁴ In a sense, apposition is about juxtaposition, contrast, and comparison. Visually and verbally, in negative political advertisements, apposition becomes a kind of antithesis—what the audience desires, respects, aspires to, set in opposition to that which is to be avoided, rejected, and dismissed. A campaign will often shift to this tactic when trying to simplify the candidate's message and the choice for voters. Right versus wrong, moral versus immoral, strength versus weakness, and so on.

When employed in a primary race, the comparison and contrasting may come at the expense of other candidates in the same party. For example, in the 2004 presidential election, Howard Dean emerged as an early front-runner, largely on the success of leveraging the Internet for fund-raising and grassroots organization-building, as well as upon the somewhat novel (at least for the new millennium in American politics) approach of being willing to speak openly about subjects Democrats had stayed away from,

or already ceded to Republicans. Being willing, for instance, to speak out against the war in Iraq made Dean different, and this was something he wanted to capitalize on in an early political advertisement called “Standing,” created before the Iowa Caucuses.

In “Standing,”²⁵ a dark screen slowly morphs to a black/white shot of a younger looking Howard Dean, holding his right hand up, apparently caught in the oath of office. A voice-over narrative announces: “Standing up for what’s right. Even if it’s not popular.” To the small right corner of the screen, a news clipping appears, with the headlines in bold: “Dean Signs Civil Unions Bill into Law.” The voice-over adds: “That’s the test of a true leader.” The screen then fades to black, and the following words appear in white lettering: “A True Leader: Howard Dean.” This contrasts with another image—that of a dour looking President Bush, who appears to stare to his left, where a newspaper clipping appears, with the headline: “Bush and GOP Enjoy Record Popularity.” The narrator’s voice intones: “When George Bush was riding high in the polls, and other Democrats were silent . . .” The screen turns black again, and the text message echoes the spoken sentiment: *Democrats silent*. The pictures now become colorized again. We see color video of Dean, smiling at the camera. The voice-over continues, finishing the previous statement: “Howard Dean spoke out . . .” The images of Dean shift. Now he is in what looks like a living room, talking to voters. The narrator’s voice adds: “. . . to oppose the war.” The words *Opposed the War* appear in bold on top of the picture. “. . . and Bush’s economic policy”—again, the spoken word is echoed by written text, atop the picture: *Opposed Bush Economic Plan*.

The images shift again. Now Dean is seen shaking hands with former President Jimmy Carter. The voice-over adds: “That’s why Jimmy Carter called Howard Dean courageous.” Now the word *COURAGEOUS* appears in capital letters, lest we miss the point. The narrator’s voice posits in closing: “Saying the popular thing is easy. But is that what America needs right now?”

Note that this commercial is not overtly negative, as it fails to mention any of Dean’s Democratic rivals for the nomination by name, and the only reference to President Bush emphasizes his popularity. But the commercial is still negative by inference and effective in the use of apposition. Here, Dean means to juxtapose *speaking out* with *remaining silent*, and *standing up for what’s right* with whatever is *popular*. He infers that other Democrats have remained silent, refraining from criticizing a popular president—even when there are legitimate questions to ask and arguments to advance about the war in Iraq or the economic conditions at home. When he associates himself with Jimmy Carter (a far more popular ex-president, and now

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a Nobel laureate as well), he also uses Carter's word *courageous* to describe himself, contrasted by inference with whatever his rivals may be demonstrating with their silence. Without having to say so directly, he implies their *cowardice*.

A similar result is obtained with the 1996 campaign advertisement for the Clinton/Gore campaign, in a spot called "Opportunities."²⁶ Like the previous example, this general election spot appears to be nothing more than a laundry list of economic achievements for the Clinton Administration, but in reality it is a negative advertisement meant to draw a strong contrast between Clinton and GOP challenger Bob Dole.

"Opportunities" opens with black and white video of what appears to be the inside of a deserted warehouse or closed factory. In a later shot, a man walks dejectedly, smoking a cigarette, while a voice-over narrative says: "Recession. Hard times." A black and white photo of Republican challenger Bob Dole appears beside text that reads: "Dole Votes to Deny Unemployment Benefits." The narrator repeats the headlines, but adds the word *families*: "Dole votes to deny *families* benefits." The screen now flows with images of desperate looking small children. A color video of Dole on a cable talk show (perhaps Larry King?) shows a quick sound bite, no doubt out of context, with Dole saying: "The economy was never that bad." This is contrasted with a black and white shot of a door, with the words *Unemployment Assistance* written on it. To the side, text rolls down the screen: *June 1992: Ten Million Unemployed*. Again, the voice-over repeats the written message verbatim, but then adds: "Higher Interest Rates." A moment passes. The screen goes to color again. There is more light. Now the voice-over adds: "Four years later, unemployment at seven year low." A color graph appears, showing the downward trend in unemployment. Text on screen now echoes the oral message: *Jobless rate lowest in seven years*. The voice-over adds: "Ten million new jobs." Video of cars on the road appears. The voice-over narrative suggests: "We make more cars than Japan." Video of President Clinton, during a speech, appears on the screen. The voice-over again adds: "The president: Growth and opportunity!" The images change to young college graduates, still in their commencement robes. The voice-over shares: "\$1,500 tax credits for college. \$500 per child tax credit. Expanded family and medical leave. A balanced budget. Building a bridge to the 21st century."

Apposition is used here on several levels: policy and personal. Although Dole is hardly to be blamed for economic conditions during the previous administration of Bush and Quayle, the ad certainly implies that he is connected to the malaise by juxtaposing *recession* and *hard times* with *Dole votes to deny unemployment benefits*, as well as Dole's own

words, “The economy was never that bad.” One side shows the reality (recession), in contrast to Dole’s perception (things weren’t that bad) leaving a viewer with the impression that Dole was out of touch. The ad furthers the possibilities by contrasting that sense of economic malaise with Clinton’s record of *10 million new jobs*, as well as *more cars* and *growth and opportunity*. Clinton is thus tied to economic prosperity, while Dole is associated with the recession—or worse, appears out of touch. This latter point may have been the more subtle reference in this ad spot as well, for an unspoken but prevalent question in the 1996 race had to do with Dole’s age at the time. Would he be too old to be president? By suggesting that he was not in touch with the economic realities confronting average Americans, the ad also subtly reinforced a bias against the senator’s age.

All things considered, however, these negative ads for identification and apposition were relatively mild (excluding for the moment the Jessie Helms attack ad); what happens when the attack ads get dirtier and more personal? Can a candidate survive the public backlash and criticism that might flow from launching a truly nasty and personal attack?

NEGATIVE ADS, SURROGATE SOURCES, AND MEDIA CONVERGENCE

Opposition research is a reality of many campaigns—and more so, in closely contested races. When a candidate uncovers information that could potentially embarrass or weaken an opponent, the temptation to release it will be very high. Oftentimes, campaigns will hold the fruit of their opposition-research for a time when its release can strategically benefit them. On occasion, this will play itself out as the campaign attempts to co-opt free media, by leaking the information to a reporter in the hopes of generating a news story that might damage an opponent enough to guarantee an election victory. If a race is still close, a campaign will also be tempted to go negative with the opposition research—and if necessary, develop a negative advertising strategy to make use of the information. Consultants who create negative ads will tell you that they are always looking for that one special ad, the most toxic and potent of advertising messages—a negative ad that delivers the knock-out blow. In the previously quoted words of consultant Ed Rollins, an ad that beats the “living daylight” out of an opponent, or in the words of consultant Joe Trippi, the “one most effective ad. The one that ‘sticks.’”

The most negative of these ads are usually also the most effective, but they carry a certain risk. Like real weapons of mass destruction, these rhetorical weapons of mass destruction risk contaminating those who run

them, against whom a public and media backlash may develop if the ads are too mean-spirited, tasteless, or personally insulting. In that environment, a candidate and his or her campaign may be perceived to have crossed an unspoken, unmarked, but clearly understood line of decency. The ads are, however, usually very effective. The question for a candidate and campaign becomes, therefore, how to use this rhetorical weapon without being caught in the fallout?

CASE STUDY 1: THE DAISY AD

Historically, one method for doing this has required a strategy *to involve free media—regular news media—in the publicizing of the advertising spot*. A notorious political ad from an earlier presidential race is instructive here. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson was seeking election to the presidency for a full term (recall that he had assumed the office after President Kennedy's assassination). His opponent in the fall election would be Republican Senator Barry Goldwater. The Arizona Republican, well known for his outrageous statements and rock-solid conservatism, had talked during the campaign about threatening and/or making strategic use of nuclear weapons. Goldwater never fully stated any intention to deploy nuclear weapons, only that his administration would consider the question. The ambiguity in his statements was intentional, designed to project the image of a tough military hawk, while also leaving Goldwater political room to maneuver lest he be accused of intending to start a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets or the Chinese.

The Johnson campaign decided to make use of Goldwater's statements, which had already been scrutinized in the news media. In an advertisement that never mentioned Goldwater by name, or quoted him directly, the ad spot known as "Daisy" nevertheless made reference to the Republican by inference, with a careful juxtaposition of images, followed by the spoken words of Lyndon Johnson himself.

The advertisement begins with film of a small, young girl, picking at the petals of a flower—a daisy—while she counts up from the number one. As she reaches a certain number, however, an elderly male voice-over kicks in, reversing the count, so that it becomes a countdown from Cape Canaveral. As the countdown continues, the camera slowly does a close-up of the girl's face, and then her eye, and then the dark pupil in the center of her eye. At that point, her picture is frozen in place, but it creates the appearance that she has stopped to listen to the countdown. As the camera focuses in on the dark pupil, the screen goes black just for an instant. This coincides with the countdown reaching past the number one. Suddenly, the screen is filled with bright, brilliant, and violent light, which slowly becomes a mushroom

cloud. The sound of a nuclear bomb detonation punctuates the imagery. Over this we then hear the voice of Johnson, as he cries out: "These are the stakes. To make a world in which all of God's children can live. Or to go into the darkness. We must either love each other . . . or we must die." A dark screen then features the words: *Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd*, and a voice-over narrative from another speaker then adds: "The stakes are too high for you to stay home."

The "Daisy" ad aired only once, on September 7, 1964, during the NBC Movie of the Week. As noted before, the advertisement never mentioned Goldwater by name, or explicitly tied any of the imagery to his campaign; but for viewers already aware of Goldwater's statements about nuclear weaponry, associating the horrific image of a mushroom cloud with his candidacy was implicit. Juxtaposing it with a symbol of innocence embodied by the young child presented voters and viewers alike with the apposition Johnson was trying to assert. The advertisement's failure to mention Goldwater explicitly could not insulate itself from charges that an ethical line had been crossed. Predictably, the Goldwater campaign complained loudly for anyone who might listen. After a brief flirtation with controversy, the ad spot was pulled—never to be played by the Johnson people again. But in the news coverage of the controversy, the advertisement—the young girl, the daisies, the mushroom cloud—lived on. Reporters and anchors needed to show the ad in order to discuss or analyze it, and in so doing, they extended the life of the ad long after Johnson's campaign had agreed to pull it from broadcast.

The 1964 race was negative in many other respects, and became more so after "Daisy" aired. But there is little disagreement today that the ad was probably the dominant message in that election, making voters afraid of Goldwater by reminding them of their fear of nuclear war. How much of that fear was engendered by only one broadcast—and for a program that not everyone watched? Free media news coverage made the difference.

In more contemporary elections, the practice of using free media coverage to lower the risk of running the truly nasty, negative ad has also come to include *the use of surrogate partisan groups*. Two modern examples may be instructive here.

CASE STUDY 2: WILLIE HORTON AND "REVOLVING DOOR"

In 1988, Vice President George Bush sought the presidency against previously mentioned Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. The Bush campaign team had their work cut out for them; Dukakis left the Democratic convention with a comfortable lead in the polls. Vice President Bush was part

of what had been a popular administration under Ronald Reagan, but Bush himself seemed to lack the charisma and rapport with voters that his partner in the White House had exuded. While the vice president had plenty of successful experience in government and life to justify a strong case for the presidency, his credentials came across more like the kind one finds in a strong résumé, the kind that might be thwarted when an actual face-to-face interview for the job occurs. Stated simply, he came across better on paper than in person. Selling his candidacy to voters—even voters in his own party—was not easy, and for this reason, the decision to go negative against Governor Dukakis made good sense, strategically, if not ethically. Here was a classic example of the need for negative campaigning: it would be easier to sell voters on Bush if his campaign could convince voters that Dukakis was a worse choice. Earlier in this chapter, the Bush campaign's *tank* ad was mentioned; this was effective in ridiculing Dukakis and defining him as weak on military and defense issues. The Bush campaign got better traction with voters, however, once they made use of a different advertising message run initially by a surrogate group—in this case, a political action committee (or PAC) called the National Security Political Action Committee (or NSPAC). This highly conservative PAC made use of news stories about a Massachusetts program for furloughing convicts from overcrowded prisons. The program allowed for prisoners (who were nearly ready for parole and deemed low risk for escape) to be given weekend passes to visit families and slowly begin the process of matriculating back into society. Ironically, the program had been started by Dukakis's predecessor, who was also a Republican. Tragically, during one of the furloughs that occurred during Dukakis's tenure as governor, one of the furloughed prisoners escaped, and later raped one woman and violently assaulted her fiancé. The convict in question was William Horton.

In the political advertisement created by the NSPAC, Horton's name was changed from William to "Willie," and an attempt was made to have voters tie Horton's crime to Dukakis's program. The ad begins with side-by-side photos of Dukakis and Bush. Interestingly (but not coincidentally), the Bush photo shows the vice president standing outside, bathed in bright daylight, while Dukakis appears looking somber (perhaps sad-faced?) cloaked in darkness. A caption beneath them reads: "Bush and Dukakis on Crime," and the screen then changes to only Bush's picture, while the caption becomes: *Supports Death Penalty*. A voice-over narrative announces: "Bush supports the death penalty for first-degree murderers." Moments later, the photo of Dukakis reappears, with the caption *Opposes Death Penalty*. The voice-over narrative now adds: "Dukakis not only opposes the death penalty, he allowed first-degree murderers to have weekend passes from prison." Beneath Dukakis's picture, the text now reads:

Allowed murderers to have weekend passes. Horton's photo—a mug shot—now fills the screen. The voice-over states: "One was Willie Horton, who murdered a boy in a robbery, stabbing him nineteen times." A photo of Horton in police custody fills the screen. The caption beneath the photo declares: *Horton received 10 weekend passes from prison.* The voice-over states: "Despite a life sentence, Horton received 10 weekend passes from prison." At this, the pivotal moment of the spot, the text beneath Horton's photo changes, and the words: *kidnapping, stabbing, and raping* appear. The voice-over narrative now declares: "Horton fled, kidnapping a young couple, stabbing the man and repeatedly raping his girlfriend." Dukakis's photo is displayed once more. The text beneath him is now identical to the words by the voice-over: "*Weekend prison passes. Dukakis on crime.*"

This advertisement was created by a PAC, and not the Bush campaign directly; that distinction is significant politically, if not legally, since it later gave the Bush campaign cover for defending their own ad spot on the furlough program when Dukakis complained and charges of racism were invoked. The NSPAC ad ran on cable television, in mid-September, less than two months before the general election. It created a national news media furor and, coupled with Bush's repeated mentions of Horton and the furlough program in his campaign speeches, helped place this issue in the minds of voters. Analysis of the NSPAC ad also allowed the spot to be replayed in the news, reinforcing the message.

In early October, the Bush campaign ran its own ad spot, called "Revolving Door." In the spot, a prison is depicted from the distance, marked by a guard tower, walls, and a gate. There are mixed sounds of drumbeats, somber music, and what sounds like metal bending. A voice-over narrative announces: "As governor, Michael Dukakis vetoed mandatory sentences for drug dealers." As the camera pans in closer, the words *The Dukakis Furlough Program* appear on the bottom of the screen. The voice-over now states: "He vetoed the death penalty." An armed guard now walks beside a barbwire fence. The voice-over continues: "His revolving door prison policy gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers not eligible for parole." Male prisoners are depicted marching in lockstep to the gate and what appears to be a revolving door. They go in, and they come back out. The words *268 escaped* now appear at the bottom of the screen. The voice-over says: "While out, many committed other crimes like kidnapping and rape." The camera focuses in on the prisoners, who now walk in slow motion. Again, a pivotal moment in the advertisement is reached. Nearly all of the men look ahead or down at the ground. Most are either Latino or white. Two appear to be black. But out of all these men, only one man makes direct eye contact with the camera as he comes out. He is black. His

eyes draw the viewer's clear attention. The words "*And many are still at large*" is both spoken in the voice-over and appears as text. The voice-over then states with some sarcasm: "Now Michael Dukakis says he wants to do for America what he's done for Massachusetts." We see the guard in the watchtower. The voice-over concludes: "America can't afford that risk."

News summaries of the fairness and accuracy of this advertisement (like the cable spot before it) naturally extended the life and reach of the ad, even into television markets where the ad was not playing. In the coverage of the controversy about Horton, it was also disclosed that Horton's victims were white, raising the question: Had the Bush campaign selected the Horton example because of the seriousness of his crimes or because as a black man, he had beaten a white man and raped a white woman? When a charge that racism had motivated the ad was leveled against the Bush campaign, the latter responded accurately that their particular spot focused on the furlough itself and never mentioned Horton at all. While the "Revolving Door" ad is susceptible to many charges of factual inaccuracies or misleading statements,²⁷ it is true that the spot never mentioned Horton by name; nevertheless, it was stretching credulity to claim that this advertisement's visual references to a black convict and a verbal reference to "kidnapping and rape" could refer to anyone but Horton, because he was the only convict to escape and commit these particular crimes. That much had already been suggested in the surrogate ad by the NSPAC and analyzed in the free media coverage of the story. In the same way that Johnson's "Daisy" ad reminded viewers of something they had already seen or heard about Goldwater and nuclear weapons—connecting these to an innate public fear about nuclear war—"Revolving Door" successfully critiqued Dukakis's record on crime in Massachusetts, while also raising the specter of racism for anyone who wanted to see that in the message.

CASE STUDY 3: SWIFTBOAT VETERANS AND "THEY SERVED"

In 2004, a group of Vietnam veterans opposed John Kerry's candidacy for president for what they believed were lies and misrepresentations he had made regarding his service and time in Vietnam, as well as his characterizations of other veterans who had served there. The group, initially calling itself *Swiftboat Veterans for Truth*, eventually changed its name to the more media savvy *Swift Vets and POWs for Truth*, and represented themselves as strictly nonpartisan (alleging that Republicans, Democrats, and independents were among their numbers) and in no way allied with President Bush's reelection campaign. The Swift Vets qualified as a 527 group (defined in Chapter 2).

Although there may have been no formal ties to the Bush campaign, it was clear that informal ties abounded, including the relationship between the Bush reelection campaign and the group's public relations consultant Mary Spaeth (she was a former media director in the Reagan Administration, and more recently had provided public speaking training to President Bush's economic advisor, Stephen Friedman),²⁸ attorney Benjamin Ginsberg, who gave legal advice to the group (he had formerly represented the 2000 Bush campaign in legal proceedings involving the challenged Florida election returns, and more recently had been counsel to the 2004 Bush reelection campaign), and Robert Perry, a Texas businessman with a long tradition of campaign contributions to GOP candidates (Perry is alleged to have given a check for \$100,000—two-thirds of the group's initial pool of funds—to get the Swift Vet group started; he had previously contributed generous amounts of money to four of President Bush's campaigns).²⁹

In all, the group ran nine televised advertisements in different and limited markets, aiming for free media analysis of their ad spots to help publicize their message. The advertisements' combination of visuals, testimonials, and harsh, blunt language drew the attention of both the media and Kerry's campaign. At different points, the ads used language in attacking Kerry personally that the Bush campaign would not have dared to use. For example, one ad referred to the Democrat as a man who had "*betrayed* his country,"³⁰ (emphasis added) while another referred to him as "*deceitful*" and as someone who told a "*lie*"³¹ about his mission in Cambodia. The Swift Vet group eventually augmented this strategy by also creating a user-friendly, accessible Web site, where the ads could be downloaded and replayed; this helped both voters and journalists who wanted to find their message.

As with the Willie Horton example and the surrogate role of the NSPAC in 1988, the Swift Vet group's status as a 527 provided President Bush's campaign with some cover for whatever backlash there might have been from attacking Kerry in so personal a way. News media analysis of the ad content and group motivations still allowed for replaying the ads on the air, or restating them in print—again further extending the life and reach of their message as election day approached. One of the last ads the group was to run showed particular effectiveness in attacking Kerry in very subtle ways. The ad spot, called "They Served,"³² featured a collection of men standing and facing a rolling, roaming camera while somber patriotic music played in the background. Nearly all of the men are dressed in suits and appeared to be older, with serious, determined looks on their faces. A voice-over provided the following narrative: "They served their country with courage and distinction. They're the men who served with John Kerry

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in Vietnam. They're his entire chain of command. Most of the officers in Kerry's unit. Even the gunner from his own boat. And they're the men who spent years in Vietnamese prison camps, tortured for refusing to confess what John Kerry accused them of. Of being war criminals. They were also decorated. Many, very highly. But they kept their medals. Today they are teachers, farmers, businessmen, ministers, and community leaders, and of course, fathers and grandfathers—with nothing to gain for themselves except the satisfaction that comes from telling the truth. They have come forward to talk about the John Kerry they know. Because to them, honesty and character still matter. Especially in a time of war."

While the ad visually appears simple and straightforward as little more than the depiction of a group of veterans who stand quietly as the narrator speaks, one veteran in particular draws the viewer's attention in a manner reminiscent of the black convict who makes eye contact in the Bush "Revolving Door" ad from the 1988 campaign. Here, the subject is no actor and no convict; instead, he is decorated war hero George E. "Bud" Day, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. The Medal of Honor is our nation's highest military award, and Day is the most highly decorated war hero in America since General Douglas MacArthur. While Day had never personally served with Kerry or been a member of any Swiftboat crew, he had been a POW for 67 months in Vietnam. As the camera pans by him in "They Served," the viewer quickly observes that Day is the only man in the group wearing any kind of award, medal, or ribbon; he wears the Congressional Medal of Honor over an unbuttoned shirt, and just inside a leather bomber jacket. That alone makes him stand out. More so, however, like the actor in the Horton ad, Day makes direct eye contact with the camera, and his head turns slowly as the camera continues past him, never breaking that gaze. He is the only man in the advertisement to do so, clearly suggesting that our eyes are intended to be drawn to him, and his award. It is no coincidence that we see him and his medal as the narrator adds that these men "have nothing to gain for themselves except the satisfaction that comes from telling the truth." Day symbolically embodies that claim, juxtaposed with what previous ads have already claimed about Kerry being "deceitful."

The timing of the ads coincided with the Republican National Convention, during which time popular speakers like John McCain (himself a POW and decorated war hero) and former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani spent much of their prime time keynote addresses arguing that President Bush would be the best candidate to defend the nation from terrorism. They cited his character in a time of conflict and war as evidence for their claims. These speeches occurred when the Swift Vet ads were run, leaving viewers with a contrast between the two main candidates.

It is little surprise that President Bush began to fare better in most if not all polls after that time, although the race was still tight. With the assistance of a 527 group that he had no formal link to, he had succeeded in negatively defining Kerry by taking away the Democrat's one solid advantage (his record of service in Vietnam) in an election dominated by war. That the Bush Administration would later try to distance itself from the Swift Vets group by claiming they had no formal relationship or connection to them was beside the point. The president never condemned or disputed the content of any of the Swift Vet ads; he merely said that 527 groups existed because of a loophole in campaign finance restrictions and argued that both Democrats and Republicans should disavow them. Neither the president nor Senator Kerry (who also benefited from Moveon.org) was about to do that. Kerry was slow to respond to the ads, and they left an impression on voters from which he never fully recovered.

Blended Media Strategies and Future Trends

As previously indicated, candidates and campaigns routinely have used especially negative political advertisements to not only damage the credibility of their opponents, but also with the hope of generating coverage of the ad content in news stories, which in effect increases the shelf life of the advertising for viewers and potential voters. This much has been commonplace in elections for the past four decades. In that time, it has also become more customary to make use of the support of surrogate groups—political organizations with no official or legal connection to a candidate or campaign—to launch particularly nasty advertisements against opposing candidates. By using surrogates, candidates and campaigns insulate themselves from criticism and outrage at the negative tone of the advertising, while also benefiting from the damage inflicted upon an opponent.

In 2004, this blending of free media and paid media—along with the unofficial connections between campaigns and surrogates—took a slightly different turn with the addition of new media in the form of campaign Web sites and blogs. Reporters who looked to campaign Web sites for material that might be used in stories (e.g., candidate issue-position statements, schedule of appearances, and so on) also found hyperlinks that would direct visitors to campaign advertising that had been stored in file form on the Internet. Additionally, news reporters and agencies in this period made use of blogs and bloggers to find material on breaking stories or to fact-check stories that were already in progress. This served two purposes: First, reporters could find commentary and original material in blogs

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that might at least give them a sense of what people who wrote and/or responded to political blogs were thinking about (meaning, the blogs provided an opportunity for reporters to eavesdrop on voters); and second, the most popular political blogs were often filled with hyperlinks to other sites, where original material for a story could be mined. When those same surrogate groups (e.g., Moveon.org or Swift Vets) then began providing links to negative political advertising, a new trend was born.

Now negative advertising could be generated by surrogate groups for very little cost, shown in only a few television markets—or none at all—and then be accessible at the surrogate group Web site. When bloggers began picking apart and discussing the controversial ads, their interest would automatically prime the interest of news reporters and agencies, drawing the latter to cover the ads, *even though the ads had not been shown in wide distribution on television*. In a very clever and novel way, therefore, the most costly part of any campaign (television advertising—especially *negative* television advertising) could be reduced and outsourced by hosting a link to the ad on a campaign or surrogate Web site, which would then be connected by hyperlinks to blogs and accessed by reporters who might then have to replay or summarize the ad in a news story. By way of example, bloggers were the first to link to the Swiftvets.com's anti-Kerry ads in July of the campaign year—and this drew the attention of reporters who created television news stories about the ads and the Swift Vets group—in the process managing to keep the group's charges against Kerry alive, forcing a response from Kerry in late August.

Regardless of whether one finds the content of these ads disturbing, or questions either the motives of the Swift Vets group or their possible connection to the Bush reelection campaign, the results of this strategy speak for themselves. Through the participation of news media and the publicizing of the negative advertisements by the Swift Vets group, the Bush campaign succeeded in undermining Senator Kerry's ethos as a war hero, while not appearing to attack a man who had volunteered for multiple tours in Vietnam. Perhaps more to the point, they accomplished this result with no financial cost (the ads were bankrolled by a surrogate 527 group, broadcast in limited markets on television, but available for very little cost to the same group on the Internet and replayed for free in news media) and little political cost (the ads were the product of a group with no official connection to the Bush campaign).

It has been said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. In future campaigns at the local, state, or national level, the blending of surrogates, paid media (ads), new media (Web sites and blogs), and news (free media)

will likely continue—if for no better reason than the fact that so doing costs very little and at the same time presents tremendous upside potential for maximizing the effect of negative campaigning. This is a major trend for future political communications.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how candidates and campaigns must blend strategies for dealing with both free (news media from broadcast, cable, print, Internet) and paid (political advertising) media to most effectively communicate with potential voters. News media and political candidates occupy a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship; candidates who understand the nature of this relationship will always be able to project their message in a manner that both benefits their campaign and subjects them to minimal risk. While the existence of favorable news media coverage provides these candidates with the ability to inexpensively reach more voters than would otherwise be possible, it does not give candidates total control over what the message becomes or how it is received. For this, paid media or political advertising is key, and the most effective kind of paid media is negative advertising, for the simple reason that it is easier to sell yourself to voters by tearing down your opponent.

It goes without saying that many of the examples of free or paid media strategies and tactics—while effective—do raise considerations about ethical behavior. Should we condone tactics that coerce reporters to cover an issue in a certain way? Does it help the democratic process to negatively campaign? Should misleading statements or inferences be tolerated—all in the name of allowing more voices in our political discourse?

The answers to dilemmas posed by questions like these are not so easily divined—and indeed, it is often the case that one's perspective about the moral state of political campaign communications depends heavily on how one fares in a political contest. I would not presume to tell anyone how to resolve this. Instead, this chapter—and in a larger sense, this book—have been offered in the hopes of addressing these questions by equipping readers with the means to understand how the process works and why. When one understands why and how a campaign stump speech is written, a political debate works, a news story is influenced, or an advertisement is constructed, one can be better prepared to assess the process—and decide for one's self. In this, the simplest and yet most demanding of ways, we become critical consumers for communication of the political.

Notes

1. See, for example, findings from researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia, presented in “Bush Leads in Negative Ads, but Kerry Has Help,” 2004, May 18, *USA Today*, p. 13A.
2. See, for example, *The Interplay of Influence: News, Advertising, Politics, and the Mass Media* (p. 135), by K. Hall Jamieson and K. Kohrs Campbell, 1997, 4th ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
3. See “Campaign Dispatches: Aid and Comfort, Part 4,” by Mark Silva and John McCormack, 2004, September 20, *Chicago Tribune*, p. 1.
4. See “Democrats Hunt for Votes,” by Lois Romano, 2004, October 22, *Washington Post*, p. A06.
5. For a fuller treatment and access to original video on this story, go to <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/05/01/bush.carrier.landing/>.
6. For more about bridging, see “Chapter Seventeen: Impromptu Speaking,” by Joseph S. Tuman and Douglas M. Fraleigh, in *The St. Martin’s Guide to Public Speaking* (p. 493), 2003, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
7. See, for example, “Elements of Videostyle,” by L. L. Kaid and D. K. Davis, in *New Perspectives on Political Advertising* (pp. 184–209), by L. L. Kaid, D. Nimmo, and K. R. Sandus (Eds.), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
8. See *Uncivil Wars: Political Campaigns in a Media Age* (p. 100), by T. A. Hollihan, 2001, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
9. See *The Governing Crisis: Media, Money, and Marketing in American Elections* (p. 137), by W. L. Bennet, 1996, 2nd ed., New York: St. Martin’s.
10. See *Uncivil Wars*, Hollihan, p. 101.
11. See *CRS Report for Congress: “Presidential Elections in the United States: A Primer,”* by K. J. Coleman, J. E. Cantor, and T. H. Neale, 2000, April 17. Full text of the report is available at <http://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/RL30527.pdf>.
12. See “Political Media Buying 2004: Analysis of Spending on Political Advertising and Marketing Communications,” a special report by PQ Media, 2004, August.
13. See *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (p. 50), by K. H. Jamieson, 1992, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
14. See “Audio-Visual Redundancy and TV News Recall,” by D. Drew and T. Grimes, 1987, *Communication Research*, 14, pp. 452–461.
15. See “The Functional Approach to Presidential Television Spots: Acclaiming, Attacking, Defending, 1952–2000,” by W. L. Benoit, 2001, *Communication Studies*, 52, pp. 109–126.
16. See, for example, *Videostyle in Presidential Elections: Style and Content of Televised Political Advertising* by L. L. Kaid and A. Johnston, 2001, Westport, CT: Praeger. From a longitudinal analysis of 1,204 ads from the election cycles in the years from 1952 to 1996, Kaid and Johnston report that negative spots had begun to dominate the airwaves from the 1988 campaign on, with 47% of the ads in 1988, 68% of the ads in 1992, and 65% of the ads in 1996.
17. See *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in Politics* (p. 350), by Ed Rollins, 1996, New York: Broadway.

18. See *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything* (pp. 39–40), by Joe Trippi, 2004, New York: HarperCollins/Regan.

19. As of the time of this writing, this advertisement could be viewed in text form at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0002/24/ip.00.html>.

20. As of the time of this writing, this ad could be viewed in archival form at <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/candidates/campaign.96/seconds.mov>.

21. This ad can be viewed at <http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/timeline/years/1990.html#movie>.

22. For a complete look at all 150 of the top recognized ads, go to <http://www.moveon.org/bushin30seconds/>.

23. See “2nd Bush-Hitler Ad Posted,” at http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36456.

24. See, *Dirty Politics*, Jamieson, p. 47.

25. As of the time of this writing, this ad could be found at <http://pcl.stanford.edu/common/media/campaign/2004/primary/dean/leader0121.mpg>.

26. As of the time of this writing, this ad could be found at <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/candidates/campaign.96/opportunities.mov>.

27. As noted by Jamieson in *Dirty Politics*, p. 20, the claim that “268 escaped” follows an assertion about first-degree murderers being furloughed, inviting the false inference that 268 murderers escaped. In fact, the only such individual who escaped was Horton. 267 other inmates did escape, but all were guilty of lesser and different crimes.

28. For more on this, see “Friendly Fire: The Birth of an Anti-Kerry Ad,” by K. Zernike and J. Rutenberg, 2004, August 20, *New York Times*. An online copy of this article is available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/20/politics/campaign/20swift.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5090&en=7bf4b2f25a4c8daf&ex=1250740800&partner=rssuserland>.

29. See “Top Bush Supporter Funds Attacks on Kerry’s War Record: Homebuilder Is Longtime Force in Texas GOP,” by S. Gold, 2004, August 15, *Los Angeles Times*. This article is available at http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2004/08/15/top_bush_supporter_funds_attacks_on_kerrys_war_record/.

30. This appeared in the ad called “Friends,” broadcast on September 21, 2004. As of the time of this writing, the ad may be viewed online at <http://www.swiftvets.com/videos/friends.mov>.

31. This ad, called “Gunner,” featured a testimonial by Swiftboat gunner Steve Gardner, who himself claimed that Kerry had lied about his service in Cambodia. As of the time of this writing, this ad can be viewed at <http://www.swiftvets.com/videos/gunner.mov>.

32. As of the time of this writing, this ad could be found online at <http://www.swiftvets.com/videos/theyserved.mov>.