



## MEDIA@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

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### Keeping Up Appearances: Candidate Self-Presentation through Web Videos in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Primary Campaign

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Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, September 2007, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Politics and Communication. Supervised by Dr. Maggie



## Introduction

*If last year was the year of the rogue videographers, the already-underway 2008 presidential campaign is likely to be remembered as the point where web video became central to the communications strategy of every serious presidential candidate (Cillizza and Balz, 2007: 1)*

Increasingly in 21<sup>st</sup> century political campaigns, internet

As web v



but also through body language, gestures, and symbols. Here, nonverbal messages act as environmental cues to provide a useful frame of reference for interpreting and checking the validity of verbal messages (Burgoon and Hoobler, 2002: 262; Edell, 1998: 14; Goffman,





Johnston, 2001: 32)



nomination of their party, so their opponents and target audience are members of their own party, rather than the general population (Parmalee, 2002: 319). Consequently, political communication methods used for primary campaigns tend to be more targeted than for general election campaigns (Kern, 1989: 131; Parmalee, 2002:

advertisements? Do candidates use the same styles of self-presentation found on candidate websites?

This study will use Kaid and Johnston's videostyle concept to examine the characteristics of campaign web videos and to understand how candidates are presenting themselves through this new medium. Initially developed by Kaid and Davidson (1986), videostyle was originally used to examine the differences in candidate self-presentation between presidential incumbents and challengers in political advertisements. However, videostyle ~~has~~ since been used in a num \_ e i

Q2: What are individual candidates' styles of self-presentation in web videos? Do they focus on or image?

Q3: Are there observable differences in the videostyle techniques employed by Democrats and Republicans?

⇒ *How do thes*





coding not only for the presence or absence of





by investigating the verbal, nonverbal, and television production components of the videos (see Appendix). 104 web video characteristics were tested, the majority of which required marking the presence or absence of the characteristic.





Figure 3. Dominant Appeal Type

These findings signal a difference between web videos and political television advertisements, which in previous studies by Kern (1989) and Kaid and Johnston (2001) have been found to use more emotional than logical or ethical proof (Kern, 1989: 207; Kaid, 2004:



### 3.2. Individual Candidate Videostyle

In this section, the major distinguishing characteristics of each candidate's videostyles are presented, as the length of this study does not permit a thorough discussion of every aspect of videostyle for all the candidates. Instead, a classif

### 3.2.2. *John Edwards Videostyle*

Edwards' videostyle can be described as *direct-emotional-image focused*. He appears in all of his videos, and his dominant expression is smiling in 70% of his vf









never featured 'common' people as the dominant speaker. Republicans featured political pundits or journalists as the dominant speaker in 17% videos as compared to Democrats who never did ( $\chi^2 = 18.7$ , d.f. = 8, p

Figure 8. Issues Mentioned by Party

<i>Issues Mentioned</i>				
Iraq War	47%	14	20%	6
Healthcare	47%	14	10%	3
Children's Issues	30%	9	7%	2
Energy	27%	8	3%	1
Foreign Affairs	23%	7	7%	2
Social Security	13%	4	0%	0
Women's Issues	13%	4	3%	1
Environment	10%	3	0%	0
Military Spending	7%	2	7%	2
Economy	13%	4	10%	3
Welfare Reform	10%	3	13%	4
Education	13%	4	17%	5
Immigration	0%	0	7%	2
Iran	0%	0	10%	3
Civil Rights	13%	4	0%	0
Taxes	3%	1	17%	5
Crime	0%	0	20%	6
Spending/Budget	3%	1	23%	7
Security/Terror	7%	2	43%	13
Total		80		34

Dominant Issue

Figure 9. Dominant Issue by Party

<i>Dominant Issue</i>			
Iraq War	27%	8	13%

The findings concerning issues mentioned by party and the d



Figure 11. Candidate Characteristics Emphasized by Party

*Ca*

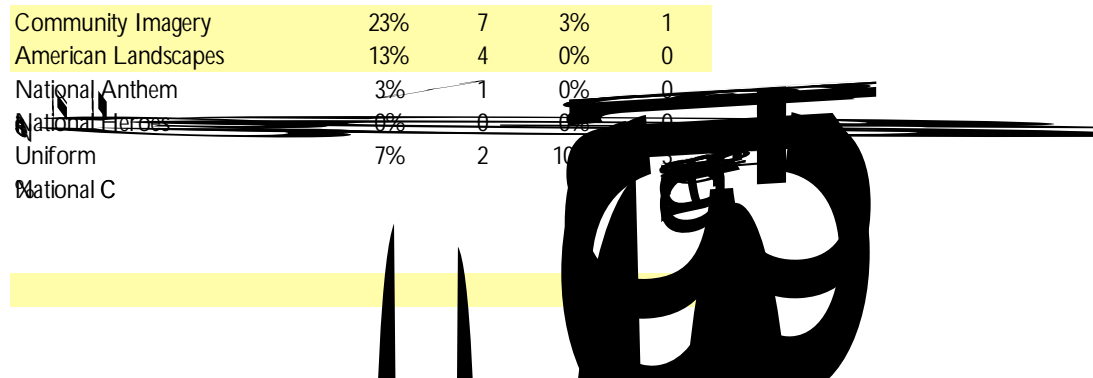


Past studies on candidate characteristics stressed in political advertisements have shown that Democrats tend to emphasize compassion and competency more than Republicans (Kaid and Johnston, 2001: 84). Similar results were found in this study of web videos. However, previous studies have found that Democrats tend to focus more on toughness/strength and qualifications than Republicans in political advertisements.



less than half of videos ( $\chi^2 = 3.3$ , d.f. = 1,  $p = 0.050$ ). Democrats used community images in nearly a quarter of videos (23%) while Republicans used such images in just 3% of videos ( $\chi^2 = 5.2$ , d.f. = 1,  $p = 0.023$ ).

Figure 13. Use of American Symbols by Party



Emotions

The two parties used different emotional appeals in their web videos (see Figure 14). 23% of Republican emotional appeals traded on fear, whereas Democrats never used fear in videos ( $\chi^2 = 7.9$ , d.f. = 1,  $p = 0.005$ ). 36% of Republican emotional appeals were based on patriotism, as compared to 13% of Democrat appeals ( $\chi^2 = 4.4$ , d.f. = 1,  $p = 0.036$ ).

Figure 14. Emotional Appeals by Party

<i>Emotional Appeal</i>	Dem (%)	Dem (n)	Rep (%)	Rep (n)
Happiness	13%	4	7%	2
Sadness	7%	2	0%	0
Anger/Disgust	7%	2	0%	0
Hope/Utopia	23%	7	20%	6
Fear	0%	0	23%	7
Patr	13%	4	36%	11

Past research on party videostyle in political advertisement shows that Democrats use more fear appeals than Republicans (Kaid and Johnston, 2001: 97); the opposite is observed in this study of web videos.

3.3.3. *Production Components of Democratic and Republican Videostyle*











Nichols, B. (1983) 'The Voice of Documentary', *Film Quarterly*. 36(3): 17-30.

Nimmo, D. and Combs, J. E. (1990) *Mediated Political Realities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. White Plains:  
Longman.

Parmalee, J. (2002). 'Presidential Primary Videocassettes: How Candidates in the 2000 U.S.

Presidential Primary







- 5 Spouse or Family Member
- 6 Political Pundit (s)
- 7 'Common' people, voter(s)
- 8 Journalist





- 66. *Taxes*
- 67. *Welfare reform*
- 68. *Education*
- 69. *Civil rights/affirmative action/rights for groups*
  
- 70. *Which of these issues is dominant in the video?* \_\_\_\_\_
- 0 No issues are present in the video
- 1 Iraq w

81. *Using endorsements by 'common' people, voter(s): 'common' people used to speak on behalf of candidate, linking of candidate with 'common' voters*
82. *Emphasizing accomplishments:* stressing the achievements of the candidate or party
83. *Attacking the record of the opponent:* reviewing and criticizing the past accomplishments (or failures) of the opponent.
84. *Other (Specify)*

Appendix B: List of Videos Sampled

Title of Video

Length





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