

THE 1st BLACK PRESIDENT OR A COMBATIVE
72-YEAR-OLD WAR HERO?:
Representations of the 2008 US presidential
candidates in two American newspapers

Bachelor's thesis
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English
May 19th 2009

HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA
KIELTEN LAITOS

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THE 1st BLACK PRESIDENT OR A COMBATIVE 72-YEAR-OLD WAR HERO?:
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Kandidaatintutkielma
Englannin kieli
Toukokuu 2009

26 sivua + 10 liitettä

Diskurssit rakentavat maailmankuvaamme ja me rakennamme maailmaa eri tekstien ja äänten kautta. Nykypäivän median ja sen valtasuhteiden tutkiminen on tärkeää, sillä sekä kielenkäyttö journalistiikassa että median poliittinen kanta rakentavat myös poliittisten hahmojen julkista kuvaa. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, 1) miten vuoden 2008 USA:n presidentinvaaliehdokkaiden, John McCainin ja Barack Obaman, representaatiot rakentuvat kahdessa amerikkalaisessa sanomalehdessä ja 2) kuinka nämä eri lehtien representaatiot eroavat toisistaan. Koska kyseisiä presidenttiehdokkaita ja heidän representaatioitaan mediassa ei ole vielä tietääksemme tutkittu, tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli myös selvittää, 3) kuinka lehtien mahdollinen poliittinen kanta tai ideologia tulee teksteissä esiin kyseisiä presidenttiehdokkaita kuvattaessa. Tutkimuksemme oli laadullista, ja se edustaa soveltavan kielitieteen tutkimusalaa.

Tutkimusaineistomme koostui kymmenestä artikkelista, jotka kerättiin aikaväliltä 20. lokakuuta – 2. marraskuuta 2008. Lehdiksi valitsimme *USA Todayn* ja *The International Herald Tribunen* kummankin lehden laajaan levikkiin sekä poliittiseen kantaan perustuen. Aineiston analyysissä käytimme Norman Faircloughin kehittämää kriittisen diskurssianalyysin (CDA) kolmiportaista mallia. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi korostaa kielen vaikutusta yhteiskuntaan ja päinvastoin. Se myös paljastaa diskursseissa piileviä ideologioita ja värittyneitä ilmaisuja.

Tulokset osoittivat, että John McCainin ja Barack Obaman representaatiot eroavat toisistaan merkittävästi kummassakin lehdessä, mutta Obamaa kuvattiin kummassakin lehdessä positiivisemmin ja hänet esitettiin presidentinvaalien varmana tai lähes varmana voittajana. McCain puolestaan esitettiin joko puolustelevana ja hyökkäävänä vaaliehdokkaana, tai hänen roolinsa oli huomattavasti pienempi kuin Obaman. Representaatioiden perusteella voitaneen myös päätellä, että huolimatta poliittisista ideologioistaan, lehdet yhdistyivät tukemaan Obamaa yli puoluerajojen. Ehdokkaiden representaatiot ja niiden kehitys koko vaalikampanjan aikana, tai lehtien poliittisen ideologian mahdollinen vaikutus amerikkalaisiin äänestäjiin tuottaisi kuitenkin arvokasta lisätutkimusta.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ovat hyödyllisiä kriittisen lukutaidon ja sen kehittämisen kannalta. Kielenkäyttö mediassa vaikuttaa mielikuviumme julkisista henkilöistä ja tekstien vallan tiedostaminen tuo ilmi teksteissä piileviä epätasa-arvoisuuksia ja puolueellisia ääniä, jotka muuten saattaisivat jäädä huomaamatta.

Asiasanat: representation, critical discourse analysis, ideology, election
2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN ANALYZING NEWSPAPERS	4
2.1 Discourse analysis vs. Critical discourse analysis	5
2.2 Critical discourse analysis (CDA).....	5
2.3 Ideology and representations in newspapers	6
2.3.1 Ideology in media	7
2.3.2 Representation	7
2.4 Study questions	8
2.5 Similar studies	8
3. DATA AND METHODS.....	9
4. RESULTS	12
4.1 <i>USA Today</i>	12
4.1.1 Names of the candidates in <i>USA Today</i>	13
4.1.2 Actions of the candidates in <i>USA Today</i>	13
4.2 <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	14
4.2.1 Names of the candidates in <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	15
4.2.2 Actions of the candidates in <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	15
5. DISCUSSION	16
5.1 <i>USA Today</i>	17
5.2 <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	19
5.3 "McCain's defiance vs. Obama's confidence" - Comparing the articles of <i>USA Today</i> and <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	21
6. CONCLUSION	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	26
APPENDIX 1: <i>USA Today</i>	27
APPENDIX 2: <i>The International Herald Tribune</i>	32

1. INTRODUCTION

Our world is constructed by the means of language use. With language we give meaning to everything around us, and without realizing its full power, we let language influence our thoughts and lives every day. Language can act as a way of affecting people subconsciously. Carefully selected words, euphemisms and metaphors, are all the time used to hide certain things and emphasize others. In the media this is one of the most common ways of affecting the consumer. Words that are meant for the public help us form certain impressions of different products and people, and will often make us behave according to that impression in the future. When choosing a political leader for a country, these impressions, *representations*, can be crucial when it comes to people deciding who to vote for in the elections.

Representations in the media, particularly in newspapers, have been a subject of research before and the topics of research vary from political figures to ethnic minorities and disabled people (see Pietikäinen (2000) and Jauhiainen (2000)). Although the field is relatively broad, and a plentitude of scientific articles on the matter have surfaced during the recent months, the representations of the most recent US presidential candidates have not yet been studied on a larger scale. As our subject is a current matter, it provides new information about the American media and its discourses. Since the US presidential elections have become a worldwide phenomenon and the course of the elections is always followed in several countries outside America, this study proves its relevance also in Europe and Finland.

The subject of our research was finding out how the representations of the 2008 US presidential candidates, John McCain and Barack Obama, were built in two American newspapers, *The International Herald Tribune* and *USA Today*, two weeks prior to the elections. By the means of critical discourse analysis, CDA, we analyzed articles from these two newspapers, and drew conclusions from the lexical choices made in the texts. We also tried to look for signs of ideological meanings behind the texts, and if either of the newspapers seemed to be biased towards one of the candidates.

The objective of our research was to find out how the language use in journalism, and the political views of popular media such as newspapers, builds the images of public political figures. We found the subject of research important, since it is useful to gain knowledge about

today's media and its power relations. Even though newspapers are thought to be reliable sources of information, different political views often influence their language and thus the readers of the particular paper.

In chapter two we will take a closer look at our theoretical framework, CDA. We will first explain the difference between discourse analysis (DA) and CDA, and further clarify the meaning of CDA. Then we will examine how the concepts of ideology and representation can be seen in media texts and newspapers. After explaining the theoretical framework of our study, we will present our study questions and take a look at the previous studies we consulted. Next, in chapter three, we will go over our choice of data and explain our chosen method of analysis in detail. After that, in chapter four, we will introduce our results and the word choices and phrases we collected from the articles. Finally, in chapter five we will analyze the articles, first newspaper-by-newspaper, and then by comparing the two newspapers with each other. Our conclusion will concisely explain our findings and suggestions for further study.

2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN ANALYZING NEWSPAPERS

The purpose of this research is to determine through linguistic means how the 2008 US presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, are represented in two American newspapers, *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune*, which is published under *The New York Times*. Our research can be linked to the broader field of applied linguistics and the theoretical framework constructs around the concept of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis, CDA, emphasizes the influence of language to society and vice versa. In addition to this, CDA also takes into account that discourse is often ideologically based, and that hidden, complex ideological meanings can be carried by single words in a text (Bloor & Bloor 2007:10). In the next chapter we will first take a brief look at the difference between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Then we will proceed to examining CDA more closely, and follow by looking at what ideology and representations mean in media texts. We will conclude this chapter by presenting our study questions and previous studies on this matter.

2.1 Discourse analysis vs. Critical discourse analysis

The field of discourse analysis (DA) is relatively broad in terms of theories, and thus there are several different approaches to it. For instance, Norman Fairclough (1995a:7) defines discourse as the use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis as the analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practices. In other words, “a wider contextual matrix must be attended to because it shapes discourse practices in important ways, and is itself in return shaped by them.” (Fairclough 1995b:50). This is particularly clear in the case of media and newspapers.

Since our research is also interested in how society, in particular the political views of the newspapers affect the representations of Barack Obama and John McCain, a critical theory is necessary. While DA investigates discourse without critiquing social practices and views all discourse mainly as matter of communication, CDA instead seeks to find out about how language use reflects social problems and patterns, ideologies, prejudices and so forth, with the intention of raising awareness of critical reading and pattern-breaking (Bloor & Bloor 2007:11)

Although the social aspect of language use is present in both DA and CDA, our research requires a more critical perspective, since the US presidential elections is a political and thus clearly biased phenomenon. In the next chapter we will take a closer look at CDA and its defining features.

2.2 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

In critical discourse analysis, CDA, the main target is to reveal the hidden meanings and presuppositions embedded in texts. Newspapers, for example, are hardly ever completely neutral in their views. Every discourse is meaningful and therefore, CDA provides the means of pointing out the power relations within texts. In our study, we used CDA in order to find out if and how the political views of the newspapers appear in the articles concerning the presidential candidates, and the ways in which the presidential candidates and their identities are represented in the texts.

For the purposes of this study we chose Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis, in other words the processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 1995a:9). This is important in the sense that in order to gain information about the power relations of the texts, one has to be aware of not merely the text itself, but also the diverse ways the texts may be interpreted and responded to and the circumstances the texts are produced in. CDA also enables an in-depth analysis of representations in texts and, as stated above, it also takes into account the critical aspect of text analysis. We will explain Fairclough's method of three-dimensional analysis further in chapter three.

There are several different theories throughout the field. Van Dijk (1988a, 1988b, 1991 as quoted by Fairclough 1995b:29), for instance, has developed a social-cognitive model for discourse analysis, particularly focusing on news texts. His work rather concerns how social relationships and processes are accomplished at micro-level through routine practices (Fairclough 1995b: 29). For the purposes of this study, we are, however, more interested in how the changing language and discursive practices in the newspapers constitute social and cultural change.

2.3 Ideology and representations in newspapers

Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which we will fully introduce in chapter three of this study, takes into account the social practices and larger contexts in which news are read and interpreted. In a world where newspapers are often thought to be reliable informative sources, the trust of the audience can easily be taken advantage of by planting hidden meanings behind words. News in itself is a medium of representational discourse, and a product constructed by someone. In addition, news topics are always chosen to be reported about and published from a wider selection, and thus give the reader only a partial view of the world. Depending on the medium, certain news and certain angles towards the news are more likely to occur than others (Fowler 1991: 10-14). These are reasons for why news need to be read and interpreted critically, in order to uncover the deeper meanings behind texts and to understand why certain pieces of news are published while some are omitted.

2.3.1 Ideology in media

Since our research topic has a political background, the concept of ideology is also closely linked to it. In CDA, the term ideology is often used to constitute people's identities and their social position and it also produces the meaning of contextual language (Vehviläinen 2004). Thus, mass media, such as the newspapers *The International Herald Tribune* and *USA Today*, can be seen as ideological constructions with certain, political ideologies. It is worthwhile to investigate how the construction of identities is linked to a medium's political values and interests, and whether these ideologies can be traced from the texts or not. Thus, in the study we intend to point out how political ideologies, moreover the ideologies of the US Democratic and Republican parties, are shown through the representations of Barack Obama and John McCain in the newspaper articles.

According to Fowler, newspapers' ideological power is based on the fact that newspapers have to sell the same message to as many people as possible simultaneously – newspapers are, after all, mass media, and one goal of a newspaper is to be read frequently by a large number of people. Moreover, Fowler argues that behind a news organization there is a larger context with its own aims and best interest. Whether it is a nation, a political party or another collective, the news reports must often follow the beliefs and paradigms of the background (Fowler 1991: 122-124).

2.3.2 Representation

In its most basic form, a representation can be described as an image of a person, a phenomenon or an event that language use constructs. In addition, the contexts, the producers and the readers of the text bring their own views into the language, thus creating a broader social representation (Hujanen & Pietikäinen 2004: 6). Fowler, on his behalf, describes representation as a constructive practice, in which people and ideas are filtered through a set of social values, ideologies and different perspectives (1991: 25). The focus then, in both cases, is on how events, situations, people, relationships and so forth are represented in texts.

A basic assumption is that media texts do not merely mirror realities, but they constitute versions of reality that depend on the social positions, interests and objectives of those who produce them (Fairclough 1995b: 104). Therefore the analysis of representational processes in texts draws on the choices that have been made (ibid.). Things that should be considered when analyzing a discourse include, for instance: what is included and what is excluded, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded and what is thematized and what is unthematized in the text.

Also, the process types and categories that are chosen to represent events are a part of representational analysis. Questions about the social motivations for particular choices, and about ideologies and relations of domination are constant concern in this type of analysis (Fairclough 1995b: 104). According to Fairclough (ibid.), there are two major aspects of representations in texts. First is how the events, relationships and situations are represented, and what motivates one set of choices over another. The second is what relations of cohesion are set up between clauses and what precedes and follows what.

2.4 Study questions

As introduced in the above paragraphs, in our study we will approach the newspaper articles on Obama and McCain through the concept of representation and shall use critical discourse analysis as the research method. We intend to focus on the concept of ideology as well in terms of the political ideologies of the newspapers and how they are presented through the representations of the two candidates. With the use of CDA we will examine the additional meanings embedded in the articles and power relations within and between the texts. Thus, our research questions are:

How are the representations of the two candidates built in the selected newspapers?

How do the representations differ from each other in the two papers?

What is the significance of the political view of the newspaper and does it show?

2.5 Similar studies

To our knowledge, similar studies to our subject have not yet been published, but there are several journal articles on the subject of the 2008 elections media coverage. For instance,

Rem Rieder's article on the claims of the media not being biased towards Obama can be connected to our study in terms of the point of view of newspapers. Rieder (2009) claims that, for instance, the mania around Sarah Palin, the Republican Party's vice presidential nominee, and Hillary Clinton, who ran against Barack Obama to be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, can be compared to the so-called *Obamamania*. His claim is that Obama has not been treated favourably by the media. Instead, he says that it was John McCain who ruined his own campaign and the press only reported what the situation was like during the campaigning (ibid.). In addition to the political ideologies that might affect the texts, we found it relevant to investigate, if any bias towards Obama can be found in the texts and if so, do the texts merely report the events of the campaigns of Barack Obama and John McCain.

Our study can also be linked to previous works on representations and critical discourse analysis of newspapers. For instance, Sari Pietikäinen's (2000) work on ethnic representations in newspaper texts and Marjaana Jauhiainen's (2000) Master's thesis on the representations of disabled people in the British newsprint media are closely connected to our subject. For instance, Pietikäinen (2000:288) found that the representations of ethnic minorities in Finnish newspaper texts were one-sided, insufficient and even negative. On her behalf, Jauhiainen's thesis studied the representations of disabled people quite similarly to us by identifying the different names and actions of the disabled in the texts, and then analyzing these representations. We used the same method, which we will introduce in the next chapter of our study and it proved to be quite fruitful. However, since the actual topics of Jauhiainen's and Pietikäinen's theses were quite different from ours, their results of varying meanings attached to disability and ethnicity cannot be fully linked to our study.

In the following chapters we will demonstrate our data and the methods of research we used in order to reveal and analyze the representations found in the newspaper articles. In addition, we will look into the representations of the candidates in terms of the adjectives and the operative words connected to the candidates, as well as how the candidates are named in the articles. Then we will move on to the analysis of the representations found in the texts.

3 DATA AND METHODS

The research frame of our study is qualitative since the method enables a more careful and thorough analysis of the newspaper articles. Also, the use of CDA requires a qualitative

analysis in order to bring out the hidden meanings in the texts. The newspapers, *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune* were chosen on the basis of their wide circulation and political background. *USA Today* has been traditionally seen as a Republican paper, whereas *The International Herald Tribune/ The New York Times* publicly announced its support for Barack Obama in the 2008 elections. We selected articles from *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune* from the time period right before the 2008 US presidential elections, namely between the 20th of October and 2nd of November 2008. At that time the presidential campaigns were also coming to their end, and thus the amount of newspaper coverage was increasing.

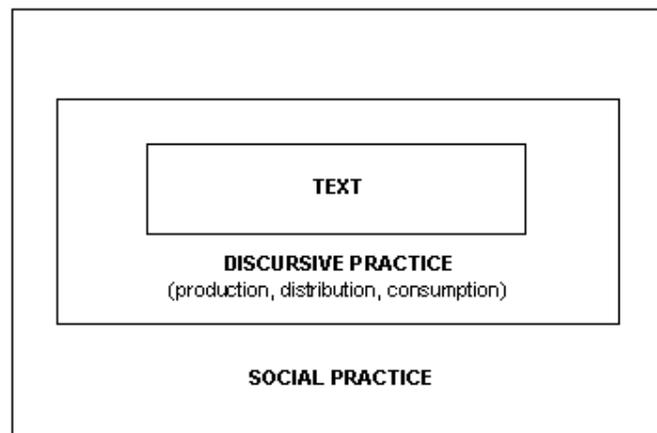
Because of the different varieties and amounts of the newspaper articles, we decided to choose every third article from the *USA Today* and every eighth from *The International Herald Tribune*. This amounted to five articles per paper, making up altogether ten articles. *USA Today* was available in the online newspaper service PressDisplay as an electronic version for two months after the issues were published, and *The International Herald Tribune* was found in the Jyväskylä University library, where the issues are stored for four years after publishing.

We concentrated on articles that concerned the candidates Obama and McCain directly, and not via the voters or the vice-presidential nominees, for instance. There was a great deal of articles that concentrated on McCain's running mate, Alaskan governor Sarah Palin, for instance, but since those articles mostly depicted her personal life and the media's growing amount of interest towards her tactics, they were best left disregarded. Despite this, she was an object of interest in some of our articles, which is a matter that we will include in our analysis. In addition, we disregarded the opinion texts of the papers, since our study focuses on the political point of views of the newspapers, and the opinion texts naturally include the point of view of the reader. Thus, the texts would not have been fruitful in terms of our study. We included, however, one editor's letter from *USA Today*, since it represents the general, political view of the newspaper and can thus be used for analysis together with the articles we chose.

In our analysis we chose to use Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for CDA (See figure 1). Our analysis therefore approaches the data on three levels, which naturally overlap within texts. Firstly, how the presidential candidates are named and depicted in the newspapers, also known as representations that perhaps carry particular political ideologies.

Secondly, what the discursive practices of the texts are. According to Fairclough (1995b: 58), discursive practices involve the processes of text production and text consumption. In other words, discursive practices can be seen as links between the actual text and the society and the culture in which it belongs to. Thirdly, the analysis looks at what the sociocultural practices and the larger contexts embedded in the texts are, particularly the issues of politics and ideologies. All of these layers may be relevant in understanding a particular event and in order to gain information about the power relations of the texts, one has to be aware of not merely the text itself, but also the diverse ways the texts may be interpreted and responded to and the circumstances the texts are produced in.

Figure 1: Fairclough's three-dimensional model



<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/2421g1.gif>

In other words, we concentrated on the choices made in the texts in terms of naming the candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain. We also examined the actions of the candidates depicted in the texts. After we found and categorized these representations, we analyzed them further by linking them to the discursive practices of the texts. For instance, the way the representations of the candidates appear in the newspapers can be seen to have an effect on the producers and consumers of the texts and vice versa. Finally, we looked into the broader, sociocultural context of the representations and analyzed the differences found in the newspapers, as well as the importance of the political view of a newspaper. For instance, whether or not Obamamania shows in the representations built in the newspapers, although Rieder claims this has not been the case.

As already stated in chapter 2.2, there are several different approaches to discourse analysis, and more specifically, critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's model for CDA is not, therefore, the only possible method of analysis for newspaper texts. For instance, Teun VanDijk has presented similar ideas of critical discourse analysis in his work. VanDijk (2008:3-4) however, talks about CDS, critical discourse studies, which has many different methods of study. CDS uses any method that is relevant to the aims of its research projects, so there is no more a discourse analysis as a one method (ibid.). Although VanDijk's work on critical discourse studies is undoubtedly relevant and could be applied to our study as well, it is the diversity of his ways of analysis that lead us to use Fairclough's model, which is clearly compatible with the data in question in this study. Moreover, since we were already familiar with the model, it was an easy choice to go with.

4. RESULTS

In the following chapters we will present our articles, their names and how they were structured. Moreover, we will state all of the names and the operative words we found from the texts. In later chapters we shall base our analyses of the newspapers on these word choices.

4.1 *USA Today*

The five newspaper articles we chose from *USA Today* were mostly written by different journalists. Unlike *the International Herald Tribune* articles that concentrated on following the campaign trail, the articles on *USA Today* held more variation in both style and themes. While most articles concentrated on the progress of the candidate's campaigns, and thus were newspaper articles by genre, there was also one editor's letter that was very different from the rest of the articles. Moreover, one article concentrated only on Barack Obama's TV infomercial, which aired during the last week of the campaign.

The headlines of our chosen articles were, as follows:

- (1) Dems get big boost in early voting (22nd Oct 2008 p.1A)
- (2) 2nd former Bush official endorses Obama (24th Oct 2008 p.4A)

- (3) McCain wages fight 'behind his own front lines (29th Oct 2008 p.6A)
- (4) Obama blankets TV with ad (30th Oct 2008 p.5A)
- (5) What presidential candidates omit in their grand plans (30th Oct 2008 p.12A)

Most of the articles had a structure similar to each other. The articles began by stating the most recent issue in either of the candidate's campaigns, proceeded to form a "debate" between the candidate's thoughts and/or actions or on expert's or spokesmen's opinions on the campaigns, and then ended by introducing historical facts about past elections, most often referring to the two latest presidential elections in 2000 and 2004.

It is also worth mentioning that in the articles in *USA Today*, there was a strong emphasis on President George W. Bush and his administration. *President Bush* was mentioned in all but one of the articles and there was a lot of data concerning his wins and losses in certain states in the previous elections. Although this study concerns the representations of candidates Barack Obama and John McCain, we will also take a look at the ideological backgrounds and goals of the newspapers, and thus will also consider this matter in our analysis.

4.1.1 Names of the candidates in *USA Today*

The first thing we looked for in the articles was how the nominees were named in the articles and whether these names differ from each other in quality and/or in quantity. In the articles both Obama and McCain were called *Senators*. Whereas Obama was called *the Democrat* or *Democratic presidential candidate*, McCain was called either *Republican* without an article or *Republican rival* or *Republican nominee*. In addition to these names, Obama was also called *his candidate*, referring to a person who was going to vote for him, as well as *A President Obama* on an occasion where it was speculated what would happen if Obama won the elections. Most often, however, the candidates were called simply by their names.

4.1.2 Actions of the candidates in *USA Today*

The second matter we took into account was the operational words used in order to describe the candidate's actions. In *USA Today* Obama spoke to audiences often: he *speaks*; *told backers in Indiana to "turn the page" on Bush-McCain economic policies*; *told the crowd* and *said to the roaring crowd*. Obama was also an active candidate, to whom even aggressive and war-related word choices were fitting: he *will move on to*; *will be joined by former president*

Bill Clinton; will appear on; pulled out all political and technological stops as well as denounced McCain's criticisms; used fundraising and aggressive effort to win over Republican votes; is trying to raid Republican territory; stumped in Pennsylvania and Virginia and took a shot. Obama's personality was shown through word choices such as: *joked; went trolling for votes; poked fun at attacks on his economic policies by McCain and left the campaign trail to visit his ailing grandmother,* which was mentioned twice using the exact same wording. In addition to these, Obama also was also described with word choices such as: *has a wide lead; making a late-night appearance, blanketing the airwaves; enormous financial advantage enjoyed by Obama* and that he *had success in unifying the party.*

McCain, on his behalf, had less operational words. In the articles he is either being either defensive or argumentative: he *criticized; argued; wages fight; is playing defense; has given ground and is trying to hold things together* and is *fighting behind his own front lines;* In addition to these word choices, McCain also *gets a hug; traversed central Florida on a "Joe the Plumber Tour"; is limited to \$84 million for the campaign and has a record with bipartisan deal-making.* On one occasion McCain also *leads,* which is a strong exception to the majority of the operational words used about him.

Some of the other operational words used in the articles were: *jabs, trade shots, grilled* Obama, the race's final weeks become *a frenzied effort to win battleground states* while *swaths of the country are ignored* and *a bruising primary battle.* These are examples of the war terminology often used when describing political events.

4.2 The International Herald Tribune

The selected five articles from *The International Herald Tribune* were written by Brian Knowlton, with the exception of one which was collected and combined from different news reports. Thus, we were able to consistently follow the representations of the candidates, and the whole political viewpoint of the paper. The articles that were chosen were headlined as follows:

- (6) Campaigns blast away at economic proposals (22nd Oct 2008 p.6)
- (7) Support expanding for Obama, poll shows (24th Oct 2008 p.1, 4)
- (8) Candidates battle for upper hand in the west (27th Oct 2008 p.5)
- (9) Both candidates turn to a tight Florida race (30th Oct 2008 p.7)
- (10) Candidates dashing to the wire (1st-2nd Nov 2008 p.1, 4)

Three articles included a countdown, which showed the number of days left until the Election Day. All of the articles were mainly summaries of what had happened on the campaign trail the day before the articles were published.

The main themes that the articles concentrated were the poll results of the days prior to the election, the speculations of how people are going to vote in different states and the proposals of the two candidates. There is a clear emphasis on the rhetorical battles between McCain and Obama. Moreover, the Republican camp's increasing disappointment towards the campaign is mentioned several times. In addition, Governor Sarah Palin is mentioned in this context only. There was also one article, "Both candidates turn to tight Florida race", which concentrated on Obama's infomercial on television. This was similar to one article on *USA Today*. Three articles included a photograph with Obama in two of them and both Obama and McCain in one.

4.2.1. Names of the candidates in *The International Herald Tribune*

Most often the candidates were simply called by their names in the articles. Also *senator McCain* and *senator Obama* were used often. Quite common were also the names referring to the elections such as *the Democratic candidate* and *the Republican nominee*. As the articles concentrated slightly more on Barack Obama, he was also called *the Illinois senator* and *the Democrat*. Although Obama was referred to in one article as *a leftist out of step with the rest of the country* by John McCain, he was also referred to as *this impressive man*. In fact, *a President Obama* was mentioned in three articles and *the 1st black president* in two articles. John McCain, on the other hand, was referred to as *Obama's republican opponent* and *a combative 72-year-old war hero*.

4.2.2 Actions of the candidates in *The International Herald Tribune*

There was a considerably large amount of words describing the actions of Barack Obama and John McCain in the articles. Also the amount of action words was more equal between the candidates. There were, however, differences in the types of words used, when describing the actions of Obama compared to the actions of McCain.

There were several actions representing Obama's professional capability in the texts. Obama *moderated, dealt handily, wielded his daunting financial advantage, lacked the experience, was using his financial edge to dominate and can be a president*. There were also actions concerning Obama's situation in the campaign. Obama *continued to have confidence, built strong support, was winning, was widely viewed as the winning candidate, would defeat, had an insignificant lead, enjoyed a comfortable edge, lead McCain, was about to leave the campaign trail, had the luxury of devoting more time to the West and held the lead* which was mentioned in two articles. In addition, Obama *was not taking this lying down, demonstrated his cool assurance, pushed back and bedeviled* during the rhetorical battles between the candidates.

The actions of John McCain, on the other hand, did not include any words referring to his professional skills, but there were also actions linked to his campaigning. McCain *made no progress, tightened the race, made up some ground, appeared to have gained some traction and shrugged off polls*, which was mentioned twice. McCain's part in the rhetorical battle, however, was reported extensively as he *spent much time on defence, batted back, also took the offence, pounded on, tried to shake off, insisted, tried to turn against, resolutely rejected, found him defending, accused, pummeled, dismissed, ramped up, hit hard and argued* during his campaign.

There were several operational words concerning both candidates in *The International Herald Tribune* articles from which McCain's concentrated more on the actions he took against Obama whereas Obama's operational words concerned his own position in the election. Also most of the war terminology in the articles was linked to McCain and his *attacking and defending* against Obama.

5. DISCUSSION

In the following chapters we will analyze our results using critical discourse analysis and will also look at the broader, sociocultural context of the representations of the candidates used in the newspapers. We will first take a closer look at both newspapers and their articles. We will also analyze how each newspaper builds a representation of each presidential candidate,

especially from the point of view of the discursive practices, in other words the lexical choices the journalists have made in the articles. After that we will move on to comparing the newspapers with each other. In drawing the comparisons between *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune*, we intend to focus on the larger sociocultural context around the texts, without forgetting to compare the discursive practices. This part of our study will lead us to the conclusion of the study, in which we will summarize our findings and make suggestions for further study.

5.1 *USA Today*

Even though *USA Today* is, by style, a simple and to-the-point newspaper, and the articles are rather short, they still succeed in using effective vocabulary and metaphors, especially when depicting the actions of the presidential candidates. Whereas Obama was *raiding*, *stomping* and *barnstorming*, McCain was *playing defense* and *fighting behind his own front lines*. These lexical choices are quite characteristic of the mood of the texts. Throughout the articles Obama is depicted as having the upper hand and the control over the elections. He is made to look like a confident, powerful character that ardently goes after what he wants. In several occasions Obama *tells* people how things are. In contrast, McCain's role is diminished, with focus being on him trying to keep the pieces of his campaign together and trying to hold on to whatever states are still left backing him up. He does not lead *roaring crowds*, as Obama does, but *criticizes* and *argues* against Obama's economic plans without once bringing up his own campaign themes. In addition, Obama's personality is characterized much further than that of McCain's. Besides being represented as a committed and strong candidate, Obama also *jokes* and *pokes fun* at McCain. Both expressions give out a certain impression of Obama, but it is up to the reader to interpret them as either a sign of being light-hearted about the race or of being arrogant and cocksure about his position.

There are several instances where Obama's speeches are quoted but only few of McCain's. Instead, more than often there is someone speaking for McCain, be it a spokesperson or some other representative. By doing so McCain is superseded, and it takes away from his power as a politician. It weakens his position further by sending a message that he is perhaps not doing his work, or that his words alone are not strong enough to stand against Obama's. Moreover, the nature of the quotations differs considerably between the candidates. Whereas Obama is quoted in a versatile fashion, making comments about McCain's policies, defending his own

and rallying his groups, McCain on his behalf is only quoted when he criticizes Obama. It is noticeable that there are not many quotes of him rallying to win the elections, or of reaching out to his voters. The closest to this is when McCain says “*I’m not afraid of the fight. I’m ready for it*” at an election rally in North Carolina, which further demonstrates him as the rival of the race rather than the winning candidate. It is also the only occasion where McCain is actually depicted as still having hope and will to fight left.

In one of the articles there is even a direct comparison between the candidates; *Obama is trying to raid Republican territory while McCain is playing defense* (29th Oct 2008), which is a good representative of the difference between the two candidates made in the articles. Altogether Obama is seen to be the more active candidate with a lot of commitments in his calendar, whilst McCain’s actions are kept in the background. Obama’s actions are often listed, for example: *Barack Obama pulled out all political and technological stops Wednesday, barnstorming across Republican territory, making a late-night appearance at a rally here with former president Bill Clinton, and blanketing the airwaves*. There are a few similar instances in the articles. They represent Obama as a machine-like, determined man with a full schedule and stamina to do whatever it takes to win over more voters. In comparison, McCain is said to be *making the necessary stops*. This quote from his senior adviser Charles Black sums up well how the articles depict McCain’s activity during the last weeks of his campaign.

Although there was a great difference in the amount of operative words used to describe Obama’s and McCain’s actions, there was not a lot of variety in the names and definitions given to the candidates. The names were quite neutral in tone, introducing both candidates as senators, either Democrat or Republican candidates or nominees or simply by their name. Some differences were still present. Whereas Obama was called *the Democrat*, referring to him as the prime example and the top person of his political party, McCain’s power was reduced to being called only *Republican*, which could mean any member of the same party. Moreover, only Obama was called *A President Obama*, which is quite suggestive in foreseeing the result of the elections and painting a picture of Obama as the President in advance. In comparison, McCain was called *the Republican rival*, which for its part again reduces McCain’s role in the presidential race to be the underdog. Again, the names given to the candidates reinforce the difference between the candidate’s representations constructed throughout the articles.

5.2 *The International Herald Tribune*

Since the genre of all texts is a “hard news” article, there is very little room for the writer to use loaded terms in the texts. However, in *The International Herald Tribune* Knowlton succeeds in this by adding various meaningful expressions in the articles. These lexical choices are often connected with the two candidates, forming representations worth noticing while interpreting the texts. For instance the naming of the two candidates suggests this in a rather obvious way. When Barack Obama is referred to as *The Democrat*, emphasizing his position as the top democrat of the country, John McCain is merely referred to as *Senator McCain*. Similarly, Obama is mentioned as *a President Obama* or *the 1st black president*, not only once, but altogether five times in five articles, whereas there are no references to McCain as the possible president. Instead, McCain is presented in the position of Obama's *republican opponent* or, in the article that tries to foresee the outcome of the election, *a combative 72-year-old war hero*. Particularly when paired up with the representation of Obama as the 1st black president, the political view of the newspaper and its reporter seems quite biased towards Obama.

The texts also draw from previous events during the campaign, since the readers of the paper are expected to read it daily. Besides informing the readers of the points of view of Obama and McCain, the repetition of events and statements of the candidates help to form and maintain the representations *The International Herald Tribune* and Brian Knowlton are attempting to create. For instance, the article “Both candidates turn to tight Florida race” (Oct, 30, 2008) which by its headlining seems neutral, includes quotes of McCain *pummeling* Obama: “*Senator Obama is running to punish the successful. I'm running to make everyone successful.*” Whereas Obama *despite the more moderate tone he has struck this week, was not taking this lying down*: “*I'm sorry to see my opponent sink so low.*” These types of choices of quotes reinforce the images of Obama as the strong, confident candidate and McCain as the weaker, defiant candidate. Similar representations can also be found in all of the articles.

The discourse practices of the articles are complex, in the sense that there are multiple discourses in each of the articles. What is worth noticing, however, is that the discourses of the reporter and the direct quotations or voices of Barack Obama and John McCain are present in all the texts. Also the voices of voters and the party officials are present. The reported speech of the candidates, the point of view of *The International Herald Tribune* and

the discourses of the voters are all mixed in the genre of "hard news". It is notable, how the texts are chained together with these discourses and form a consistent whole that can be interpreted as *The International Herald Tribune's* political view.

There were several themes that were common in all of the articles. Firstly, Barack Obama is depicted as the "cool" candidate and the assumed clear winner of the presidential race. For instance, in "Campaigns blast away at economic proposals" the text moves from the actual events of the campaigning to the voters' opinions on both candidates and Sarah Palin alienating the voters of McCain. Knowlton paints a picture of Obama having the upper hand and no need for dirty tricks. In contrast, McCain is depicted as a desperate man, near to losing his erratic campaign. The lexical choices of the article support this view. Where Obama *moderated* a panel discussion on unemployment, republicans *came up with a new line of attack* on Obama, criticizing him on his readiness of handling international crises. McCain also *pounded on* his opponent while Obama was reported to, *for his part*, fly to Hawaii to *spend a few days with his ailing grandmother*. McCain, on the other hand, is depicted as a militant, persistent fighter and the underdog of the elections, and is reported to have attacked Obama verbally in several occasions during the campaigning. Secondly, the articles suggest turmoil in the Republican Party concerning their belief that the battle of presidency has already been lost. Thirdly, there is also a strong emphasis on the poll results and the opinions of the voters in the texts.

In addition, the lexical choices of the articles make use of war terminology. For instance "Candidates dashing to the wire" (Nov 2nd 2008) includes this type of terminology and metaphors. The article was published only three days before the election, when the battle between Obama and McCain was coming to its end. In the article, McCain *hits his opponent hard*, the candidates *raced across battleground states*, Obama's campaign took off with a *caucus victory* and Obama told supporters to *expect McCain's campaign to end in a crescendo of attacks on him*. Obama was also quoted saying: "*More of the slash and burn, say-anything, do-anything politics that's calculated to divide and distract...*", which shows that not only *the International Herald Tribune* but also Obama and McCain themselves have realized the power of effective metaphors. A metaphor is also significant in terms of the newspaper's implicit claim to a relationship of solidarity and common identity with the audience (Fairclough 1995b: 71). In this particular newspaper, the metaphors seem to work by connecting the audience to Barack Obama, rather than John McCain. The also texts link intertextually to popular media coverage of the elections over a longer period of time. Thus,

this metaphor of war is ideologically potent, since it helps to sustain and reproduce dominant ideological representations.

5.3 "McCain's defiance vs. Obama's confidence" - Comparing the articles of *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune*

USA Today (*UT*) and *The International Herald Tribune* (*IHT*) are stylistically very different newspapers. This had an influence on our analysis and in particular in comparing the two newspapers with each other. In this chapter we shall combine and deepen the analyses of both newspapers in a comparative manner. We will also consider the merits and shortcomings of both newspapers regarding their reporting of the elections, as well as think of reasons for why the reports and the depictions of the candidates in both newspapers were the way they seem to be, and if any bias occurs.

Whereas the articles on *USA Today* are condensed reports of the most urgent matters concerning the presidential campaigns, *The International Herald Tribune* considers the same matters, but more in depth and often with a wider perspective. For example, something that made headline, front page news in *UT* ("Dems get big boost in early voting", *UT* 22nd Oct 2008) was a mere part of a bigger discussion in *IHT* ("Candidates battle for upper hand in the west", *IHT* 27th Oct 2008). This, of course, raises a question of why another story would be foregrounded so strongly in the other newspaper and backgrounded in the other, and we shall return to this question later on in this chapter. Moreover, as all *IHT*'s articles were from the campaign trail and almost solely written by the same journalist, Brian Knowlton, his voice was always present in the articles. *UT*'s articles were written by different journalists and were of different genres, so the journalist's voices were often hard to find and were hidden in the often minimalistic style of reporting.

The amount of articles concerning the presidential elections differed a lot as well. From the period of two weeks before the elections, there were quite a few issues of *UT* that did not have any articles about the elections. On the contrary, in *IHT* there were several articles in each issue. Each of them concentrated on different aspects of the campaigns: the polls; the rallies; the supporters; the vice presidential nominees etc. This made the reports in *IHT* seem a lot more versatile than in *UT*. Taking into account the wide circulation of *UT* in and outside of the United States, the lack of articles and attention towards the elections in general was quite

surprising. Although *UT*'s current political stand is uncertain, its concentration on Barack Obama was evident. John McCain, on his behalf, was left with very little attention in the articles we analyzed.

In *IHT* John McCain was a lot more present than in *UT* and his role was a lot more powerful and noteworthy. This seems appropriate considering that the presidential race was reaching its peak at the time of publishing the articles. As opposed to the nearly voiceless, defensive representation of McCain in *UT*, the articles on *IHT* represented McCain as a brisk-natured fighter, who was still hopeful of his chances in the race, even if his Republican supporters were depicted as giving up on hope and even beginning to “point fingers” within the party. The Republican Party’s growing pessimism was mentioned in several articles in *IHT*, whereas the Democrats were depicted as standing unified and confident.

A great deal of the representation built of McCain in *IHT* had to do with him being quoted several times criticizing Obama’s tax plans. The same parts of the same speech, *he wants to spread the wealth*, and *he is more interested in controlling who gets your piece of the pie than he is in growing the pie*, were quoted in many of the articles in *IHT*. *UT* used the same quotes, but without repetition. Since Obama gave his response to these accusations in each article by using different quotes, this led to a continuous dialogue between the candidates in each article of *IHT*. The repetition of the same theme made McCain seem to be clutching to the same final straw over and over again, while Obama *handily* played his accusations off. Perhaps the best example was when Obama answered McCain’s accusation with saying *next he will be accusing me of being a communist because I shared my toys in the kindergarten*. The same quote was used in *UT* as well. Moreover, perhaps the best sentence to characterize *IHT*'s stand on the final moments of the presidential race can be found in the article from 24th October, which claims that *there were indications that McCain’s continued attacks on Obama were harming McCain more than they were harming Obama*. This represents well the alignment of *IHT*; representing McCain as the aggressive rival, whereas Obama is depicted as the candidate that plays the game in a fair manner.

Although McCain was not altogether represented in a negative light in *IHT*, we find that the articles served a Democrat goal and ideology in depicting McCain as the “bad guy” and as a possibly dangerous rival of Obama in the elections. Even when McCain’s merits are included in the text, it feels as if they might serve as a warning of him still being capable of swinging votes his way. In a way this emphasizing of McCain’s perseverance could even be seen as an

indirect urge of getting readers to cast their ballot for Obama. It would seem wise for a newspaper that is backing a candidate, in this case Obama, to not start celebrating until all votes have been counted. Therefore it should be important to activate the readers to both acknowledge that the competition is still on, as well as to encourage them to pick the “better” of the two candidates by making the other look better compared to the other.

Repetition of the same themes was a noticeable effect throughout the articles of *IHT*, both in the articles and between them. *UT* had much less repetition, since there were fewer articles in the newspaper altogether. Also, they considered different aspects of the race than *IHT*. The effect of repetition in *IHT* made the series of articles consistent, but also helped to further create certain images of both candidates in the reader’s mind. In this sense the repetition of the same quotes, for example, was an effective way of affecting the reader. In addition to underlining the question of economy and tax issues, *IHT* also often marked that the Republicans were dismissing what the polls were saying about the candidate’s popularity or about the possible result of the elections. This made the Republican Party seem desperate, again, since the results of different polls were an important storyline throughout the articles and probably throughout the whole race to the throne.

As *IHT* pictured Obama as the unaffected and cool winning favorite of the elections, and as the victim of McCain’s continuous attacks, *USA Today* had a different representation of both candidates. As mentioned in section 5.1 of this study, McCain’s role in *UT* was much diminished. He was only quoted a few times and his role was altogether surprisingly small. It felt that in *UT*, Obama was depicted as a candidate so strong that at a stage so late in the presidential race, McCain perhaps would not be able to hold any comparison to him anymore. In contrast to the representations of the candidates in *IHT*, the roles of Obama and McCain feel somewhat reversed in *UT*. *UT* paints a picture of Obama being the more aggressive candidate who *raids territories* and *pokes fun* at McCain’s comments about Obama’s economic policies. The representation created of Obama is not negative by any means, but seems a lot more arrogant than the innocent picture *IHT* gives of Obama. McCain, on his behalf, is depicted as having *given ground and trying to hold things together*, trying to defend whatever states might still be backing him up. Even though he is quoted in a similar way in *UT* as in *IHT*, McCain’s aggressiveness and accusations of Obama’s tax plans are played down in the former. This is executed by, for example, using less war related verbs and adjectives as in *IHT*, by emphasizing the aggressiveness of Obama and by otherwise de-voicing McCain by frequent usage of spokespeople and campaign people throughout the

articles.

Despite representing the two candidates quite differently than in *IHT*, *UT* seems to genuinely support Obama during the last moments of the race. Obama is quoted as a great leader, his personality shines through more than McCain's and his victory in the elections is predicted in most of the articles. Articles in *UT* point out that former, powerful Republicans are now backing up Obama and that Obama has managed to bring together the Democrat party. Even the aforementioned headline of the Democrat Party getting a lot of early voters seems to support this idea. The *UT* editor's letter we had as one of the articles was the only one to draw a clear comparison between the candidates. It talks about which of the candidates would have an easier time with the congress after the elections, and despite its neutral tone, it sides with Obama. This is a good indication of *UT*'s stand. A question remains whether the newspaper has been more inclusive of McCain, or more supportive of the Republican Party before. However, since our study only reached the two weeks prior to the election, we cannot comment on this speculation.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study we intended to look into how two different American newspapers, which have a wide circulation, report about a media event of great importance that two people personify. Our wish was to point out how the newspapers, *USA Today* and *The International Herald Tribune*, build representations of these two people, the US presidential candidates of the 2008 elections, Barack Obama and John McCain. We wanted to examine what the representations are like in each newspaper and if and how they differ from each other. We also intended to seek if any political ideologies or hidden motives could be found in the texts.

Our study showed that the representations do differ considerably between the newspapers. Both papers, however, were surprisingly united in presenting Barack Obama as the very likely winner of the presidential race and moreover, the better candidate for the office. This might be linked to the fact that former president Bush's policies turned out to be quite unpopular towards the end of his term. Therefore the American press, whether Democratic or Republican, seems to side with Obama's policies. It also seems, at least in the light of the newspapers we used in this study, that Rieder's claims of the media not being biased towards Obama are strongly exaggerated. The writers and reporters of both *UT* and *IHT* came up with

representations that were not merely reports, such as *the 1st black president* of Obama and *a combative 72-year-old war hero* of McCain in *IHT*. Instead, these word choices seem to be designed to affect the reader, whether it is about deciding who to vote for, whether to vote at all, or to stronger stand behind an already chosen candidate. Studying whether word choices such as these actually had an effect on the readers of the newspapers could serve as a great opportunity for further research. Another suggestion for further study would be to study the newspapers from the duration of the whole presidential campaigns, and to see if the political stands or the reporting styles of the newspapers have in fact changed in the long run.

The study would have been more comprehensive, if the amount of articles would have been greater. Five articles from the duration of two weeks from each newspaper is not a large amount, and merely give an indication of what the results of this study would be if a wider sample was analyzed with more time. Moreover, the choice of newspapers was not perfect as we had to choose from newspapers that were most readily available to us at the time of beginning this study. We would have gotten more contrast to the study had we chosen, for example, the strongly McCain-endorsing *New York Post* instead of *USA Today*. *The International Herald Tribune* could have been substituted with *New York Times*, the newspaper which *IHT* is published under. This choice of newspapers might have offered an interesting perspective on two East Coast newspapers with polar opposite political stands.

On the whole we were happy with the way the study turned out. We were able to gain a fresh approach to an old concept and find differences in the representations and between the newspapers. We also feel that we were able to carry out a meaningful study that encourages critical reading. Even though the sample we used was limiting, the results show that notable differences were still evident in the articles, and we were able to successfully point them out.

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APPENDIX 1: *USA Today*

(1) Dems get big boost in early voting (22nd Oct 2008 p.1A)

10/22/2008 News 1A (1 of 36)

Dems get big boost in early voting

Trend is a reversal of pattern favoring GOP

By Richard Wolf
USA TODAY

Democrats are voting early in greater numbers than Republicans in many closely contested states, reversing a pattern that favored the GOP in the past.

The trend is evident in Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, Nevada and New Mexico. In Georgia, blacks are voting in greater numbers than in 2004.

"This is like a mirror image of what we've seen in the past," says Paul Gronke of the Early Voting Information Center at Reed College. President Bush won 60% of the early votes in 2000 and 2004, he says.

"It looks good for Barack Obama," says Michael McDonald, a George Mason University elections expert who tracks early voting.

Elections officials caution against quick conclusions. "We've still got a long ways to go," says Gary Bartlett, head of North Carolina's elections board.

Thirty-four states allow early in-person voting. All accept absentee ballots. Up to one-third of all voters are expected to vote before Election Day.

Election records in many states show voters as affiliated with a political party or independent. States that must comply with the federal Voting Rights Act, such as Georgia, also show racial breakdowns. No votes will be counted until Nov. 4.

Obama campaign manager David Plouffe says he gauges success by early voters' party affiliation or where they live. In Ohio, he says, "we really like where these votes are coming from."

Republicans say Democrats are wasting their time pushing loyalists to the polls early. "They only get to vote once," quips Rich Beeson, political director for the Republican National Committee.

Who's voting early, according to state data:

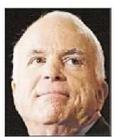
► **Florida:** Republicans outnumber Democrats in absentee voting by nearly 3-to-2 among 630,000 voters, according to the state Republican Party. But Democrats are closing that gap in early in-person voting; Monday's opening day produced nearly a 2-to-1 advantage for Democrats among 150,000 voters. Bush carried the state with 52% in 2004.

► **Ohio:** In Cuyahoga County, which Democrat John Kerry won by a 2-to-1 ratio in 2004, nearly 45,000 people who affiliate with Democrats in primary elections have cast ballots, compared with 10,000 who vote in GOP primaries. In Hamilton County, where Bush won 53% in 2004, three in five early voters are affiliated with Democrats.

► **North Carolina:** Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than 2-to-1 among 480,000 early voters. In 2004, Democrats' early voting edge was 58% to 42%. Bush won the state in 2004 with 56%.

► **Georgia:** More than 750,000 people have voted. Voters don't register by party, but 36% of early voters are black — up from 22% in 2004.

► **Iowa:** Nearly 200,000 people have voted, including 100,000 Democrats and 54,000 Republicans. Bush won Iowa in 2004 by 10,000 votes.



Jabs on crisis management

■ McCain, above, Obama trade shots, 5A

Politics

2nd former Bush official endorses Obama

Camps sustain volleys over 'Plumber,' taxes

By David Jackson
USA TODAY

President Bush's former press secretary Scott McClellan endorsed Barack Obama on Thursday, becoming the second Bush White House veteran this week to back the Democrat.

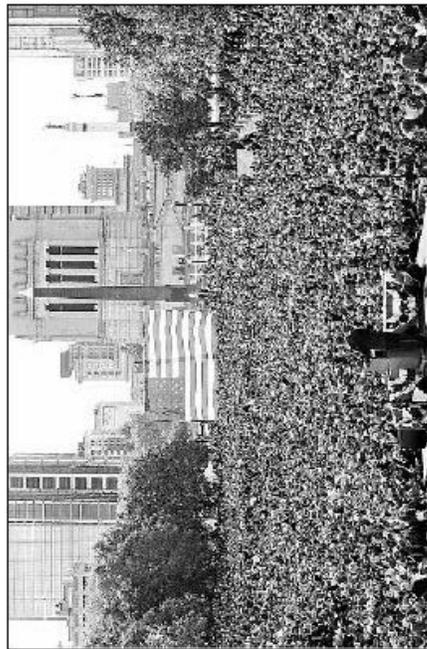
McClellan, who wrote a book critical of the Bush administration, said Obama has "the best chance of changing the way Washington works."

His comments were made during the taping of a new CNN talk show featuring comedian D.L. Hughley that airs this weekend.

McClellan's announcement comes days after former secretary of State Colin Powell said on Sunday that he backs Obama. McClellan was Bush's chief spokesman from 2003 to 2006 and went



By Chip SomODEVILLE, GERRY IMAGES
In Florida: Sen. John McCain gets a hug Thursday at a rally in Ormond Beach.



By Joe KACIC, GERRY IMAGES
In Indiana: Sen. Barack Obama speaks at the American Legion Mall in Indianapolis on Thursday. Later, he left the campaign to visit his ailing grandmother in Hawaii.

bacher, who grilled Obama about his tax plan this month.

"Sen. Obama is more interested in controlling who gets your piece of the pie than he is in growing the pie," McCain said in Ormond Beach, Fla. He also criticized Obama for changing details in his plans, arguing that Obama would "say anything to get elected."

Hours later in Indianapolis, Obama said all but the wealthiest Americans would get a tax break under his proposal, while McCain plans to reward corporations that move jobs overseas. He denounced McCain's criticisms as "say-anything, do-anything politics."

"We've tried it John McCain's way," Obama said, stressing the nation's financial crisis. "We've tried it George Bush's way."

Obama left the campaign later in the day to visit his ailing grandmother in Hawaii. He plans to resume campaigning Saturday in Reno.

Indiana has backed a Democrat only once since 1936: Its voters picked Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

Without Florida, Bush would not have won either of his presidential elections.

Plumber Tour," saying the Ohio man is the kind of aspiring business owner who would be hurt by higher taxes under an Obama administration. The tour is named for Joe Wurzel-

to work for his fellow Texan's first presidential campaign in 1999.

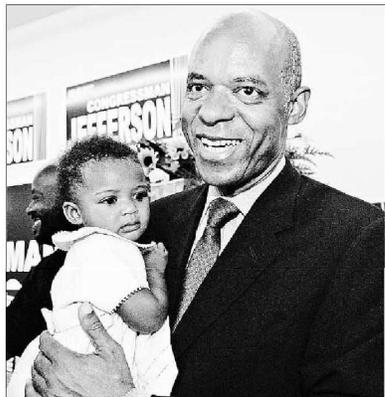
Obama and Republican nominee John McCain, meanwhile, invoked Bush and "Joe the Plumber" in their ongoing de-

(3) McCain wages fight 'behind his own front lines (29th Oct 2008 p.6A)

6A - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2008 - USA TODAY

Politics

McCain wages fight 'behind his own front lines'



In position to win: Rep. William Jefferson, D-La., here with granddaughter Phaelin Jones, was charged last year with accepting bribes.



Felon on the ballot: Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, was found guilty Monday of concealing more than \$250,000 in gifts he received.

Scandals dog incumbents in both parties

But they may have less of an impact this year

By John Fritze and Ken Dilanian
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens is the only member of Congress running for re-election as a convicted felon, but he's not the only one running from scandal.

From admission of adultery by a Florida incumbent to a candidate under indictment in Louisiana, lawmakers in both parties are wrestling with embarrassment and imbrigo as they seek another term in Congress.

Even so, the historic presidential campaign may make candidate indiscretions less significant than they were in 2006, experts said. "Voters are paying attention to the presidential race to the exclusion of other developments," said David Wasserman, who tracks House races for the *Cook Political Report*. Ethical matters, he said, are "pretty far down the list of priorities for voters."

A jury found Stevens guilty Monday of concealing more than \$250,000 in gifts he received from wealthy friends. The 84-year-old Republican vowed to appeal the conviction and also to continue campaigning for an eighth term even as the presidential candidates, fellow Sens. John McCain and Barack

Obama, called for his resignation.

A campaign spokesman did not return a call seeking comment, but Stevens told Fox News he would return home today to restart his campaign. Asked why Alaskans would vote for him, Stevens said: "Ask them. I know they will."

Alaska Democratic Senate candidate Mark Begich has mostly avoided the issue. But on Tuesday, as Stevens announced he received an endorsement from an Eskimo whaling group, Begich spoke up.

"The charges against Senator Stevens were serious and the conviction sends a strong message that no man is above the law," Begich said in a statement.

Although Begich had remained quiet, the national Democratic Party aired television spots publicizing the trial. The party developed a slogan, "Ted Stevens: It's not about Alaska anymore." State Democrats have launched a website, *retired.com*.

Candidates running against someone under investigation or in turmoil must be cautious in their attacks, said Bruce Gronbeck, director of the University of Iowa Center for Media Studies and Political Culture.

"You have to be careful you don't generate sympathy," Gronbeck said, noting that scandals get a lot of exposure. "If any of these opponents comes out really strongly they just haven't been paying attention to what's

happening in the media world."

Republicans have tread lightly with Florida Democrat Rep. Tim Mahoney, who admitted to having extramarital affairs. Cook predicts the race is likely to be won by his Republican opponent, Tom Rooney.

Louisiana Democrat Rep. William Jefferson has faced little criticism despite being charged last year with accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. He is likely to win re-election, Cook says.

Scandals have sunk incumbents. In 2006, Curt Weldon, a 10-term Republican from suburban Philadelphia, was facing a strong opponent when the FBI raided his home. Though associates later pleaded guilty, Weldon was not charged. He lost 56% to 44%.

Another Republican under investigation, Rep. Jerry Lewis of California, is considered by Cook to be a safe bet to keep his seat, even though his opponent, Tim Prince, has made Lewis' conduct a centerpiece of his campaign in radio ads and mailings.

"Our whole campaign theme has been 'restore principles to Congress,'" said Patrick Kahler, Prince's campaign manager.

Authorities have contacted Lewis' lawyers, but Lewis is not sure what the investigation is about, spokesman Jim Specht said. "His position is that he's always done everything to meet the highest ethical standard," Specht said.

Obama's gains in GOP territory has him sharing travel plans with rival

By Kathy Kieley and David Jackson
USA TODAY

They don't agree on many issues, but judging by their itineraries, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama and Republican John McCain have similar tastes in travel destinations.

As the campaign draws to a close, both candidates plan to return to the same handful of states, such as Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Colorado and New Mexico. It's a sign of the challenging times for the GOP that both candidates are mostly concentrating on states President Bush won in 2004. Obama is trying to raid Republican territory while McCain is playing defense.

"Clearly, McCain has given ground and is trying to hold things together" in Republican-leaning states, said Andy Taylor, a political scientist at North Carolina State University.

North Carolina isn't the kind of place a Republican presidential candidate wants to be days before the election, Taylor said. McCain is "fighting behind his own front lines here," rather than trying to claim new ground for the Republican Party, he said.

After speaking Tuesday in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, McCain headed back to Florida, where he will spend most of today.

"I'm not afraid of the fight. I'm ready for it," McCain said at an ice hockey arena in Fayetteville, N.C.

McCain senior adviser Charles Black said McCain is making the necessary stops.

"If you win all the red states, you win," he said.

Obama's campaign manager, David Plouffe, is confident that his candidate will be in the right places.

"We're just playing by the rules. It's about putting together the 270

electoral votes" needed to win, Plouffe said.

Obama, who stumped in Pennsylvania and Virginia on Tuesday, will move on to North Carolina and Florida. He will be joined part of the day by former president Bill Clinton. In addition, Obama will appear on *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart* tonight.

"I just want all of you to know that if we see this kind of dedication on Election Day, there is no way that we're not going to bring change to America," Obama told the crowd that turned out in the rain to see him at Widener University near Philadelphia.

There are 538 Electoral College votes; it takes 270 to win the

White House. At this point, the itineraries of McCain and Obama are all about picking up enough states to get them to that number.

Because the president is chosen by electors — awarded in most states on a winner-take-all basis — the race's final weeks become a frenzied effort to win battleground states, while swaths of the country are ignored. Of the states McCain and Obama have visited since Oct. 20, only two went for Democratic candidate John Kerry in 2004: New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.

Obama's fundraising and aggressive effort to win over Republican votes has put some states in play that had been ignored in past presidential campaigns. One example is Virginia, which Obama has visited twice in the past week.

The nation's most populous states have been left behind. "It feels like getting all dressed up for the prom and not having anybody to go with," says Roger Salazar, a spokesman for the Democratic Party in California. Obama has a wide lead in many state polls there, just as McCain leads in Texas polls.

On the trail

Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama started Tuesday in Pennsylvania, Obama then went to Virginia; McCain to North Carolina.

Pennsylvania: 21 electoral votes. Democrat John Kerry won in 2004 with 51%.

Virginia: 13 electoral votes. Republican George W. Bush won in '04 with 54%.

North Carolina: 15 electoral votes. Bush won in '04 with 56%.

Source: USA TODAY research

(4) Obama blankets TV with ad (30th Oct 2008 p.5A)

USA TODAY 10/30/2008 News 5A (5 of 44)

Obama blankets TV with ad

Times Clinton appearance for 11 p.m. news

By Kathy Kiely
USA TODAY

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Barack Obama pulled out all political and technological stops Wednesday, barnstorming across Republican territory, making a late-night appearance at a rally here with former president Bill Clinton, and blanketing the airwaves.

Obama's first joint campaign appearance with Clinton, the last Democrat to serve in the White House and husband of his former rival, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., came on the same evening as his campaign aired a 30-minute TV ad.

In what Obama aide Linda Douglass described as "a bit of a high-wire act," the campaign cut from the pre-taped ad with a live feed from a rally Obama held in Sunrise, Fla., a suburb of Orlando, with his running mate, Joe Biden.

Obama's ad ran simultaneously on several broadcast and cable networks at a cost of more than \$4 million. It intertwined stories of families facing financial and personal difficulties with Obama's comments on how he plans to help them. It cut to the live rally just as Obama was reaching the climax of his speech.

"If you'll stand with me, and fight by my side, and cast your ballot for me, then I promise you, we will not just win Florida, we will win this election," he said to the roaring crowd during the last part of the ad.

The ad highlighted the enormous financial advantage enjoyed by Obama, who opted out of the public campaign finance system. McCain, who accepted public funding, is limited to \$84 million for the general election campaign. In September, Obama



By Joe Raedle, Getty Images

First rally together: Barack Obama and Bill Clinton are introduced during a campaign stop at Osceola Heritage Park in Kissimmee, Fla.

raised \$153 million and spent \$106 million in the first two weeks of October.

Buying a half-hour block of TV time was a chance for Obama to capture the nation's attention and control the news cycle, said Ken Goldstein, head of the Wisconsin Advertising Project at the University of Wisconsin. "Campaigns usually have very few chances to get through unfiltered to voters," he said.

After the ad aired, Tucker Bounds, spokesman for Repub-

lican rival John McCain, said: "As anyone who has bought anything from an infomercial knows, the sales-job is always better than the product. Buyer beware."

At his appearance with Bill Clinton, timed for the 11 p.m. ET news, Obama took a shot at the current president and the Republican who wants to succeed him.

"We've dug a deep hole, and George Bush wants to hand the shovel to John McCain," Obama said.

Clinton's willingness to share a

On the trail

Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain campaigned in Florida on Wednesday. Obama began in North Carolina. McCain spent the night in Ohio.

Florida: 27 electoral votes. President Bush won in 2004 with 52%.

North Carolina: 15 electoral votes. Bush won in 2004 with 56%.

stage with Obama was also a sign of Obama's success in unifying the party after a bruising primary battle with Clinton's wife.

"I am honored to be here to voice my support," Clinton said.

The two Democrats' appearance came at the same hour that an interview Obama had with Jon Stewart aired on the comedian's *Daily Show*.

In the interview, Obama joked that his daughters were appalled at his big TV buy. He quoted 10-year-old Malia as saying "Are you saying that my programs are going to be interrupted?"

"I said, 'No, we didn't buy on Disney,'" Obama said.

Obama spent the day trolling for votes here and in North Carolina, two states where early voting is underway.

The last Democratic presidential candidate to win North Carolina was Jimmy Carter in 1976. The last to win Florida was Clinton in 1996.

In Raleigh, Obama poked fun at attacks on his economic policies by McCain: "By the end of the week, he'll be accusing me of being a secret Communist because I shared my toys in kindergarten."

Contributing: Fredreka Schouten in Washington, D.C., and Martha T. Moore in New York City

(5) What presidential candidates omit in their grand plans (30th Oct 2008 p.12A)

12A · THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2008 · USA TODAY

"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

-Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

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What presidential candidates omit in their grand plans

Throughout this campaign season, most of the public's attention has focused on the presidential race and what kind of changes John McCain or Barack Obama would bring to the country.

The candidates' debates, speeches, ads and infomercials have been filled with detailed I'll-do-this, I'll-do-that plans for taxes, health care, energy and other issues.

Neither talks much, however, about the reality that another institution — Congress — will have a major say in what actually gets done. Whoever occupies the White House will be dealing with a House and Senate that could be significantly more Democratic and filled with power brokers who have their own agendas.

McCain doesn't talk much about this because it imposes serious limitations on his ability to fulfill campaign promises (though lately, he has begun to warn about the dangers of one-party government). Obama doesn't talk much about this because it might scare moderate and conservative voters worried about liberal excess. In different ways, Congress is likely to be a major headache for either man.

The problem is more obvious for McCain, who as a Republican would be facing a Democratic Congress with bad memories of all the times it was thwarted by President Bush. With the right leadership, divided government can produce productive compromise. But it can also be endlessly frustrating for a president, like the current one, who'd rather not compromise with the opposition.

McCain has a record of bipartisan deal-making. But the McCain of the past two

months hasn't seemed much like the senator who joined with Democrats to pass a controversial campaign-finance law or break a logjam on judicial nominations. Many of his key proposals — extending the Bush tax cuts, using tax policy to restructure the health care

system, keeping troops in Iraq and nominating conservative judges — would encounter serious resistance in a Democratic Congress.

On the face of it, Obama would have a much easier time with a Congress led by fellow Democrats. But one-party government is no guarantee of harmony or of solving problems — particularly those that require painful, bipartisan solutions, such as the underfunding of Social Security and Medicare.

Getting fellow party members to embrace wrenching change is difficult and politically dangerous. When newly elected President Clinton proposed a tough but necessary deficit-reduction plan in his

first months in office in 1993, he came within a single vote of losing in the House and Senate, both controlled by Democrats. Clinton's sweeping health care overhaul never even made it to a vote.

A President Obama would have to straddle the liberal wing of his party, which favors more spending on an array of social and economic programs, and the more fiscally conservative "blue dog" Democrats — a good thing if it forces him toward the center.

For voters, this complicates Tuesday's choice. The question should not be just whom to pick for president but how best to calibrate the balance of power in Washington.

Bigger majorities?

Democrats control both chambers of Congress and are expected to gain seats Tuesday. Current breakdown:

House of Representatives

- ▶ Democrats 235
- ▶ Republicans 199
- ▶ Vacancies 1

Senate

- ▶ Democrats 49
- ▶ Republicans 49
- ▶ Independent 2*

*Both independents caucus with the Democrats, giving them control.

APPENDIX 2: *The International Herald Tribune*

(6) Campaigns blast away at economic proposals (22nd Oct 2008 p.6)

6 | The Global Edition of The New York Times
Wednesday, October 22, 2008

WORLD NEWS | UNITED STATES

Campaigns blast away at economic proposals

With 2 weeks to go, jobs and taxes are key

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON: The Democratic and Republican presidential candidates hammered away at economic themes Tuesday, criticizing each other's proposals on taxes, the creation of jobs and government spending at events in the crucial states of Florida and Pennsylvania.

In Palm Beach, Senator Barack Obama moderated a panel discussion on unemployment, the subprime mortgage crisis and how businesses were scraping along in a weak economy.

"We need a whole new set of priorities to create jobs and grow our economy over the long term," Obama said.

Senator John McCain, meanwhile, appearing on CBS, said that it was "absolutely not true" that, as some reports have suggested, the Republican ticket could not win the election if it concentrated on the economy.

"We're focusing on the economy," McCain said. "I'm the candidate and this campaign is about the economy."

Republicans also came up with a new line of attack to question Obama's readiness for the presidency.

In Pennsylvania, McCain seized on a speech in which the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Senator Joseph Biden Jr., predicted that Obama would face "an international crisis, a generated crisis," if he was elected Nov. 4.

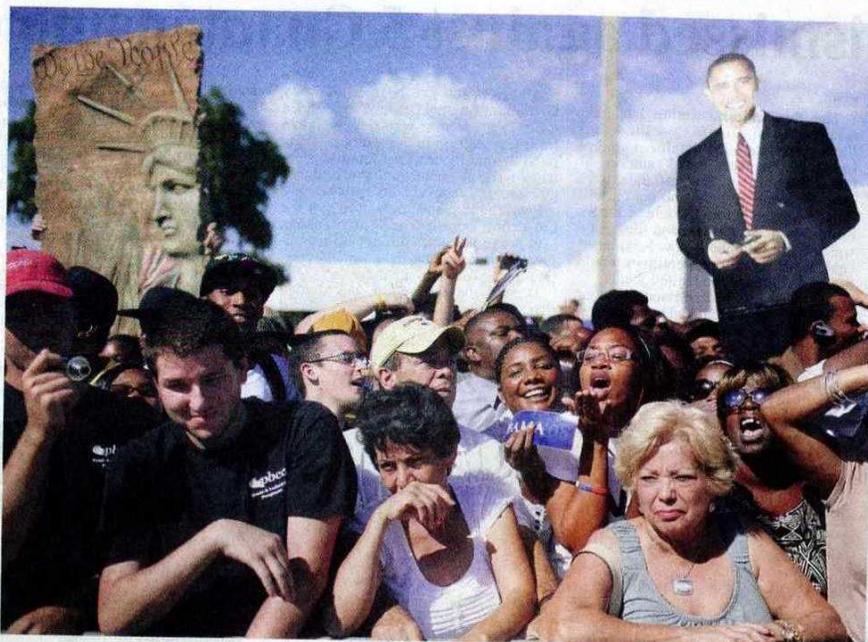
Biden had said at a fund-raising event in Seattle that "it will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama like they did John Kennedy."

"Watch," he said, "we're going to have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

Although Biden was simply speculating, McCain treated the remark as a "guarantee" of trouble.

"Senator Biden guaranteed that if Senator Obama is elected, we will have an international crisis to test America's new president," he said. "We don't want a president who invites testing from the world at a time when our economy is in crisis and Americans are already fighting in two wars."

Obama dealt handily with an ad disseminated by Hillary Rodham Clinton during the primary campaign that suggested he would be unready to handle



People who couldn't get in to Barack Obama's meeting at Palm Beach Community College in Florida on Tuesday sat outside to listen. Damon Winter/The New York Times

an international crisis.

The Illinois senator, for his part, was leaving the campaign to fly to Hawaii to spend a few days with his ailing grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, 85, who raised him during his teenage years. Obama will miss scheduled appearances in Iowa and Wisconsin.

To leave the trail at this juncture carries an element of risk. Obama leads in national polls, but in some states his lead is slim.

He last went to Hawaii in mid-August, during the Russian invasion of Georgia. With Obama out of the media spotlight then, McCain pounded on his opponent

for being "naïve" for suggesting that both Russia and Georgia should show restraint.

McCain mentioned that again Tuesday, and his campaign has been e-mailing the Biden remarks to reporters as further evidence that electing Obama would be risky.

David Wade, a Biden spokesman, said that the senator was simply trying to say that "history shows presidents face challenges from Day One" and that "we need Barack Obama's good judgment and steady leadership, not the erratic and ideological Bush-McCain approach."

McCain spent Tuesday in Pennsylvania, which appears increasingly critical to his hopes of victory. His advisers, growing pessimistic about their chances in Colorado, New Mexico and Iowa, now see few avenues to the White House without a come-from-behind victory in Pennsylvania, CNN reported. The state last backed a Republican in 1988. But a variety of trends seem to be against him.

As voters have gotten to know McCain, they have not warmed to him. A new poll indicates that only 36 percent of voters view him favorably while 45 percent view him unfavorably.

As voters have gotten to know Obama, they have warmed to him, with more than half, 53 percent, now saying they have a favorable impression of him and 33 percent saying they have an unfavorable one.

The New York Times and CBS News polls — conducted with the same respondents before the first presidential debate and after the last one — show that McCain has made no progress in appealing to voters on a personal level, and that he and his running mate, Sarah Palin, have alienated some voters.

In this stretch run, meanwhile, Palin has seemed like a candidate trying to wriggle free of her handlers.

She recently twice took questions from reporters, the first time on an airport tarmac without her press staff's knowledge.

After landing in Colorado Springs on Sunday, Palin marched over to a local television crew and began answering questions on camera, sending the traveling press corps sprinting in pursuit, and her press staff scrambling.

"Get Tracey," one campaign aide barked into his headset, calling for Tracey Schmitt, Palin's ever-watchful spokeswoman, who rushed over to supervise — and to try in vain to stop — the impromptu news conference.

Reporters following Palin have grumbled over their extremely limited access to the candidate.

But in the last few days, Palin appeared to be bucking her staff and answering questions with more confidence — and also at times taking positions that were in conflict with McCain's.

On Sunday, she criticized the Republican National Committee's use of automated telephone calls that slam Obama on a number of issues, saying she would rather have a direct conversation with Americans about the economy.

And in a break with McCain, she told the Christian Broadcasting Network that she supported a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage.

McCain has said the definition of marriage should be left to the states.

Jack Healy, Elisabeth Bumiller, John M. Broder, Michael Powell and Megan Thee contributed reporting.



13 days to the vote

(7) Support expanding for Obama, poll shows (24th Oct 2008 p.1, 4)

Support expanding for Obama, poll shows

Democrat erodes the traditional voter base for Republicans

By Jim Rutenberg, Marjorie Connelly and Brian Knowlton

Senator Barack Obama is building strong support among the constituencies of the political coalition that sent George W. Bush back to the White House four years ago, including white Catholics, married women and people from Midwestern states who usually vote Republican but are now among the hardest hit by the economic slowdown, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll.

Underscoring the building strength of Obama's candidacy less than two



**ELECTIONS
2008**

weeks before Election Day, the poll found that Obama is competitive with McCain even among voters whose support he had struggled to gain during the Democratic nominating fight, including white men and working-class voters.

There were some encouraging signs for Obama's Republican opponent, Senator John McCain. Coming on a week when Obama's running mate, Senator Joseph Biden Jr., warned that hostile foreign leaders would quickly test a President Obama, voters are more closely divided about Obama's ability to handle a crisis.

And, of potential concern for Obama's strategists, a third of those surveyed said they knew someone who does not support Obama because he is black.

But overall the poll found that Obama would defeat McCain if the election were held now, with 52 percent of probable voters saying they would vote for Obama and 39 percent saying they would vote for McCain.

Still, politicians learned long ago — and even the pollsters caution — not to rely heavily on opinion surveys; unexpected developments or subtle shifts can turn the course of a close race or tighten even a sizable gap. With Obama about to leave the campaign trail for two critical days to visit his gravely ill grandmother in Hawaii, Obama advisers are holding their breath.

Republicans were taking some heart, moreover, from a new Associated Press poll showing Obama to have an insignificant one-point nationwide lead — though that was an anomaly among national polls. Among recent surveys, Fox put the Obama advantage at 9 points, NBC/WSJ at 10 points, Pew at 14 and ABC/Washington Post at 11.

But the new poll also found that voters' negative views of McCain were on the rise, as were their negative views of the Republican Party, and that Republicans themselves had grown steadily more pessimistic

CAMPAIGN, Continued on Page 4

Support expanding for Obama, poll shows

CAMPAIGN, From Page 1

about their chances in the election.

Polls in one key state coveted by McCain, Pennsylvania, give Obama a sizable lead, but not enough to comfort the state's Democratic governor, Ed Rendell. "I'm still a little nervous," he told CNN, "so I have asked Obama to come back."

McCain appeared to have gained some traction with his talk of how average Americans like "Joe the Plumber" — now an archetypal hard-working middle-class American — might suffer under a President Obama.

"He wants to 'quote,' spread the wealth around," McCain told a crowd in Ormond Beach, Florida. "He believes in redistributing the wealth, not in policies that grow our economy and create jobs and opportunities for all Americans. Senator Obama is more interested in controlling who gets your piece of the pie than he is in growing the pie."

That brought a cry from the crowd of "socialist!" Obama later went out of his way, during a speaking event before an estimated 35,000 people in Indianapolis, to try to rebut the suggestion.

"It's true that I want to roll back the Bush tax cuts on the wealthiest Americans and go back to the rate they paid under Bill Clinton," he said. "John McCain calls that socialism. What he forgets is that just a few years ago, he himself said those Bush tax cuts were irresponsible. He said he couldn't in good conscience support a tax cut where the benefits went to the wealthy at the expense of middle class Americans who most need tax relief. Well, he was right then, and I am right now."

There were indications that McCain's continued attacks on Obama were harming McCain more than they were harming Obama. The percentage of respondents who now say they have an unfavorable view of McCain is at its highest level since The New York Times and CBS began asking about him in 1999. In all, 46 percent said they had an unfavorable view of him.

Obama, who has run many negative advertisements himself — while mixing those with positive ads — is not paying a similar price in voters' minds. In all, 52 percent said they had a favorable opinion of Obama and 31 percent said they had an unfavorable view.

McCain's political party, meanwhile, continues to struggle. Americans in general see the Republican Party more negatively than they have at any time since 1985, when The Times and CBS News began asking about the political parties. In the current poll, 60 percent of the respondents said their opinion of the Republican Party is not favorable while 36 percent said their opinion is favorable.

The Democratic Party fared far better. Forty percent of the respondents said they have an unfavorable view of the party while a majority, 56 percent, have a favorable view. That is despite the finding in the poll that there remains overwhelming disapproval of the Democratic-controlled Congress.

That difference in standing was reflected in comments from some respondents in the poll who said they had voted for Bush in 2004 but were now planning to vote for Obama.

"I've always been a Republican, but I've switched in the last four years," said Helen Taylor, 64, of Los Fresnos, Texas. "I voted for Bush because I knew more about him than Kerry and I stuck with the Republican stance on things at that time, but I became concerned about things Bush was doing and now I'm more in line with the Democratic platform. I also like Barack Obama because he has intelligence and class and the ability to think on his feet."

Although a national poll is not a gauge for opinion of voters in individual districts, it can provide insight about the broad strength of the parties. In the Times/CBS News poll, 48 percent of probable voters said they plan to vote for the Democratic candidate for Congress in their district, while 36 percent expect to back the Republican.

Republicans are increasingly pessimistic about their party's chances next month. Forty-two percent expect Obama to win while 35 percent predict a McCain victory. Conversely, Democrats have become even more confident: 84 percent said Obama will defeat McCain, up from 65 percent who said that in September.

Four years ago, partisans from both parties were optimistic. Just before the election, 8 in 10 Republican voters were confident that Bush would be re-elected and more than 6 in 10 Democrats were convinced that their party's nominee, John Kerry, would win.

Throughout the campaign, McCain has been seen by voters as more prepared for the job of president. In the current poll, the two are seen as equally prepared.

Obama continues to have the confidence of voters on the economy and health care. More than 6 in 10 of the voters polled have confidence in his handling of those issues, while less than half feel the same about McCain. Voters have roughly the same level of confidence in each candidate's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq.

Far more important than national polling numbers are the state-by-state battles as presidential candidates work to assemble the 270 Electoral College votes needed for election; as Al Gore learned in 2000, the popular vote matters not.

McCain now seems to be focusing on states like Pennsylvania and Florida that would be crucial to reaching 270. But while Obama aides can now imagine a half-dozen plausible combinations of state results to bring victory, McCain's options are few.

(8) Candidates battle for upper hand in the west (27th Oct 2008 p.5)

Candidates battle for upper hand in the West

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON: With concern mounting in the Republican Party, Senator John McCain on Sunday shrugged off a series of national polls showing Senator Barack Obama holding a clear lead in the U.S. presidential contest, saying, "This is going to be a very close race, and I believe I'm going to win it."



"We've closed in the last week," he said, speaking nine days before the election Nov. 4.

In an interview with NBC from Iowa, a state where Obama enjoys a comfortable edge in opinion polls, McCain spent much of his time on defense — batting back the bad polling news, standing up for his running mate, and distancing himself from President George W. Bush, even while saying they shared "a common philosophy," and trying to shake off signs of Republican pessimism.

But he also took the offense, claiming that his Democratic rival would impose high taxes at the worst possible time.

"He wants to 'spread the wealth,'" McCain said, trying to turn against Obama a phrase the Illinois senator had used. "He wants to raise taxes in a time of economic difficulties."

Obama, speaking later in Denver, pushed back.

"Senator McCain has been throwing everything he's got at us, hoping something will stick," he said. "He's even called me a socialist for suggesting that we focus on tax cuts, not for corporations and the wealthy, but for the middle class."

McCain, he said, had also tried to distance himself from Bush.

"But then, just this morning, Senator McCain said that he and President Bush 'share a common philosophy,'" Obama said. "That's right, Colorado. I guess that was John McCain finally giving us a little straight talk."

By most calculations of what he needs to win, McCain would have to hold the states leaning his way, win nearly all the states currently rated as toss-ups, and pry away certain states that are leaning toward Obama — like Ohio and Virginia. Some of the states leaning to Obama are rated as within the statistical margin of error for the polls, and McCain insists that his hopes are not unrealistic.

But with Obama's position seeming



Joe G. Hong/The Associated Press

Obama at a rally Sunday in Denver. As his lead grows, he is challenging McCain in states that voted Republican in the last election.

to solidify in states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, he had the luxury of devoting more time to the West. State polls now present him a number of possible combinations amounting to the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win; McCain has far fewer.

McCain has found himself defending states won by Bush in 2004, including Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico, while Obama has not seen the need, since mid-October, to campaign in states that voted Democratic four years ago.

Part of the McCain ticket's problem — to judge by opinion polls that McCain resolutely rejected — are the doubts many voters have about Governor Sarah Palin's readiness for high office. Asked about this, McCain replied: "I don't defend her. I praise her. She needs no defense."

But he did defend her against criticism of the Republican Party for spending \$150,000 on the wardrobe and makeup of the self-described "hockey mom."

"She lives a frugal life," McCain said. "She and her family are not wealthy, she and her family were thrust into this."

McCain has accused his rival of overconfidence — suggesting that the Illinois senator already had an Inaugural speech prepared, written by John Podesta. But Podesta was a supporter of Hillary Clinton when the speech was written early this year. Obama denied McCain's charge, and has been cautioning his supporters not to stop working.

The candidates agree on one thing: anything can happen. McCain sugges-

ted that he might defy expectations the way Harry Truman did in 1948 in his comeback victory over Thomas Dewey.

"Those polls have consistently shown me much further behind than we actually are," McCain said.

But Republicans have expressed increasing doubts, with some blaming the McCain campaign for never finding focus or reaching full stride.

"This is not the kind of thing you like to have happening," Karl Rove, the former top adviser to Bush, said on Fox television about recent finger-pointing among Republicans. "It's generally a sign people are throwing in the towel and thinking they're going to lose."

Obama leads McCain in national opinion polls, and early voting carries some hopeful signs for him. Blacks in some districts have voted in unprecedented numbers.

"It's through the roof," said the NBC political director, Chuck Todd.

Hispanics have shifted toward Obama, and Democratic registrations far outnumber Republicans.

But the polls have been something of a puzzle. Rove noted that on the same day last week, a New York Times poll had Obama with a 13-point national lead while an Associated Press poll gave him a one-point edge.

"We endow these polls with a false scientific precision they simply do not have," Rove said.

Still, Charlie Cook, a longtime political analyst, said that while Obama advisers might worry about slippage, there were no signs of it; the Democratic tide appeared unusually strong even

in conservative states like Georgia.

One early indicator on Election Day might be Virginia. It last voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in 1964, but polls give Obama a lead.

"I think Senator Obama can be president without Virginia," the state's Democratic governor, Tim Kaine, said on Fox. "But I do not see how Senator McCain can be president without Virginia."

Analysts note that there is still time for some dramatic, momentum-shifting event, but many Republicans appear grim.

David Frum, a former Bush speechwriter, wrote in The Washington Post that a Republican in Congress told him: "There is not a safe Republican seat in the country. I don't mean that we're going to lose all of them. But we could lose any of them."

iht.com/uselections

- Senator John McCain's conflicting impulses toward deliberation and aggression have marked his career and, if he wins the White House, could shape his presidency.
- A President Barack Obama would prize consensus, except when he would disregard it. His lifelong penchant for control would probably translate into a disciplined White House.
- Long before her unexpected arrival on a presidential ticket, confrontation had been a political comfort zone for Governor Sarah Palin.

(9) Both candidates turn to tight Florida race (30th Oct 2008 p.7)

International Herald Tribune | 7
Thursday, October 30, 2008

Both candidates turn to tight Florida race

Obama books nationwide infomercial

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON: Barack Obama and John McCain pressed their closing appeals full-throttle Wednesday in another key state — Florida — as Obama wielded his daunting financial advantage to book television time nationwide for a rare half-hour infomercial and to saturate the airwaves in other states.

But McCain seemed to be lifting his own game, shrugging off pessimistic voices in his Republican Party as he campaigned in Florida, having tightened the race to a virtual tie there.

Voter excitement was so great there, and early-voting lines so long — with waits up to five hours — that Governor Charlie Crist, a Republican, extended polling hours by emergency order.

"We need to win Florida on November 4th and with your help we're going to win here and bring real change to Washington," McCain said in Miami, sharing a stage with Crist and other senior Republicans.

He again pummeled Obama for saying he wanted to "spread the wealth," declaring: "Senator Obama is running to punish the successful. I'm running to make everyone successful."

Obama, despite the more moderate tone he has struck this week, was not taking this lying down.

"I'm sorry to see my opponent sink so low," he said in Raleigh, North Carolina. "Lately, he's called me a socialist for wanting to roll back the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans so we can finally give tax relief to the middle class. By the end of the week, he'll be accusing me of being a secret communist because I shared my toys in kindergarten."

Both men remain energized in the final days of a presidential race that will provide a historic result no matter the outcome: giving Americans their first black president or else a combative 72-year-old war hero who will have managed to defeat great odds and succeed a deeply unpopular president of the same party.

Obama's half-hour infomercial was the first extended-length commercial aired by a presidential candidate in prime time since the third-party candidate Ross Perot funded a series of infomercials in his 1992 race against Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush. The best-viewed of those drew 16.5 million spectators.

The Obama infomercial, according to a short trailer seen in advance, shows him seated at a kitchen table with four white, apparently working-class, voters, talking about the problems they face.

Then, while standing before an American flag, Obama says: "For the past 20 months, I've traveled the length of this country, and Michelle and I have met so many Americans who are looking for real and lasting change."

A campaign spokesman said that Obama would also share the story of his mother's struggle against cancer "and the difficulty she had with her insurance company, to help viewers understand why his health care reform program is what it is." It will conclude by showing Obama, live, at a rally in Florida.

The ad was airing on three major networks — CBS, NBC and Fox, at a cost of about \$1 million each — and on MSNBC, the Spanish-language Univision and two black-oriented channels, TV One and BET.

Some critics charged that the Obama infomercial was overkill, a showoff luxury only an immensely well-funded candidate could afford. But Obama

aides say they have seen poll leads evaporate before — as they did in the senator's New Hampshire primary against Senator Hillary Clinton — and do not want to take the chance again.

McCain, in a new ad of his own, dismissed the Obama infomercial as a "TV special" that sought to substitute celebrity appeal for substance.

"With crises at home and abroad," the ad announcer says, "Barack Obama lacks the experience America needs. And it shows."

Obama clearly is using his financial edge to dominate the political ad wars. As of Oct. 22, he had placed 150 percent more ads than McCain in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia, the journal Politico reported, citing data from the Nielsen Co.

In Florida, Obama ran nearly 19,000 ads from Oct. 6 to Oct. 26, Nielsen reported, to McCain's 5,700. McCain ramped up his ad showings sharply this week, but was still airing fewer than half Obama's number.

The Democrat actually risked competing against himself for broadcast time. He was to appear late Wednesday in Or-

lando with former President Bill Clinton, an event sure to be broadcast at least locally, at the same time as a taped appearance was to be aired on the widely watched "Daily Show."

Still, McCain has made up some ground in Florida, particularly among white voters, polls indicate. But the same Quinnipiac University survey that gives Obama a statistically insignificant 2 point lead in that state shows him leading comfortably in Ohio, by 9 points, and in Pennsylvania, by 8. And no candidate since John F. Kennedy in 1960 has won the White House without winning two of those three large swing states.

A new AP-GfK poll shows Obama winning among early voters and widely viewed as the winning candidate — one of the more reliable metrics at so late a stage in a race — by voters in the battleground states of Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Both candidates have made the economy the center of their appeal since the financial crisis erupted. But in another new ad that questions the Republican ticket's economic preparedness, the Obama campaign directly singles out McCain's choice of a running mate, Governor Sarah Palin.

The ad plays music as comments by McCain on the economy scroll across the screen. In one, he acknowledges not being an economic expert and then he is quoted as saying, "I might have to rely on a vice president that I select for expertise on economic issues." The ad then asks, "His Choice?" before showing footage of Palin winking during the vice presidential debate.

Palin on Wednesday played down speculation about rising friction between her and McCain aides, particularly over their efforts to keep her away from unscripted meetings with the press.

"I laugh at 'em," she told The Wall Street Journal, adding, "I have nothing but praise for those involved in this campaign."

Jim Rutenberg and Kate Phillips contributed reporting.



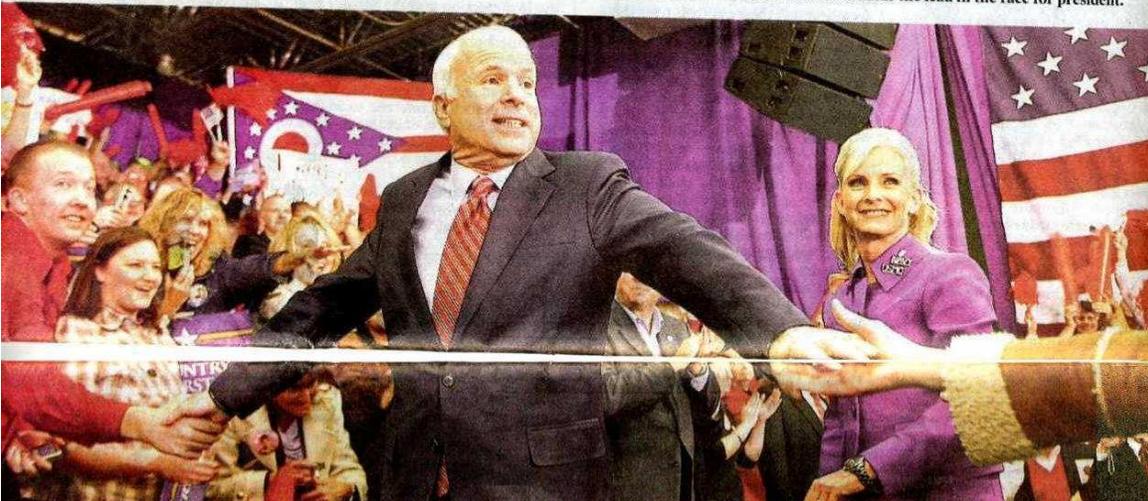
5 days to the vote

(10) Candidates dashing to the wire (1st-2nd Nov 2008 p.1, 4)

Candidates dashing to the wire



Barack Obama greeting supporters at a rally Friday in Des Moines, Iowa. According to most polls, the Democratic candidate holds the lead in the race for president. Jason Reed/Reuters



John McCain with his wife, Cindy, at a campaign stop Friday in Hanoverton, Ohio. The state's 20 electoral votes are considered crucial for the Republican's national victory. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images-AFP

For liberals, Obama lead is too good to be true

by Michael Powell

Deep in the den of his home in New Hope, Pennsylvania, a liberal sits tapping at his computer.

Jon Downs, 53, works the electoral college maps on Yahoo like a spiritualist shaking his ouija board. He calibrates and recalibrates: Give John McCain Ohio, Missouri, even Florida. But Virginia and Pennsylvania — those go to Barack Obama. And Vermont? Democrats can count on Vermont, right?

McCain's defiance vs. Obama's confidence

From news reports

Entering the final weekend before an election that has electrified the United States and legions of observers overseas, Senator John McCain and Senator Barack Obama — along with a cast of supporting characters from Al Gore to Arnold Schwarzenegger — made fervent appeals Friday in key states they hope will swing the vote.

According to most polls, Obama, the Democratic candidate, holds the lead. And he demonstrated his cool assurance Friday by broadening his advertising campaign into two once-reliably Republican

states, Georgia and North Dakota, and further bedeviling McCain by placing a commercial in the Republican nominee's home state, Arizona.

McCain, meanwhile, hit hard, characterizing his opponent as a leftist out of step with the rest of the country. And the Republican candidate argued that he was headed for one of the greatest comebacks in recent political history.

The candidates raced across battleground states, trying to rev supporters and sway any lingering undecided voters before Election Day on Tuesday. The candidates focused on the Midwest on Friday, appearing in Iowa, Ohio and Indiana, plus Pennsylvania.

McCain was barreling through Ohio, with four scheduled stops across a state whose 20 electoral votes are considered crucial for a Republican victory. His running mate, Governor Sarah

Palin of Alaska, was holding rallies in Pennsylvania, where Republicans are aggressively campaigning despite polls showing Obama ahead there, as well as in Ohio.

In Iowa, where the Democrat's campaign took off with a caucus victory on Jan. 3, Obama told supporters to expect McCain's campaign to end in a crescendo of attacks on him.

"More of the slash and burn, say-anything, do-anything politics that's calculated to divide and distract; to tear us apart instead of bringing us together," Obama told 25,000 at a rally in Des Moines.

He said he admired a presidential candidate who asserted in 2000, "I will not take the low road to the highest office in this land."

CAMPAIGN, Continued on Page 4



ELECTIONS
2008

3 days to
the vote

Candidates dashing toward the line

CAMPAIGN, From Page 1

"Those words were spoken eight years ago by my opponent, John McCain," Obama said. "But the high road didn't lead him to the White House then, so this time, he decided to take a different route."

In Ohio, McCain was spicing up rallies with Schwarzenegger, the governor of California, and Rudolph Giuliani, a former mayor of New York.

At a rally Friday morning in Hanoverton, Ohio, McCain told the crowd that Obama "began his campaign in the liberal left lane of politics and has never left it. He's more liberal than a senator who calls himself a socialist," a reference to Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont.

At the same event, Giuliani mocked Obama's tax proposals as a "flimflam" and praised McCain's record of military service, saying the Republican nominee had fought for Americans "all his life."

In an interview with The Columbus Dispatch published Friday, Schwarzenegger made no effort to disguise the challenge facing McCain. He told the newspaper it would be a "major struggle for him to win."

But, Schwarzenegger added, "I have seen him in those major struggles in the past when he has come back when everyone counted him out."

Meanwhile, Gore campaigned for Obama in Florida, the state that cost him the 2000 presidential election and that polls say is leaning toward Obama.

Gore and his wife, Tipper, were recruited to appear at rallies in West Palm Beach and nearby Pompano Beach. In West Palm Beach, Gore told a crowd

that America's problems with the economy, environment and foreign policy all connected to its dependence on burning fossil fuels. He said Obama would invest in renewable energy, adding, "Change is needed now more than it has ever been needed in the past."

In conference calls Friday morning, each campaign offered a glimpse of its strategies in the closing days of the election.

"It's going to be a ferocious four days," David Plouffe, the campaign manager for Obama, told reporters, saying it was the rush of early voting — not hubris — that had led the campaign to buy television advertising time in Georgia, North Dakota and Arizona.

As for McCain, his campaign pressed forward with its argument that its own polls showed the race far closer than the public polls. McCain's final theme, that Obama would raise taxes, was having an effect, the campaign said.

"We're pretty jazzed up about what we're seeing as movement in this election," McCain's campaign manager, Rick Davis, told reporters in a morning conference call.

He added that "we are witnessing, I believe, probably one of the greatest comebacks that you've seen since John McCain won the primary."

McCain has been echoing that sentiment in rallies, saying he relishes being a campaign underdog. He told supporters on Friday morning, "We're a few points down, but we're coming back and we're coming back strong, my friends."

National polls have shown the Democrat with a substantial lead across the country, and he was rated the favorite in a half-dozen states that sided with President George W. Bush in 2004. Surveys

showed Obama in close races in three other states that went to Bush.

Obama has used his huge financial advantage to draw votes in traditionally Republican areas, forcing McCain to spend precious time and money defending his home turf. Obama's campaign has collected a record-shattering \$640 million — \$400 million more than McCain. Obama has devoted enormous sums in this election to nearly everything, including a half-hour prime-time commercial on Wednesday that cost well over \$3 million.

Both campaigns have also invested heavily in turning out early voters, with Obama expected to reap the most votes.

According to Michael McDonald of George Mason University, 17.5 million Americans have already cast ballots under provisions for early voting, or about 14 percent of the 124 million cast in the 2004 elections.

Also Friday, the McCain campaign said that he would appear on the late-night show "Saturday Night Live" this weekend, indicating that he was willing to accept the risks in a comedy spot only three days before the election.

The campaign did not say what McCain would do on the show, but he is almost certain to make only a brief appearance in the middle of his marathon final push to Tuesday. McCain will be in Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York on Saturday, possibly in New Hampshire on Sunday and on an eight-state swing on Monday.

After a late-night rally on Friday evening in Indiana, Obama heads Saturday to Nevada, Colorado and Missouri. And on Monday, he is set to dash through Florida, North Carolina and Virginia. (IHT, AP)