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**Covert Racism in Presidential Campaigns: Exploiting Racial
Prejudice by George H. W. Bush in the 1988 Elections**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defense: 2023

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on April, 28, 2023

Bc. Jakub Cajkář

References

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Abstract

This master's thesis examines the rhetorical strategy of the Republican Party in the presidential campaigns in the second half of the 20th century while its main part analyzes George H. W. Bush's campaign in 1988. This research aims to ascertain whether Bush's campaign carried racist features and whether the Republican candidate exploited the racial prejudice of white voters toward African Americans. Firstly, the thesis briefly outlines the history of racial discrimination in the United States and explores the presidential campaigns of Republican candidates who perfected the strategy of dog whistle politics when they enticed white constituents while sacrificing African-American votes by using implicit racial allusions that connected Blacks with words of negative connotations like "crime", "drugs", "law and order", or "welfare queens". Afterward, the thesis focuses on the strategy of Bush's presidential campaign in 1988. It analyzes some of the negative television commercials which strived to weaken the Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis and make him appear soft on crime. Predominantly the "Willie Horton" ad, which abused the story of an African-American man convicted of murder, helped to create this narrative. The study concludes with an analysis of speeches that George Bush delivered throughout the campaign. It finds out that television advertisements and Bush's speeches contained racial elements and that the Bush campaign can be described as covertly racist.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá strategii rétoriky, kterou využívala Republikánská strana ve druhé polovině 20. století, přičemž hlavní část práce se sestává z analýzy kampaně George H. W. Bushe v roce 1988. Cílem této práce je zjistit, zdali Bushova kampaň obsahovala rasistické prvky, a zdali tento republikánský kandidát zneužil rasové předsudky bělošských voličů, které cítili vůči Afroameričanům. Výzkum nejdříve stručně nastiňuje historii rasové diskriminace ve Spojených státech amerických a pokrývá prezidentské kampaně republikánských kandidátů, kteří zdokonalili rasově kódovanou rétoriku. Tzn., že používali slova, jejichž význam je na povrchu běžný a nekontroverzní, ale implicitně mají negativní konotace, které si s nimi voliči spojí. Těmito slovy byly např. „zločinnost“, „drogy“, „právo a pořádek“ či tzv. „královny sociálních dávek“, pomocí kterých kandidáti lákali bílé voliče, zatímco obětovali hlasy od Afroameričanů. Diplomová práce se následně zabývá

prezidentskou kampaní George Bushe v roce 1988 a analyzuje některé televizní reklamy, jejichž cílem bylo oslabit demokratického kandidáta Michaela Dukakise a vykreslit ho jako politika, který neumí zkontrolovat kriminalitu. K vytvoření tohoto narativu pomohla zejména reklama s názvem „Willie Horton“, která zneužila příběh Afroameričana obviněného z vraždy. Práce končí analýzou Bushových proslovů, které pronesl během kampaně a zjišťuje, že jak reklamy, tak proslovy obsahovaly rasistické prvky, a že Bushova kampaň spoléhala na rasovou strategii.

Keywords

Racism, U.S. presidential elections, political campaign, George H. W. Bush, rhetoric, dog whistle politics, code words

Klíčová slova

Rasismus, americké prezidentské volby, politická kampaň, George H. W. Bush, rasově kódovaná rétorika

Název práce

Skrytý rasismus v prezidentských kampaních: Zneužití rasových předpokladů Georgem Bushem starším ve volbách v roce 1988

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Introduction

The history of the United States is intertwined with racism and various racist practices, among which slavery stands out as one of the cruelest and most visible examples. The abolition of slavery did not lead to equality or equity, and decades of the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws followed, which allowed racial segregation to flourish. Amelioration of the conditions for African Americans occurred in 1964 when the much-awaited Civil Rights Act was finally signed into law thanks to the relentless efforts of civil rights activists. The law banned discrimination based inter alia on race, but it did not solve all problems. Albeit the position of minorities in American society is undoubtedly better than in the past, the difficulties in race relations persist.

As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrates, opaque and covert racist acts were an inseparable part of political campaigns in the second half of the 20th century, when Republicans became the party that integrated racial rhetoric into its presidential campaigns. In the latter half of the 20th century, the candidates could not make explicit racist remarks because the old white supremacy and racial segregation norms were no longer acceptable thanks to the successful efforts of civil rights activists. Nonetheless, those who desired to win the political battle rhetorically targeted African Americans by using implicit racial allusions. Candidates used code words with negative connotations that can be defined as “a word or phrase which communicates a well-understood but implicit meaning to part of a public audience while preserving for the speaker deniability of that meaning by reference to its denotative explicit meaning,”¹ as Kinders and Sanders put it. Such code words often serve as cognitive shortcuts which successfully associate seemingly innocent words with race. Thus, they reinforce racial animosity and people’s prejudices. Constituents then understand the message and connect the negative comments with a particular group of people based on the stereotypes they believe so it corresponds to their opinions and the stereotypical image of African Americans in the minds of white Americans. Furthermore, code words are not racist on the surface, meaning that the candidates could easily shield themselves from potential criticism and deny their remarks were racist.²

¹ Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 223.

² Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 21.

The first chapter also examines how candidates such as George Wallace, Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan abused racial prejudice to attract white voters and outlines specific examples of dog whistle politics. This thesis uses terms *dogs whistle politics* and *dog whistle strategy* interchangeably and draws from the definition of dog whistle politics that can be found in McCutcheon's and Mark's book, which defines this concept as "[p]olitical messaging using coded language that seems to mean one thing to the general population, but which to a targeted subgroup means something else entirely."³ Some voters thus discerned that the racial code words which were harmless on the veneer had a different, more sinister meaning which responded to their worldview.

The focal point of this thesis is George H. W. Bush's presidential campaign in 1988, in which he defeated a Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis and became the president for the upcoming four years. The main goal of this research is to ascertain whether Bush continued in the pattern established by his predecessors and used implicit racial cues to garner white votes while disparaging African Americans. In other words, this thesis asks whether Bush's campaign used dog whistle strategy and whether he used implicit racial rhetoric in his speeches that he delivered throughout the course of the elections.

To answer this question, the second chapter examines the Republican strategy in the 1988 elections and analyzes negative commercials that the Bush campaign either produced or used to its advantage. One of those advertisements is the "Willie Horton" ad which told the story of an African American male who was jailed for murder and committed other crimes in Maryland during his furlough. Because Horton was initially jailed in Massachusetts, where Michael Dukakis was a Governor, the Bush campaign used this story to make Dukakis appear soft on crime. Besides TV commercials, candidates send a message to their constituency with their speeches. For this reason, the chapter also analyzes the rhetoric that George H.W. Bush used in his speeches and the presidential debates and strives to find out whether the Republican candidate repeatedly made implicit racist remarks to garner white votes.

³ Chuck McCutcheon and David Mark, *Dog Whistles, Walk-Backs, and Washington Handshakes: Decoding the Jargon, Slang, and Bluster of American Political Speech* (Lebanon, New Hampshire: ForeEdge from University Press of New England, 2014), 136–137.

To examine the message that Bush's campaign transmitted throughout the campaign, the thesis derives from a content analysis of campaign TV advertisements focused on crime⁴ and of Bush's speeches. However, a limitation of this work is that it does not examine all speeches that George Bush delivered because they are located in the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas⁵ and are not digitalized, which was confirmed to the author of this thesis by the library via e-mail communication.⁶ Since the collection of the speeches is named "David Hoffman collection", the author asked him whether he kept any of Bush's speeches from the 1988 presidential campaign. However, he answered that he did not keep any documents from this period.⁷ Former speechwriter for George H. W. Bush Mary Kate Cary then answered that she was only a staff member during the 1988 presidential campaign and she wrote speeches later, so she does not have any Bush's speeches from the elections.⁸ Reid Detchon, who was Bush's speechwriter during his vice presidency, kept speeches that he drafted but could not provide any documents because "they are in storage and would be time-consuming to retrieve."⁹

Because of the inaccessibility of Bush's speeches, the thesis analyzes 12 speeches that are available on *C-SPAN*,¹⁰ Bush's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, and the two presidential debates that were held in September and October 1988, respectively. Despite the limitations, the author firmly believes that analysis of the sample of speeches, debates, and the commercials can indicate the frequency of implicit racial allusions and deepen the understanding of covert racism in the 1988 presidential campaign.

⁴ The television commercials are mentioned in subchapter 2.4., which examines strategy of the Republican Party in the 1988 presidential elections. Visuals from the advertisements are added into this thesis, while all such images are a screenshots made by the author.

⁵ "David Hoffman Collection", George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/finding-aids/donated-materials/david-hoffman>.

⁶ It was further stated that the campaign records have not been processed and are not subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. John P. Blair, e-mail message to the author, October 17, 2022.

⁷ David E. Hoffman, e-mail message to the author, November 17, 2022.

⁸ Mary Kate Cary, e-mail message to the author, October 18, 2022.

⁹ Reid Detchon, e-mail message to the author, October, 18, 2022.

¹⁰ All these speeches are listed in the List of References.

Literature Overview

Scholars have extensively covered the topic of using racial prejudice by political candidates in campaigns. For example, the book *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*¹¹ written by political scientists Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders served as a stepping stone for this thesis. The authors argued that racial resentment did not disappear after the formal end of segregation in the 1960s and that racial prejudice towards African Americans guides the decision-making of white voters. In one chapter, the book also pays close attention to the campaign in 1988, labeling it “as the meanest and least edifying in modern memory, the most dismal of presidential campaigns, a national embarrassment”¹² because of the attacks on the Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis. The scholars provide a high-quality overview of racial politics and of Bush’s campaign but omit the rhetoric that George Bush used in his speeches. Furthermore, the authors occasionally generalized and portrayed African Americans as a minority group that passively sits back and let others decide their fate.

Numerous journal articles also examine Bush’s campaign in 1988 and explore whether George Bush played the race card. The scholars mainly focus on the details of the campaign, “Willie Horton” commercial, or similar cases in other campaigns, but they rarely (if ever) discuss more TV advertisements apart from the “Revolving Door” ad.¹³ Furthermore, the journal articles often covered the role of the media which inadvertently amplified Bush’s message by showing a mug shot of William Horton that was used in the Republican advertisement. Almost no scholarly paper connects Bush’s campaign commercials to his speeches and does not analyze whether the implicit racial allusions that were present in the ads also appeared in Bush’s rhetoric. For example, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, who specializes in rhetorical analysis of communication in political campaigns,¹⁴ briefly claims that “Bush’s speeches reinforced the

¹¹ Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹² Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 229.

¹³ The exceptions is e.g. Bruce E. Gronbeck, who also focuses e.g. on the Boston Harbor ad. See Bruce E. Gronbeck, “Negative Narratives in 1988 Presidential Campaign Ads,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no. 3 (August 1, 1992).

¹⁴ “Kathleen Hall Jamieson”, Annenberg School for Communication - University of Pennsylvania, accessed April 2, 2023, <https://www.asc.upenn.edu/people/faculty/kathleen-hall-jamieson-phd>.

Horton-Dukakis link”¹⁵ but fails to provide a detailed analysis and mentions merely brief excerpts from only two speeches.

Jamieson also explores the topic of news influence on campaigns and the negative advertising when one candidate attacks his political adversary to undermine their chances of winning the elections in her book called *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy*.¹⁶ In the book, she examines the general strategy of negative campaigning and perhaps too often associates the universal circumstances with Bush’s campaign while omitting other examples that could have strengthened her argument. Nonetheless, her book serves as a good basis for readers that want to learn more about negative campaigning.

Various sources – predominantly journal articles – have been used for the introductory chapter about the history of racial discrimination and dog whistle politics. However, an essential source for this chapter was the book called *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*¹⁷ written by Ian Haney Lopez,¹⁸ a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who specializes on the use of racism in political campaigns.¹⁹ The book summarizes the origin of dog whistle politics and outlines various political campaigns where candidates used this strategy, including Bill Clinton’s campaigns in the 1990s. Albeit concise, the book discusses dog whistle politics also after the September 11 attacks and provides thorough evidence that implicit racial rhetoric has been aimed at Muslims and Latinos as well.

Another crucial book, which was important also for the second chapter about George H. W. Bush’s presidential campaign in the 1988 elections, was *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*²⁰ by Tali Mendelberg, a professor of politics at Princeton University who specializes on political behavior and inequality.²¹ This book thoroughly depicts how the social norms about racism changed over time, describes why

¹⁵ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Context and the Creation of Meaning in the Advertising of the 1988 Presidential Campaign,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 32, no. 4 (March 1, 1989): 417.

¹⁶ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ “Ian F. Haney Lopez”, University of California, Berkeley, accessed April 2, 2023, <https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/faculty/ian-f-haney-lopez>.

¹⁹ “Ian Haney Lopez”, Ian Haney Lopez, accessed April 2, 2023, <https://ianhaneylopez.com/>.

²⁰ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*.

²¹ “Tali Mendelberg”, Princeton University, accessed April 2, 2023, <https://talim.scholar.princeton.edu/home>.

implicit messages work, and repeatedly refers to the story of William Horton and the 1988 elections. As the title indicates, Mendelberg analyzes how candidates play the race card during elections and also examines why implicit racial rhetoric works. Although the book was published already in 2001, the results that the author presents are still applicable to this day.

1. Dog Whistle Politics – How the Republican Party Learned to Exploit Racial Prejudice

This introductory chapter demonstrates that racism (both overt and covert) has always been an inseparable feature of U.S. politics. It outlines the history of racial discrimination in the United States and the origin of the dog whistle politics used by white politicians to attract white voters while disparaging African Americans. Then, the chapter briefly examines the campaigns of George Wallace and Barry Goldwater, who used dog whistle politics but were unsuccessful since this strategy did not bring them victory in the presidential elections. Afterward, this section continues with Richard Nixon's campaign in 1968 when the Republican candidate adopted dog whistle politics which contributed to his victory in the presidential race for the first time. Because of Gerald Ford's endeavor to disassociate himself from the problems of the Nixon administration, he did not engage in the political battle by wielding racial code words as a weapon. The chapter concludes with Ronald Reagan in the 1980 elections when the race card efficiently returned to the game.

1.1. Racial Discrimination in the United States and Evolution of the Rhetoric Targeting African Americans

In every society, people are constrained by norms to which individuals have to adapt to be considered a respectable person. These norms, however, change over time as new ideas emerge and old practices become obsolete. One of the acceptable norms was racism and prejudice vis-à-vis non-white people. Clayton et al. claim that racism was an inherent characteristic of the emerging American nation because the Constitution endorsed slavery since one of the crucial issues was the protection of property and black people were perceived as the property of white males.²² Therefore, the racial discrimination in the form of slavery was ubiquitous in the United States during its first decades of existence while racial bias served as a vindication for the practice. According to the then stereotypes, Blacks were regarded as inferior and portrayed as people that were happy for their enslavement because they could not provide for themselves.

Racial discrimination persisted even after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which declared that the enslaved people in the Confederate states were

²² Dewey M. Clayton, Sharon E. Moore, and Sharon D. Jones-Eversley, "A Historical Analysis of Racism within the US Presidency: Implications for African Americans and the Political Process," *Journal of African American Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2021): 389.

freed²³ and after slavery was abolished by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which was ratified in 1865. Right after the end of the Civil War, the Southern states passed Black codes which constrained African Americans' freedom and essentially forced them to continue working for little to no wage. The position of Blacks did not significantly ameliorate also because the Amendment permitted slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for a crime.²⁴ Later, the infamous Jim Crow laws allowed racial segregation in public spaces like schools, restaurants, or parks, as well as in housing or employment. Blacks were also disenfranchised and denied the right to vote through measures such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and the grandfather clause, which stated anyone whose grandfather could vote did not need to pass the literacy test. This provision exempted white Southerners from needing to undergo the literacy test to vote in the elections. Therefore, the economic interest of whites could still be protected by implementing new laws that led to higher incarceration rates so the convicted prisoners could have been exploited as workers. A new justification for these new practices was needed. Hence whites commenced to portray Blacks as dangerous, violent, life-threatening, and raping beasts that needed to be held captive in order to maintain social order.²⁵ Thus, Blacks were not truly emancipated, although the federal government tried to free them.

One of the many ways how racial discrimination permeated society was through rhetoric because the words we choose to speak shape our understanding of the world. The offensive racial appeals were firstly overt and straightforward because the zeitgeist allowed whites to use explicitly racist statements since racism was a norm. Thus, when the two main political parties started to have different views on race in the 1860s, Democrats could openly condemn Blacks solely due to their distinct appearance and as Tali Mendelberg concludes, Democratic "position against extending citizenship rights to African Americans was communicated with explicitly racial messages."²⁶ Nevertheless, the presidential campaigns – that are the focal point of this thesis – of both Democrats and Republicans lacked racial appeals since the 1880s until the early 1930s because racial inequality once again settled as the reestablished norm.²⁷

²³ "The Emancipation Proclamation", National Archives, accessed March 30, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>.

²⁴ "Thirteenth Amendment", Constitution Annotated | Congress.gov | Library of Congress, accessed March 8, 2023, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-13/>.

²⁵ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 38.

²⁶ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 28.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 56.

The notion of Blacks being inferior was omnipresent and prejudice persisted as a justification of African Americans' place in society.²⁸ They were once again widely regarded as dangerous animals who, as Mendelberg puts it, "were portrayed as having a proclivity toward [...] evils: sexual immorality, criminality and the desire to subjugate whites, and economic dependency and laziness."²⁹

The 1940s and the 1950s were times when presidents (especially Harry Truman) commenced to slightly support civil rights for African Americans. However, some of the Southern politicians continued to utter explicitly racist remarks and still defended segregation because the norm of racial equality was only slowly getting established by the civil rights activists. Both racial equality and the condemnation of white supremacy were relatively new ideas that allowed conservative politicians to overtly attack Blacks without the fear of losing their constituency's support.³⁰ Later, once the norm of racial equality spread and replaced the old belief that African Americans were inferior citizens, the explicit racist attacks began to lose its appeal and its power, and they almost disappeared because they became less acceptable for the majority of society. Nevertheless, according to Mendelberg, whites still held prejudice against African Americans and "were still predisposed to believe that Blacks had a tendency to engage in sexual excess and violence and to avoid work."³¹

Due to the rising norm of racial equality and the civil rights movement, opinions demeaning African Americans could not be shared openly without repercussions. To shield themselves from criticism, politicians commenced using implicit racial allusions and code words that Himelstein defines as "a word or phrase which communicates a well-understood but implicit meaning to part of a public audience while preserving for the speaker deniability of that meaning by reference to its denotative explicit meaning."³² For example, during the presidential elections of 1948, the shortly-lived Dixiecrats were formed when Southern politicians who strived to preserve segregation seceded from the Democratic Party. The members of what was officially called the States' Rights Democratic Party paid attention to

²⁸ Donald R. Kinder, and Tali Mendelberg, "Cracks in American Apartheid: The Political Impact of Prejudice among Desegregated Whites," *The Journal of Politics* 57, no. 2 (May 1, 1995): 405.

²⁹ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 70.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

³² Jerry Himelstein, "Rhetorical Continuities in the Politics of Race: The Closed Society Revisited," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 48, (March 1, 1983): 156.

the limits of their rhetoric. They began to use implicit racial cues as a strategy to win the elections and safeguard their privileged status. They claimed they did not detest African Americans and that their fight was not to maintain segregation but to protect states' rights and ensure the federal branch would not usurp too much power. The reason for this tactic was simple – the Dixiecrats wanted to eschew being called racist because the norm of racial equality was becoming more widespread and rooted in society.³³

The narrative about protecting states' rights was accentuated multiple times since the 1960s because it was a perfect allusion. It is not explicitly racist, yet it appealed to whites who opposed desegregation and believed they were superior to African Americans. The subtle meaning of states' rights originates in times before the Civil War when proponents of slavery argued that it was the right of every state to decide whether it would permit or ban the enslavement of Blacks.³⁴ In the 1960s, the term meant that every state – especially Southern ones – should have a right to maintain segregationist practices and the federal government should not enforce the laws that aimed at complete emancipation of African Americans. Besides that, the politicians justified segregation by terms such as *law and order*, *crime*, *inner cities*, *neighborhoods*, and later *drugs* or *narcotics*, and *the death penalty*. As Lerman and Weaver put it, these insinuations “carried strong racial content but w[ere] safe from charges of racism”³⁵ because they only implicitly linked African Americans with these issues.

The period of realignment of the two main political parties culminated in the 1960s when Lyndon B. Johnson endorsed civil rights laws. Johnson's attitude towards the equality of races led white southern Democrats and stalwarts of segregation to side with the Republicans because they opined that the Democratic Party could not efficiently safeguard their interests.³⁶ According to Heersink, the realignment was a pivotal moment in U.S. history³⁷ that heralded new era when Republicans seized an opportunity to incorporate the Southern states and obtained the support of previously Democratic strongholds. As Heersink avers, the candidates “had to tread lightly: a full embrace of white segregationists in the South could

³³ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 72.

³⁴ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 16.

³⁵ Amy E. Lerman and Vesla M. Weaver, “Race and Crime in American Politics: From Law and Order to Willie Horton and Beyond”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration* (Oxford Handbooks, 2013), 43.

³⁶ Clayton et al., “A Historical Analysis of Racism within the US Presidency,” 392.

³⁷ Boris Heersink, “Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment: Democratic and Republican Southern Strategies, 1948–1968,” *The Forum* 15, no. 4 (December 20, 2017): 632.

hurt the party elsewhere in the nation.”³⁸ Hence, campaign teams had to invent creative ways how to express repulsion for black minority through euphemistic language and subtle hints that their target audience understood so Republicans would not lose the support of other regions while focusing on the South.

The Republican Party eventually mastered this rhetorical strategy that became to be known as dog whistle politics. The Republican strategy is perhaps best summarized by Lee Atwater, who managed George Bush’s campaign in 1988 and was involved in other campaigns as well. In 1981, he purported:

You start out in 1954 by saying, “Nigger, nigger, nigger.” By 1968 you can’t say “nigger” – that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states’ rights and all that stuff. You’re getting so abstract now, you’re talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you’re talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks [sic] get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I’m not saying that. But I’m saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me – because obviously sitting around saying, “We want to cut taxes and we want to cut this,” is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than “Nigger, nigger.” So anyway you look at it, race is coming on the back burner.³⁹

Why does dog whistle politics work? It depicts minorities as inferior people who are to be blamed for many societal problems. The notion that African Americans are the cause of the issues contributes to the success of the message among whites.⁴⁰ However, the mental processes involved in receiving the implicit message are often subconscious because a study from 1985⁴¹ examined motivation of white, young blue-collar workers who identified themselves as Democrats but voted for a Republican candidate in 1980 and 1984. The study ascertained that the understanding of political issues was framed in racial terms, although the participants did not realize it.⁴² Furthermore, the dog whistle strategy works because the racial

³⁸ Heersink, “Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment,” 632.

³⁹ Rick Perlstein, “Exclusive: Lee Atwater’s Infamous 1981 Interview on the Southern Strategy,” *The Nation*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/exclusive-lee-atwaters-infamous-1981-interview-southern-strategy/>.

⁴⁰ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 176.

⁴¹ A study from 1985 might be outdated from today’s point of view, but is suitable to use to shed light on the behavior of voters in the times pertinent to this thesis.

⁴² Michael Omi, “Shifting the Blame: Racial Ideology and Politics in the Post-Civil Rights Era,” *Critical Sociology* 18, no. 3 (October 1, 1991): 79.

cues are implicit. If the attacks were explicitly racist, white Americans would have opposed the message that the candidates were trying to convey.⁴³

1.2. George Wallace and Barry Goldwater – Precursors of Successful Dog Whistle Politics

Dog whistle politics began to be widely utilized in the 1960s by Democratic governor of Alabama George Wallace, who tried to become president several times, and with the Republican candidate in the 1964 elections, Barry Goldwater.⁴⁴ Initially, Wallace was anything but subtle. In January 1963, in his inaugural address as a governor of Alabama, he openly invoked Confederacy and uttered the infamous words “segregation now...segregation tomorrow...segregation forever.”⁴⁵ Even when Wallace ran for the Oval Office, he defended segregation and was backed by the Ku Klux Klan. However, perhaps his most significant contribution to national politics occurred in the presidential campaign in 1968 when he ran as an independent candidate. Wallace realized he had to adapt to social norms if he wanted to stand a chance in the elections. Hence, he strived to convey a message of his white supremacist beliefs without alienating a broad audience.⁴⁶ As Tali Mendelberg concludes, he “gained legitimacy for himself through ambiguity, by forging a set of rhetorical symbols with meanings both racial and nonracial. He thus managed to conform to the new norm of racial equality but still appeal to racially resentful white voters.”⁴⁷

Before we examine how George Wallace unintentionally contributed to Richard Nixon’s victory in the 1968 elections, we need to delve into Barry Goldwater’s presidential candidacy in 1964, as he was the precursor for Nixon’s successful dog whistle strategy. Goldwater opposed the Civil Rights Act and justified his stance by states’ rights. According to him, the federal government usurped too much power by banning racial discrimination in interstate commerce.⁴⁸ In Goldwater’s view, he fought for the autonomy of states and endeavored to forestall meddling in internal affairs by the national government. Such opinions served as a camouflage for opposing racial integration, which Goldwater could not explicitly decry

⁴³ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 178.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 13.

⁴⁵ “The Inaugural address of Governor George C. Wallace,” *Alabama Digital Archives*, accessed February 20, 2022, 2, <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/voices/id/2952/>.

⁴⁶ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 16.

⁴⁷ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 91.

⁴⁸ Mark Percy and Jeremiah Clabough, “Discussing the Elephant in the Room: The Republican Party and Race Issues,” *Social Studies Research & Practice* 14, no. 3 (2019): 379.

because of the rising norm of racial equality. In Mendelberg's words, "[t]he norm had changed so much that Goldwater could not be expected, even by white southerners, to criticize racial integration on principle, or to defend segregation."⁴⁹

Since the social norm had been altered, Barry Goldwater applied the dog whistle strategy in the presidential elections of 1964. Albeit he was a senator from Arizona, wooing the South was fundamental in his campaign. With subtle racial allusions, Goldwater also strived to allure not only the Southern constituency but even those outside the region who opposed desegregation and were worried about the emerging equality among African Americans and whites.⁵⁰ Therefore, Goldwater defended states' rights during his campaign and avoided explicit public mentions about civil rights, whites, or Blacks. Instead, he talked about *bullies and marauders* and *criminal defendants*.⁵¹ These words naturally were not the only racial cues that the Republican candidate used. Andrew Taylor from the University of Sheffield examined Goldwater's speeches and ascertained that "[f]ederal,' 'freedom' and 'states' are a significant combination in Goldwater's discourse as it is a proxy for states' rights, which was itself a proxy for southern (and increasingly, northern) hostility to civil rights."⁵²

Nonetheless, Barry Goldwater did not manage to win the elections, and the rhetoric he used was one of the reasons. His dog whistle was too audible compared to the other candidates mentioned in the rest of this chapter. Although Goldwater gained the support of some Southern voters, he paid for it by alienating voters in different parts of the country.⁵³ The deal was settled by the acceptance speech which Goldwater delivered at the Republican National Convention, where he officially accepted the party's presidential nomination. The majority of non-southern constituents perceived the candidate's phrasing as too extreme, and even some Republicans refused to endorse Goldwater, citing the speech as an argument.⁵⁴ For example,

⁴⁹ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 85.

⁵⁰ Andrew M. Taylor, "Barry Goldwater: Insurgent Conservatism as Constitutive Rhetoric," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 3 (July 15, 2016): 250–251.

⁵¹ Richard Halworth Rovere, *The Goldwater Caper* (New York: Harcourt, 1965), 143.

⁵² Taylor, "Barry Goldwater: Insurgent Conservatism," 250.

⁵³ Heersink, "Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment," 648.

⁵⁴ Carl R. Burghardt, "Extremism in the Defense of Liberty", in *Social Controversy and Public Address in the 1960s and Early 1970s: A Rhetorical History of the United States*, vol. 9, (Michigan State University Press, 2017), 320.

Goldwater talked about African Americans as “growing menace [...] to personal safety,”⁵⁵ thus the meaning behind the coded language was not concealed enough to cover his true beliefs.

Despite the fact that Goldwater lost the elections, his campaign was essential for the future fate of the Republican Party for two reasons. Firstly, it was crucial for the realignment of the two major parties on the issue of race because the Southern voters supported the Republican Party over the Democrats for the first time since Civil War.⁵⁶ As Haney Lopez summarized, in 1964, 60% of respondents said that the Democratic Party was more supportive of equal treatment of whites and Blacks and only 7% claimed that the Republican Party was more likely to introduce agenda that would fully emancipate African Americans. Two years earlier, the parties were viewed as equal in this matter.⁵⁷ Secondly, Goldwater knew he was likely to lose because the polls heavily favored Lyndon B. Johnson as the future president. Hence, he did not strive to persuade every eligible voter to cast a ballot with his name. Instead, Goldwater’s actions redefined the course of the Republican Party. As Burgchardt puts it, “[h]e had an unprecedented opportunity to alter the ideological identity of the Republican Party, and he seized it. The party’s internal dynamics became more important than reaching out to undecided voters.”⁵⁸ For this reason, Goldwater did not hesitate to make powerful remarks that defended racial segregation. In the end, he only failed to convince racial moderates to vote for him, but he managed to attract Southern white segregationists to the Republican Party. Barry Goldwater’s campaign thus laid the basis for the tactics of future Republican presidential campaigns – using such language that would attract segregationists without alienating other voters outside the South. The man who championed this strategy and lured even moderates into voting for Republicans was Richard M. Nixon in 1968.

1.3. Richard M. Nixon – A Case of Strategic Racism

In a bipartisan political system, candidates of third parties practically never win elections. However, they might affect other candidates’ campaigns simply by their presence. The year 1968, with the candidacy of George Wallace as an independent candidate, was such a year.

⁵⁵ “Barry Goldwater at 1964 Republican National Convention,” C-SPAN.org | National Politics | History | Nonfiction Books, video, 47:37, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?320250-1/reel-america-barry-goldwaters-1964-acceptance-speech>.

⁵⁶ Anthony J. Badger, *Why White Liberals Fail: Race and Southern Politics from FDR to Trump*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022), 128.

⁵⁷ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 18.

⁵⁸ Burgchardt, “Extremism in the Defense of Liberty”, 337.

Wallace continuously attracted larger support in the South than Republican nominee Richard Nixon or Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey. According to polls, he might have had a solid chance even in non-southern states.⁵⁹ Wallace owed his success to the rhetoric he used – while still holding segregationist views, he refrained from explicit remarks about African Americans to prevent backlash from moderate voters and was instead talking predominantly about states’ rights, the necessity of limiting the power of the federal government, or taxpayers’ rights.⁶⁰ With the prospect that Wallace would siphon part of the Republican constituency, Nixon’s campaign had to invent a plan how to turn the odds in their favor. Eventually, Nixon began to use the same strategy as his opponent to woo Wallace’s voters. His dog whistle strategy thus indicated that he held similar opinions and that a vote for Wallace would put a liberal Democrat into the Oval Office, which would have been a disaster for the potential Republican base.

Covert racism played a role in the 1968 presidential elections. The effectiveness of the dog whistle strategy was facilitated by the social unrest that stemmed from riots of African Americans who were not content with the progress of civil rights reforms and challenged the ascendancy of whites throughout the second half of the 1960s. For example, the Black Panther Party addressed systemic racism and economic injustice and pushed for armed self-defense against police brutality. The revolutionary movement Black Power also emerged in the late 1960s. This movement rejected white supremacy, endorsed racial pride, and believed in the power of collective action.

Richard Nixon capitalized on that unrest and incorporated *law and order* into his speeches,⁶¹ which was nearly perfect racial allusion – non-Southerners could not be driven away by these words because the meaning was not explicitly racist. Yet, it implied that African Americans were the main culprits causing the social unrest. This notion was supported by the fact that

⁵⁹ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 23.

⁶⁰ Badger, *Why White Liberals Fail*, 138.

⁶¹ The message of law and order was not conveyed only in Nixon’s speeches, but also in a TV commercial. A minute-long advertisement shows ominous photographs and begins with the narrator saying: “It is time for an honest look at the problem of *order* in the United States.” Then, the narrator mentions that there is no reason to be violent and that “the first civil right of every American is to be free from domestic violence.” The ad concludes with the words: “we shall have *order* in the United States” [emphasis added]. See ““Law and Order” Ad 1968 Nixon vs. Humphrey vs. Wallace,” The Living Room Candidate, video, 01:02, accessed February 25, 2023, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1968>.

Southern politicians denounced the civil rights movement as *lawbreakers* since the 1950s.⁶² Moreover, instead of focusing on rectification of the roots of the problems, Nixon promoted policing as the only solution to maintain the status quo.⁶³ To white conservatives and Southerners, *law and order* automatically translated into the necessity of suppression of African Americans because, in the eyes of the public, they were the first and foremost cause for the disturbances.⁶⁴ Nixon's message was thus attractive for the South and other regions as well. As Heersink says, "Nixon's Southern Strategy provided Republicans with a blueprint for a way to appeal to voters inside the South while not being punished for doing so by voters outside the region."⁶⁵ Furthermore, Nixon spoke about the *forgotten man* whom the federal government overlooks. In the era of the civil rights movement, this allusion insinuated that the forgotten man was exclusively white.⁶⁶

The adopted dog whistle politics, therefore, worked out tremendously for Nixon. Not only did Nixon attract potential Wallace's voters, but he contributed to the separation of Southern states and Democrats when Hubert Humphrey won only Texas. According to Haney Lopez, "Nixon had mastered Wallace's dark art. Forced bussing, law and order, and security from unrest as the essential civil right of the majority—all of these were coded phrases that allowed Nixon to appeal to racial fears without overtly mentioning race at all."⁶⁷ Using the subtle racial rhetoric in the political campaign became to be known as the Southern Strategy which Nixon himself did not invent, but he perfected it. For the first time, this strategy proved to be effective, and the Republican Party managed to appeal to voters from all over the country⁶⁸ while losing only the Black vote, which did not matter to the party since conservative constituents were deemed as more valuable.⁶⁹

What motivated Nixon to sacrifice African-Americans' votes and exploit racial bias? Haney Lopez claims that Nixon did not act out of hatred towards Blacks and that his campaign did not intend to further maliciously belittle African Americans. The humiliation was perceived as

⁶² Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 23.

⁶³ Mary E. Stuckey, "Complicit Civility and the Politics of Exclusion: Nixon's Southern Strategy and Rockefeller's Response," *Western Journal of Communication* 86, no. 2 (2022): 161.

⁶⁴ Himelstein, "Rhetorical Continuities in the Politics of Race," 156.

⁶⁵ Heersink, "Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment," 649.

⁶⁶ Stuckey, "Complicit Civility and the Politics of Exclusion, 162.

⁶⁷ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 24.

⁶⁸ Heersink, "Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment," 651.

⁶⁹ Stuckey, "Complicit Civility and the Politics of Exclusion, 160.

collateral damage on the road to the main objective – getting elected. Hence, he defines Nixon as a strategic racist⁷⁰ and asserts that Nixon’s campaign adopted the issue of race because it was the most likely way to garner votes. Moreover, he also accuses George Wallace and Barry Goldwater of being strategic racist candidates who decided to turn a blind eye to the consequences of their actions because their main goal was to win elections and seize power by any means necessary. Haney Lopez concludes, “[i]f a more promising route had been available, they would have taken it. But race seemed the most likely avenue, so each opted to harness racial divisions to their agenda of getting elected.”⁷¹

The elections of 1968 efficiently shattered the New Deal coalition since blue-collar workers and rural white Southerners began to vote Republican in high numbers. Middle-class Americans increasingly viewed African Americans as a peril to their supremacy and their jobs. They felt abandoned by the federal government and by the Democrats because they opined the federal government provided support to Blacks and lost interest in the white population.⁷² Nevertheless, what distinguished Richard Nixon was the fact he continued his Southern Strategy even during his presidency in order to maintain the support of white Southerners. In his term, he strived to consolidate his position among white Southerners and to regress civil rights victories that many voters perceived as excessively liberal.⁷³ Nixon hindered the national government’s involvement in the integration of schools and opposed busing.⁷⁴ Furthermore, he continued to stress the necessity of *law and order* where the war on drugs stands out as the most prominent example of a policy that should have restored the order. In the long term, war on drugs happened to be one of the many components of structural violence and institutional racism, which led to mass incarceration and disproportionate arrests of African Americans.

1.4. Ronald Reagan – the Race Card Strikes Back

Before Regan’s presidential campaign in 1980, the Republican Party, embodied by Nixon’s Vice President Gerald Ford, ceased exploiting the implicit racial allusions in the 1976 presidential

⁷⁰ As Haney-Lopez claims, “[s]trategic racism refers to purposeful efforts to use racial animus as leverage to gain material wealth, political power, or heightened social standing.” See Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 35 and 46.

⁷¹ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 48.

⁷² Heersink, “Party Leaders and Electoral Realignment,” 649.

⁷³ Jordan O. Alexander, “Striving for Civil Rights: Senator Edward W. Brooke, President Richard Nixon’s ‘Southern Strategy’ and the Supreme Court,” *Journal of Supreme Court History* 46, no. 2 (July 1, 2021): 206.

⁷⁴ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 26.

elections. Ford did not want to be associated with the previous administration predominantly due to the Watergate scandal, which led to Nixon's resignation. Avoiding dog whistle politics was one of the strategies how to break this connection and entice voters.⁷⁵ Although code words did not play a significant role in the 1976 campaign, the racial cues were still present because Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter disapproved of neighborhood integration in a frail effort to regain Southern constituency for his party. Carter promoted the idea of *ethnic purity* of neighborhoods for all races into which the federal government should not have interfered. Nonetheless, he later apologized for uttering these words and did not manage to retake the South. Many constituents were still disenchanted by Nixon – whites because of the Watergate scandal and African Americans because of his racial politics – which helped Carter to victory in the 1976 elections.⁷⁶

The focus on implicit racial allusions efficiently returned with Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential elections, although other factors such as stagflation, the charisma of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, or the mishandling of the Iran hostage crisis by the Carter administration played a crucial role in the campaign. The Republican nominee Ronald Reagan played a race card immediately at the beginning of his campaign, which was initiated in Neshoba County, Mississippi. There, Reagan spoke about common topics like foreign policy, the misdeeds of his predecessor, or patriotism. However, he also explicitly mentioned that he believed in states' rights.⁷⁷ The implicit racist meaning of this term was further underscored by the place of the speech – in 1964, three civil rights volunteers were pursued and lynched by the crowd there. Reagan's deliberate choice of the place and the speech that he delivered, containing implicit racial appeals, "consciously aimed to strike a chord with conservative former segregationists,"⁷⁸ as Badger puts it. Furthermore, Reagan narrated a *Chicago Welfare Queen*⁷⁹ story to exploit the rancor of white Southern conservatives against African

⁷⁵ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 55.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 55–56.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁸ Badger, *Why White Liberals Fail*, 148,

⁷⁹ A welfare queen is a term that disparages female recipients of welfare and assumes that African-American women have children only for financial gains and abuse the social system guaranteed by the federal government. The term also implies that the federal government is incapable of monitoring its expenses, hence is too big and its powers need to be limited. See, for example, Carly Hayden Foster, "Anchor Babies and Welfare Queens: An Essay on Political Rhetoric, Gendered Racism, and Marginalization," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 50. See also Jeffrey R. Dudas, "Little Monsters, Wild Animals, and Welfare Queens: Ronald Reagan and the Legal Constitution of American Politics," *Studies in Law, Politics and Society* (November 2, 2009): 188–189.

Americans. The campaign's launch thus set a course for the upcoming months that led to the general election.

The *welfare queen* was not a new term. Ronald Reagan repeatedly used it since the 1970s when he accused single Black women with numerous children of abusing social welfare. In his imagination, such women circumvented the system by using false names to collect as many financial checks as possible while riding in expensive cars, going on luxurious vacations, and exchanging food stamps for vices like alcohol and cigarettes at the expense of taxpayers and their hard-earned money.⁸⁰ The term *welfare queen* embodied a long-standing racial stereotype that African-American women were lazy and promiscuous persons who were shamelessly taking advantage of generous social programs provided by the federal government and taxpayers. Therefore, the alleged existence of welfare queens proved that the government was too big and ineffective since it was not able to use its resources efficiently. Furthermore, Reagan implied that whites were the honest laborers who diligently paid taxes and, as Haney Lopez puts it, they were "playing by the rules and struggling to make ends meet while brazen minorities partied with their hard-earned tax dollars."⁸¹ The one particular story which Reagan fabricated was about a "Chicago woman [who] used 80 names, 30 addresses, and 15 telephone numbers in collecting food stamps, social security, welfare, and Veterans' benefits from four deceased but non-existent husbands. Her tax free-cash income alone was \$150,000 a year."⁸² However, long before the campaign, journalists questioned the facts and found that Reagan exaggerated the story⁸³ of an African-American woman named Linda Taylor, who was accused of stealing 8,000 dollars. Nevertheless, Reagan created a well-established metaphor that equaled welfare fraud, and the falsehood of the story did not prevent him from using this term during the campaign and even during his presidency.⁸⁴

By using the phrase *welfare queen*, Reagan implicitly continued the *law and order* message that Nixon propagated earlier. In his views, women exploiting the social welfare not only broke

⁸⁰ Hayden Foster, "Anchor Babies and Welfare Queens," 54.

⁸¹ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 58–59.

⁸² Reagan, R. (1976e). Stump speech insert. In: K. K. Skinner, A. Anderson & M. Anderson (Eds), *Reagan, in his own hand: The writings of Ronald Reagan that reveal his revolutionary vision for America* (pp. 457–466). New York: Simon & Schuster, quoted in Dudas, "Little Monsters, Wild Animals, and Welfare Queens," 188.

⁸³ Holloway Sparks, "Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers: Race, Gender, and the Discourse of Welfare Reform," in *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform* (University of Michigan Press, 2003), 194.

⁸⁴ Dudas, "Little Monsters, Wild Animals, and Welfare Queens," 188.

the law but also disrupted the order by accepting poverty as an unalterable condition and who relied on the help of others instead of striving to pick themselves up by their bootstraps through hard work.⁸⁵ Moreover, the debate about the beneficiaries of social welfare was situated in the concept of individual rights. In Reagan's worldview, *welfare queens* were certain they had a right to equal outcomes, and the national government should have helped them to ameliorate their lives because of their humble beginnings. Thus, poor African-American women discredited the traditional value of equal opportunity when everybody had the same possibilities to enhance their living conditions without being dependent on others. In this perception, social welfare recipients abused hard-working taxpayers whose money went into the pockets of undeserving women who were not entitled to such financial gains. As Dudas claims, "their [welfare queens'] bogus rights claims to a governmentally subsidized living harmed the interests both of America's virtuous, average citizens and the nation itself."⁸⁶ Reagan's beliefs also served as a basis for the intensification of both class and the racial divide because the rhetoric of *welfare queens* invoked fear among the white majority that their money supported people who were not worthy of the aid and who had different values,⁸⁷ which jeopardized the existing order. The presumed connection between racial minorities and big government also negatively affected whites' stance towards the image of big government.⁸⁸

Reagan's focus on crime further amplified the *law and order* message. According to the Republican candidate, criminals were also convinced they had a right to equal outcomes and justified their wrongdoings by their poor socio-economic conditions. Reagan viewed this perspective as dangerous because it implied that some people could automatically and purposefully break the law and damage the order.⁸⁹ According to Reagan, putting a spotlight on the rights of criminals instead of the rights of victims undermined the existing order. To convey this message in racial code words, Reagan first used the phrase *strapping young buck*, which was historically used to describe a vigorous African-American man who is perilous for white women. Nevertheless, this racial allusion was not sufficiently subtle, so Reagan later

⁸⁵ Dudas, "Little Monsters, Wild Animals, and Welfare Queens," 187.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 186.

⁸⁷ Hayden Foster, "Anchor Babies and Welfare Queens," 52.

⁸⁸ Luiza Maria Filimon, "From the Dog Whistle to the Dog Scream: The Republican Party's (Ab)Use of Discriminatory Speech in Electoral Campaigns and Party Politics," *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* 11, no. 2 (December 2016): 31.

⁸⁹ Dudas, "Little Monsters, Wild Animals, and Welfare Queens," 180.

altered it into *some young fellow*, which was less explicit and prevented him from direct accusations of being racist.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Reagan often spoke about criminals as *wild animals* who escaped from the zoos. In the end, Reagan's racial rhetoric contributed to his victory in the elections – the data shows that 22% of all voters who identified as Democrats decided to vote for Reagan and 71% of those who reckoned the national government should not help African Americans because they could help themselves, voted Republican.⁹¹

Ronald Reagan secured the 1984 elections in a landslide victory when he won every state except Minnesota. In the campaign, he relied on success stemming from his first presidential term, but he also embraced the dog whistle politics by declaring that “the South shall rise again.”⁹² Furthermore, Reagan criticized affirmative action and believed that it was discrimination against white population: “We will resist efforts to replace equal rights with discriminatory quota systems and preferential treatment. Quotas are the most insidious form of discrimination: reverse discrimination against the innocent.”⁹³ This statement pushed the agenda of whites as victims whose economic prospects were threatened by African Americans who “gained jobs that would otherwise gone to white people.” Therefore, together with the focus on crime, attacking affirmative action was a strategy to further portray African Americans as dangerous people who jeopardized the position of whites.

As this chapter demonstrated, the Republican Party exploited the racial prejudice of white constituents. The implicit rhetoric attacks were an integral part of presidential campaigns in the second half of the 20th century after the Civil Rights Act was signed into law in 1964. From this point, explicit racist remarks would have been condemned by voters, hence candidates turned to racial allusions to shield themselves from accusations of being racist. The next part of the thesis examines whether George Bush's campaign in the 1988 presidential elections continued in the pre-established pattern and contained racist elements to appeal to voters.

⁹⁰ Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 59.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 59.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 70.

2. George Bush's Presidential Campaign in the 1988 Presidential Elections

This chapter examines the presidential campaign of George H.W. Bush in 1988. The crucial aspect of this campaign (and arguably of every political campaign) was to convey a specific message to constituents in order to win their hearts and minds so they would vote for the desired candidate. That is the reason why this chapter starts with a brief section about conveying the message during campaigns. Afterward, it briefly mentions presidential primaries in 1988 and delineates the most important members of Bush's team that shaped his campaign strategy. Then, the chapter continues with the segment about negative commercials that the Bush campaign either produced or used to its advantage. One of those advertisements is the infamous "Willie Horton" ad which abused the wrongdoings of an African American male who committed other crimes while he was on furlough in Massachusetts – in the state of Governor Dukakis. Bush's campaign used this story to make Dukakis appear soft on crime. Lastly, the chapter analyzes George Bush's rhetoric in his speeches and the presidential debates. It depicts why the campaign can be perceived as racist, even though the Republican nominee made no explicit mentions of race.

2.1. Conveying a Message during Campaigns

The ability of candidates to convey a message to the voters is crucial in every election. Such message can be communicated directly or indirectly through various means, e.g. television advertisements, campaign speeches, or presidential debates. The message of candidates and what words politicians choose to spread that message matter because they are public figures. Therefore they receive media attention and serve as role models for some citizens. Furthermore, the way how we communicate can affect our perception of reality, which also includes the communication of political parties that might influence voters' opinions through the framing of some issues.⁹⁴ If a leader – from their position of power – will utter some claim repeatedly, the audience would start to believe such a claim is true. This theory was first described in 1977⁹⁵ and is called the illusory truth effect – meaning that people perceive

⁹⁴ Rune Stubager and Henrik Bech Seeberg, "What Can a Party Say? How Parties' Communication Can Influence Voters' Issue Ownership Perceptions," *Electoral Studies*, (December 1, 2016): 162.

⁹⁵ Lynn Hasher, David Goldstein, and Thomas C. Toppino. "Frequency and the Conference of Referential Validity." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 1977): 107–112.

repeated information as more credible and truthful.⁹⁶ For instance, if a politician labels migrants as a threat, voters might be persuaded that migrants are dangerous. Therefore, if the Bush campaign associates crime with the issue of race, voters would conflate these two different issues and would gain a distorted view of reality in which race and crime equal one inseparable problem.⁹⁷ As Feagin et al. put it, “[w]hoever controls the language in which issues are discussed controls the issues.”⁹⁸ There is no doubt that it was George Bush and his campaign team who dominated the discourse in the 1988 presidential campaign, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Besides uttered words, candidates send a message, although very niche, to the constituency also by selecting their running mates. Choosing a person that is on the ballot as a contender for the vice presidency can be influential since they will become the second-highest public servant in the executive branch, and the president will collaborate with them for the next four years. That indicates both candidates should hold similar views and opinions. Thus, as Stark asserts, “George Bush and Michael Dukakis offered glimpses of their presidential personalities through their vice-presidential selections.”⁹⁹ However, choosing a vice president can also mean that the main nominee wants to balance power and bring slightly different views and new opinions into the campaign. Hence vice-presidential candidate should help the main candidate obtain more votes if they cover a larger ideological spectrum. George Bush chose a senator for Indiana and former member of the National Guard during the Vietnam War Dan Quayle, who was backed by Bush’s media adviser Roger Ailes.¹⁰⁰ Quayle was young, conservative, and he had opposed civil rights legislation in the past.¹⁰¹ Bush’s choice of the young but inexperienced senator to be his running mate was not met with understanding and was criticized by fellow party members. Stark claims that “the choice reflected poorly on Bush’s ability to make presidential-type decision”¹⁰² because the acceptance speech that

⁹⁶ Aumyo Hassan and Sarah Barber, “The Effects of Repetition Frequency on the Illusory Truth Effect,” *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications* 6, no. 1 (May 13, 2021): 1.

⁹⁷ Joe R. Feagin, Vera Hernan, and Pinar Batur, “Racism in the Halls of Power: The Texaco, “Willie” Horton, and Sister Souljah Cases”, in *White Racism: The Basics*, (United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 167.

⁹⁸ Feagin et al., “Racism in the Halls of Power,” 167.

⁹⁹ Leonard P. Stark, “Predicting Presidential Performance from Campaign Conduct: A Character Analysis of the 1988 Election,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 295.

¹⁰⁰ Dennis W. Johnson, “Consultants and Presidential Campaigns, 1984 and 1988,” in *Democracy for Hire*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 267.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Drew, *Election Journal: Political Events of 1987-1988* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989), 247.

¹⁰² Stark, “Predicting Presidential Performance from Campaign Conduct,” 302.

Quayle delivered at the Republican National Convention gave the impression that the vice-presidential candidate diverted the attention from the issues that Bush wanted to focus on in the upcoming months of the campaign.

2.2. Presidential Primaries – Road to the Nomination

Before discussing the Republican presidential primaries, we need to concisely mention the Democratic primaries that Michael Dukakis eventually won because the campaign indicated how future events would unfold. Current President Joe Biden stepped out of the race and ended his campaign in September 1987¹⁰³ following an accusation of plagiarism when he adopted his closing remarks from British Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock and did not credit him. The man who discovered this gaffe was Dukakis's campaign manager John Sasso who made a video that compared the speeches of both politicians and delivered it into numerous redactions,¹⁰⁴ which led, e.g., *The New York Times* to report¹⁰⁵ the plagiarism scandal. While the scandal eliminated one of Dukakis's opponents, Dukakis was not satisfied with the strategy of his campaign manager because Sasso acted behind his back. In addition, Dukakis wanted to fight honestly and perceived Sasso's steps as excessively ruthless, which prompted him to sack John Sasso.¹⁰⁶ As this thesis demonstrates later, Dukakis's reluctance towards negative campaigning also affected his campaign against George Bush and contributed to his loss in the general elections.

As this chapter shows later, one of the main topics of the presidential contest in 1988 was a furlough issue when George H.W. Bush accused Michael Dukakis of being too soft on crime and caring more about the rights of criminals than the rights of their victims. This issue was embodied in the story of William Horton, an African American man convicted of first-degree murder and armed robbery in 1974. Subsequently, he was sentenced to life imprisonment at Northeastern Correctional Center in Massachusetts and did not have the option to request parole. The fateful day with ramifications for the 1988 campaign occurred in June 1986 when Horton was granted his tenth furlough for a weekend during which he escaped. During the

¹⁰³ E. J. Dionne Jr, "Biden Withdraws Bid for President in Wake of Furor," *New York Times*, September 24, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/24/us/biden-withdraws-bid-for-president-in-wake-of-furor.html>.

¹⁰⁴ John J. Pitney Jr., *After Reagan: Bush, Dukakis, and the 1988 Election* (University Press of Kansas, 2019), 134.

¹⁰⁵ Maureen Dowd, "Biden's Debate Finale: An Echo from Abroad," *New York Times*, September 12, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/12/us/biden-s-debate-finale-an-echo-from-abroad.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Katherine A. Hinckley and John C. Green, "Fund-Raising in Presidential Nomination Campaigns: The Primary Lessons of 1988," *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (1996): 710.

escape, Horton was pulled over by the police because he did not halt at a red light. He introduced himself as William Crawford and said that the car was his friend's. While the policemen went back to their vehicle to check records on the car and on the man who claimed to be William Crawford, Horton seized the opportunity and fled away. Since the police did not manage to catch up to him, Horton was not seen for the upcoming ten months when he was at large.¹⁰⁷ Horton was later caught in Maryland, where he allegedly kidnapped a white couple,¹⁰⁸ stole a car, "stabbed and pistol-whipped a man, and raped and beaten his fiancée over the course of eleven hours of captivity."¹⁰⁹ Moreover, according to evidence the man had been tortured for several hours.¹¹⁰

The furlough issue became a topic already during the Democratic primary elections due to Al Gore's campaign. In April 1988, Gore strived to gain an advantage over his opponents by pointing out a furlough program "that Dukakis had sponsored in Massachusetts, which granted weekend passes to prisoners, including some serving life sentences for murder."¹¹¹ Gore's short remark was not significant for his fellow party members, but it was a hidden treasure for the team of George Bush which later took advantage of the same topic to gain leverage over Dukakis.

2.2.1. George Bush's nomination

Bush's vice presidency during the Reagan years served as a double-edged sword. To some regular citizens, Bush's vice presidency meant that he was prepared to assume the role of the president after spending eight years in the second-highest political function. However, in the Republican circles, Bush was not perceived as a person competent to lead the American nation due to flaws of the Reagan administration, and as Pitney points out, "[f]or much of Reagan's second term, Bush was an iffy prospect to win the 1988 general election."¹¹² His reputation was harmed by problems and scandals like the Iran-Contra affair, a large trade deficit, or fall

¹⁰⁷ David C. Anderson, *Crime and the Politics of Hysteria: How the Willie Horton Story Changed American Justice* (New York: Times Books, Crown, 1995), 112–117.

¹⁰⁸ Tali Mendelberg, "Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (May 1, 1997): 137.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, "Consultants and Presidential Campaigns," 271.

¹¹⁰ Jeffrey M. Elliot, "The 'Willie' Horton Nobody Knows," *The Nation* 257, no. 6 (1993): 201.

¹¹¹ Robert Shogan, "Gore, Dukakis Tangle during N.Y. Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-04-13-mn-1028-story.html>.

¹¹² Pitney Jr., *After Reagan*, 81.

of dollar's value which led to the market crash on October 19, 1987, when the stock market fell by circa 20 percent.¹¹³

All these events damaged Reagan's – and consequentially Bush's – reputation. *The New York Times/CBS* poll from March 1987 showed that Reagan's approval rating was at the lowest level in four years, while Bush's popularity also deteriorated.¹¹⁴ Only 32 percent of respondents said that they had a favorable opinion of him, a decline by 11 percentage points compared to January of the same year.¹¹⁵ With such low popularity, George Bush had to fight hard to win the Republican nomination. Eventually, after his third place in the Iowa caucuses,¹¹⁶ he managed to build a successful campaign team and reverse the initial results of primaries when he won 16 states out of the total 17 who held primaries on Super Tuesday.¹¹⁷ When Bush won over Bob Dole in Illinois primaries, Dole ceased his campaign¹¹⁸ which unofficially meant that George Bush would become the Republican candidate for the presidential function. In August 1988, the Republican National Convention officially nominated George Bush for president together with his running mate Dan Quayle.

2.2.2. General Election

More than 91.5 million votes were cast on Election Day, meaning that half¹¹⁹ of the eligible voters came to the elections and decided the country's fate for the upcoming four years. George H. W. Bush gained approximately 48.9 million¹²⁰ popular votes, making him a popular vote winner with 53% of the total votes obtained. Michael Dukakis fell behind when he gained seven million votes less than his political opponent. In the Electoral College, it translated into Bush's landslide victory since he obtained 426 electoral votes and Dukakis only 111.¹²¹ The

¹¹³ Mark Carlson, "A Brief History of the 1987 Stock Market Crash With a Discussion of the Federal Reserve Response," *Federal Reserve*, 2.

¹¹⁴ E. J. Dionne Jr., "Poll Shows Reagan Approval Rating at 4-Year Low," *New York Times*, March 3, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/03/us/poll-shows-reagan-approval-rating-at-4-year-low.html>.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Stark, "Predicting Presidential Performance from Campaign Conduct," 301.

¹¹⁷ Pitney Jr., *After Reagan*, 106.

¹¹⁸ Bernard Weinraub, "Bush Nomination Seems Assured as Dole Leaves Republican Race," *New York Times*, March 30, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/30/us/bush-nomination-seems-assured-as-dole-leaves-republican-race.html>.

¹¹⁹ "Federal Elections 88: Elections Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives," Federal Elections Commission (1989), 15.

¹²⁰ The exact number was 48,886,097 votes.

¹²¹ "Federal Elections 88: Elections Results," 15.

Republican Party, therefore, won the President's seat for a third consecutive term.¹²² What helped Bush to secure his victory despite losing in the polls and being the weaker candidate at the beginning of the campaign is examined in the following segments of this thesis.

2.3. Crucial Members of Bush's Campaign Team

Bush's campaign team consisted of various people, but two were crucial for his success – campaign manager Lee Atwater and media team head Roger Ailes. In the 1970s, Atwater participated in the campaigns of Strom Thurmond, a senator for South Carolina who is infamous for defending racial segregation. Hence, he gained experiences in the South when candidates implemented implicit racial allusions instead of outright verbal attacks on African Americans to garner whites' votes. His career breakthrough occurred in 1980 when he implemented an aggressive strategy to help Republican Floyd Spence to retain his seat in the House of Representatives. For example, Atwater conducted fake surveys that tried to convince voters that Spence's Democratic opponent was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Afterward, Atwater stepped up the career ladder by relocating to Washington, D.C., where he worked as an adviser to President Ronald Reagan and served as a political director of Reagan's 1984 presidential campaign. Thus, as the heavyweight of political campaigns, he was crucial for Bush's success in the elections since, as Pitney claims, he "had spent most of his career working for other politicians, he knew what the world looked like outside Bush's bubble."¹²³ Therefore he knew to whom Bush should appeal and how to secure the Republican nomination in the primaries. Atwater figured out that the efforts should be concentrated on the mainstream conservative members of the Republican Party.¹²⁴

Perhaps the most important person in Bush's campaign team was a media adviser Roger Ailes. He gained political experience already in the late 1960s when he assisted in the successful campaign of Richard Nixon and in 1984 when he – together with Atwater – helped to reelect Ronald Reagan. In the 1988 campaign, Ailes affected and essentially controlled the public

¹²² Although it did not make a difference, Dukakis lost one vote to his running mate. Margaret Leach, a Democratic elector from West Virginia, voted for Lloyd Bentsen as a president and Dukakis as vice president despite her pledge to vote for Dukakis, thus she became a faithless elector. Leach realized that her vote would not have mattered and did so to protest the Electoral College rules in her state. See Beverly J. Ross and William Josephson, "The Electoral College and the Popular Vote," *Journal of Law & Politics* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 679.

¹²³ Pitney Jr., *After Reagan*, 83.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, 84.

image of George Bush, and he was also one of the closest advisors to the candidate. Moreover, as Devlin points out, “Ailes worked for Bush during the primary campaign producing ads and worked with Bush on his speaking and debate style [...], he also gave important communication advice on all aspects of the campaign, for example, on how to deal with the press.”¹²⁵ Hence, Roger Ailes played a crucial role throughout the whole campaign. In addition, Ailes had the final say on the campaign spots and impacted how the commercials looked like. Devlin argues that “[t]he direction of Ailes in Washington was to have a powerful influence throughout this ad campaign.”¹²⁶

Roger Ailes¹²⁷ revealed his ability to control Bush’s image and effectively control media at the beginning of the voting year in the heat of preparation for primary elections. The then-Vice President was interviewed about his role in the infamous Iran-Contra affair by journalist and CBS news anchor Dan Rather on January 25, 1988, just several days before the Iowa caucuses. As a professor emeritus at George Washington University Dennis W. Johnson reports, “Ailes insisted on a live interview (so CBS couldn’t edit the material unfavorably), a mole inside CBS informed the Bush camp of what Rather’s questions would be, and Bush came out blasting.”¹²⁸ During the interview, Bush labeled the question about the Iran-Contra affair as a rehash and refused to provide clear answer stating that he expected that the interview would be his political profile. Instead, Rather still insisted on asking about the Iran-Contra affair and tried to ascertain what role Bush had in the scandal.¹²⁹ The Vice President then proceeded to turn the interview around, accused CBS of unfair practices, questioned Rather, and reminded him of his past mistake when he angrily walked off the set of CBS News in September 1987 because the television shortened the broadcasting of Evening News to show the end of a tennis match at the U.S. Open tournament. Rather’s walkout caused six minutes of dead air and black screen

¹²⁵ Patrick L. Devlin, “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials of 1988,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 32, no. 4 (March 1, 1989): 392.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, 395.

¹²⁷ Roger Ailes’s prominence continued in the 1990s, albeit in a slightly different sphere – he became chairman of Fox News when it was founded in 1996. As a CEO, he managed to turn the television channel into conservative haven that openly sides with the Republican Party. Ailes held his position for 20 years and resigned only in 2016 after accusations of sexual harassment. In that same year, Ailes advised the then Republican nominee Donald Trump to prepare him for presidential debates against Hillary Clinton. See for example David Brock, Ari Rabin-Havt, and Media Matters for America, *The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012).

¹²⁸ Johnson, “Consultants and Presidential Campaigns,” 265.

¹²⁹ “Dan Rather Interview of George Bush”, C-SPAN.org | National Politics | History | Nonfiction Books, video 09:28, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?752-1/dan-interview-george-bush>.

because CBS Sports eventually yielded to the news segment, but only after the anchor had already left the studio.¹³⁰ During the interview, George Bush did not hesitate to take advantage of Rather's wrongdoing:

I want to talk about why I want to be president, why those 41 percent of the people are supporting me. And I don't think it's fair to judge a whole career [...] by a rehash on Iran. How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set in New York? Would you like that?¹³¹

The viewers were discontent with the way Dan Rather conducted the interview because they thought the journalist was biased toward Bush and was too harsh on him. Some viewers even almost immediately began to call CBS to express their objections. Ailes not only prepared Bush for the tough interview but, as Johnson claims, "[t]he calls were allegedly orchestrated by Ailes as well,"¹³² with the most likely intention to discourage CBS from further attempts to enquire Bush about controversial issues that could harm his reputation among the electorate.

Bush's advisers and other people around him were convinced that his confrontation with the journalist was beneficial because it helped the nominee's image in the eyes of the public¹³³ and demonstrated that Bush could be tough. Altogether, this episode indicated subsequent moves that Bush's campaign used to gain votes – when facing critique, point to the (even sometimes fabricated) mistakes of the opponent, being it either a journalist or a contender for the Oval Office, through which Bush diverted attention from his past wrongdoings. As Pitney argues, Bush's actions also "reinforced a tactic that Nixon, Agnew, and Ailes had developed in the 1960s: cast political arguments as battles with the press."¹³⁴

2.4. Strategy of Bush's Campaign Team

Campaign teams generally endeavor to subvert the political opponent through negative commercials whose function, according to Gronbeck, "is to destabilize [sic] the voter support for the other, either increasing the undecideds [...] or even driving voters out of the electoral

¹³⁰ Peter J. Boyer, "Rather Walked off Set of CBS News," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/13/nyregion/rather-walked-off-set-of-cbs-news.html>.

¹³¹ "Dan Rather Interview of George Bush", C-SPAN.org.

¹³² Johnson, "Consultants and Presidential Campaigns," 265.

¹³³ Drew, *Election Journal*, 114.

¹³⁴ Pitney Jr., *After Reagan*, 102.

arena altogether.”¹³⁵ This was one of many reasons why the negative discourse emerged already in the 1988 primaries since political contenders from the same party strived to gain the support of their fellow party members to become the presidential nominee. The necessity to first beat others who might have similar opinions and values offers a suitable environment for verbal attacks that are used to disparage political rivals. Therefore, in 1988, the attacks commenced already at the beginning of the year in primaries and caucuses.¹³⁶

Furthermore, the hostile political culture of primaries can affect the phase of the general election campaign. George Bush initially opposed negativity and wanted to emphasize his strengths without attacking his opponent. Nonetheless, thanks to the focus groups where people reacted to the negative framing of Dukakis’s liberalism, Bush’s pollster Robert Teeter persuaded him that negative commercials worked and should have been aired during the whole campaign.¹³⁷ The road to commercials full of attacks and allegations was cleared.

The negative notion then pervaded the overall atmosphere. The Bush campaign team – predominantly the media team head Roger Ailes and campaign manager Lee Atwater – orchestrated a well-elaborated campaign strategy for the general election. Atwater drafted the strategy long before he knew who would run for president from the Democratic camp. As Atwater himself stated, his main intention was to “paint him [the opponent] as a frostbelt [sic] liberal who is out of mainstream and is not in tune with the values of mainstream voters.”¹³⁸ To fulfill this objective, Atwater and Ailes firstly had to ascertain what topic might be prevalent in the upcoming campaign and outline the exact issues that would equalize the Democratic candidate with the liberal label. Therefore, Bush’s campaign team invited people who identified themselves as Democrats but were not the party’s hardline supporters (some even voted for Reagan in the previous elections) to participate in a focus group in New Jersey. The campaigners were convinced that inviting Democratic voters and focusing on the topics that worried them the most would help them to swing Democratic votes to the Republican Party. During these sessions, Bush’s team ascertained what topics alienated voters from Michael

¹³⁵ Bruce E. Gronbeck, “Negative Narratives in 1988 Presidential Campaign Ads,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no. 3 (August 1, 1992): 341.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, 336.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹³⁸ Thomas B. Edsall, “NEW GOP CHIEF RENOWNED FOR DIVIDING FOES,” *Washington Post*, January 20, 1989, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/01/20/new-gop-chief-renowned-for-dividing-foes/4f39e0ca-fc90-441d-b5d4-915c3a6dee88/>.

Dukakis and found out that predominantly the issue of crime turned out to have the potential to enhance Bush's image and seriously damage voters' perception of Dukakis. Half (out of thirty) of the participants alleged that their views of Dukakis as presidential candidate changed after depicting Dukakis as a candidate who was soft on crime.¹³⁹ According to Ratzan, the "focus group and follow-up polls [...] convinced GOP media guru Roger Ailes that crime [...] could translate into the Achilles' heel for Michael Dukakis."¹⁴⁰

Bush's campaign team chose William Horton as an embodiment of crime and made him a symbol of Dukakis's political weakness, primarily because of an advertisement that made Horton a "star" against his will.¹⁴¹ Bush's campaign team tasked numerous staffers to conduct research on Dukakis's life in the hope of finding a flaw that could be exploited during the General Election. As Dennis Johnson reports, "[i]n one of their findings, the researchers discovered that Dukakis had vetoed a bill that would ban weekend furloughs from prison for Massachusetts murders"¹⁴² which proved to be essential to consequent events.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the issue of furloughs was first brought up in April 1988 by Al Gore when he "accused Michael Dukakis of giving weekend passes to convicted criminals."¹⁴³ Dukakis first seemed indifferent to the issue since he did not apologize, avoided confrontation, and refused to make a statement where he would have pointed out that California under the then Governor Ronald Reagan had a similar program. Michael Dukakis refused to alter the furlough program and change the main topics of his campaign despite the fact that his campaign team warned him about the issue and the case of William Horton, which could prove problematic further in the campaign.

Albeit the practice of furloughs in Massachusetts was introduced by Republican governor Francis Sargent and continued under conservative Democrat Edward King, Dukakis's veto of the aforementioned bill that would abolish the program proved to be a gold mine for the Bush campaign. For example, Lee Atwater promised to "make Willie Horton his [Dukakis's] running mate."¹⁴⁴ Due to the campaign team's effort and due to the commercial that took advantage

¹³⁹ Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 396.

¹⁴⁰ Scott C. Ratzan, "The Real Agenda Setters," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 32, no. 4 (1989): 454.

¹⁴¹ The commercial is discussed below in the subchapter 2.4.1.

¹⁴² Johnson, "Consultants and Presidential Campaigns," 270.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, 271.

¹⁴⁴ Herbert S. Parmet, *George Bush: The Life of a Lone Star Yankee* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2001), 336.

of Horton, “Willie” Horton indeed became a household name and the symbol of 1988 elections. Even several years later, when some constituents were asked to recall the elections, they mainly remembered Bush, Dukakis, and Horton.¹⁴⁵

Except for topics like the economy, foreign policy, and women’s right to access abortion, virtually no substantial policy issues were discussed during the entire campaign. The absence of essential topics left leeway for discussing largely symbolic issues such as the Pledge of Allegiance because of Dukakis’s antipathy towards schools’ requirement for students to recite the it in schools. As can be seen in professor of communication Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s book called *Dirty politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy*, the Republicans criticized Dukakis’s veto of a bill that would have obliged children in public schools to recite the Pledge.¹⁴⁶ Bush was indeed successful in setting the agenda of the 1988 elections because he often repeated the Pledge through which – as Haynes Johnson asserts – “he injected the divisive issue of patriotism squarely into the campaign.”¹⁴⁷ To emphasize his presumed dominance in patriotism, he even cited the Pledge of Allegiance at the end of the acceptance speech that he delivered on the Republican National Convention in August.¹⁴⁸

In the end, the campaign strategy of Bush’s team helped him to win the general elections and to obtain the favor of voters despite the fact he was initially losing in the opinion polls¹⁴⁹. Abramowitz and Segal argue that Bush’s “success [...] is generally attributed to a brilliant negative advertising campaign devised by Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes that portrayed Michael Dukakis as soft on crime and insufficiently patriotic.”¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Dukakis’s inability to lessen the damage made by negative ads and his refusal to quickly retaliate against his opponent contributed to the weakening of his image. Commercials made by Dukakis’s campaign team were hard to understand and hard to remember because Dukakis’s advertisements emphasized his achievement with complicated graphics. On the other hand, Bush’s

¹⁴⁵ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 398.

¹⁴⁸ “George H.W. Bush 1988 Acceptance Speech”, C-SPAN.org | National Politics | History | Nonfiction Books, video, 1:24:01, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?3848-1/george-hw-bush-1988-acceptance-speech>.

¹⁴⁹ The polls are further mentioned in the subchapter 2.7., which analyzes Bush’s rhetoric in the campaign.

¹⁵⁰ Alan I. Abramowitz and Jeffrey A. Segal, “Beyond Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance: National Issues in the 1988 Elections,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (November 1, 1990): 566.

commercials tried to evoke emotions.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Bush did not have a problem with offensive ads. In contrast, Dukakis strived to evade the attacks, and the prolonged response from his campaign team made him appear weak and indecisive. Dukakis also did not want to repeat the same topic over and over again.¹⁵² That meant that the message he was trying to convey received less attention than Bush's because the longer the message stays in the campaign environment, the more voters can identify with it. Overall, Dukakis's disinclination towards reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in schools, affiliation with the American Civil Liberties Union, and furlough program in Massachusetts became the issues that were exploited by Bush's campaign to harm the opponent in the race for the presidential seat. Later, Roger Ailes summarized the strategy:

It could have been written on the back of a matchbook. It was basically positive George Bush and how we would define him. We always knew we would have to define Dukakis as well, and whichever of us defined the other and ourselves most effectively would win.¹⁵³

2.4.1. The "Willie Horton" advertisement

The commercials played a significant role during the 1988 presidential elections, and primarily the negative ones predominated. Kaid et al. define such ads as "advertisements that directly refer to an opposing candidate, the issues for which the other candidates stand, or the party of the other candidate"¹⁵⁴ instead of putting the main emphasis on the strengths of the candidate whom commercials strive to promote.

Scholars from Stanford University John Newhagen and Byron Reeves then distinguish three types of negative commercials. One of the categories is *attack ads* which they define as an advertisement in which the campaigners strive to weaken the opponent through outright attacks or allusions and insinuations. At the same time, there is no reference to the image of the candidate who attacks his opponent. The second type is a *comparative ad*, where a positive image of the candidate is being constructed, and the opponent's repute is, on the other hand, diminished. The last category is *hope commercials*, where a candidate is

¹⁵¹ Devlin, "Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials," 410.

¹⁵² Drew, *Election Journal*, 329.

¹⁵³ Devlin, "Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials," 392.

¹⁵⁴ Lynda Lee Kaid, Chris M. Leland, and Susan Whitney, "The Impact of Televised Political Ads: Evoking Viewer Responses in the 1988 Presidential Campaign," *The Southern Communication Journal* 57, no. 4 (1992): 287.

introduced as the solution to a particular issue, and there are no direct attacks on the opponent.¹⁵⁵ Drawing from this definition, the “Willie Horton” advertisement can be perceived as a comparative ad since the commercial begins with juxtaposing Bush’s and Dukakis’s stance on crime and death penalty. Afterward, approximately two-thirds of the spot focus on Horton’s story and emphasize the notion that Dukakis was soft on crime through indirect accusations,¹⁵⁶ which suggested that Dukakis was to blame for the crimes committed by Horton. However, the commercial simultaneously bears some features of an attack ad. For these reasons, the thesis refers to the Horton commercial as a negative advertisement, not an attack ad. Newhagen and Reeves further elaborate that attack ads “have negative peripheral cues, represented by fear, disgust, or anger, embedded throughout the commercial,”¹⁵⁷ which the Horton ad undoubtedly has, albeit the main target of those cues is not Dukakis, but William Horton.

The main topic of the advertisement is the death penalty and crime in general. Hence, it might appear that race was not a significant factor since the race of William Horton was never explicitly mentioned by George Bush in his campaign¹⁵⁸ or mentioned in the commercials where people could see only Horton’s photograph. However, the implicit message about race was crucial since white Americans decry openly racist allusions while often having subconscious prejudice towards African Americans. Tali Mendelberg found that “[t]he Horton appeal was [...] about race rather than crime; it mobilized whites’ racial prejudice, not their worries about crime.”¹⁵⁹

The absence of explicit racial remarks enabled George Bush and members of his campaign team to defend themselves from the accusations of racism. As Jamieson states, “[n]oting that Horton did not appear in any ad sponsored by the Bush campaign, Bush spokespersons denied Democratic charges that Bush was running a racist campaign.”¹⁶⁰ The fact that the ad was paid

¹⁵⁵ John E. Newhagen and Byron Reeves, “Emotion and Memory Responses for Negative Political Advertising: A Study of Television Commercials Used in the 1988 Presidential Election,” (presentation, Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., August 10–13, 1989): 2–3.

¹⁵⁶ ““Willie Horton” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” *The Living Room Candidate*, video, 00:35, accessed October 29, 2022, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

¹⁵⁷ Newhagen and Reeves, “Emotion and Memory Responses for Negative Political Advertising,” 11.

¹⁵⁸ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Mendelberg, “Executing Hortons,” 151.

¹⁶⁰ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Context and the Creation of Meaning in the Advertising of the 1988 Presidential Campaign,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 32, no. 4 (March 1, 1989): 418.

for and created by independent National Security Political Action Committee (NSPAC), which did not have a direct link to campaign¹⁶¹ also helped Bush and his team to officially condemn the advertisements and downplay the accusations of racism.

The “Willie Horton” advertisement aired from the 21st of September 1988 until the 4th of October¹⁶² and compared the attitudes of Bush and Dukakis on the death penalty. It begins with the image of George Bush and the narrator saying: “Bush supports the death penalty for first-degree murderers.” The words *supports the death penalty* were emphasized as they appeared on the bottom half of the screen. The narrator then proceeds to depict Dukakis’s stance on the same issue by uttering: “Dukakis not only opposes the death penalty, he allowed first-degree murders to have weekend passes from prison.”¹⁶³ To stress the point which the commercial made, almost the entire sentence appeared on the screen together with Dukakis’s picture. Besides the dark-blue background, the photos of both candidates were the only colored images in the entire advertisement. As Jamieson observes, “Dukakis’s hair is unkempt, the photo dark. Bush, by contrast, is smiling and bathed in light.”¹⁶⁴



Figure 1 – Comparison of the stance on capital punishment. The ad first shows Bush, then it continues with Dukakis’ picture.

¹⁶¹ A connection between the NSPAC was never proven, but an unnamed NSPAC employee’s link to Bush’s communication expert and similarities in the official and NSPAC’s advertisement sparked suspicion about collaboration between the members of Bush campaign team and the NSPAC. Although Lee Atwater initially declared that if Horton had been used by an independent committee, Bush’s campaign would condemn the move. Nonetheless, in 1991, Atwater acknowledged that the decision to involve William Horton in the presidential elections came from the campaign headquarters. See “Independent Expenditures,” OpenSecrets, accessed February 27, 2023,

https://web.archive.org/web/20060215055332/https://www.opensecrets.org/pubs/law_bagtricks/loop4.asp and Feagin et al., “Racism in the Halls of Power,” 166.

¹⁶² Johnson, “Consultants and Presidential Campaigns,” 272.

¹⁶³ ““Willie Horton” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

¹⁶⁴ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 17.

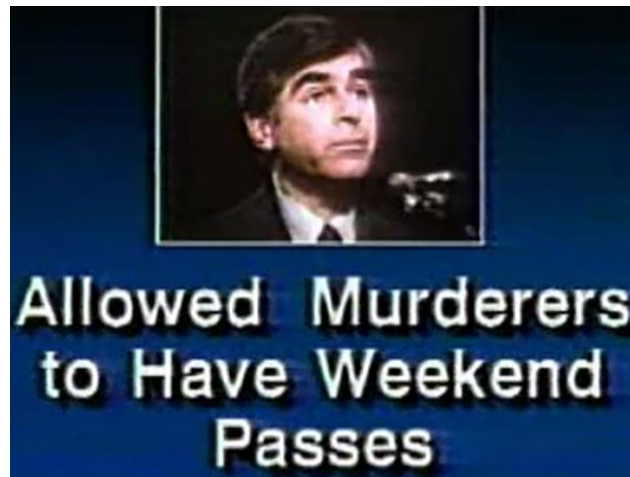


Figure 2 – Michael Dukakis is shown in the "Willie Horton" ad with words that underscore the narrator's point that Dukakis supports the death penalty.¹⁶⁵

Afterward, the commercial mentions William Horton and shows his black-and-white mug shot. The producers used the patronizing name "Willie," which was meant to demean Horton and degrade him into the category of criminals by dehumanizing him. While showing Horton's picture, the viewers learn that one of those prisoners who received furlough was "Willie Horton, who murdered a boy in a robbery stabbing him 19 times."¹⁶⁶

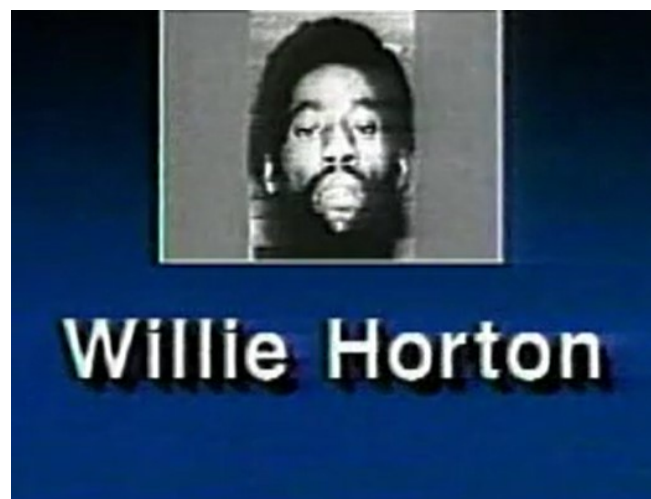


Figure 3 – Mugshot of William Horton that was used in the commercial.

¹⁶⁵ Images 1–7 are screenshots from campaign commercials and were made by the author. Figures 1–4 are screenshots from "'Willie Horton' Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis," *The Living Room Candidate*.

¹⁶⁶ "'Willie Horton' Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis," *The Living Room Candidate*.

The picture then changes to William Horton being detained by a policeman while the text implicitly underscores the main message that Dukakis is weak on crime and is letting dangerous murderers out of prison. The narrator proceeds to tell the audience that “Horton fled [during the furlough], kidnapped a young couple, stabbing the man, and repeatedly raping his girlfriend.”¹⁶⁷ The words *kidnapping*, *stabbing*, and *raping* flashed on the screen so there would be no doubt what Horton had done. Subsequently, the photograph of Michael Dukakis is shown again, and the commercial ends with the words “weekend prison passes – Dukakis on crime,”¹⁶⁸ which were meant to insinuate that Dukakis was soft on crime and allude that the safety of law-abiding citizens was in peril if he would win the election.



Figure 4 – Sequence from the ad that tries to invoke fear in viewers and implicitly conveys the message that Dukakis was soft on crime.

The picture of untidy and unshaved Horton helped create the impression of him as a menacing and dangerous man while implying that many African American men threaten whites. The notion of a black murderer and rapist who assaulted and raped a white woman fits into the historical construct of a Black man as savage and an uncivilized and dangerous “monster” who rapes white women.¹⁶⁹ As Klinkner and Smith put it, “[t]he ‘Willie’ Horton imagery served several purposes for the Republicans – it not only conjured up white fears of black crime, but also reinforced the perception of many white voters that the Democrats were overly tolerant of social deviants (read, blacks).”¹⁷⁰ At the beginning of the 1990s when Horton gave an interview from the prison, he lamented about the use of the picture:

¹⁶⁷ “‘Willie Horton’ Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” *The Living Room Candidate*.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ According to statistics, rape is predominantly intra-racial problematic. In 1988, African Americans committed only 11.3 percent of reported rapes that included a white victim. See Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 134.

¹⁷⁰ Philip A. Klinkner and Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 305.

At the time the photograph was taken, I was a suspect in the rape case. I was still recovering from the gunshot wounds. After two surgeries, they took me from the hospital to the Upper Marlboro Detention Center, where I was placed in a cell in the hospital for three or four days. [...] They then placed me in segregation, where I stayed for two and a half to three months, after which I was taken down, fingerprinted and booked. During that period, I was denied the right to have a shave or a haircut. I only had three or four baths during those several months. It was then that they took the picture. That's why I looked like a zombie.¹⁷¹

Four years after the commercial aired, journalist David Anderson met with Horton in the Maryland penitentiary and expressed his impression of Horton's visage. According to Anderson, Horton "bears only a distant resemblance to the disheveled, barely human image that for a time became a kind of national icon."¹⁷² Of course, a person's image can profoundly change after four years, but this evidence also indicates that the misuse of Horton's mugshot was well-calculated by the Republican campaign.

In addition, the "Willie Horton" commercial exaggerated the topic of furloughs because, according to Feagin et al., Horton "was the only person imprisoned in Massachusetts for first-degree murder to be accused and convicted of a violent crime committed while he was on furlough."¹⁷³ The ad also omitted the fact that many other states – including states where Republican governors held the office – had similar programs.

2.4.2. The "Revolving Door" Ad

The Bush campaign team also produced an advertisement focused on crime. Its name is "Revolving Door." It directly criticized the Massachusetts furlough program and was shot in the Utah state prison. The commercial began to air on the 5th of October¹⁷⁴ – shortly after the "Willie Horton" ad ceased to be broadcasted. The people starring in this advertisement were not prisoners. Producer Dennis Frankenberry, who helped Bush in his campaign, came up with the idea to create this commercial. He used young Republicans that, based on stereotypes and bias, supposedly looked like people who committed crimes. The campaign team members

¹⁷¹ Elliot, "The 'Willie' Horton Nobody Knows," 203.

¹⁷² Anderson, *Crime and the Politics of Hysteria*, 28.

¹⁷³ Feagin et al., "Racism in the Halls of Power," 168.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 164.

even went off to the streets of Salt Lake City, where they strived to convince locals to participate in the shooting.

The commercial told a more coherent story than the Horton ad and was shot in black-and-white as well. The first frame shows a prison guard with a weapon climbing a watchtower with the words “The Dukakis Furlough Program” appearing on the screen and the narrator saying: “governor Michael Dukakis vetoed mandatory sentences for drug dealers, he vetoed the death penalty.”¹⁷⁵ The frame changes so the audience can take a closer look at another guard with a rifle walking alongside a fence.



Figure 5 – The beginning of the “Revolving Door” ad that shows guards in prison.¹⁷⁶

The male narrator continues with the critique of Dukakis: “his revolving door prison policy gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers not eligible for parole.”¹⁷⁷ While the viewer hears this phrase, a line of convicts is entering and immediately leaving the revolving door which resembles prison bars to allude that prisoners spend a disproportionately short time in jail. Afterward, the narrator says: “While out, many committed other crimes like kidnapping and rape.”¹⁷⁸ While he is uttering these words, the text “268 escaped” appears on the screen, from which a viewer infers that 268 is the number of men who committed crimes during their temporary furloughs and never returned to prison after that. This notion is underlined by the

¹⁷⁵ ““Revolving Door” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate, video, 00:32, accessed November 10, 2022, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

¹⁷⁶ Figures 5 and 6 are screenshots from ““Revolving Door” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

¹⁷⁷ ““Revolving Door” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem.

words “many are still at large” that flashed on the screen and were also uttered by the narrator. The advertisement ends with another look at a watchtower with an armed prison guard in the foreground. The narrator concludes: “Now Michael Dukakis says he wants to do for America what he has done for Massachusetts. America can’t [sic] afford that risk.”¹⁷⁹ In addition, eerie music is playing throughout the entire ad to induce fear in the audience.

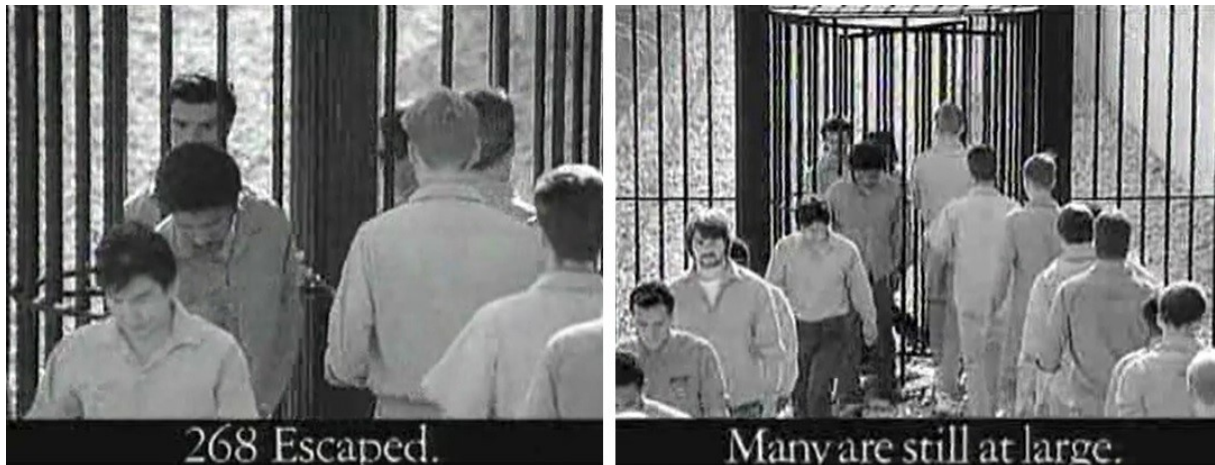


Figure 6 – Takes from the “Revolving Door” ad that depicts lines of prisoners conveying the message that many imprisoned people spend a short time in jail and are dangerous during their furloughs. Moreover, they allegedly did not return to prison after their furloughs ended.

The “Revolving Door” ad was misleading and contained factual mistakes. Only four of the 268 prisoners were jailed for first-degree murder, and only one was convicted of crimes committed during the furlough.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the use of the word “escaped” is problematic since it suggests that the convicts were not eventually sent back to prison and were still roaming the streets while the commercial was aired. Altogether, it is necessary to put the number into context. While it is true that during Dukakis’s first two terms as a governor of Massachusetts,¹⁸¹ 268 imprisoned people escaped while they were on furloughs, the number of individuals who were granted furlough was 11,497, and the total number of furloughs was even greater – 67,378.¹⁸² Thus, during the first two Dukakis’s terms (1975–1979 and 1983–

¹⁷⁹ ““Revolving Door” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” *The Living Room Candidate*.

¹⁸⁰ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 19–20.

¹⁸¹ Michael Dukakis firstly served as a governor of Massachusetts from 1975 to 1979. He held the seat again from 1983 to 1987 when he was reelected for another term.

¹⁸² Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 20.

1987), only 0.4 percent furloughs ended with the convicts running away and not returning to jail.

Moreover, voters inferred that Dukakis then temporarily released 267 other convicts and could only imagine what heinous crimes such prisoners must have committed while on furlough. The fear-mongering message of the ad was completed with the subconscious message that every prison in the country would provide furloughs to virtually every convict if Dukakis became the President. The constituents thus concluded that the crime rate would dramatically increase as a potential consequence of Dukakis's soon-to-be policies. Although the conclusion that voters could have drawn from the ad was incorrect, the symbols can often be more important than facts.¹⁸³ Kinder and Sanders found out that "words and symbols make a difference: the underpinning of opinion, and thus the very meaning of opinion, can be shifted by inducing citizens to think about issues in particular ways."¹⁸⁴ Hence, the ultimate narrative that Bush's campaign created was that domestic security would decrease under Dukakis.

The "Revolving Door" commercial does not explicitly mention race, and the majority of actors are white. Nonetheless, it again falls into the narrative of white Americans feeling endangered by criminals, which in the U.S. context subconsciously implies African Americans. According to Frankenberry, this ad was not supposed to appear racist:

The conscious decision was to balance the population [...], they were chosen to look menacing, but if we had tilted it to all black, it would have been subject to a lot of criticism and rightfully so. And the absence of any minorities would have been incorrect and unrepresentative.¹⁸⁵

It is noteworthy, that Frankenberry did not explicitly say that depicting prisoners only as African Americans would be wrong because he would perceive it as a racist step. Instead, he was more afraid of the potential criticism that would have followed had all of the "actors" been black.

¹⁸³ Tim Newburn and Trevor Jones, "Symbolic Politics and Penal Populism: The Long Shadow of Willie Horton," *Crime, Media, Culture* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 72, 76–77.

¹⁸⁴ Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 192.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Dennis Frankenberry (Media Producer, November 8, 1988), quoted in Devlin, "Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials," 395.

2.4.3. Other TV Commercials Used in Bush's Campaign

The message about Dukakis being soft on crime was also reinforced by other advertisements created by the Bush campaign that altogether crafted the story in which George Bush was depicted as the better politician to assume the role of the presidency. Instead of focusing on the future and Bush's visions of enhancing everybody's lives in the United States, the advertisements referred to Dukakis's past sins¹⁸⁶ that he allegedly committed during his tenure as the governor of Massachusetts. Hence, four topics were prevalent in the Bush campaign – crime, environment, taxes, and foreign policy. All these issues were meant to discredit Dukakis's capability to hold the most important office in the nation. As we will later see, George Bush also communicated these topics in his speeches to disparage his opponent. Before that, it is necessary to briefly analyze other TV commercials.

The leitmotif of the selected advertisements was to induce fear in the constituents and warn them against the potential events that could occur if Dukakis was elected as the new president. To increase the efficiency of the fear-mongering tactics, the Bush campaign utilized Dukakis's record as the governor of Massachusetts. The crime issue was one example and the most prevailing one because the "Willie Horton" and the "Revolving Door" ads put a spotlight on this topic. Furthermore, the commercial titled "Credibility," which aired after the candidates' first presidential debate,¹⁸⁷ also emphasized Dukakis's putative wrongdoings in the sphere of crime. This ad begins with ominous music similar to the music used in the Horton commercial. The narrator immediately tells the audience that "one person has released killers sentenced to life without parole on unsupervised weekend passes"¹⁸⁸ while a picture of Michael Dukakis from the debate is in the background, emphasizing who is meant by the *one person*. Moreover, the framing of furloughs as *weekend passes* indicates that imprisoned men were on vacation since weekends are generally time to take some pressure off our everyday lives. As Jamieson underscores, "[t]his suggests that the assault and rapes were leisure activities for the prisoners."¹⁸⁹ The commercial then proceeds to accuse Dukakis that he

¹⁸⁶ Gronbeck, "Negative Narratives," 337.

¹⁸⁷ The first debate took place on 25th of September 1988.

¹⁸⁸ "'Credibility' Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis," The Living Room Candidate, video, 00:32, accessed February 8, 2023, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

¹⁸⁹ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 130.

“pardoned 49 convicted drug dealers and offenders and commuted the sentences of a record 53 murderers.”¹⁹⁰

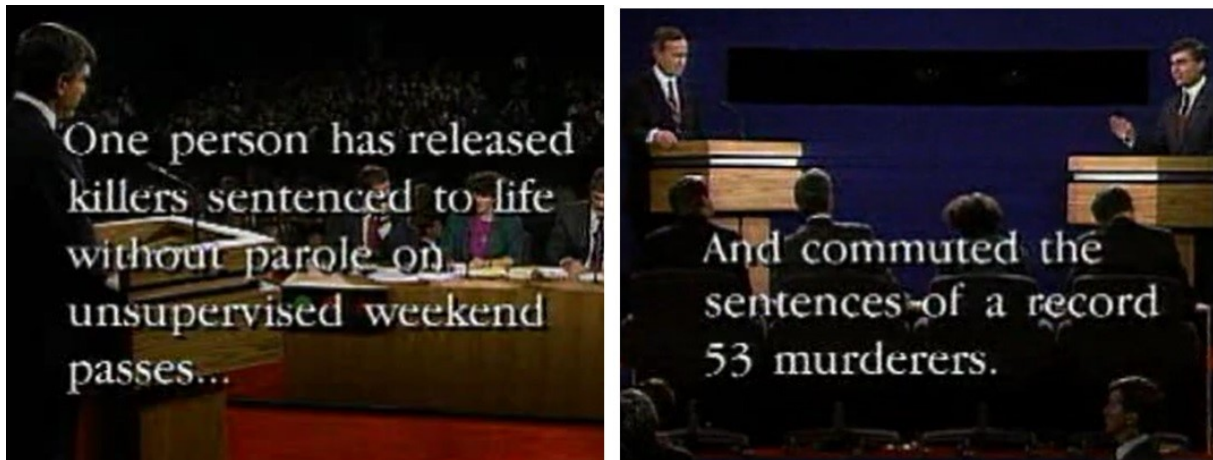


Figure 7 – Excerpts from the “Credibility” ad that exploited Dukakis’s record on crime.¹⁹¹

Afterward, the “Credibility” commercial strived to harm Dukakis by using a segment from the presidential debate where Dukakis endeavored to defend his stance on the death penalty and claimed that he is “very tough on violent crime.”¹⁹² Subsequently, the audience burst out into laughter which the commercial took advantage of. The male narrator ends the spot with an affront that “even Michael Dukakis can’t [sic] say he’s [sic] tough on crime with a straight face.”¹⁹³ Based on the aforementioned definitions of negative commercials, the “Credibility” ad can be classified as an attack ad because it directly refers to the other candidate, tries to disparage Dukakis’s competence, and there is no reference to George Bush, who attacks his rival through this advertisement.

The abovementioned three advertisements are not connected only with the same topic but also with the same meaning – they all tried to induce fear in the voters of what could happen if Dukakis won the elections and became president and implied that Dukakis would make the same flawed policies as president as he has done as a governor.

¹⁹⁰ “Credibility” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

¹⁹¹ Screenshots from “Credibility” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

¹⁹² “Presidential Candidates Debate”, C-SPAN.org | National Politics | History | Nonfiction Books, video, 1:32:15, accessed November 19, 2022, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?4309-1/presidential-candidates-debate#>.

¹⁹³ “Credibility” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

This paradigm also pertains to other TV spots that emphasized issues other than crime. For example, “The Harbor” ad concentrated on the environment, particularly on the pollution of the Boston Harbor in Massachusetts Bay. This commercial “depicted a Boston harbor oozing with sewer pipes, floating debris, and garbage washing up on the shore.”¹⁹⁴ The viewers come to know that:

As a candidate [for the governor], Michael Dukakis called Boston Harbor open sewer. As governor, he had the opportunity to do something about it, but chose not to. The Environmental Protection Agency called his lack of action the most expensive public policy mistake in the history of New England. Now Boston Harbor – dirtiest harbor in America – will cost residents 6 billion dollars to clean. And Michael Dukakis promises to do for America what he’s [sic] done for Massachusetts.¹⁹⁵

The “Harbor” commercial ends in an identical tone as the “Revolving Door” ad. In both spots, the narrator convinces the audience that Dukakis would repeat his past errors if elected president. Thus he would significantly decrease the quality of life of Americans. In other words, as Gronbeck puts it, “[t]hat last line moved listeners from the past to the present [...]. Dukakis presumed ineptitude and callousness were the reasons for telling the story.”¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the commercial implied a rhetorical question – if Dukakis as governor is unable to take care of his state, how could he be expected to govern the United States and “how could he claim to be an effective environmentalist.”¹⁹⁷ While it is true that cleansing of the Boston Harbor commenced only after courts ruled that it was necessary to clean up the place, the advertisement was still misleading. At one point, the sign that contained the words *danger, radiation, hazard, and no swimming* can be seen. All these negative words strived to induce fear in the audience, but mainly this picture was not related to the Boston Harbor. The photo was taken at an abandoned site where nuclear submarines were repaired that was closed by President Richard Nixon in 1973.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the paradigm that Dukakis would be a weak and ineffective head of state was also perpetuated by this negative advertisement.

¹⁹⁴ Devlin, “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials,” 395.

¹⁹⁵ “The Harbor” Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate, video, 00:32, accessed February 8, 2023, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

¹⁹⁶ Gronbeck, “Negative Narratives,” 337.

¹⁹⁷ Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 401.

¹⁹⁸ Devlin, “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials,” 395.

The most substantial proof that Dukakis's campaign was feckless occurred in Sterling Heights, Michigan on 13th September 1988. Devlin argues that it was "[o]ne of the biggest mistakes in a campaign of many mistakes."¹⁹⁹ The campaign team decided to organize a photo op to demonstrate Dukakis's stand on defense policy, which was intertwined with the foreign policy during the Cold War. In foreign policy, Michael Dukakis lagged behind Bush, who had experience as a former ambassador to the United Nations, head of the liaison office in mainland China, and Vice President during the Reagan era. In addition, Dukakis criticized the defense spending of the Reagan administration, which he deemed as too high. Hence, Bush was widely considered as a better choice to be the future commander-in-chief. The Dukakis campaign strived to invert this perception by sending the candidate for a tank ride in Michigan, which did not meet its goals and even backfired on Dukakis's image. The Democratic nominee had to wear a helmet because it was the only way of communicating with the commander. However, the helmet was too big, which prompted the press to laugh almost immediately²⁰⁰ after they beheld Dukakis, who wore a suit underneath the uniform to complete the surrealist picture.



Figure 8 – Michael Dukakis in the infamous tank that harmed his image.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Devlin, "Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials," 396.

²⁰⁰ Jeremy B. White, "Dukakis and the Tank," *POLITICO Magazine*, November 17, 2013, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2013/11/dukakis-and-the-tank-099119/>.

²⁰¹ Nicole Hernandez, "Remember Michael Dukakis's Infamous Tank Ride? So Does He," *Boston Globe*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2016/08/10/remember-michael-dukakis-infamous-tank-ride-does/wVngluATanikakqmgImh2N/story.html>.

The video from this event turned out to be a gift for the Republicans, who did not hesitate and created another negative commercial, using exclusively takes from Dukakis's photo op. The "Tank Ride" ad begins with the narrator saying: "Michael Dukakis has opposed virtually every defense system we developed."²⁰² Afterwards, the uttered sentences appear on the screen:

He opposed new aircraft carriers. He opposed anti-satellite weapons. He opposed four missile systems, including the Pershing Two Missile deployment. Dukakis opposed the Stealth Bomber and a ground emergency warning system against nuclear attack. He even criticized our rescue mission to Grenada and our strike on Libya.²⁰³

This advertisement contains a lot of information to be absorbed by the average viewer. It was misleading because Dukakis endorsed the Stealth Bomber in the campaign.²⁰⁴ However, the Bush campaign was insistent on the claims and justified them by previous statements made by presumed experts.²⁰⁵ Overall, this commercial tried to induce fear in the audience and evoke the feeling of Dukakis's incompetence which would decrease the safety of Americans. Amidst the Cold War, claiming that the potential future commander-in-chief opposes new technologies that could defend the United States in case of any attack might have strengthened the feeling that the country would be unprepared for a potential conflict. The ad concludes with the same sentence as the "Revolving Door" and the "Boston Harbor" commercials – "America can't [sic] afford that risk,"²⁰⁶ which further distressed voters about the possible outcomes of Dukakis's imagined presidency.

The last campaign spot that is examined is not an advertisement per se because it lasts for four minutes and thirty seconds. Thus it is further referred to as a spot. It captures all the essential issues in the 1988 presidential campaign and outlines the topics that were repeated in Bush's speeches. In the beginning, the video sets the agenda by comparing Dukakis's commercial, which claimed he cut taxes, with the newspapers' headlines that focused on crime. Several headlines appear on the screen, but one stands out – "murderer on furlough is

²⁰² ""Tank Ride" Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis," The Living Room Candidate, video, 00:32, accessed February 8, 2023, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

²⁰³ Ibidem.

²⁰⁴ Devlin, "Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials," 396.

²⁰⁵ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 255.

²⁰⁶ ""Tank Ride" Ad 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis," The Living Room Candidate.

the 62nd to escape”²⁰⁷ – subtly referring to William Horton. The announcer continues to mention other topics with the words “environmental problems, liberal spending out of control. Michael Dukakis, out of touch with our values and problems.”²⁰⁸ As we will see in the following subchapters, the portrayal of Dukakis as a politician who does not understand American values was a recurring theme in Bush’s speeches.

Inter alia, the spot concentrates on crime. It begins with a statement delivered by a Massachusetts resident who said that she thought she lived in a safe neighborhood, but near her house, “a first degree murderer was stopped [...] and nobody knew he was out.”²⁰⁹ The narrator then describes Dukakis as the only incumbent governor who endorsed “furloughs for killers sentenced to life without parole.”²¹⁰ Subsequently, the spot asserts that the Democratic candidate defended the policy even after a “furlough escapee terrorized a Maryland couple”²¹¹ which is a blatant reference to William Horton and his actions. Furthermore, Dukakis is depicted as a reckless leader unconcerned about the regular citizens and their requests to abolish the furlough policy. The spot reiterates that Dukakis is out of touch with American values and stands outside the mainstream. The last take comes from Dukakis’s advertisements which said: “Mike Dukakis. What he did for Massachusetts, he can do for America.”²¹² The Bush campaign used this sentence to Bush’s advantage since his team warned against the possible perils of Dukakis’s presidency and suggested that the quality of life in the United States would deteriorate under Dukakis. That is the reason why once again, the spot ends with the phrase: “America can’t [sic] afford that risk.”²¹³

2.5. Impact of the Television Commercials

Television commercials were one of the most crucial areas where both campaigns differed in the 1988 presidential election. Bush’s campaign team managed to flood the broadcasting with negative advertisements. Such negative commercials received greater attention from television news because the anchors mentioned the negative ads or their excerpts more

²⁰⁷ “Campaign Spot 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate, video, 04:27, accessed February 8, 2023, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988>.

²⁰⁸ “Campaign Spot 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis,” The Living Room Candidate.

²⁰⁹ Ibidem.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

frequently than the positive ones,²¹⁴ which allowed campaigners to spread the message more efficiently. Also, the “viewers saw and heard content they would not otherwise have been exposed to,”²¹⁵ as Jamieson asserts. Kaid et al. then found “that the increased coverage has helped to legitimize political advertisements as a tool for a voter decision-making.”²¹⁶ On the other hand, Dukakis’s campaign team was unable to quickly and effectively respond, and as Devlin summarizes, “strong ads emphasizing Bush’s lack of judgment and accomplishments never got made. Others were made and aired only later in during the campaign but failed to have the desired effect.”²¹⁷ The first and foremost reason for the lack of negative commercials was Michael Dukakis’s stance who refused to counterattack his opponent with negative agenda and did not take heed of his advisers’ recommendations. Eventually, Dukakis begrudgingly gave permission to produce such ads, but they only subtly attacked Bush. Furthermore, the commercials failed to control the damage because they were made poorly and in a hurry, so they did not accomplish the same goals as the ads produced by the Bush campaign, and their effect did not last long enough. Michael Dukakis later reproached his mistake and admitted that “[m]aybe, with the benefit of hindsight, I should have tried to respond sooner.”²¹⁸

The Horton commercial also accentuated the parties’ different approaches toward race. The advertisement and accompanying strategy of the Bush campaign showed that Republicans were not afraid to intensify the voters’ fears and exploit whites’ racial prejudice in order to garner votes and seize power. On the other hand, the whole situation exposed the Democratic inability to react to the Republican attacks adequately, and inability to take a firm stand on racial issues during campaigns – the reason for Dukakis’s aforementioned slow and insufficient reaction lies in the frail balance between maintaining whites’ votes and gaining votes from African Americans. If Dukakis and other Democrats had explicitly mentioned race and taken pride in their racial liberal policies during the 1988 presidential campaign, they would have risked losing white votes²¹⁹ and doomed themselves to an inevitable loss in the election. The apparent ignorance of the racial issues allowed them to have a leeway to save their chance of

²¹⁴ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 135.

²¹⁵ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 124

²¹⁶ Lynda Lee Kaid et al., “Television News and Presidential Campaigns: The Legitimization of Televised Political Advertising,” *Social Science Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (1993): 274.

²¹⁷ Devlin, “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials,” 399.

²¹⁸ Drew, *Election Journal*, 328.

²¹⁹ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 187.

winning. Therefore, the Democrats could not overtly stand up for African Americans. That benefited Republicans because the Bush campaign could use implicitly racist remarks freely, knowing no immediate backlash from the opposing party would follow.

The different approach towards negative advertisements paid off for the Republican Party. According to *The New York Times/CBS* poll carried out during the latter half of October 1988, one in four voters admitted that the ads helped them to decide for which candidate they would cast a ballot.²²⁰ Gronbeck opines that negative advertisements were effective because “[t]he margin of Bush’s victory, the predominance of his negative television commercials, and the fact that he was able to reverse a twenty-point gap in the polls after he focused his television campaign on his opponent’s faults suggest that the technique worked well for the Republicans.”²²¹ Moreover, political scientist Tali Mendelberg endeavored to ascertain whether the Horton commercial had its desired effect and affected white voters who then sided with Bush. She analyzed the National Election Study of 1988 and found that the advertisements served their purpose – they weakened Dukakis and strengthened Bush. According to her, the implicitness of the message, which induced racial fears and reinforced stereotypes, was crucial in conveying the message²²² that Dukakis was soft on crime and that his potential presidency would exacerbate the living conditions of white Americans. The Republican campaign offered a simple solution to avert this scenario – cast the ballot for George Bush.

The message that advertisements are trying to convey might also be influenced by the context that surrounds the commercials because “the environment [...] can infuse an ad with unstated meaning,”²²³ as Jamieson claims. The “Willie Horton” commercial tried to connect Dukakis’s picture with Horton’s face in a way that indicated he would be another suspect and also Horton’s accomplice in the crime. The Horton commercial and the “Revolving Door” ad both

²²⁰ Michael Oreskes, “TV’s Role in ’88: The Medium Is the Election,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/10/30/us/tv-s-role-in-88-the-medium-is-the-election.html>

²²¹ Gronbeck, “Negative Narratives,” 340. The same conclusion can also be found in Abramowitz and Segal, “Beyond Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance,” 566. Kaid et al. then opine that the advertisements ameliorated Bush’s images – see Kaid et al., “The Impact of Televised Political Ads,” 285. Moreover, Devlin states that “[n]egative ads and negative campaigning had a direct and dramatic effect during the 1988 presidential campaign [...]. Pollster Peter Hart found in July that 21 percent of those polled had a negative opinion about Michael Dukakis. By November, Dukakis’s negative rating rose to 44 percent and surpassed his positive rating of 42 percent.” – see Devlin, “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials,” 406.

²²² Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 178.

²²³ Jamieson, “Context and the Creation of Meaning,” 416.

focused on crime and accused Dukakis of recklessly granting furloughs to prisoners who allegedly committed various felonies during their furloughs. Jamieson argues that viewers reflected the notion of Dukakis defending prisoners in the “Revolving Door” advertisement, which aired later because “[b]y carefully juxtaposing words and pictures, the ad invited the false inference that 268 first-degree murderers were furloughed by Dukakis (personally) to rape and kidnap.”²²⁴

Lastly, public opinion can also be affected by framing the issues since politicians’ comments are reflected in the media from which people consume information. If people consume the same information repetitively on a daily basis, they might be influenced by it. Frames also shape our understanding of the world, and as Kinder and Sanders put it, they “help individual citizens make sense of the issues that animate political life. They provide order and meaning; they make the world beyond direct experience seem natural.”²²⁵ Notably, towards the end of the 1980s, when there were fewer – if any – opportunities to fact-check statements of candidates for office, campaign staff had an exquisite chance to affect public discourse and shape voters’ opinions. Nevertheless, shortly after the 1988 campaign, journalists began to control factual claims to a greater extent. According to Kaid et al., “[t]he need for such media oversight of campaign commercials has been heightened by the perception that television ads are increasingly adept at manipulating visual and aural cues,”²²⁶ which is what happened in the 1988 campaign. Therefore, many media outlets introduced a watchdog position of journalistic “adwatches” whose objective was to help voters to understand the campaign commercials and their context through diligent fact-checking of misleading claims made in the ads.

2.6. Further Amplification of the Message

The Republican message about the furlough issue that strived to depict Michael Dukakis as a candidate that is soft on crime was not transmitted only in the television area. During the primary elections, the Republican National Committee distributed a *Reader’s Digest* article that discussed the Horton case to its delegates²²⁷ to inform them about the events connected

²²⁴ Jamieson, “Context and the Creation of Meaning,” 416–417.

²²⁵ Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 164.

²²⁶ Lynda Lee Kaid, John C. Tedesco, and Lori Melton McKinnon, “Presidential Ads as Nightly News: A Content Analysis of 1988 and 1992 Televised Adwatches,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 40, no. 3 (June 21, 1996): 297.

²²⁷ Drew, *Election Journal*, 253.

with the furlough. But the Republican Party did not amplify the racially implicit message only among its members. Several hundred thousand people in New York received fliers that contained William Horton's photograph with the headline that asked: "How Serious Is Dukakis about Crime?"²²⁸ Hence, the flier further utilized the fear-mongering tactic and tried to reinvigorate the message of the TV commercial.

Another example of strategies that can be covertly racist might be the actions of the Maryland Republican Party, which was formally independent of the official Bush campaign. It delivered letters that depicted Michael Dukakis and William Horton, encouraging the impression that Horton was Dukakis' running mate. This notion was further strengthened by the text: "By now, you have heard of the Dukakis/Bentsen team. But have you heard of the Dukakis/Willie Horton team?" In addition, the letter strived to induce fear in voters by claiming that "[y]ou, your spouse, your children, your parents and your friends can have the opportunity to receive a visit from someone like Willie Horton if Mike Dukakis becomes president."²²⁹ Therefore, the negative advertisements together with actions of some Republican organizations successfully, albeit factually inaccurately, narrated the story of William Horton and associated Michael Dukakis with softness on crime and conflated him with the fear of deterioration of the crime rate if he had won the elections.

There were also other methods that strived to intensify the message. In August 1988, after the Republican National Convention, an unknown member of the Republican Party handed out cards to other passengers on a plane from New Orleans to Washington. The card titled "Get out of jail, free" openly attacked Michael Dukakis and stated:

Michael Dukakis's furlough plan allowed convicted murderers to take a weekend leave from prison. One, Willie Horton, left and never came back. He viciously raped and beat a woman [...]. In the last several years, Mike Dukakis has furloughed more than one murderer per day. Mike Dukakis is the killer's best friend, and the decent, honest citizen's worst enemy.²³⁰

²²⁸ Andrew Rosenthal, "Bush Flier Features Convict," *The New York Times*, October 24, 1988, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1988/10/24/110488.html?pageNumber=23>.

²²⁹ Hill Retha, "Bush Aide Denounces Maryland Letter," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1988, quoted in Racism in Feagin et al., "Racism in the Halls of Power," 165.

²³⁰ Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 399–400.

While only episodic, this event indirectly supported Bush's message about crime and promise to protect whites (here described as *decent and honest citizens*) and also accentuated Bush's agenda – accuse Dukakis of being soft on crime, go offensive with little regard to further consequences, and (ab)using words that have negative connotations. Furthermore, the short text on the card proves that Ailes's objective to make William Horton Dukakis's running mate was not just empty talk since the Democratic nominee is mentioned twice, and Horton is associated with him. A similar message was also communicated to the constituency in Texas when 400,000 similar fliers were delivered to people living there.²³¹

Printed newspapers also reinforced the Bush campaign's message. Guido Stempel and John Windhauser analyzed seventeen newspapers and compared the 1984 campaign with the 1988 campaign. The authors ascertained that while crime was not the prevalent topic of print media coverage in either of the campaigns, the number of stories related to crime rose²³² in the latter campaign when Republicans decided to put a larger emphasis on the potential and presumed danger connected to criminals. The higher number of crime-related articles in newspapers suggests that the Republican campaign managed to influence the issues discussed during the 1988 presidential campaign.

Furthermore, segments from the Horton commercial continuously appeared on TV news when journalists simply covered the 1988 campaign, but as Mendelberg asserts, they unintentionally "circulated Horton's image more effectively than any of the other media, and served as a boon to the Bush campaign because it was free."²³³ Firstly, the coverage contained the infamous mug shot of Horton, thus the news inadvertently conveyed the story in a racially stereotypic way.²³⁴ Secondly, the words uttered by a reporter were insufficient to put the record straight because the advertisement narrator's voice is usually more resonant than the journalist's covering the story.²³⁵ Also, the reporters' words with which they tried to counter the misleading message of the advertisements was not sufficient because the viewers remember images better than spoken word.²³⁶ Therefore, the news can indirectly amplify the

²³¹ The flier claimed that Dukakis "let convicted rapists, murderers, and drug dealers out of prison on weekend passes," thus it adhered to the focal point of Bush's campaign. See Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 22.

²³² Guido Hermann Stempel and John William Windhauser, *The Media in the 1984 and 1988 Presidential Campaigns* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), 24–25.

²³³ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 150.

²³⁴ *Ibidem*, 135.

²³⁵ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 127.

²³⁶ *Ibidem*, 147.

message of a commercial by playing only a short clip since “[a]fter a viewer has seen the same ad many times, exposure to a small segment of it can evoke the whole ad.”²³⁷ The claim that the message of commercials can be amplified by their news media coverage was also supported by Vice President and director of Governance Studies at Brookings Institution Darrell M. West.²³⁸

2.7. George Bush’s Rhetoric in the 1988 Presidential Elections

The presidential campaign naturally did not consist only of television commercials. Its integral part was also speeches that George Bush delivered throughout the year. This subchapter examines the rhetoric that Bush used and tries to ascertain whether he conveyed a covertly racist message to his audience and if so, to what extent. However, only a fragment of his speeches is available online. The majority is located in the Presidential Library in Texas, which has not yet digitalized Bush’s speeches from the presidential campaign period.²³⁹ Hence, the discourse analysis derives from twelve speeches that are accessible on *C-SPAN*, Bush’s acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, and the two presidential debates that were held in September and October 1988 respectively.

Initially, George Bush was losing the polls to Michael Dukakis. In March 1988, 50% of voters deemed Dukakis as a more favorable candidate, while only 45% supported Bush, according to the poll published by *The Washington Post/ABC*. The odds were altered after Bush’s official nomination at the Republican National Convention in August. As can be seen in the list of appendices, polls made by *The Washington Post* presumed a narrow margin between the two candidates, with Bush gaining a significant lead in October as the general elections were approaching. According to *The New York Times/CBS* polls, Bush overcame Dukakis in late August and did not lose his lead until Election Day.²⁴⁰ The other media organizations that

²³⁷ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 127.

²³⁸ Darrell M. West, “Television Advertising in Election Campaigns,” *Political Science Quarterly* 109, no. 5 (April 19, 1995): 790.

²³⁹ As can be seen on the website of the library, the campaign files are located there. See “David Hoffman Collection”, George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum. However, the speeches that George Bush delivered during the campaign are not digitalized which was further confirmed by the library via e-mail communication. John P. Blair, e-mail message to the author, October 17, 2022. Since the collection of the speeches is named “David Hoffman collection”, the author of this thesis contacted him whether he kept any of Bush’s speeches from the 1988 presidential campaign. Nevertheless, his answer was that he did not keep any speeches. David E. Hoffman, e-mail message to the author, November 17, 2022.

²⁴⁰ Mack C. Shelley and Hwang-Du Hwang, “The Mass Media and Public Opinion Polls in the 1988 Presidential Election,” *American Politics Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1991): 65, 76–77.

measured public opinion and are mentioned here also recorded Bush's leap forward in August. This suggests that his official nomination by the Republican Party and his speech played a decisive role in altering the opinions of voters who slightly leaned Democratic and affecting the minds of undecided voters. The subsequent events like the negative campaigning then helped Bush to maintain his position in the polls and strengthened his lead.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that the change in the opinion polls might have been affected by the fact that more citizens started paying attention to the elections when the voting day was getting closer.

The available evidence indicates that Bush's campaign strategy contributed to the change in the polls and enhanced his odds of winning the general elections. Falling behind in the polls, Bush's campaign team decided to go offensive "by constantly attacking Dukakis as an ultraliberal out of step with mainstream America, drive up his negatives and destroy him,"²⁴² as Haynes Johnson claims. For example, Bush described Dukakis as a *liberal governor* four times in his rally in Los Angeles in June 1988²⁴³ and associated the term with negative connotations that implied that the federal government spending would get out of control if Dukakis won the elections. According to the Republican nominee, Dukakis was "trying to take us back to those liberal days of the misery index and malaise."²⁴⁴ Labeling Dukakis as a liberal whilst associating the term with negative connotations was Bush's constant effort. In the sample of analyzed speeches and debates, he used *liberal* or *liberals* 35 times, which was one of the most uttered words.

In the same Los Angeles speech, Bush claimed that he embodied mainstream and traditional American values to attract conservative constituents. In the examined sample, the candidate used the word *values* 25 times, emphasizing that he was a better future president who would uphold the values without specifying what he considers as the traditional American norms. Therefore, the values were portrayed as a positive issue and were linked with Bush. On the other hand, liberalism was depicted as a negative issue that would threaten the future of the United States. Liberalism, in this interpretation, was a derogatory term that, according to

²⁴¹ The data for the graphs were gathered in a journal article that examined results of 48 polls – for more information see Shelley and Hwang-Du Hwang, "The Mass Media and Public Opinion Polls."

²⁴² Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 395.

²⁴³ "Bush Campaign Rally in Los Angeles", C-SPAN.org | National Politics | History | Nonfiction Books, video 54:06, accessed November 25, 2022, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?4978-1/bush-campaign-rally-los-angeles>.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

Haynes Johnson, “stood for alien, and therefore dangerous, ideas and values.”²⁴⁵ Framing of the terms *values* and *liberalism* or *liberal* had a clear purpose – depict Bush as the more capable politician and as a potential future president who would safeguard Americans from the plausible perils, whereas Dukakis would only jeopardize citizens’ security.

Besides these two predominant terms, George Bush also spoke about foreign policy, which is not surprising given his experiences in this area (and inexperience on the side of Governor Dukakis) and the persisting Cold War. In the first debate, Bush even insinuated Dukakis’s alleged incompetence by referring to the aforementioned “Tank ad,” which lists Dukakis’s record on defense, albeit with factual errors. Specifically, Bush said: “I wanted to hitchhike a ride home in his tank with him,”²⁴⁶ which also aimed to ridicule the Democratic nominee for his appearance in the tank.

Another way how George Bush bluntly attacked his opponent was by putting the spotlight on crime and claiming that Michael Dukakis was soft on crime because he vetoed the bill that would ban furloughs for persons convicted of murder. The “Willie Horton” advertisement was the crucial platform for these attacks, but Bush also supported the narrative in his speeches. Although based on the available speeches, Bush uttered Horton’s name only twice (both times in the first presidential debate that took place in September 1988 and both times with the demeaning variation of “Willie”), according to secondary sources, he first mentioned Horton’s name in June 1988.²⁴⁷ Afterwards, as Kinder and Sanders put it, “Willie Horton became a fixture in Bush’s speeches and in three weeks, the large lead [in the *Washington Post/ABC* polls] that Dukakis had been enjoying was sliced in half.”²⁴⁸ This promised that accusations of the Democratic candidate would work and would significantly weaken Dukakis’s prospects of winning the elections.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of crime contained racial code words. Because this thesis is limited by the small number of Bush’s speeches available online, it does not include the total number and frequency with which Bush used racial cues. Nevertheless, the sample of speeches and secondary sources offer a relatively complete picture of the covert racism that

²⁴⁵ Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 399.

²⁴⁶ “September 25, 1988 Debate Transcript”, Commission on Presidential Debates, accessed November 19, 2022, <https://www.debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/september-25-1988-debate-transcript/>.

²⁴⁷ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 135.

²⁴⁸ Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 234.

penetrated the 1988 presidential campaign. The list of the most prevalent racial allusions that Bush used can be seen in the following table, which also includes the quantity of the abovementioned terms for a better overview. The table does not contain only racial code words but also other terms that Bush frequently used and through which he strived to depict Dukakis as an incompetent candidate.

Term	Quantity
Killer	1
Murderer/s	2
Willie Horton	2
Kingpin/s	3
Criminal/s	3
Narcotics	4
Neighborhood/s (in a negative context)	5
Death penalty	7
Environment ²⁴⁹	7
Furlough/ed	8
Crime/s	12
Drug/s	13
Values	25
Liberal/s	35

Figure 9 – Racial code words and other frequent terms that George H. W. Bush used in his speeches (13 in total) and in two presidential debates during the 1988 campaign.

The least used words were *killer* and *murderer*, which Bush used to describe William Horton. One can argue that these words depict Horton’s deeds. Nevertheless, Bush uttered these words to further brutalize Horton’s past actions and dehumanize him. In his acceptance speech, the Republican candidate said: “I’m the one who believes it is a scandal to give a weekend furlough to a hardened first degree killer who hasn’t even served enough time to be eligible for parole.”²⁵⁰ In that speech, this was the only reference to Horton that was made without mentioning his name. Note that the Republican framing of furloughs as weekend leisure also appeared here.

Furthermore, in the first debate, Bush stated that “Maryland²⁵¹ would not extradite Willie Horton, the man who was furloughed, the murderer, because they didn’t want him to be furloughed again.”²⁵² The usage of the word “murderer” in this sentence is redundant and its

²⁴⁹ George Bush used this word with the connection of the polluted Boston Harbor which he framed as a Dukakis’s failure.

²⁵⁰ “George H.W. Bush 1988 Acceptance Speech”, C-SPAN.org.

²⁵¹ During the furlough, William Horton escaped to Maryland and it was there where he allegedly kidnapped the white couple and raped a white woman.

²⁵² “Presidential Candidates Debate”, C-SPAN.org.

primary function is to label Horton as a dangerous person. In the context of this statement, Bush spoke about the Massachusetts furlough program and obliquely delineated Dukakis as a politician who was on the side of convicted people instead of blameless citizens. This whole remark thus subtly indicated that the everyday lives of Americans would be imperiled if Dukakis became president.

As was mentioned earlier, George Bush never specified William Horton's race. Yet his chosen words can be defined as racist, specifically as covert racism. He depicted Horton only as a murderer, which was in accordance with the commercial and fitted into the prejudiced stereotype that African Americans posed a threat to whites. The Republican nominee also used Horton's story and distorted the crime issue for his political benefit. The connection between Horton and Dukakis's stance on crime was reinforced after the "Willie Horton" ad began to air. According to Jamieson, "once a viewer had seen the PAC ad or a news clip about it, the images of Horton, his victims, and the circling convicts were likely to meld [sic] into a coherent narrative reinforced almost daily by Bush's recounting of it in his campaign speeches."²⁵³ Therefore, the race of Horton was omnipresent in the campaign, although it was never explicitly stated by Bush.

For example, Bush evoked whites' concerns by using the term "death penalty," which he often connected with Horton's wrongdoings. This term might seem harmless, but as Jamieson summarizes, "[t]he 1990 General Social Survey [...] demonstrates that racial prejudice correlates with support for capital punishment"²⁵⁴ because 78 % of respondents approved of the death penalty for people convicted of murder. Hence, alluding to the necessity of capital punishment might efficiently invoke racial fears among white constituents.²⁵⁵ Moreover, the fact that white voters heard the dog whistle is supported by the data from other general social surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. According to the surveys, in the years 1988–1991, approximately 42% of respondents either opposed or strongly opposed living in a neighborhood where more than half of the inhabitants were African American. The numbers about interracial marriage were even more alarming. 52% of respondents opposed or strongly opposed the idea of a relative or a close

²⁵³ Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 23.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 34.

²⁵⁵ Kinder and Mendelberg, "Cracks in American Apartheid," 413.

family member marrying a black person.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, “[r]esponses to the four symbolic racism items carried by the 1988 National Election Study [...] show that racially resentful expressions on average are endorsed by 61 percent of whites.”²⁵⁷ This data suggests that albeit many white Americans publicly denounced racism, the racial bias persisted, and could thus be exploited for political gains.

Bush’s message induced fear in American citizens, as this thesis repeatedly asserts. This is supported by Johnson, who claimed that “[f]or in depicting Willie Horton as a symbol of Dukakis’s alleged softness of crime, the Bush campaign fomented racial fears for political purposes and appealed to the worst elements of the American character.”²⁵⁸ The fear-mongering was boosted by racial prejudice and implicit racial cues that Bush uttered throughout the campaign. Firstly, the implicitness of the message is important because the conflict between races still existed, but at the same time, racism was a publicly reprehensible idea. If the remarks were explicitly racist, voters might have perceived the candidate as too extreme, which would discourage them from voting for him. Therefore, as Mendelberg puts it, “[t]he implicit nature of these appeals allows them [the candidates] to prime racial stereotypes, fears, and resentments while appearing not to do so.”²⁵⁹ Kinder and Sanders then summarize that fear-mongering message was perfected in early October when the furlough problematic started to be a centerpiece of Bush’s speeches. The researchers state that “[a]gain and again, Bush recounted the gruesome and horrific details of Horton’s crimes [...], insisted that Dukakis cared more about the rights of criminals than he did the victims of crimes, and he lambasted Dukakis for opposing the death penalty.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ “General Social Surveys, 1972-2018: Cumulative Codebook” (December 2019), *National Data Program for the Social Sciences at National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago*, 719 and 722.

²⁵⁷ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 116–117.

²⁵⁸ Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History*, 399.

²⁵⁹ Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 4.

²⁶⁰ Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 234.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the political campaigns of selected Republicans in the presidential elections in the second half of the 20th century. Racial discrimination was an inseparable part of U.S. history and was exploited in presidential campaigns when candidates played a race card through using racial rhetoric to attract white voters. As this thesis proved, the campaign of George H. W. Bush in 1988 was no exception since it continued in the dog whistle strategy that was perfected by preceding Republican candidates. The evidence for this claim stemmed from various secondary sources and from an analysis of television commercials and speeches that Bush delivered during the campaign.

Although the thesis connects dog whistle politics with Republicans, the origins of this strategy can be traced to the Democratic governor of Alabama George Wallace in the 1960s. Initially, he openly endorsed white supremacy and racial segregation, but he later adapted to changing social norms and tried to spread his opinions by racial cues to prevent alienating a broad audience.

With the advancement of civil rights, uttering explicit racist attacks was no longer a viable way to win the elections. Hence, beginning with Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential elections, candidates switched to implicit racial remarks like *states' rights* to garner white votes. By exploiting racial allusions, candidates strove to appeal predominantly to conservative, white, and Southern constituents who opined that whites began to lose their social status. Politicians, who implicitly promised to maintain the old order and preserve the traditional values, aimed at whites' prejudice towards African Americans. Their rhetoric implied that they wanted to move the country backward to the conditions that were omnipresent before the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

The Republican Party eventually mastered the dog whistle strategy with Richard Nixon's victory in the 1968 presidential elections. One of the reasons why Nixon used dog whistle politics was George Wallace, who ran as an independent candidate and who managed to attract support among the Southerners by holding segregationist opinions and avoiding explicit racist statements. Since Nixon tried to attract similar voters, he had to adapt to Wallace's tactics, and he commenced using *law and order* as part of his complex Southern strategy. The emphasis on law and order worked because of the riots of African Americans who were not content with the progress of civil rights reforms and wanted faster amelioration

of race relations. The victory of Richard Nixon meant that the dog whistle strategy was successful for the first time, which outlined future Republican campaigns. Moreover, the 1968 elections completed the process of party realignment by shattering the New Deal coalition because blue-collar workers and rural white Southerners began to vote Republican since middle-class voters felt betrayed by the federal government and perceived the Democrats as a party that lost interest in them and cared more about minorities.

In the main part, this thesis examined the successful campaign of George H. W. Bush in 1988. Although Bush was initially losing in the polls, he seized the lead in August after the Republican National Convention and after his campaign manager Lee Atwater and media team head Roger Ailes elaborated the strategy to appeal to white voters effectively. Furthermore, Bush controlled the topics discussed in the campaign due to the negative television commercials and constant attacks on his opponent. He successfully injected patriotism into the campaign because Dukakis vetoed a bill that would have forced children in public schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The Republican candidate even cited the Pledge at the end of his acceptance speech to emphasize his patriotism.

Based on the analysis of secondary sources, television advertisements, speeches that Bush delivered, and two presidential debates, this research showcased that George H. W. Bush's campaign in 1988 took advantage of racial bias and used covertly racist rhetoric. The previous evidence shows that this was not an exception but rather a norm in the Republican campaigns in presidential elections. The issue connected with race was a crime and the furlough issue because Dukakis vetoed a bill that would ban weekend furloughs for prisoners jailed for murder. The infamous "Willie Horton" ad exploited the furlough issue with a story of an African American man, which tried to evoke fear in voters by connecting their safety with a high crime rate that could have followed if Dukakis had been elected president. Furthermore, describing William Horton almost as an animal without regard for human life falls under the historical construct of a Black man as savage and an uncivilized and dangerous "creature" who rapes white women. From the commercial, voters could have inferred that more people like William Horton would roam the streets if they voted for Dukakis, which eventually discouraged them from casting a ballot for him.

Other advertisements, such as the "Revolving Door" commercial, further exploited the racial bias of white voters through the issue of crime. In this ad, the Bush campaign again abused

racial stereotypes by describing African Americans as criminals and implicitly spread the message that the Democratic Party was soft on crime and only Republicans could defend law and order.

The research was constrained by the relatively small number of available primary sources. However, Bush's speeches contained racial allusions and implicit racist remarks, which is also supported by secondary sources.²⁶¹ Therefore, it can be claimed that both the strategy and the rhetoric that George Bush used in his speeches and the presidential debates were covertly racist and were a way how the Republican nominee strived to attract white voters.

Candidates for an office might deem dog whistle politics as a viable strategy that reflects some voters' opinions, and that can be used in their campaigns. Since everyone holds slightly different principles of morality, the question remains whether such tactic is moral. Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis may be relevant for undecided voters who are especially susceptible to dog whistle politics since fear-mongering and generally aiming at feelings is an efficient campaign strategy. If constituents know about the dog whistle strategy and how the candidates endeavor to manipulate their minds, they can be more resistant to such tactics. They can decide rationally, which might lead to an improvement of political culture in which politicians would not exploit racial stereotypes to get elected and enhance their careers at the expense of the African-American minority.

²⁶¹ E.g., Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color*, 234; Feagin et al., "Racism in the Halls of Power," 165; Mendelberg, "Executing Hortons," 137; Jamieson, *Dirty Politics*, 130.

Summary

In the second half of the 20th century, the candidates of the Republican Party for the presidency managed to find a way how to exploit racial fears and prejudice of white constituents. To win presidential elections, they relied on implicit racial allusions that linked African Americans with terms of negative connotations. The candidates used code words and dog whistle politics – a strategy where the remarks in their speeches seemed harmless on the veneer, but a particular group of the population heard the hidden meaning and discerned the actual message.

The precursors of such strategy – George Wallace and Barry Goldwater – were unsuccessful and did not win the race for the Oval Office. However, Richard Nixon perfected the tactics by emphasizing his message more ardently. He capitalized on the social unrest at the end of the 1960s that stemmed from riots of African Americans who were not content with the progress of civil rights reforms and challenged the ascendancy of whites. The Republican politician was a strategic racist because he abused racial prejudice to move up the career ladder and ignored the ramifications of his rhetoric in order to win the elections. Nixon pushed the *law and order* message, which helped him to win the race.

Richard Nixon continued using covertly racist rhetoric and policies even during his presidency. Nonetheless, the presidential elections in 1976 meant an intermezzo of dog whistle politics because Gerald Ford wanted to disassociate himself from the Watergate scandal of the previous Nixon administration. Employing dog whistle politics returned with Ronald Reagan's candidacy when he accused single African-American women with numerous children of abusing social welfare. The exaggerated story reinforced the racial stereotype that Black women were promiscuous people taking advantage of the federal government, thus the taxpayers' hard-earned money.

Ronald Reagan also focused on crime and continued the law and order message. A similar pattern can be seen in George H. W. Bush's campaign in the 1988 presidential elections. With the help of the campaign manager Lee Atwater and the head of the media team Roger Ailes, Bush's campaign exploited racial bias through a story of William Horton, an African American man convicted for murder, who escaped during furlough and allegedly committed other crimes. Because Horton was granted furlough in Massachusetts, where governor and Democratic candidate for presidency Michael Dukakis previously vetoed a bill that would ban

furloughs for people imprisoned for murder, Bush's campaign made Dukakis appear soft on crime and strived to evoke fear in voters. The message that citizens would not be safe if Dukakis became president was present in television campaign commercials and Bush's speeches. Furthermore, Bush also abused the story in the presidential debate on the 25th of September 1988.

Through all these steps, the Republican candidate implicitly and repeatedly connected the crime issue with African Americans by using racial code words. The embodiment of crime in the 1988 presidential elections was Horton's story, which Bush's campaign made into a part of the historical stereotype that African-American men were dangerous for the white population, predominantly for women.

George H. W. Bush thus continued in the dog whistle politics, and his rhetoric contained racial allusions and code words. His message was supported by campaign commercials focused on crime, which included code words or racist images. Bush's campaign did not consider the broader repercussions of the hostile rhetoric because winning the elections was an ultimate goal, and being covertly racist was a way to achieve this goal. In other words, Bush relied on the dog whistle strategy, which was established and perfected by previous Republican candidates who have won the presidential race.

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Master's Thesis Summary

ZÁVĚREČNÉ TEZE MAGISTERSKÉ PRÁCE NMTS
Závěrečné teze student odevzdává ke konci Diplomního semináře III jako součást magisterské práce a tyto teze jsou spolu s odevzdáním magisterské práce do SIS předpokladem udělení zápočtu za tento seminář.
Jméno: Jakub Cajkář
E-mail: 24840258@fsv.cuni.cz
Specializace (uved'te zkratkou)*: SAS
Semestr a školní rok zahájení práce: LS 2020/2021
Semestr a školní rok ukončení práce: LS 2022/2023
Vedoucí diplomového semináře: Dr. phil. Lucie Kýrová, M.A.
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jana Sehnálková, Ph.D.
Název práce: Covert Racism in Presidential Campaigns: Exploiting Racial Prejudice by George H. W. Bush in the 1988 Elections
Charakteristika tématu práce (max. 10 řádek): This master's thesis examines the rhetorical strategy of the Republican Party in the presidential campaigns in the second half of the 20th century while the main focus was on George H. W. Bush's campaign in 1988. The thesis began with a historical overview of covertly racist rhetoric in the second half of the 20 th century when candidates switched from explicit racist remarks to implicit racial allusions to appeal to white constituents while sacrificing African-American votes by connecting Blacks with words of negative connotations. The essential part examines the Republican strategy in the 1988 elections and analyzes negative commercials through which Bush continued in the established pattern of covert racism.
Vývoj tématu od zadání projektu do odevzdání práce (max. 10 řádek): Initially, the thesis aimed to examine the role of the "Willie" Horton advertisement. Its goal was to answer whether this form of covert racism played a significant role in the presidential campaign and eventually contributed to the victory of George H. W. Bush in 1988. During the writing process, the aim of the thesis changed, and the updated goal was to find out whether Bush's rhetoric during the campaign contained "hidden" racist remarks. Because of this change, an introductory chapter about the history of covertly racist rhetoric was added. Due to the inaccessibility of Bush's speeches from the 1988 elections, the main scope of this work focused on speeches and TV campaign commercials
Struktura práce (hlavní kapitoly obsahu): 1. Dog Whistle Politics – How the Republican Party Learned to Exploit Racial Prejudice 1.1. Discrimination in the United States and Evolution of the Rhetoric Targeting African Americans 1.2. George Wallace and Barry Goldwater – Precursors of Successful Dog Whistle Politics 1.3. Richard M. Nixon – A Case of Strategic Racism

- 1.4. Ronald Reagan – the Race Card Strikes Back
- 2. George Bush’s Presidential Campaign in the 1988 Presidential Elections**
 - 2.1. Conveying a Message during Campaigns
 - 2.2. Presidential Primaries – Road to the Nomination
 - 2.3. Crucial Members of Bush’s Campaign Team
 - 2.4. Strategy of Bush’s Campaign Team
 - 2.5. Impact of the Television Commercials
 - 2.6. Further Amplification of the Message
 - 2.7. George Bush’s Rhetoric in the 1988 Presidential Elections

Hlavní výsledky práce (max. 10 řádek):

Based on the analysis of campaign commercials and speeches that George Bush delivered throughout the campaign, the thesis ascertained that Bush’s presidential campaign contained racial elements and used racial rhetoric. He thus continued in the pattern set by his precursors because covertly racist campaigns were the modus operandi of the Republican Party in the presidential campaigns in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1988 presidential elections, the issue connected with race was a crime and the furlough issue because Michael Dukakis vetoed a bill that would ban weekend furloughs for prisoners jailed for murder. Bush’s campaign took advantage of that and exploited voters’ racial fears.

Prameny a literatura (výběr nejpodstatnějších):

Devlin, L. Patrick. “Contrasts in Presidential Campaign Commercials of 1988.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 32, no. 4 (March 1, 1989): 389–414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764289032004006>.

Feagin, Joe R., Vera Hernan, and Pinar Batur. “Racism in the Halls of Power: The Texaco, “Willie” Horton, and Sister Souljah Cases”. In *White Racism: The Basics*, 152–185, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 2001.

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Kaid, Lynda Lee, Chris M. Leland, and Susan Whitney. “The Impact of Televised Political Ads: Evoking Viewer Responses in the 1988 Presidential Campaign”. *The Southern Communication Journal* 57, no. 4 (1992): 285–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10417949209372875>.

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Mendelberg, Tali. “Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (May 1, 1997): 134–157. <https://doi.org/10.1086/297790>.

Mendelberg, Tali. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017.

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Etika výzkumu:**

No ethical detriment was caused by this research.

Jazyk práce:

Anglický

Podpis studenta a datum

Jakub Cajkář, 28.4.2023

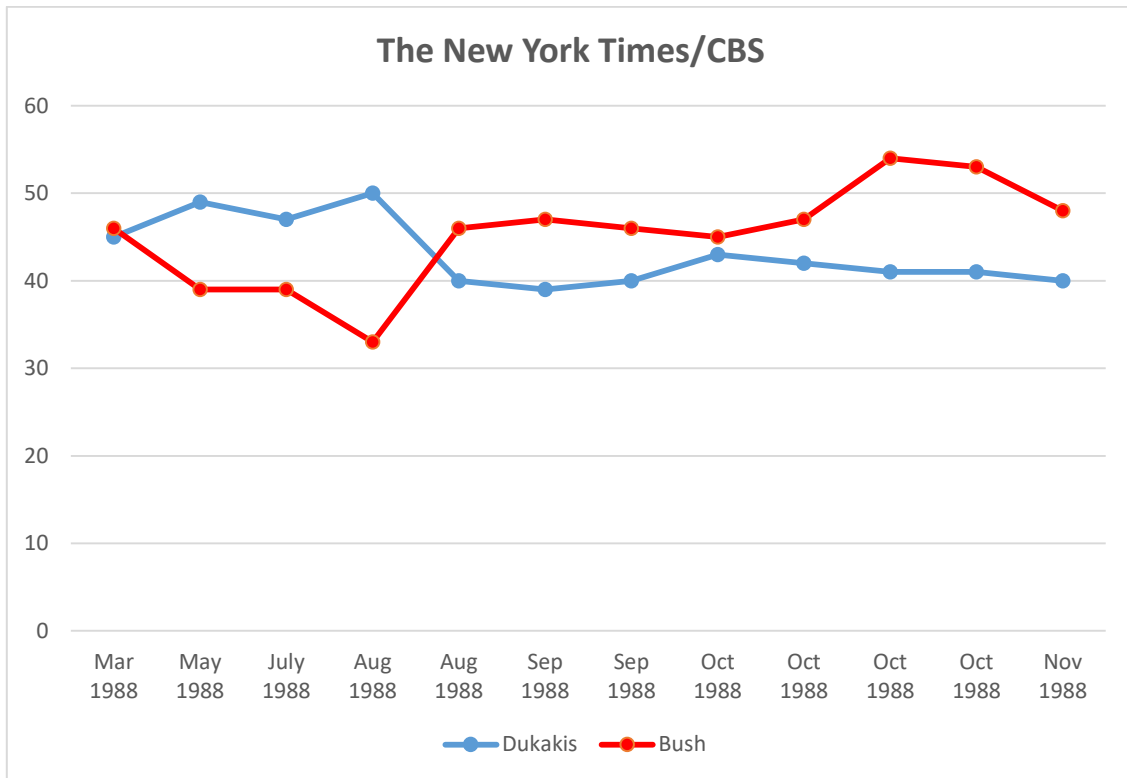
Schváleno	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		
Vedoucí specializace		
Garant programu		

* BAS – Balkánská a středoevropská studia; ES – Evropská studia; NRS – Německá a rakouská studia; RES – Ruská a eurasijská studia; SAS – Severoamerická studia; ZES – Západoevropská studia.

** Pokud je to relevantní, tj. vyžaduje to charakter výzkumu (nebo jeho zadavatel), data, s nimiž pracujete, nebo osobní bezpečnost vaše či dalších účastníků výzkumu, vysvětlíte, jak zajistíte dodržení, resp. splnění těchto etických aspektů výzkumu: 1) informovaný souhlas s účastí na výzkumu, 2) dobrovolná účast na výzkumu, 3) důvěrnost a anonymita zdrojů, 4) bezpečný výzkum (nikomu nevznikne újma).

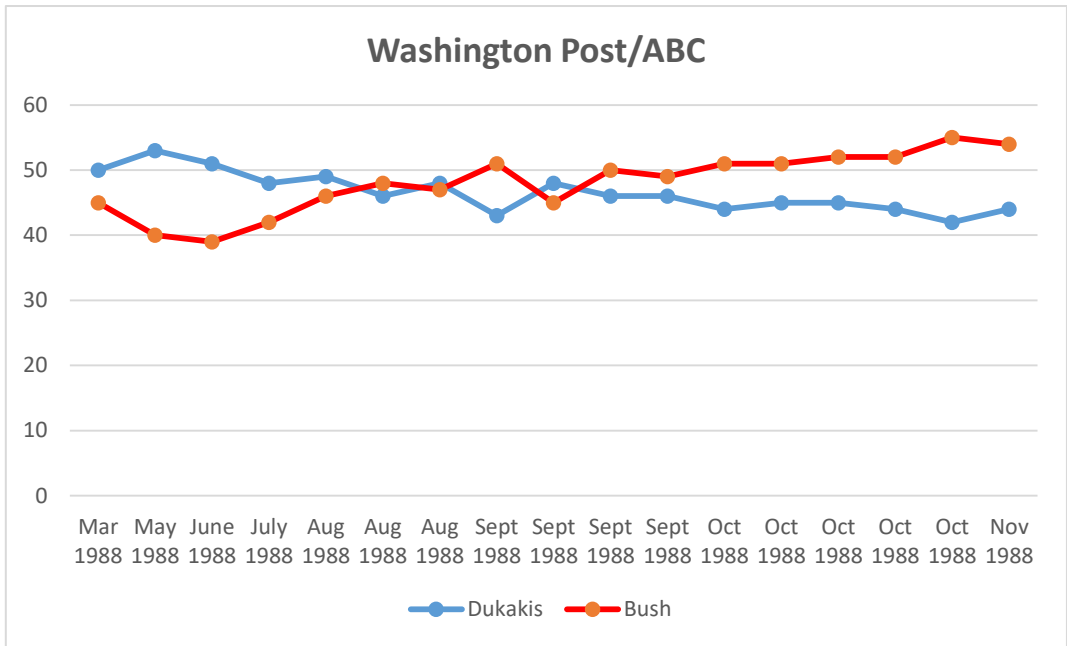
List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Opinion polls conducted by *The New York Times/CBS* during the presidential campaign of 1988²⁶²

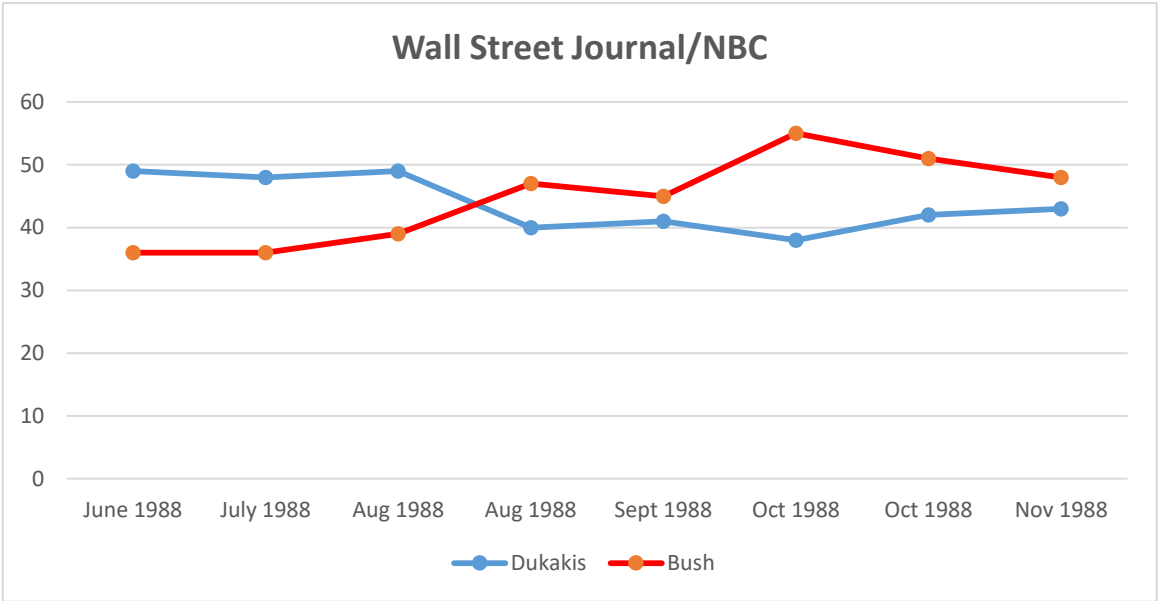


Appendix no. 2: Opinion polls made by the *Washington Post/ABC* during the presidential campaign of 1988

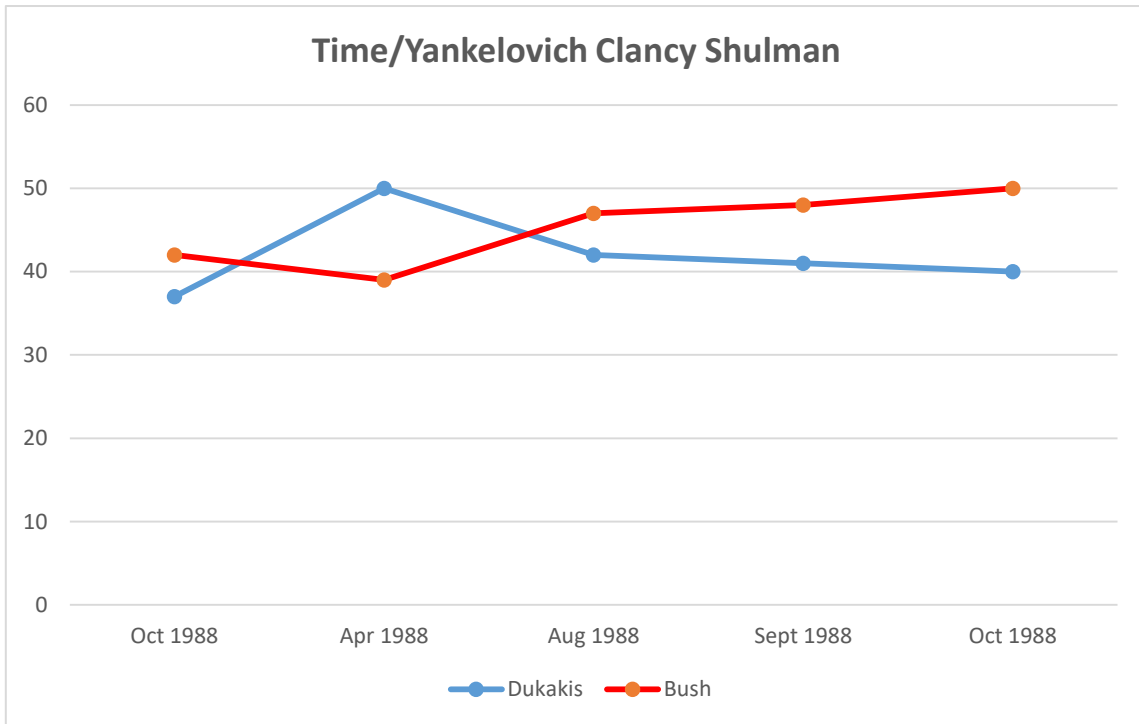
²⁶² Percentage of respondents that were in favor of Michael Dukakis (blue lines) or George Bush (red lines). All data for appendices no. 1–5 were gathered from Mack C. Shelley and Hwang-Du Hwang, "The Mass Media and Public Opinion Polls in the 1988 Presidential Election," *American Politics Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1991): 65, 76–77.



Appendix no. 3: Opinion polls conducted by the *Wall Street Journal/NBC* during the presidential campaign of 1988



Appendix no. 4: Opinion polls conducted by *Time/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman* during the presidential campaign of 1988



Appendix no. 5: Opinion polls made by the *Newsweek/Gallup* during the presidential campaign of 1988

