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Inspiring the Cynics of America's Tomorrow

In his article “Up, Simba”, David Foster Wallace uses his unique stance as a column writer for *Rolling Stone* to reach out to young voters during the 2000 presidential election and question them to think about their disinterest in politics by examining the premises of John McCain’s anticandidacy. An anticandidate refers a member of the campaign that refuses to succumb to all of the baggage attached with being a run of the mill politician, or in Wallace’s words, someone “who wants your vote but won’t whore himself to get it, and wants you to vote for him *because* he won’t whore” (160). Just as McCain refuses to “whore himself” in the election, Wallace uses a similar approach to engage readers, an approach aimed specifically at the cynical and unimpressionable population of youth voters. **And** although Wallace and McCain use similar tactics in inviting youth voters in America to enter into the political conversation, the subdivisions within youth voters that are each of their target audiences are entirely different. That is, McCain has the reputation of engaging young Americans in his campaign in ways that the other candidates were not; however, those voters had preexisting interest in politics in a way that the readers of Wallace's article do not share. Wallace, rather, intends to instill in readers that are apathetic towards the happenings in Washington a motivation to get involved through a cynical approach that is not unlike reverse psychology.

Through exploring the nuances of McCain’s campaign, Wallace fosters a correlation between his stance as “Not a Political Journalist” and McCain’s anticandidacy to show young

voters that not every politician or political journalist is out to deceive them. By creating separation between themselves and others in their respective fields, both McCain and Wallace persuade people to engage in politics and to follow the lead of someone that stands apart from the pack. One of McCain's trademarks of his campaign was being someone that will "always, Tell you. The truth", which is essentially why he has accumulated a following of young voters (188). The younger generations of Americans have grown up seeing elected officials on trial for perjury and hearing their parents talk about how the promises of the politicians they voted for have fallen through, which is why so many of these young people feel disinclined to cast their ballot. Young voters want the facts, which is why David Foster Wallace steps up to be the one to share the campaign from his perspective as "the truth as one person saw it" without any trace of "partisan moves or conservative agenda" motivating or skewing his perception (157). In either scenario, both McCain and Wallace intend to convey that they are doing a service for the people without extra drama, they are separating fact from fiction and drama from politics.

Even though the relationship between how McCain and Wallace address the voters are closely connected, the differences in how they both address their audiences and who their audiences are are key to understanding how their end goals are similar. McCain uses a direct approach to gain the trust of his voters through his awareness to the importance of money and his conservative values. When Wallace mentions that the buses the McCain campaign uses are rented in each state they travel through, rather than bought outright, it shows that McCain allocates his money differently than other politicians. By not accepting "bundled" or "soft" money either, McCain showcases how he values working hard to earn money, which is a trait that many young Americans admire and a trait not commonly seen on the campaign trail, and by doing this McCain creates a stronger bond with younger populations. Additionally, McCain uses

the speech given at a police academy as not only an appeal to voters with shared ideals of right wing conservatism, but also as a way of appealing to the next generation of right wing conservatives. If McCain could succeed in gathering support behind his “100 percent conservative voting record on crime, punishment, firearms, and the war on drugs” while charming young minds, he could gain a foothold in the younger demographic and alter the perception of conservative voters (172). That being said, McCain is only appealing to the youth that are already politically active, those that are already invested in the current political climate, and those that are “cheering and waving signs and dancing and holding a weird kind of GOP rave” (161).

On the other hand, Wallace uses the cynicism in his writing voice to backhandedly persuade voters to drop their misguided preconceptions about politics, do some research, and get out and vote. One of the more prevalent tactics that Wallace employs is that of reverse psychology, a trick used by parents in raising children, or in this case an older American attempting to sway the youth. By relentlessly using phrases such as “no generation of Young Voters has ever cared less about politics and politicians than yours” or posing the question of “Who Cares”, Wallace repeatedly reminds readers of their own faults rather than spurring out a speech promising they can make a difference (160-161). In doing this, David Foster Wallace already knows that the readers of *Rolling Stone* are not typically those that prioritize following politics or casting their ballot, so he will not use the same inspirational monologues as McCain. Instead, Wallace takes on a more comedic writing style and levels with his readers through a mutual dislike of the deceptive game politics has become, gains their trust, and hopes to sway them into voting.

Conclusively, McCain and Wallace have the aligned intention of getting young people involved in politics, but their tactics in achieving that goal are vastly different. McCain uses his preexisting conservative values and his philosophies that running for president are “causes greater than self-interest” to convince young voters that he is the change they wish to see in politics (163). Wallace however, uses a more indirect tactic to point out the faults in young voters in hopes of challenging readers to find an escape from their apathetic tendencies. In either case both the anticandidate and “Not a Political Journalist” emphasize the importance and privilege of voting and the amount of weight that the younger voters could carry in the election.

Works Cited

Wallace, David Foster. "Up, Simba: Seven Days on the Trail of an Anticandidate." *Consider the Lobster*. Little, Brown, and Company, 2006. pp. 156-234