

# Poisoning the atmosphere or energizing the electorate?

Tom Kazez analyzes negative campaign advertising

By MICHELE MILLER

Does negative advertising work? In a study presented to the American Political Science Association, Davidson political science professor Tom Kazez found that negative campaign advertising produces negative attitudes about the political system, but does not decrease voter turnout.

And because it sometimes works, Kazez says, voters should expect to see more of it this year.

Kazez is currently working as a political analyst for the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance (Chairman Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass.) on a year-long fellowship with the political science association. He and former student Patrick J. Sellers, now a legislative assistant to Rep. James Clarke, D-N.C., studied the impact of negative advertising in political campaigns focusing on 1984 senate races in 33 states.

"The idea grew out of Pat's honors thesis," Kazez says. "He wanted to find out whether or not negative advertising poisoned the atmosphere. His original idea was to focus on the Hunt-Helms 1984 Senate race in North Carolina. After he had written his paper, I realized that the questions that he asked had relevance in a wider sense. Where was negative advertising taking the country?"

In their 1987 study, presented to the annual meeting of the political science association last fall, Kazez and Sellers point out that "it may take more than one

bitter election campaign to cause the seeds of negativism to flourish." They compared attitudes of voters in states with a high or low incidence of negativism.

Kazez says voter turnout probably doesn't decrease in the wake of negative

people vote."

Kazez and Sellers found that those persons who had a high exposure to media messages were most affected by negative advertising. "The involved citizen, usually resistant to media-induced attitudinal change, was likely to be so inundated with negative communications that a creeping sort of negativism was the logical result," Kazez says.

Kazez and Sellers conclude that the effects of negative advertising may be long-range and cumulative. The professor observes that in the television age negative advertising is becoming more apparent in campaign strategy. As negative strategies are assessed, researchers will have more data. These effects cannot be easily measured in one election, but will be better understood as negative advertising becomes a staple.

In 10 years, will America become a turned-off electorate because of increasing negativism in campaigns?

Probably not, says Kazez, because politicians are sensitive to the atmosphere in the electorate and will gauge a negative reaction to advertising and change their tactics.

Kazez maintains that the shift in attitudes about the political system is ultimately more serious than what a single campaign could do to change attitudes about candidates. A campaign manager, however, tries to do the best for his candidate, Kazez says, so that if "the best" means criticizing the other candidate, then he or she does it.

Does negative advertising work? Kazez says that it works for some candidates in some circumstances. Sometimes it serves to present the candidate as the better of two evils; other times, the candidate's image is tarnished by his negative stance. Those who use it argue that negative advertising is a simple comparison of candidates. This "vote-for-me-because-my-opponent-has-this-weakness" tactic may or may not work, but it does serve to lower the appeal of the other candidate, Kazez says.

In the 1988 presidential primaries, Kazez believes candidates will carefully take the high road to their parties' nomination. Candidate on either side are concerned that they don't appear "mean-spirited" as Jimmy Carter did in 1980. Kazez says that Bob Dole, often caustic, must be careful because he has been criticized for being too willing to take the low road. Bush is able to get away with a bit more negativism. Democrat Mike Dukakis fired his campaign manager for revealing the tapes that caused Joseph Biden to withdraw from the race; Dukakis was opposed to waging a negative campaign.

Kazez feels certain that until a front runner emerges, presidential candidates will refrain from explicitly negative ads. But once the race gets tough and some candidates fall far behind, the likelihood that the losers will resort to negative advertising is greater. "Those who are the furthest behind are more likely to 'throw the bomb,'" Kazez says.



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advertising because it creates the impression that both candidates are bad, and if both candidates are bad, voters are encouraged to do something about it. "Negative advertising turns up the heat," Kazez says. "More people talk about the election, more

## Spring break '88: Where we're going, how much it will cost

By KATHERINE ARMSTRONG

According to a recent poll, many Davidson College students see spring break in two ways--a week's vacation with no family obligations; and a chance to seek the sun.

One junior summed up the opinion on the majority of polls: "Spring break is normally a great break from Davidson pressure--a time to kick back and enjoy your friends without the hassle of DC work--also, we get away from the DRIPPY, WET AND GRAY Davidson WINTER TERM BLAHS!! I live for the SUN..." Not surprisingly then, of the poll's 158 respondents, 25 percent will be catching Florida rays, while 7 percent plan to vegetate on the beaches of Mexico--especially Cancun.

The companions of choice for the majority of adventures are other Davidson students--also no shocker. Anyone can tell from a night on Patterson Court that Davidson students (to understate) have fun together. Judging from responses, this may not be the only reason they can be seen in groups from two to sixteen or more across the U.S. come the end of the month. The most polite form of a common complaint came from a freshman: "I would like to go home, but Davidson's break is so awkwardly placed that none of my non-Davidson friends will be out of their respective colleges."

However, this problem has a

flip side--an opportunity to do more college-hopping than the average student has done since his or her days as a prospective, and several respondents are seeking old friendships rather than sun.

And lest you think that aside from these few, the entire college is migrating south the second after exams, the philosophy of one senior offers variety. Simply stated, "Spring break is not at home and is for the sole purpose of skiing."

Ten percent agree and are headed for snow. Colorado is at the top of the destination list for this group, though no particular site has a majority.

Students were also asked to estimate the cost of their various activities, and the prices ranged from less than \$100 to more than \$500. Florida appears to be the least expensive option.

Eighty five percent of those Florida bound intend to spend less than \$200 on their vacation. Skiing is next with an average cost of \$400, though about 30 percent place the price at over \$500. Vegetating under exotic Mexican rays, according to over half of those who plan to do so, has a price tag of anywhere from \$500 to \$1000.

Davidson itself offers several opportunities for travel. The Concert Choir is headed for Florida and Disney World this year. The Jazz and Wind Ensembles are going north with Chicago as a destination. Ten people will go to

the Soviet Union and thirty plan a trip to Central America.

Of course, for maximum R & R and minimum cost, Dorothy would tell us, "There's no place like home." Fifteen percent who replied were hoping to find summer jobs, a lot of rest, (study time

for MCATs?) and longing for home cooking.

Only seven respondents have job plans--most admitted that spring break was just too short to work for any substantial time. Of those working, most plan to stay in their home towns, and no one is

planning an internship. Two students are working for the Dukakis and Kemp campaigns.

This survey information was originally compiled for use as a news tip to be sent to regional newspapers. Thank you to all of you who replied!

### Confidential Health

## AIDS and "safe sex"

Dear Confidential Health,

I'm very concerned about AIDS and wonder if I should be tested. I have dated a few women since I've been in college, but I'm fairly sure we did not always practice "safe sex." Is it a good idea to get tested?

Answer:

It is difficult to tell if you have been exposed to the AIDS virus. If you think you may have been exposed by engaging in a "high risk" activity, then the answer is yes, you should be tested. It is best that you know if you have been exposed to the virus so that you will not give it to anyone else.

Before describing the "high risk" activities, it is important to understand that the test will check if you have developed antibodies to HTLV-III, the agent thought to cause the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). This does not mean that you have AIDS,

or that you will develop AIDS. It means you have been exposed to the virus and you are considered infectious in that you can transmit the virus to other people if you engage in "high risk" activities with them.

The people at greatest risk are defined in the American College Health Association brochure, *AIDS: What Everyone Should Know*. "70-75% of people with AIDS have been homosexual or bisexual men; 17% have been intravenous drug (IV) abusers. A significant percentage of the homosexual/bisexual group have included hemophiliacs and blood transfusion recipients. The availability of the antibody test for HTLV-III is having a significant impact in reducing the number of cases transmitted by blood or blood derivatives.

Some people who don't belong to any of these established risk groups have gotten AIDS; most have been sexual partners of those in one of the risk groups. AIDS

can be transmitted sexually between men and women. AIDS may also be transmitted from mother to infant before or at birth. Although the number of cases occurring outside those known risk groups is small, all students, gay or straight, should be informed and know to protect themselves."

"High risk" activities include anal or vaginal intercourse without condoms, and manual or oral anal contact. Activities that are listed as "Possibly Safe" include deeper kissing, anal and vaginal intercourse with condoms, fellatio interruptus (stopping before climax), cunnilingus and urine contact. The AIDS virus is spread through activities that involve the sharing of bodily fluids, especially if the skin is torn or punctured at all. The HTLV-III virus has been iso-

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