CHAPTER 1

A Tale of Two Campaigns?

> Not only are we going to New Hampshire, Tom Harkin, we're going to South Carolina and Oklahoma and Arizona and North Dakota and New Mexico. We're going to California and Texas and New York. And we're going to South Dakota and Oregon and Washington and Michigan and then we're going to Washington, D.C., to take back the White House! Yeeeeeeah!
>
> —Howard Dean, *after the Iowa caucuses, January 19, 2004*

In what is certainly an indelible image from the 2004 presidential race, Howard Dean's now infamous "scream" can be seen as a microcosm of the larger campaign. It was simultaneously a sign of the good and the bad that appeared throughout the election season. One might be tempted to ask, How can the scene that played out on caucus night in West Des Moines, Iowa, possibly be indicative of anything good? Well, if one goes back and looks at the full video of the speech, it is clear that Dean was speaking to a crowd of dedicated supporters who were fully behind their candidate—the *New York Times* called them "fiery"—and who wanted him to keep fighting for the nomination.[1] In addition, it was Howard Dean who can be credited, at the outset, with getting certain portions of the electorate intensely interested in the presidential election of 2004 with his fierce criticism of President George W. Bush. Dean also

advanced campaigning in one particular area by taking advantage of a relatively new source of funds for candidates and information for potential voters—the Internet—as no candidate had done before. He constructed a campaign from the ground up with grassroots support (as is clear from the more than thirty-five hundred volunteers who traveled to Iowa from other states to work for the Dean campaign) in an era of campaigning that has come to be known more for television ads than house-to-house campaigning. Dean showed that insurgent campaigns can have some success, and he created, in part, the atmosphere that led to excitement and enthusiasm among Democrats that continued through until election day on November 2, 2004.

Obviously, however, all was not positive for the former governor of Vermont after the Iowa caucuses. Although his support in states like Iowa and New Hampshire had begun to slide before the caucuses, what truly brought on his downfall as the front-runner in the race for the Democratic Party nomination was the media coverage of his speech after the caucus results came in. Continually replaying the "Dean scream" solidly during the time between the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, network and cable news completed the cycle they had begun, taking Dean from the darling of the primaries to the down and out.

This event, and its aftermath, is the bad that came out of this particular evening in West Des Moines. It illustrates the overwhelming power of both the media and the expectations set on candidates in presidential primaries. If the media had not played his "concession" speech over and over again, or if they had instead played the entire video clip—including the beginning, which illustrated the excitement in the crowd to which he was reacting—Dean might have had a chance to recover from his third-place finish in Iowa with a strong showing in New Hampshire, where he also had held a lead in the polls for the months leading up to the primary voting. However, the media cannot be blamed completely; it was quite a story and an intriguing video.[2]

This book is about the health of campaigning in America. Many pundits, commentators, and scholars are quick to say that our system of electing candidates is ill. They point to alleged problems such as decreasing voter turnout, increases in "negative" attack ads, the exacerbation of the permanent campaign by candidates' handlers and political consultants, the lack of media attention to important issues during the campaign, the decline in interest and efficacy in the electorate, and the increasing costs of

seeking office, which are associated with the growing presence of massive amounts of money in campaigns, to name only a few. We do not wish to be so quick to judge, however. In the chapters that follow, we undertake an exploration of several key factors related to the health of our system of campaigning. There are unquestionably issues that need attention in our system of campaigning. But we believe there are also signs of hope. The 2004 presidential campaign, aside from its inauspicious start in West Des Moines for Governor Dean, illustrates what we mean.

It Was the Best of Campaigns

Campaign 2004 was, in the language of the literary classic *A Tale of Two Cities,* the best of campaigns and the worst of campaigns. Some aspects of the 2004 election cycle are clearly good news for our system of campaigning, but other features should make us question the health of modern campaigns. Consider, for instance, as a sign of the positive aspects of the 2004 election cycle, the record turnout of voters on election day. On November 2, 2004, roughly 121 million voters went to the polls and cast a ballot for either President George W. Bush or Senator John F. Kerry.[3] George Bush won more votes than any presidential candidate in American history—more than 60 million—and John Kerry received the second-highest vote total of any candidate in history. Sixteen million more Americans cast ballots in 2004 than in 2000, an increase in voter turnout of almost ten points; turnout in the election was 60.7 percent. This is notable because since 1960 the trend has been a decline in turnout in presidential elections—except in 1992, when turnout increased slightly thanks to the breath of fresh air H. Ross Perot gave to the race.

Just as important as the increase in the number of voters, however, is what brought these voters to the polls. Certainly, a large number of voters were self-motivated because of their feelings for one of the candidates: Democrats were excited about going to the polls to unseat President Bush, and many Republicans were just as excited by the opportunity to defend and vote for their candidate. The increase in turnout, however, would not have happened had it not been for a resurgence in old-fashioned retail politics. The grassroots campaigning started by Governor Dean in the weeks and months before the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary carried over into the campaigns of both general election candidates. In short, grassroots politics made a comeback in 2004. "Each party deployed

hundreds of thousands of volunteers in a precinct-by-precinct voter-turnout drive . . . that strategists said was the most ambitious national campaign offensive they had ever seen."[4]

Today's presidential campaigns (as well as most competitive congressional campaigns and even some lower-level, down-ballot races) are mass-media based in that the main vehicle of communication is paid electronic media.[5] The 2004 election, however, was somewhat of a flashback to the days when retail politics and voter mobilization by face-to-face contact were not only important but vital to a campaign strategy.[6] This is not to say that the 2004 presidential candidates did not heavily employ television and radio ads. However, both the Bush and Kerry campaigns reported that they had "the largest turnout organizations in the history of the modern political era" to mobilize voters for election day.[7] In other words, the way in which voters were mobilized—by the tried-and-true, but often forgotten, method of canvassing and voter contact—is another positive result of the 2004 campaign.

The return to this kind of campaigning was driven to a large extent by both sides' realization that the end result was going to be close and that the side that did a better job of getting its supporters to the polls would most likely win. In this respect, the return to grassroots campaigning was motivated by self-interest. This kind of mobilization has been used in other modern elections, as has been clear in the Democratic Party's use of organized labor and other outside groups to conduct get-out-the-vote drives. However, considering the 1.4 million volunteers employed by the GOP to conduct voter contact and to both register and turn out supporters,[8] it is hard to argue that 2004 was not a new high in candidate and party mobilization efforts in the modern era. One study conducted after election day finds that 64 percent of voters were contacted by either the Bush or Kerry campaign or other groups over the course of the campaign.[9] The efforts to add to the registration rolls during 2004 should also be seen as a benefit that came out of this election cycle. Again, both sides engaged in unprecedented efforts to add names to the list of registered voters, and both sides boasted huge successes, claiming to have registered millions of new voters.[10]

Another encouraging sign from the 2004 campaign is that the electorate was highly engaged in the race between the two candidates and followed the campaign throughout 2004. Consider, for example, that in June 2004—five months before election day—nearly 60 percent of Americans surveyed said that they had thought "quite a lot" about the presi-

dential campaign (up from only 46 percent of Americans surveyed at the same time in 2000); by September this figure had risen to nearly three in four voters (71 percent).[11] Members of the public also reported that they were paying close attention to the 2004 campaign: in June, 28 percent reported following the election "very closely"; by September this figure jumped to four in ten, about double what it had been in the past two presidential campaigns at a similar point in time.[12]

The public also seemed to be learning about the issues that were being discussed by the candidates. After election day, more than 85 percent of voters said that they had learned enough throughout the campaign to make an informed vote choice.[13] The public saw that the 2004 presidential election was a high-stakes election and that it was one of the most important in history—almost two in three felt that it "really mattered" who won the election.[14] In short, a large portion of the public generally grasped what was at stake, and they took the steps necessary to become active participants.

The electorate also saw clear differences in the candidates. There has been a good deal of criticism in the popular press in recent years that the two major parties have grown so close that there are no longer any meaningful differences between them. Many of these critiques come from those outside the two-party system, like Ralph Nader or members of the Green Party. However, many citizens (one in five, according to a July 2004 CBS News–*New York Times* poll, down from roughly a third of the public in several previous surveys) have these kinds of thoughts about the candidates who represent the Democrats and Republicans in the race for the presidency every four years.[15]

The argument that there are no differences between the candidates or the parties is difficult to make, however, about the 2004 campaign for the presidency.[16] There were large and important differences between Senator Kerry and President Bush on many key issues. On the domestic side, there were glaring differences between the candidates in the policy alternatives they offered with respect to many of the major policy problems confronting the United States, such as taxes, health care, job creation, education, Social Security, and homeland security. In foreign policy, the candidates certainly had different views on how to handle the "war on terror" as well as the war in Iraq; this was, in many ways, the focus of the campaign. These differences were not lost on the American people: by September 2004, almost 72 percent of Americans surveyed reported that President Bush and Senator Kerry took different positions

on issues; this is a 16-point increase from the same period during the 2000 campaign.[17]

Another positive effect of the 2004 presidential election, it can be argued, is the importance of the three presidential debates. Not only did they have an impact on the state of the race—Kerry adviser John Sasso said that his candidate's performance in the first debate put Kerry "back in the game"[18]—but public interest in them was greater than it had been in most recent presidential debates. More than 62 million people watched the first debate (an audience about 35 percent larger than the one that tuned into the first Bush-Gore debate in 2000); many pundits and journalists thought that if Bush had scored a victory in that debate the race would effectively have been over. The public's interest in the 2004 debates was up nearly 20 percentage points compared with 2000 and 1996; only the 1992 debates that included H. Ross Perot exceeded 2004 in viewer interest.[19]

In addition, the public seemed to use the information that was communicated to them in the debates. The Annenberg Public Policy Center finds that "the public's knowledge of the presidential candidates' positions on issues such as tax cuts and re-importation of drugs from Canada increased after the three [2004] presidential debates."[20] Before the debates, for example, only 53 percent of Americans knew that it was Senator Kerry who favored prescription drug re-importation, while after the debates this figure rose to 68 percent; and before the debates, only 33 percent of Americans knew that Kerry had proposed repealing the Bush tax cuts that went to those making more than $200,000 a year, while after the debates 56 percent correctly identified this issue position.[21]

It Was the Worst of Campaigns

Certainly, however, not every development that transpired over the course of the 2004 campaign can be viewed as encouraging for our system of campaigning. The 2004 campaign was filled with examples of business as usual. If the truth be told, there were probably more problematic elements that emerged from the 2004 election cycle than positive signs.

For instance, some point to the huge sums of money that made 2004 the most expensive race in history as a clearly negative aspect of the campaign: $2.2 billion was spent on the 2004 presidential race in total, and the total dollars spent in all of the 2004 campaigns by all the different sources was nearly $5 billion.[22] The presidential candidates alone spent

$863 million in 2004, up from $509 million in 2000.[23] For many, the simple presence of this level of spending in an election is more than just disturbing, it is unethical.[24] At worst, campaign contributors are getting something for their money—a quid pro quo; at best, it seems like a waste to spend that kind of money on campaigning.[25]

Because modern campaigns are generally more capital intensive than labor intensive,[26] the dollars raised tend to be spent on paid advertising rather than old-school ways of political campaigning. The 2004 campaign was no different in this respect, as much of the candidate spending, of course, went to television commercials. For an example of the amount of money dedicated to this kind of spending, one need look no further than the final week of the campaign, during which "both candidates spent nearly $40 million on TV ads"; moreover, they spent "more than $400 million on TV and radio commercials since the ad wars began in earnest in March."[27] The free spending in 2004 did not end with the contest between George W. Bush and John Kerry; in a single U.S. Senate race—the campaign to fill John Edwards's seat in North Carolina—the two candidates, former U.S. representative Richard Burr and former Clinton administration official Erskine Bowles, spent nearly $12 million over the course of three months (July through September) and more than $26 million in total.[28]

Much of the story on campaign fundraising and spending goes back to Howard Dean. It was the Vermont governor who set the early fundraising pace in the race for the Democratic nomination, and he was the first (besides President Bush) to opt out of the public funding system of presidential matching funds that go to candidates in the primaries who accept certain spending limits. Dean's move to do without federal matching funds, of course, meant that he could raise and spend as much as he liked during the primary season. However, this strategic decision by the Dean campaign forced fellow Democrat Kerry to do the same; Kerry did not want to unilaterally disarm and thereby be in a position where he could not match the spending of the Dean campaign in later primaries, should the quest for the nomination reach such a point.

In an unprecedented move, the Kerry campaign, having sewn up the nomination, even contemplated, for a brief period, forgoing the federal funds provided to presidential candidates for the general election campaign. This was a threat to the public funding system for presidential contests, which had already been dealt a serious blow by three candidates' refusal of primary matching funds. Not only were those who did not like

to see money in politics distressed at the total spending in 2004, but those who support the public funding of campaigns saw that very system come under heavy fire.

Candidate spending in 2004 is only half the story, however. In the first election cycle governed by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA; also known as McCain-Feingold after its two chief sponsors in the U.S. Senate), the spending by outside interest groups also reached a record high. The BCRA provisions, intended to curb the presence of unlimited and unregulated contributions from individuals, corporations, and unions, failed to stop outside interest groups from raising more than half a billion dollars themselves.[29] The spending by outside groups was highlighted by the activity of so-called 527 organizations—those groups that, because of their status in the tax code, do not have to report to the Federal Election Commission and are free to raise and spend as much money as they like. Specifically, 527 groups such as the Joint Victory Campaign 2004 saw contributions from individuals exceeding $10 million, and other groups, including MoveOn.org, America Coming Together, Progress for America, and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, received many contributions from individuals well in excess of $1 million.[30] If the architects of the BCRA meant to keep big donations out of campaigns, their level of success has to be questioned.

For others, disappointment in the 2004 campaign will be found not in the money spent or the way it was raised but in the tone of the campaign. As early as May 2004, the *Washington Post* described the campaign as characterized by "unprecedented negativity."[31] Indeed, the avenue most commonly associated with negative campaigning—television advertising—got heated up early in the campaign. Early on, some observers warned that 2004 might be the "the most negative campaign in history."[32]

Certainly, the presidential candidates had something to do with this, as they constantly criticized one another for this vote or that statement, that proposal or some other questionable activity. Starting early in 2004, the campaign was "marked by angry anti-Bush energy that first surfaced during the Democratic primaries and by relentless criticism of Kerry by the Bush campaign."[33] However, the nastiness of the 2004 cycle extended beyond the clashes between President Bush and Senator Kerry, into congressional races as well. For instance, in September, Wisconsin senator Russell Feingold's campaign manager, George Aldrich, warned Wisconsinites to "brace themselves for one of the most negative campaigns waged in Wisconsin history."[34]

Much of the nastiness was focused on a particular issue, one that many Americans saw as outside the set of topics that should have been a focus for the 2004 campaign—the candidates' activity during the Vietnam War, fought more than thirty-five years earlier. Even more important than the subject of the negativity, however, may be the source of much of it. Some of the 527s that raised huge sums of money during 2004 were behind many of the worst attacks on both candidates' service records. The most egregious of these was arguably the attacks by the anti-Kerry group, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The Swift Boat Veterans went so far as to question what then-lieutenant Kerry had actually done to receive the medals he was awarded (three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, and a Silver Star) for his service in Vietnam. They also questioned the accuracy of the reports that led many to call Senator Kerry a war hero. Groups working to defeat President Bush, however, did not go unheard on this topic, either. MoveOn.org ran a television advertisement alleging that Bush had received preferential treatment to get into the Texas Air National Guard and that, once there, he had not fulfilled his obligations and had been able to get out of service by requesting an early release to go to graduate school at Harvard.[35] One comment in particular by Senator Kerry epitomizes the sparring on this issue between the two sides: at a campaign rally, the Massachusetts senator told the audience, "I will not have my commitment to defend this country questioned by those who refused to serve when they could have."[36]

The theme of the candidates' service in Vietnam was persistent in the 2004 campaign, as it was one of the first issues raised by the Kerry campaign in their efforts to present him as a candidate who was "capable of managing world affairs and the war on terrorism as well as, or better than, Bush."[37] Kerry's service during the Vietnam War was also on display during the Democratic National Convention, when the candidate again tried to convince the American public that he could be trusted to fight the current war on terror as valiantly as he had fought in Vietnam.[38]

The media played a large role in shaping the more memorable moments of Campaign 2004. Unfortunately, some of them might better be forgotten. Certainly, the media's fascination with the "Dean scream" in the time between the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary hurt Dean's candidacy. This, however, is only one example of how the media's focus on process, punditry, and the campaign as a horse race left an important mark on the campaign.

Besides their coverage of Dean's speech after Iowans had caucused, the biggest media story of the campaign was arguably the controversy involving CBS News and Dan Rather's report about President Bush's service in the Texas National Guard. Briefly, Rather ran with a story on the CBS program *60 Minutes* using, as evidence, documents that turned out to be fraudulent (though truthful) and refused, for a lengthy period of time, to admit any wrongdoing on the part of CBS. However, the importance of this story goes beyond one reporter at one network.

The importance of this story is that the media in general were focused on the process of how it was reported and not on the issues central to this important story. Certainly, the use of forged documents to question the service record of the sitting commander in chief is worthy of discussion. However, little attention was paid by anyone in the media to the crux of the story. Great attention was paid to Marian Carr Knox, the secretary to Bush's former squadron commander and the purported source of the documents, when she said that she had not typed the documents in question. However, her assertion that the information in the documents was nonetheless correct seemed to get swept under the rug.[39] Once again, the media looked to the process rather than the more meaningful aspects of the story.

Much of the media coverage of the 2004 campaign illustrated a fascination with the presidential contest as a horse race—who was ahead and who was behind in the polls. For weeks, if not months, before election day, it was difficult to pick up a newspaper or turn on a radio or television broadcast without hearing what the latest polls were showing. Bush would be up one day, Kerry would gain ground the next and then take the lead, then Bush would gain the lead back again. All of this, of course, was nearly useless because, as the 2000 election showed us, the part played by the Electoral College renders national polls irrelevant to the outcome on election day. Even though reporters, journalists, and editors are keenly aware of this fact, national polls were the subject of much media coverage.

The quadrennial national party conventions were also a big story during the campaign. However, from one perspective they were not the successes that the candidates thought they were. First, although the public was more engaged in the election than they had been in quite some time, the major broadcast networks covered only three hours of each convention's proceedings—only one hour a night for three of the four nights were shown live by NBC, ABC, and CBS.[40] These programming decisions meant that speeches by some of the most recognizable members of each

party—for example, Senator Edward Kennedy on the Democratic side and Senator John McCain on the Republican—were not broadcast.

It is hard to argue with ABC's Ted Koppel, who has described the national conventions as "nothing more than 'publicity-making machines.'"[41] Like those of the recent past, the 2004 conventions of both parties amounted to little more than four-day infomercials for the preordained candidate's campaign, with each and every move scripted and well planned out. In addition, each convention had the specific goal of connecting with the elusive "swing voters" in the electorate rather than engaging in activities more traditionally associated with political conventions, such as discussion of the party platform or policy fights within the party. Many of the scenes that students of conventions are used to seeing are now avoided as if they were radioactive; instead, conventions seek to show a "united" party and send the "right" message.

The Kerry campaign's focus on the candidate's war record continued to be on display during the Democratic National Convention in Boston. Kerry mentioned it in his speech, and retired officers from all branches of the military were on display, advertising their support of the candidate. Kerry was joined on stage for his acceptance speech by retired military officers and some of his former Navy crewmates.

The Republicans, too, put on quite a show for "persuadable" voters at their convention in New York City; they were even accused of being disingenuous during their convention when they gave prime-time speaking slots to public and popular figures such as Arizona senator John McCain, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani. Clearly, the GOP was trying to put its best foot forward in communicating with those in the electorate who might not agree with everything in the Republican platform, as Schwarzenegger and Giuliani are both "at odds with the president and [the] conservative base on social issues such as abortion and gay rights."[42] Many also questioned the timing of the convention—it concluded only nine days before the third anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks—accusing the Republicans of using the anniversary for political purposes and political gain.

Many commentators, journalists, and pundits saw the three presidential debates as potentially decisive, especially because the first debate focused on foreign policy, which was commonly thought to be President Bush's strength. Although the three debates seemed to reach a number of potential voters, much of the media coverage addressed factors other than

the issues. After the first debate, commentary focused less on the substantive points made by either of the candidates and more on the style and appearance of the candidates. In 2004 the focus was on the facial expressions of President Bush, calling to mind the 2000 debates, when much of the postdebate commentary centered on Al Gore's sighs and his impatience with his opponent. Indeed, the public may have been as influenced by Bush's petulant tone and appearance as they were by what the candidates said about Iraq, North Korea, or the global war on terror, since "perceptions can shift as commentators, analysts and spinners chew things over and selected sound bites are endlessly replayed on television, creating 'moments' that may have seemed particularly dramatic at the time."[43] This, of course, is nothing new to campaign debates in the United States: in 1992 George H. W. Bush was roundly criticized for looking at his watch rather than paying attention to his rivals or the audience.

Additionally, there was a great deal of discussion after the first presidential debate about a certain "bulge" in President Bush's jacket. Rumors started to circulate, mainly in a new medium for political discussion—the weblog—that Bush had a communications device in his jacket through which he was able to talk to his advisers during the debate. The Bush team had to respond to these stories and rumors rather than engage voters with their message, even resorting to a report from the president's tailor reassuring the public that nothing dastardly had occurred.[44]

Negative features of Campaign 2004 were present right up to and including election day. In a preemptive strike intended to avert a scenario similar to that in Florida during 2000, both Democrats and Republicans dispatched thousands of attorneys around the country (though particularly in battleground states), to get set for recounts where necessary and to file lawsuits claiming election fraud or voter intimidation. Democrats had their teams of lawyers (there were reports of two thousand in Florida alone) in heavily Democratic areas to deal with charges that Republican voter intimidation would keep many minorities from voting, and Republicans claimed to have attorneys in thirty thousand precincts across the country to challenge voters whose registration credentials were suspect. Both sides claimed their efforts were altruistic and done in the name of fairness—the Democrats said they simply wanted to make sure every vote was counted, and the Republicans said that they wanted to make sure that every vote was counted only once—but campaigns rarely engage in seemingly selfless behavior unless it produces some benefit as well.

Underlying Issues in 2004

Many of the issues discussed above—both positive and negative—are directly related to the art of campaigning.[45] At the root of many of these stories are decisions, actions, or personalities that contributed to how each main story line played out in the public arena. These additional, underlying features are as important to how the 2004 campaign was waged, and to its outcome, as the more visible aspects of the campaign. However, they received relatively little coverage compared with the stories noted earlier. Some may consider these underlying issues to be "inside baseball," important only to those who closely follow campaigns; in fact, they probably are. However, simply because they slip under the radar for most Americans does not mean they have no bearing on the campaign. In one sense, the stories about how decisions were made, what went into those decisions, and how those decisions were carried out are more important than those that get the most coverage. Without them, little else would happen during the campaign.

For instance, any explanation of the record turnout and heightened mobilization efforts by the candidates and their party organizations would be incomplete without an examination of the role that campaigning and campaigners played. Notwithstanding the success of these efforts and the most sophisticated and ambitious turnout plans in the era of modern campaigning, the behind-the-scenes contributions of political professionals cannot be underestimated.

On the GOP side, based on scientific research (the science, as opposed to the art, of campaigning) conducted by the campaign's chief strategist and pollster, Matthew Dowd, "the Bush operation sniffed out potential voters with precision-guided accuracy, particularly in fast-growing counties beyond the first ring of suburbs of major cities. The campaign used computer models and demographic files to locate probable GOP voters."[46] Not to be outdone, the Kerry campaign had a similar operation headed by Michael Whouley, who for much of the campaign, beginning in Iowa, was "shuttered away in 'war rooms,' constantly monitoring the ebb and flow of possible votes, precinct by precinct."[47]

Of course, in examining the success of these turnout operations, one cannot overlook the simple exercise of getting volunteers in the right place at the right time. Again, campaigners were at the heart of this work in 2004. In the end, voters came out in impressive numbers on election day because each campaign galvanized its supporters with the help of

tried-and-true tools of shoe leather and phone banks. Still, the importance of strategists and electioneering here cannot be glossed over. One of the reasons the Bush campaign had the success it did in Ohio—both in turning out its voters and, ultimately, in the election results (Ohio was the state that put President Bush over the top in the Electoral College)—was the practice get-out-the-vote drive ordered by campaign manager Ken Mehlman during the summer months. In both Florida (another state key to Bush's victory) and Ohio, the Bush campaign undertook a dry run of their turnout effort, telling all their volunteers that "Saturday was 'election day'"; "people walked the precincts county by county, counted voters, monitored the numbers of doors knocked on and offered rides to simulate our operation," and "turnout workers ran their phone banks and contacted lists of voters 'just as if the election were being held.'"[48] The importance of these kinds of efforts was captured by the political scientist Thomas Schaller when he noted, "We call them political campaigns for a reason. Like a military campaign, the idea is to outflank your opponent, to move your resources around as quickly and in the most strategically advantageous way."[49] It was this kind of strategic thinking that allowed both campaigns to turn out their voters in unprecedented numbers in 2004.

Voters were not only energized in 2004, they were also engaged. Campaigning and campaigners had a part to play here, as well. Why were so many individuals engaged in the election? Mobilization efforts were undoubtedly part of the answer, but the campaigns contributed in other important ways. Both campaigns drew contrasts between their candidate and the opponent, giving voters a clear choice.[50] For instance, the issues that were at the top of many voters' minds—Iraq and the war on terror—showed the decided differences between the candidates, as well as how their campaigns positioned them to make their individual cases to the public. President Bush tied the two issues together, saying that Iraq was the central front in the war on terror, and apparently convinced the public that one went hand-in-hand with the other. Senator Kerry tried to separate the two issues, arguing that the war in Iraq had taken away vital resources and efforts from the broader war on terror and calling Iraq a "diversion" and "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time."[51] Although the campaigners on each team of advisers did not invent the positions the candidates held on the issues, they helped create language that their candidates used to convey those positions to the voters and highlight the contrasts between the two men.[52]

Campaigners and campaigns are at the root of many of the positive and encouraging aspects of the 2004 campaign, but they are also the source of the disappointing elements, as well. All the money that was spent during 2004 by all those involved (save the matching funds taken by some Democrats in their primary campaigns and the roughly $75 million spent by each of the presidential candidates during the general election as part of the public funding system) was money that was raised from individuals and from political action committees. Countless numbers of individuals and groups gave money to candidates, parties, and outside organizations. Much of this money was raised with the help of professional fundraisers. Without these key players on the inside, candidates, parties, and outside groups would have a much more difficult time raising the money needed to wage a viable campaign. Furthermore, the decisions made by the Dean, Kerry, and Bush campaigns not to take matching funds during the primary season were made by strategists on the inside of the campaign organization. The Kerry team of advisers also had to struggle with whether to accept public money for the general election. In the end, their decision to participate in the public funding system was also a strategic and political move; they did not want Kerry, a Democrat, to be the first to opt out of this part of the public funding system.

Additionally, 2004 was viewed as one of the most negative campaigns in American history.[53] Both campaigns "came out swinging" early in the election year and engaged their opponent earlier than many anticipated. Those who made the decisions not only on when to engage the opposing candidate through paid advertisements on television, radio, and through the mail but also on what issues and language to use in engaging the opposition were those inside the campaigns. The political consultants and campaign advisers created the television and radio commercials and the direct mail flyers that communicated these "negative" messages to potential voters. Early in the campaign, the Bush team wasted little time going after their opponent as having been on both sides of many major issues (that is, flip-flopped) and as having continually supported higher taxes (a position that never plays well in a presidential election); Kerry, for his part, continually attacked Bush for his handling of the war in Iraq as well as the U.S. economy (for example, sending jobs overseas and tax cuts for the rich). These kinds of messages were not limited to the early months of 2004, of course, but continued throughout the campaign.

The focus on the candidates' roles in the Vietnam War was a conscious decision made by the Kerry campaign to remind the American public that

he was a war hero and therefore had the requisite credentials of a commander in chief. The campaign also wanted to convince voters that Kerry could hold his own on the world stage and be as effective in the war on terror as President Bush. Whether this was the right or wrong decision, the issue was designed by the campaign itself.

War records were on display at the Democratic National Convention in July, where the Kerry campaign's goal was to reintroduce their candidate to the public and to convey their message that Senator Kerry would "make America stronger at home and respected in the world." This message, created by Kerry's team of advisers, was "designed to underscore the centrist and forward-looking image Kerry wanted to present to voters."[54] The consultants and handlers of the candidates crafted more than the words, however, at the national conventions. The "publicity-making machines" were designed to send a certain signal to those who were watching. All of this—from the messages spoken to the messages transmitted by visual images—was the making of the campaigns. In today's politics, every aspect of the four-day events—the look of the hall, the placement of the chairs on the floor, the list of speakers who address the crowd, even the speed with which the balloons fall after the nominee finishes his or her speech—is controlled by the campaigns to make sure that only the "right" message is heard and seen by the voters. So tight was the control on imagery from inside the Bush campaign that on the day of the president's speech, the hall was transformed. Workers tore down the stage used for the three previous nights' speeches and constructed a new circular stage—complete with the presidential seal—in the middle of the hall. This change was designed to bring Bush closer to the audience; and after three nights of hitting Senator Kerry rather hard, Bush "sought to soften the sharp-edged tone of the convention's first three nights with some personal reflections tinged with humor."[55] The Bush campaign staff tried to end the convention with a different message, one that helped them achieve the desired success (after the convention, the polls gave Bush a 52-43 lead over Kerry).

Although the three presidential debates provided an opportunity for the candidates to tell the public about their plans for the next four years and for the electorate to gather a good deal of information, they may have been tarnished by the tightly controlled rules hammered out by the two campaigns before they began. Everything from approved camera angles to the heights of and distance between the podiums, from what the candidates could have at their podiums to the choice of moderator, was

negotiated beforehand in a thirty-two-page written contract. The agreement between the two campaigns "had been negotiated to make the encounter as antiseptic as possible":[56] neither candidate could approach his opponent during the debate or ask direct questions of his opponent; and the response time to questions was to be limited to two minutes. The agreement was entered into by both campaigns (negotiated by former secretary of state James Baker, for the Bush team, and Vernon Jordan, for the Kerry team), and was pushed by the campaigners, to try to remove the possibility of any "gotcha" moments from the debates, such as Al Gore's leaving his stool and approaching George W. Bush during a debate in 2000, making Gore appear overbearing and inconsiderate of his opponent. The Bush campaign made no secret that it wanted to limit the responses to questions to two minutes so that Senator Kerry might go over his allotted time and be alerted by the buzzer that was negotiated as a signal that a candidate's time was up. Again, the jockeying by the campaigns affected the campaigning itself. In this instance, it appeared to have little impact, since there was still plenty of "spin" after the debates—especially after the first debate, when the media focused on the president's facial expressions.

The importance of campaigning and campaigners extends beyond the candidates' campaigns. There was considerable activity on the part of outside interests—both parties and interest groups (many in the form of 527s)—during the 2004 campaign. Those behind the efforts of parties, political action committees, and 527 organizations are the same campaigners that were at the helm of the Bush and the Kerry campaigns. For instance, one of the top staffers of the active and influential 527 America Coming Together, Jim Jordan, had been John Kerry's campaign manager before being fired in late 2003. Other political consultants and former party operatives headed many other prominent 527 organizations that played a major part in the 2004 election.

Rationale for the Book

This book is about the health of American campaigning. "Campaigning," however, at least in our view, is different from "elections"; by *campaigning* we mean those concepts, decisions, actors, and processes that are associated with the everyday execution of a campaign for elective office. In other words, we view campaigning as a smaller piece of the general topic of elections. Thus we leave many questions aside in this exercise. We do

not address topics that would be included in a broader discussion of the health of our electoral system, such as voter registration regulations and reforms, the administration of elections on election day (that is, ballots and voting mechanisms), electoral competitiveness (or the lack thereof), and the electoral rules we employ in most election contests (for example, single-member districts, winner-take-all rules, or the Electoral College).

Each of these topics is surely fair game in an examination of our electoral system. However, we consider these to be issues that are at a macro level of the process. We are interested, instead, in issues that may be considered to be at a micro level of our electoral process—the decisions that are made in campaigns, the actors inside those campaigns, and the exercises undertaken by campaigns. Many of the examples noted in our recap of the good and the bad of the 2004 campaign illustrate this point. Moreover, many of the ills that seem to plague our system are associated with this micro level. Decisions about what issues to focus on in a campaign, how to communicate candidates' stances on those issues, the money needed to wage a campaign in the twenty-first century, strategies that will result in victory on election day, and messages created by campaigns for their candidates are all questions that fit into our conception of campaigning. We agree with Mark Petracca, who notes that "our attention has moved away from the analysis of electoral institutions [as a discipline]. . . . In general we pay less attention to the dynamics of electoral institutions and the processes of campaigning than we do to those variables that seem to directly influence the voters' choice."[57]

There are certainly many specific questions that would be good candidates for such an inquiry, and questions about the health of our system of campaigning abound—as seen from the 2004 presidential election alone. However, for this exercise we restrict ourselves to four central topics that are focused on the way campaigns are actually conducted and waged in the United States. Specifically, we examine questions related to the control of modern campaigns, the quality of the most important players in the campaigning process, the role of money in our campaigns, and the ethics of the way our campaigns are conducted.[58] We examine these questions through the lens of political consultants, party elites, and the general public, based heavily on survey research conducted over a seven-year period beginning in 1997 and continuing through 2003. We augment our empirical data with examples and accounts from recent elections, with a specific focus on the 2004 presidential election because it provides several points of interesting comparison and evaluation.

We believe that each of these topics is important in any effort to judge the health and quality of our campaigns. The question of control in modern campaigns is central to the question of quality because it explores who controls the decisionmaking in campaigns on a daily basis. In other words, we believe determining who is in charge of the day-to-day decisionmaking in campaigns is important to the health of those campaigns because these decisions are often linked to other aspects of campaigning that can be criticized or questioned. If those involved are not of high quality, one might also question the results of the system in which they operate. The importance of the role of money in elections is self-evident. To some extent, however, this question also addresses control in elections, but from a different perspective. Who is paying for our elections matters a great deal when one considers the quality of the system of campaigning. The final question we consider—Are our campaigns conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner?—may be the most important. If campaigns are not being conducted with high standards, can we have confidence in the results of those elections? Although we expect campaigns to be waged with vigor, we also expect them to be conducted in a manner befitting the offices they pursue. One can question whether this is happening in today's campaigns.

The research we rely on in examining these questions comes from surveys of those who are involved in the processes of campaigning; the data are from their perspective. We offer an insiders look at the questions outlined above. Our work focuses on three critical campaign actors—professional political consultants, political party elites, and members of the general public—because of their important and special roles in our system of campaigning.[59] We do not, however, limit our exploration to our surveys of campaign actors. We supplement our own data with surveys of candidates, journalists, and other surveys of the public, among other data sources.

This book is the culmination of several years of work on a larger project, which was funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. When we began this larger project, our first interest was to better understand political consultants. Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, consultants came to play an integral part in American elections, and we wanted to know more about who these new campaign actors were, what they brought to the electioneering table, and what motivated them to enter politics. After three years of studying consultants through surveys, interviews, and participant observation, we decided to expand our study to

other actors in the process of campaigning. We were still focused on consultants, but we wanted a different perspective on the work they do every day in campaigns and the effects of their work on the electorate. Therefore, we turned to examinations of political party elites, because they often work alongside consultants in the execution of campaigns (on behalf of either candidates or the parties), and the general public, because they are the targets of the efforts of consultants and campaigners.

The result of this entire grant project is a data set that we believe is unlike any other that has been used to study campaigns and campaigning. In the chapters that follow we report on seven surveys of campaign actors, as well as other data we have collected through other methods during the seven-year project, including focus groups with consultants, interviews with consultants and party elites, and participant observations made in several campaigns.[60]

Our data set is unique not because we ask questions of those who are at the heart of the campaigning process—there are a number of works that use surveys of participants in campaigns[61]—but because we bring together survey research focusing on multiple actors in the same outlet. More important, we designed our survey research for the comparisons reported in this book by posing the same set of questions to these multiple actors. We believe that what sets our data set and our work apart from others is that we can confidently make comparisons across different groups of campaign actors. In addition, in two cases—political consultants and the general public—we can make these comparisons over time because we have longitudinal data over three waves of surveys.

In the chapters that follow, we report on these data and address the four central questions about the health of our system of campaigning. We make frequent use of the 2004 presidential election to drive home these points, many of which are clearly illustrated in the contest between Senator Kerry and President Bush. We also believe that the presence of these factors over several election cycles (the surveys of consultants were done in three separate election cycles, the surveys of the general public were conducted over two) demonstrates the consistency of our survey findings.

Plan of the Book

In chapter 2 we tackle the question of who is in charge of our campaigns today. We begin by providing a brief historical overview of control of

American campaigns, beginning with those around the turn of the nineteenth century and continuing through the turn of the twenty-first century. Again, we are focused on who makes the day-to-day decisions in candidates' campaigns, so we look at political parties, candidates for office, and political consultants after their appearance in the 1930s.[62] This historical examination of the question sets the context for a discussion of modern campaigns.

We then turn to an exploration of the survey data gathered from those campaign actors who are at the center of political campaigns—political consultants, party elites, and, to some extent, candidates—and detail how each group of actors sees the status of control in campaigns. We begin with a description of how consultants and party elites view the importance of their peers as well as other actors central to this question. We add to this a discussion of consultants' and party operatives' views of who does what in modern campaigns and outline a division of labor that exists between the two in the provision of services to candidates' campaigns.

In chapter 3 we consider the state of our system of campaigning in terms of the quality of the actors in the process. This is the most data-heavy chapter in the book and includes comparisons of all the actors we surveyed (and, thanks to some additional sources of data, some that we ourselves did not) on questions about nearly every actor group in our system of campaigning. We begin by assessing the quality of candidates: In electing public officials, are we selecting from a set of solid choices? We also examine the role of the public in our system of elections in terms of their responsibilities in creating a sound system: Are voters doing their part and becoming well informed on issues and candidates? We then investigate the different groups' attitudes about actors who operate mainly behind the scenes of the process, specifically political consultants and party operatives. Finally, we consider the performance of journalists in the system through the eyes of the actors we interviewed. The evaluations of each of these groups of actors is made both over time and from the perspective of the other groups of actors, using the same survey questions. We believe this provides a unique picture of the state of the actors in our system of campaigning.

In chapter 4 we address the role of money in campaigns. We examine the attitudes and beliefs of consultants, party elites, and the general public on questions of money in politics and explore in detail their attitudes about reforms to the campaign funding system. Specifically, we consider consultants' views on the potential impact of the Bipartisan Campaign

Reform Act. We evaluate the early impact of the BCRA and speculate as to the consequences—both intended and unintended—of the law. We examine the role of money in campaigns with a specific focus on the 2004 cycle and how it compares with past election cycles.

In the last empirical chapter, chapter 5, we consider the ethics of American political campaigns in these times. In some respects, this is the most important question we could consider. Are our campaigns being conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner? If not, what does that say about the results of our elections? If a candidate wins through tactics that are unethical, can we have trust in our government—and can that candidate be considered a legitimate elected official? We examine the attitudes of several groups of electoral actors, focusing on different aspects of campaigning. We detail what each considers to be appropriate behavior in campaigns, as well as what each sees as unethical practices in campaigning. We also offer several examples of many of these practices from recent campaigns.

In chapter 6 we reflect on the main findings in our empirical examination of electoral actors' attitudes and beliefs and explore their meaning in the context of the lessons learned from the 2004 campaign. More important, we ask, What have we learned about the state of campaigning in the United States? Our answer may surprise the reader.

Before getting into our exploration of these questions, we want to provide some important notes to the reader about what follows. We began our larger project knowing relatively little about political consultants and the consulting industry. Historically, there has been, and there continues to be, a lack of data about much of what consultants do and the impact they have on campaigns. Stanley Kelley Jr. noted this deficit nearly fifty years ago: "There are few data for evaluating, with anything like scientific accuracy, particular propaganda techniques, and certainly not for the assessment of the effectiveness of 'public relations' in general."[63] Not much changed in the next forty years; in 1989, Mark Petracca noted this same lack of information.[64]

Tracking the behavior of consultants and their participation in political campaigns, even at the highest levels, still remains difficult. Some studies have tried to survey individuals in the field, but many of these have been small, targeted surveys that did not reach across the entire industry. Because of the limited data, we started our inquiry as an exploratory one, with the central objective of creating a baseline of knowledge about political consultants and their industry. We entered this endeavor with rela-

tively few expectations because there had been little work devoted to the subject, compared with other topics in political science.

In addition, because we replicated so many of the questions we asked political consultants when we surveyed political party elites and the general public, we also were not sure how these two groups of actors would stack up compared with consultants. Having said that, we did have a few hypotheses we wanted to test, and those are presented in the following chapters. However, what follows is mainly a report on the data we have collected in our multiple surveys and additional methods of data collection. In many cases, we did not have an expectation of what we would see in the data. Where interesting and important patterns emerge—either over time or across electoral actors—we engage in a bit of speculation and present possible explanations for these patterns.

This leads us to a more important point. We view this book as a hypothesis-generating exercise, rather than a hypothesis-testing one. We hope this book encourages readers and other scholars to ask similar questions and generate new hypotheses that expand on our work. We believe that in many areas of study related to political consultants, political parties, candidates, the public, the media, and outside interest groups, as well as how each interacts with the others, we have only found the tip of the iceberg when it comes to scholarly investigation. We hope others pick up where we have left off and collect more data and test some of the hypotheses that the material presented here is sure to provide.

Finally, one methodological note should be made at the start. Although we include many different types of data, the reader should know that we rely mostly on the responses from the seven surveys we conducted of electoral actors. We believe this to be a rich method of studying the phenomena we are interested in. As Henry Brady notes, "Surveys . . . it can be argued, have revolutionized the social sciences. . . . No other social science method has proven so valuable."[65] However, a few caveats are in order, as is true of any work that relies on respondents' reports of their attitudes, beliefs, and, more important, behaviors. We have to put some faith in the survey respondents to accurately report their feelings and behavior.

This is especially true in the case of political consultants and party operatives. When we began this study, we were pleasantly surprised with the candor of the vast majority of consultants in discussions outside of the surveys, both on and off the record. We believe that the consultants were aware of the lack of scholarly attention their profession had received and

were willing to talk about almost every aspect of their work. We are confident in the accuracy of their survey responses because their responses were not always complimentary, either to their peers or to their industry. The same can be said about party elites, as they were equally forthcoming in their responses to the questions we posed. We are also confident in the data collected from the American public. To some extent, we have to take a leap of faith with the public, as well; but then, so does every other study that utilizes public opinion data.

These points are not brought up to cast doubt on any of the findings reported in the following chapters. Rather, we want our readers to be aware of these limitations so they can make their own judgments about what to do and what data need to be collected when they begin to think about how future questions can be asked about similar issues.