

Skylar, I can tell you've worked hard on analyzing and synthesizing your sources. The role of style-shifting in communication is underlined by your use of African American English styles and patterns. I have noted examples of these styles and patterns so that as you revise, you can consider strategic use of language patterns based on what audience you want to reach and the message you want to get across.

The Presidential Election of 2008

Unlike the 2000 Election, the 2008 Presidential Election was a historic election due to the story behind the candidates participating in it. For the first time in United States History, an African-American was running for the most powerful office in the United States. Illinois Senator Barack Obama was a young, African-American lawyer who was poised to be the first African-American President. **But he was not running unopposed.** John McCain, the senior Senator from Arizona ran opposite of Obama. The story of these two candidates couldn't be anymore different. Senator John McCain was an experienced politician serving his fourth term in Senate at the time. McCain was also a Navy Veteran who served in the Vietnam War. Obama on the other hand had just begun his first term as a United States Senator and had no prior military experience. Despite their differences, these two men ran in one of the most historic races in American history foreshadowing the most historic election outcome in history.

The candidates in the 2008 Presidential Election displayed two different and unique communication styles in order to appeal to America's voting population. Barack Obama campaigned as a **"Man for the People"** (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). By campaigning as man first and politician second, he connected on a personal level with all voters, specifically African-American voters. **Obama** style of campaign

Commented [HF1]: This stylistic variation between long and short sentences, including fragments like this one, can help maintain your reader's interest

Commented [HF2]: The capitalization here gives a sense of naming a legitimate rhetorical style. Do Alim and Smitherman capitalize this phrase as well?

Commented [HF3]: Here you have variation in possessive form. "Obama style" can also be "Obama's style." This variation can work well with your points about style-shifting! Think about such variation strategically. Who is your audience? How do they themselves style-shift?

communication was revolutionary and **in my opinion** this drastically affected the outcome of the election. Obama used a technique known as Style-shifting (Alim & Smitherman, 2012) to communicate with voters. Style shifting is a technique where the speaker will change his or her diction depending on the audience that the speaker is addressing. Obama used this technique effectively and was able to appeal to a wide variety of voters. The best case of Obama using this technique was when he was eating at a restaurant in Washington D.C. Obama had just ordered his food and was preceding to hand a twenty-dollar bill to the cashier. When the cashier attempted to give Obama his change back, Obama replied “Nah, we straight” (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). The use of the lexical variant of the word no, “nah”, made Obama’s appeal as a “Man for the People” (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). Obama combined his use of style shifting with a heavy social media campaign to appeal to voters. John McCain **on the other hand** used George W. Bush’s communication style of grassroots campaigning. McCain encouraged Americans to **“Live off of the Land”** (Claiborne, 2007). McCain’s entire campaign was centered on making America more “Financially viable” (Claiborne, 2007). His ideas of financial viability were shown throughout his campaign communication through taking advantage of free advertising events such as debates and public speeches. These two different campaign communication styles made each candidate appeal to specific audiences and this led to a record outcome at the polls.

Commented [HF4]: How does your opinion relate to the evidence from your sources? Your perspective can build on and be in conversation with your sources, so explain these connections to your readers.

Commented [HF5]: Repeating phrases can be engaging to your audience. Could depend on the reader, though, so it would be good to get feedback from different readers

Commented [HF6]: As above, the capitalization can achieve a particular effect. Does Claiborne capitalize this phrase as well?

Analysis of the 2008 Presidential Election Results

Barack Obama won the 2008 Presidential Election and became America’s first African-American President of November 4, 2008. Obama won single handedly in the

Electoral Colleges with a victory margin of 365 – 173 and won 52.86% of the popular vote (Leip, 2012). When it came down to the actual election, Obama had 69,499,428 compared to 59,950,323 votes the McCain obtained (Leip, 2012). The 2008 Elections also had a rise in the amount of African-Americans who participated in the election. About 65% of African-American voted in the election, which equates to about 16 million of the 131 million votes casted (File, 2013). I believe that Obama's ability to Style-shift gave him the opportunity to connect with a diverse group of voters specifically African-American and young voters.

The 2008 Presidential Election was a groundbreaking election for African American voters. As a result, in the election that produced the nation's first black president, the historic gap between black and white voter participation rates over all virtually evaporated (Roberts, 2009). African-American Voter Turnout Percentage would surpass the Voter Turnout Percentage of Non-Hispanic White voters in 2012 by about 2% (File, 2013). This leads me to believe that Obama's communication skills, and not his race, made African Americans identify with him and ultimately vote for him.

Conclusion of my Research

Presidential Campaign Communication is what can make or a break a Presidential Candidate's campaign. According to Smith (2012), "In order to be effective as a candidate, you must be able to appeal to a wide variety of audiences."(p.2). In the past four elections, American voters have selected Presidents who have done just that, and have appealed to their own personal beliefs. This has definitely given me a new

Commented [HF7]: This variation is similar to the possessive variation I mentioned above. Here you have plural variation. "65% of African-American" can also be "65% of African-Americans." Again, I think your linguistic choice works well here for writing about style-shifting.

Commented [HF8]: More African American English variation here as well! The standardized past tense form of "cast" is "cast." Consider both your audience—what forms do they use—and your purpose. The variation aligns with your style-shifting topic.

outlook on elections and how communication can affect all voters, especially African American voters.

