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Echoes of September 11th : an analysis of the 2004 presidential campaign ads

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ECHOES OF SEPTEMBER 11TH:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ADS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Shannon A. Doyle

August 2006

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ABSTRACT

ECHOES OF SEPTEMBER 11th :

AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ADS

By Shannon A. Doyle

This thesis examines how the tragic events of September 11th and the War on Terror were employed in the 2004 presidential election by President George W. Bush and Senator John F. Kerry. With the use of the website, The Living Room Candidate, these ads were watched to see how and to what extent these events were represented in the ads. Techniques such as color, music, and imagery were all analyzed for how they contributed to the persuasiveness of each advertisement.

Through careful analysis three main themes have been identified in the ads: fear, leadership, and family and safety. While both candidates used these themes, President Bush won the election with advertisements that were more attack oriented in nature. The way each candidate used September 11th in the election offers insight to the outcome of the election. Political advertising might offer insight as to why the public votes a certain way.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Arne and Lois Bruhn, for instilling the value of education in our family and helping to make this thesis possible.

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Chapter I: Introduction

It seemed like a horror movie. The haunting music coming from my television screen caused me to stop washing dishes immediately and watch. For a full thirty seconds I sat there, engrossed in the images on the screen, until it stopped, leaving me feeling shaken and a little scared. As it turned out, what I had seen was not a horror movie but a political advertisement. This ad was shown as part of a news story on the aggressiveness of negative advertising. Quickly, my feelings of fear turned to anger, as I realized that the purpose of this ad was in fact to frighten me, and worse, frighten me into voting for a certain candidate. Even more upsetting was that this ad was developed by a political party that I did not even support and yet, it was able to affect me emotionally. I wondered if other people had the same reaction to this ad that I had and would maybe even use this ad to base their decision on who to vote for. This got me thinking, what was it about this ad that made me feel this way? Why was it effective? Thinking back about this ad, the impetus for this thesis, I realize this ad drew upon a very frightening and emotional memory of mine and nearly every other eligible voter: the morning of September 11, 2001. While watching the ad, the memory of that day re-played in my mind, making me relive that morning as I watched from my television screen and saw the World Trade Center being demolished with thousands of people in it, right before my eyes.

In this way, advertising is a powerful force in our society: it can use a single event to make the public feel a certain way or vote a certain way. American ideology changed on September 11th and advertisers were quick to use it as a persuasive tool in their

campaign ads. With the belief in a safe and indestructible nation shaken, the prevention of another 9/11 terrorist attack became the driving force behind the 2004 election. Before September 11, 2001, many Americans could not have even imagined a terrorist attack of that magnitude occurring in the United States and were shocked at what they saw on their television screens. According to Nancy Gibbs (2001) of *Time Magazine*:

People thought it was a sonic boom, or a construction accident, or a freak of lighting on that lovely day; at worst, a horrible airline accident, a plane losing altitude, out of control, a pilot trying to ditch in the river and missing...But as the gruesome rains came-bits of plane, a tire, office furniture, glass, a hand, a leg, whole bodies, began falling around-people in the streets all stopped and looked, and fell silent. (p.34)

Television news replayed these images for weeks helping to establish 9/11 as the day that changed America. The images of September 11th remain imprinted on the American mind.

Severely shaken by this event, Americans immediately turned their efforts to recovering and rebuilding the nation. The rights and freedoms to which they had grown accustomed had been threatened, causing Americans to come together in order to protect the American way of life. Underlying these efforts to heal was a great deal of rage and despair over what had happened. Adopting President Bush's philosophy of "you're either with us or against us," many Americans wanted revenge and felt that waging war should be the next course of action. *Time Magazine* writer Lance Morrow (2001) reflected these feelings stating "anyone who does not loathe the people who did these things and the people who cheer them on, is too philosophical for decent company" (p.48). Many citizens simply wanted to understand how and why a terrorist attack occurred in their

homeland. In the weeks and the months that followed the attack, the bond of solidarity Americans felt after September 11th was replaced by division over what should be done to protect the country. Although the country was widely divided over this decision, President Bush began the War on Terror by bombing Afghanistan.

No matter how citizens view the War on Terror, the devastation and the aftermath proved September 11th 2001 to be a day that no American would ever forget. This event would become a permanent memory in the American culture. Cultural memory is defined as “a field of contested meanings in which Americans interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of the nation, particularly in events of trauma, where both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed” (Sturken, 1997, p.3). The impact of September 11th was so significant that almost five years later the public was still sensitive to its effects. Images of the destruction shown on the news immediately brought back the emotions of the day. In addition to serving as a constant reminder of the terrorist attack, media messages also served as a way to bring the country together. Values such as family, faith, and patriotism were emphasized in media coverage as a way for society to return to normalcy. News stories focusing on the recovery efforts and on American patriotism in the face of adversity are examples of how the media played “a central role in conjuring up a sense of national belonging and community” and how “the media’s will to remember was connected to the resuscitation of national culture” (Spigel, 2004, p.240).

Through the prevalence of the media, Americans developed a common consciousness or memory of September 11th. People of diverse backgrounds found they

shared the same feelings or perceptions of that day. September 11th changed the way people viewed and talked about the world around them as international news became increasingly more important to the American public. In particular, the political discourse of the country was greatly influenced by September 11th. During the 2004 election, powerful political ads conjuring up images of the terrorist attacks flashed across television screens bringing the horror and despair of that day right back into American homes. These ads insisted that Americans must remember September 11th when casting their votes and urged them to vote a certain way for the sake of their survival. Political ads have long been a part of the political process, reflecting and shaping American attitudes and the world we live in. The history of political advertising gives insight as to how these ads are crucial components of political campaigns and why they have continued to be used over the years. The next section will look into how political ads became a vital part of American politics.

History of Political Advertisements

Advertising in the political arena has a long and rich history in America. During an election, politicians use a variety of methods to persuade and influence voters. Advertising has been a widely used and effective tool, for a candidate to get his or her message to the general public. In its earliest forms, political advertising consisted of handbills and posters vouching for a certain candidate and later, advertisements on the radio (West, 2001). It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that televised political ads would emerge as the most commonly used form of political advertising.

Political advertisements made their debut in 1952 during the Eisenhower campaign.

Madison Avenue advertising executive Rosser Reeves approached Eisenhower with the first political advertising campaign strategy for television, in which he ran twenty second commercials in between popular shows of the time such as “I Love Lucy” (Slovin, 2005, para.3). These ads were simplistic in nature, featuring questions from average citizens, followed by answers from Eisenhower and were positive in tone (Perloff, 1998).

Ever since, television advertising has played a key role in the political process. “Television commercials use the techniques of filmmaking--including script, editing and performance--to distill a candidate’s major campaign themes into a few powerful images” (Solvin, 2005, para.3). Advertisements appeal to voters’ emotions and needs in order to persuade them to vote a certain way. As more and more homes acquired television sets, televised ads became an essential part of political campaigns. According to Roger Allies (1968), a television producer and Nixon campaign consultant, “television is no gimmick and nobody will ever be elected to major office again without presenting themselves well on it” (quoted in Slovin, 2005, para.3). With the emergence of television in American life, a politician’s appearance took on new importance. How candidates portray themselves through advertisements has become a key way for voters get to know a candidate’s persona and platform. With the rise of television, candidates began paying more attention to their media image and that of their opponents on television. In 1964 Lyndon Johnson took advantage of this, running one of the most effective, but negative campaigns in American history (West, 2001). With Johnson’s campaign against Barry

Goldwater, the tone of political advertising changed from being mainly positive in tone to being more negative and attack oriented in nature.

Televised political advertisements have now become a necessity for any candidate running for office. Politicians put a lot of time, energy and money into formulating their ad campaign strategies to reach voters. Ads are carefully constructed to define issues that impact the lives of the general public. While similar themes such as the economy or education can be found among political ads through over fifty years of elections, advertisements also reflect issues that are unique to the time. Mass media is a prevalent part of the average American's life and the televised commercial has proven to be an efficient and effective way for a candidate to bring campaign messages and goals directly to their audience. Today, political advertisements still make up one of the most crucial parts of campaign discourse. The 2004 presidential election is an example of how political advertisements are developed to appeal to their audience by deploying tragic events recent in the nation's memory.

September 11th in the 2004 Presidential Election

The discourse of the 2004 presidential election was dramatically shaped by the War on Terror and homeland security issues. The events of September 11th, 2001 and the subsequent War on Terror were re-occurring themes in political ads of both the Democratic and Republican candidates. The war in Iraq emerged as one of the most important issues to voters. "This already polarizing subject of war was also emotionally connected in the minds of voters despite the lack of any direct link between Iraq and

September 11th” (Slovin, 2005, para.3). During this election, the effects of the September 11th terrorist attacks still lingered in the minds of the American people. Americans sought a leader that would protect them from another terrorist attack. The country was divided over what should be the next course of action in the War on Terror and how best to protect the homeland. Juliette Kayyem (2005), the executive director of research at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government emphasized the importance of these issues: “either President Bush or John Kerry, whoever is elected president in November-will face the formidable task of overseeing a significant War on Terror” (para.4). During this election, homeland security and fighting terrorism abroad were portrayed as the main issues voters should care about.

One of the primary strategies both Bush and Kerry used to communicate the impact of September 11th was political ads. The goal of the Bush campaign’s advertisements was to tear down his opponent, Senator John Kerry, by portraying him as a reckless individual who would not defend the country well. The Kerry campaign ads were also negative in nature and frequently attacked Bush’s foreign policy. However, some of themes that emerge out of these ads are unique to the 2004 election. Domestic issues were overlooked as concerns about homeland security and the War on Terror emerged as the central themes in this election. The 2004 presidential election was centered on international and homeland security concerns whereas in previous elections, domestic issues took precedence. ”The focus on military issues and foreign affairs this year marks a strong departure from the previous three elections... which focused almost entirely on domestic issues”(Solvin, 2005, para.3). Foreign affairs and the importance of

America's role in the international community became increasingly important after September 11th as voters had to acknowledge Americans were at risk of terrorism and realized that isolation was not an option. In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the confidence of the American people was shaken, to the point that they no longer felt secure in their own country. These fears were only heightened by repeatedly seeing images of these attacks on their television screens. Political commercials were a driving force in reminding the public that a terrorist attack could happen again, raising the stakes for the presidential election.

Throughout the 2004 presidential election, the events of September 11th echoed in the campaign ads, reminding voters of that terrifying day. Viewers saw ads with frightening images of terrorists, collapsing buildings and strong themes of the danger of terrorists and of the need for taking military action to protect the homeland. It is important to consider the role September 11th played in the political commercials of the 2004 presidential election since it tends to be "the emotional resonance of the ads and not their adherence to facts that will have the greatest impact on voters" (Solvin, 2005, para.4). Playing on fears of terrorism, both Bush and Kerry's political campaigns employed September 11th as a way to elicit strong emotional reactions from their viewer. With each ad, the public was forced to relive that day and the emotions that went along with it. Focusing on their worries and grief, impressionable viewers were urged to vote for a certain candidate for their safety. Both President Bush and Senator Kerry used the themes of September 11th and terrorism in both subtle and explicit ways to win the support of the public during the election

Political advertising has been the focus of many studies over the years in the fields of communication studies, psychology, and marketing, among others. The next chapter will look into previous inquiries on how political ads are constructed and their effectiveness in communicating their messages to an audience. These studies will provide a valuable framework for analyzing the 2004 presidential election ads. Previous research will also serve as a credible resource for examining the persuasive techniques used in the 2004 election and will help guide the study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

America is a nation founded upon democratic beliefs and freedoms. One of the most important of these freedoms is the right to vote and elect leaders. Through the use of communication, politicians compete for the votes of average citizens. Political communication can often be defined as “the process by which a nation’s leadership, media, and citizenry exchange and confer meaning upon messages that relate to the conduct of public policy” (Perloff, 1998, p.8). In a democratic society, political discourse consists of candidates communicating to their public through the means of mass media. This persuasive type of communication targets its audience with one goal in mind; a vote. Political communication has evolved over the years, from the standard soapbox speech to cleverly constructed political advertisements that emotionally move and motivate people to act or feel a certain way. Political communication focuses on public issues that are timely and are of importance to its targeted audience. Political rhetoric has a short term orientation, because there is usually a set amount of time (the length of the campaign) that a political communicator has to reach his or her audience. In other words, “political communicators seek practical and immediate results” and their “messages are typically planned, prepared and delivered with an eye to immediate outcomes” (Denton & Woodward, 1990, p.9). Through this form of fast paced communication, candidates attempt to reach and persuade audiences in the quickest way possible through the use of mass media.

Mass media devices, such as the television and the radio, combined with the use of issues important to a target audience, are powerful persuasive tools. Through the use

of television and radio, politicians can reach thousands of people at once with their campaign message. Political advertisements help to educate and inform voters about the candidate's election issues because the public tends to remember the content of political advertisements during an election (Perloff, 1998). Political advertisements are proven to be one of the most effective persuasive devices because they are more memorable in the minds of their viewers.

The scope of public issues reflected through political communication is wide, ranging from issues such as the economy to war. One major concern of political communication is how candidates portray themselves or their opponent and attempt to convey a message about their character or beliefs. Factors such as gender, race and the tone of a message can impact a candidate's chance of winning an election. Strategies are a vital component of political communication as "in presidential electoral politics, strategies that are novel and innovative in one campaign quickly become part of the establish campaign tactical arsenal" (Jamieson, 1997, p. 210). The message a candidate sends to the public represents who they are and what they stand for, and this message is a crucial part of their success in the election.

Advertising as Political Strategy

Adopting some of the same techniques as consumer advertisers, political parties market their candidate or message in powerful and creative ways to their audiences through the use of the media. The fields of Communication Studies, Mass Communication, Political Science and Psychology have all studied the effect of political

advertising on our society. Political ads on television and on the web have proven effective for politicians to reach a wide variety of audiences, having a direct impact on the electoral system (Davis & Owen, 1998). One of the goals of political advertising is to strengthen partisan ties to a candidate's political party while also persuading non-partisan voters to vote for a particular candidate. These advertisements also serve to make a candidate look better qualified for the job than their opponent by pointing out the shortcomings of the opponent.

Another reason advertising plays such a key role in the political arena is the information they provide for voters. Vogly and Schwarz (1980) found that the majority of Americans get their information about the candidates from political ads on television. Their study re-emphasizes the importance of advertisements and the role they play in elections. In surveying individuals of different educational levels about their feelings on political ads, Vogly and Schwarz found that even the most educated people found the information in political ads to be believable and would base their vote on it. It follows that the politician who gets the most media coverage or exposure will most likely win the election (Vogly & Schwarz, 1990). The information given in a political ad is often memorable and focuses on issues that are important to the voters. The strategies and techniques employed by advertisers are used to persuade the public to buy a certain product or think a certain way. A lot of time and energy is devoted to developing persuasive techniques that make a product or idea appeal to a wide variety of audiences. However, this form of communication is constrained by the ad buy, leaving viewers with little time (often thirty seconds) to assess the claims an ad makes for accuracy. Political

ads are a type of advertising communication that “provides the reader, viewer, or listener with a vast number of bits of information which he must rapidly sort out to arrive at a unique interpretation” (Moran, p.11, 1988). In other words, the information in political ads is presented so quickly that the viewer does not have enough time to process the information. The viewer is taken by surprise and is not able to use reasoning to analyze the messages in the advertisement and find possible fallacies in the ad.

Unlike any other form of advertising, television commercials provide their audience with “an entire drama, with plot and character development, structure of crisis, climax and denouement all in thirty seconds” (Blair, 1996, p.33). Television advertising uses thirty second stories to appeal to the emotions of their audience. Emotional appeals are an essential part of an effective political advertisement. “Emotional appeals are communications intended to elicit an emotional response from some or all who receive them” (Brader, 2005, p.2). These appeals cause their audience to feel a certain way about the candidate or their opponent by using familiar images or music associated with a certain emotion. Emotional appeals are designed to leave the audience with a lasting impression of a candidate that they will remember when casting their vote on election day.

To best understand why political advertisements are so effective it is important to look at the different types of political ads and the techniques used in them. While many ads fall into multiple categories it is useful to identify elements of ads to aid in my analysis. Image ads, issue ads, and negative ads will be discussed for how they are used in elections.

Image Ads

Image ads are commonly used in political advertising. “A candidate’s image is a cluster of traits that reflect the candidate as person and as a politician” (Biocca, 1990, p.126), giving the voters insight as to who the politician is. The politician is the main focus of image ads. Qualities such as politicians’ character, experience, achievements and leadership ability are all emphasized in image ads. Shyles (1984) notes how politicians use television to define their image to the public. His findings reveal that candidates who displayed positive attributes such as honesty and experience are received well by their viewers. The politician who presents the best attributes to voters will most likely be elected because voters will be persuaded by the candidate’s image in the advertisement, leading voters to believe that this is who they are as a person. Traits such as integrity, competence and trustworthiness are stressed in this type of ad implying that trust is a major factor used by voters in determining who they will vote for (Biocca, 1990 p.126). Image ads take on many forms from talking head spots with the candidate speaking directly to the viewer to documentary ads focusing on the politicians’ background and childhood (Perloff, 1998). The main goals of these ads is to show the candidate as a moral and well-rounded individual that is capable of running a country and can serve as a role model for the nation.

Taking into consideration how a candidate portrays their image through their advertisement, it has been found that neither the candidate’s race nor gender impacts how a viewer perceives them (Swain, Copeland, & Johnson-Cartee, 2000). What is significant

about these finding is that it goes against some of the common beliefs, that gender and race do have an impact on how image is perceived by voters and influences the substance and style of a candidate's advertising campaign (Trent & Friedenberg, 1995). These findings indicate that a politician's physical traits have nothing to do with how they are perceived but it is how they present themselves in their ads, and the personal qualities they emphasize in their ads that have the greatest impact on viewers.

Image ads are employed by politicians to convey personal characteristics that would make them qualified for the elected positions. These ads portray a candidate's characterological coherence or attempt to tell their story in accordance to their audience's expectations (Fisher, 1987 quoted in Sturken, 1997). Image ads convey traits or characteristics of a candidate that would make them qualified for the elected position. Traits such as leadership, bravery in the face of opposition, and family values are just a few examples of what to look for when analyzing political ads. Storytelling and personal narratives are often used to display these qualities to voters and explain why they should be elected (Hollihan & Baaske, 1998). An Ivy League education or past achievements on other jobs are presented to voters as evidence of the competence a candidate would bring to the elected position. Politicians also use image ads to identify with voters. A politician might run a "log cabin campaign" stressing how they came from humble beginnings or how they served in the military, like many other average Americans. Family values are often emphasized in these ads, with the candidate shown interacting with their family. Incorporating politicians' families into advertisements is a way to convey to viewers that they are family oriented and share the same concerns that they do. By appealing to

common values, candidates can gain support from voters who are more likely to trust a candidate who shares the same values and concerns as they do. The image a candidate presents in their ads often indicates where they stand on issues surrounding the campaign.

Issue Ads

Issue ads are another common type of ad used by candidates during an election year. In these ads the politician is not the main focus rather they're position on a certain issue is. The types of issues featured in these ads are generally described as having a direct impact on the lives of the voters. In these ads politicians try to "position themselves advantageously (and their opponent disadvantageously) on major political issues" (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995, p.34). Issue ads they define the parameters on certain issues, letting the public know where a politician stands on an issue. For example, a politician might develop an ad against stem cell research. Not only will this ad argue against stem cell research but will make a subtle statement about the values and beliefs this politician holds. An issue ad against stem cell research produced by a political campaign indicates they are "pro-life" and will embrace conservative values. This advertisement will appeal to viewers who share these values, helping them to identify with the candidate and distancing them from their opponent. According to Perloff (1998) the majority of political advertisements focus on issues because they not only describe a candidate's character but they also point out their opponent's short-comings on an issue. Issue ads are a valuable form of political advertising because they serve more than one purpose: educating viewers about an issue and transmitting more information politician's

character. Issue ads attempt to gain support for a candidate by appealing to voters through common beliefs about an issue. The dual purpose that issue ads represent will help explain why certain issue ads in the 2004 election were persuasive and beneficial for the candidate who produced them. Not only did these ads educate voters about an issue, they were used to assist the candidate in connecting with voters through common beliefs and values about public policy. Issue ads come in many forms, one of the most prevalent today are negative ads.

Negative Ads

Negative advertisements are a growing phenomenon in today's political campaigns (Pfau & Kenski, 1990). These types of ads "focus on criticisms of the opponent while positive ads focus on the good characteristics, accomplishments or issue positions of the sponsoring candidate" (Kaid & Johnson, 1991, p.53). It has been estimated that between 30% and 50% of political advertising is negative (Kaid & Johnson, 1991). There are many different types of negative advertisements used in elections. Two of the most common types of negative ads are direct attack ads, that directly attack a candidate's opponent by portraying them in a negative light, and comparative ads that make a politician seem more qualified than their opponent (Pfau & Kenski, 1990). When looking at the content of political ads, Kaid & Johnson (1991) found negative ads that attacked an opponent's stance on an issue rather than their character were received better by viewers. By attacking their opponent's stance on an issue, a candidate can avoid being accused of "mudslinging" and can use ads to point out

the differences between them and their opponent. Studies indicate these advertisements are effective because they appeal to voters through the use of logical and emotional appeals and are more memorable than positive ads (see Reeves & Newhagen, 1990). Both negative issue and image ads target the character of their opponent by directly attacking their character, pointing out their shortcomings or simply implying that the candidate that is sponsoring the ad is better qualified for the job. One common theme is the idea of a politician being “their own worst enemy,” implying that a candidate does not have the leadership ability required for the job (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 1991). Candidates might miss use a piece of their opponent’s ad to attack their character, or point out their opponent’s mistakes, claiming they do not have enough experience.

The effectiveness of negative ads is a significant debate in political communication. Many researchers have wondered if negative advertising produces the desired results for the politician sponsoring the negative ad. A study by Geer and Kahn (1994) investigated whether negative or positive ads were received more favorably by viewers. These scholars hypothesized that positive advertisements would be better received by viewers than negative advertisements. Geer and Kahn (1994) focused on how the tone of the advertisements and the frequency of the times the ads aired affected the audiences’ perception of the candidate sponsoring the ad. Results indicated that negative ads attacking a candidate’s opponent produced unfavorable impressions of the candidate sponsoring the ad, especially among participants who were independents and were not affiliated with any political party (Geer & Kahn, 1994). However, negative ads

did create a significant impression on viewers affiliated with a political party, implying that these ads might be good for strengthening partisan voter support.

Other studies have found that although negative ads were not always received well by voters they were still valuable because people tend to remember them better. Looking at these ads from a psychological perspective, Biocca (1990) found that although negative ads were not received well by voters they were remembered more clearly than positive ads were making them more effective in promoting a candidate's message. While an ad that is negative in nature might not be received well by viewers, it is still more valuable to a political campaign because it is memorable to the audience. Certain negative ads contrasting the two candidates actually increased voter turnout. Comparative messages in political ads do not personally attack a candidate and people find them informative and less distasteful than attack ads (Pfau & Kenski, 1990). These ads are a subtle way for a candidate to indirectly criticize their opponent while at the same time presenting a respectable image of themselves to voters.

A later study done by Jamieson (2000) reached the same conclusion, as for finding that higher levels of negative advertising did increase voter turnout (p.109). Jamieson distinguishes negative ads from attack ads implying that ads with negative appeals in them are confused with attack ads that directly attack a candidate. The word "negative is problematic because it combines types of discourse that are actually distinct" and that "the standard use of "negative" in reference to ads also assumes that any attack is illegitimate when instead attack-based differentiation is an important way to determine that one candidate is better qualified than others" (Jamieson, 2000, p.99). This implies

that the reason viewers do not like negative ads is that they confuse ads with negative elements in them with ads that “mudsling” and directly attack a candidate. These findings support the view that negative political ads can provide valuable sources of information for voters during an election despite the fact that viewers do not like them. For example, citizens who are uninterested in politics will most likely rely on political ads as their main source of information, when deciding which candidate, if any, to vote for. The findings of Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) imply that the “overall level of voter learning rises with the intensity of the advertising campaign” (p.13). However, the voters who benefit the most from the information in advertising are usually those who are attentive and already involved in the political process, doing more to strengthen partisanship than persuading people to vote a certain way.

Negative ads not only educate the voters about a candidate’s positions on issues but play a major role in “shaping voter choice” by exposing voters to different perspectives of the candidates in an election (Ansolabeh & Iyengar, 1995). Even when campaigns are monitored for their use of this type of advertising, negative ads still draw more support for a politician than positive ads (McKinnon & Kaid 1999). Media exposure commenting on the use of negative ads also provides valuable exposure for a political campaign. In today’s world, negative advertising is under constant scrutiny by the mainstream media and consumer watch groups designed to monitor their use. The mass media covers stories about the prevalence of negative attack ads used by political campaigns. In covering the use of these ads, reporters are drawing attention to the ads, giving the candidates sponsoring the ads even more exposure. It seems that in political

advertising, any attention by the mass media is good attention because it alerts the public to the candidate and their message. Realizing that negative ads draw more attention than positive ads, politicians might purposely use negative ads to attract ad watch organization for additional media coverage. Such coverage not only gives candidates and their negative ads more exposure, but makes them more memorable to viewers by giving them special attention during nightly news sessions.

How negative ads influence the public's intentions to vote is another aspect of negative ads studied by researchers. Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino (1994) found that negative advertising dropped the intention to vote by as much as five percent because viewers felt a weakened sense of political efficacy after seeing them. However, other researchers have found that attack advertising does not have the demobilizing effect on the political system as once thought and that viewers were able to distinguish legitimate criticism in the ads (Geer & Finkel, 1998 & Kahn & Kenny, 1999). Pfau and Kenski (1990) state "while there is room for argument about whether negative ads will damage the political system in the long term, there is no argument about their short-term impact, they work and they win elections. Voters pay attention to them" (p.3). The main reason that negative ads continue to be used by candidate is because they are better remembered by voters than positive advertisements. The transmission of negative messages and images serves to unite partisan voters while making a memorable impact in the minds of undecided voters. This information is useful to keep in mind when looking at the 2004 presidential ads for what techniques make them memorable and convincing to voters.

Negative ads have not only been found to be memorable in the minds of their audiences, they are also perceived as believable. Researchers Shim, Park and Chang (1998) were able to conclude that the believability of an ad was positively correlated with approval, meaning that the believability of an ad is what attracts viewers to the information given in the ad. Believability is an essential part of an ad's success. Examining exactly what goes into making these ads believable provides clues as to why an ad is able to persuade a viewer into believing its message. Looking at the believability of the 2004 election will show how images of a tragic event can be combined with music and voice-overs, to create an ad so believable that some viewers might not question its merits.

When comparing the results of studies done on political advertisements it is evident there is a pattern in how viewers perceive them. Voters appear to receive positive ads well and dislike the negative ads (Shim et.al, 1998; Geer & Kahn, 1994). However, there is disagreement over the effectiveness of these advertisements. Shim, Park and Chang (1998) linked the believability of an ad to the approval of the candidate sponsoring the ad while Geer and Kahn (1994) found negative ads to backfire on the sponsor of the ad. These findings indicate there needs to be more studies to understand why negative ads sometimes work to a candidate's advantage and sometimes do not. This might indicate that the political climate, in which these ads are shown, might have an impact on how they are received. In the post September 11th environment, negativity combined with fear became a common sight in the 2004 election ads. The country was still reeling from the attacks and the political campaigns used this event as a way to powerfully reach

viewers. This study will look at the prevalence of negative ads in this election and speculate on how negative ads could have been perceived by voters, only a few years after a national tragedy. When looking at the types of political ads it is important to note that they usually overlap in an election. Image and issues ads can all be portrayed positively and negatively to viewers. During an election, viewers will witness all types of political advertisements presented in a variety of ways, using different persuasive appeals. In order to fully understand why these ads are persuasive, it is useful to understand the techniques that go into making the ads.

Fear Appeals

One type of technique often used in negative advertising is the fear appeal. Emotional appeals such as these “significantly alter the motivational and persuasive power of ads by simply by using music and images to elicit emotions such as fear or enthusiasm” (Brader, 2005, p.388). Politicians use emotional appeals to motivate their target audience to vote for them. These appeals help viewers to remember the ad by touching on their emotions and implying that something bad could happen if they do not take a certain course of action. “Communications using fear appeals are designed to stimulate anxiety in an audience with the expectation that the audience will attempt to reduce this anxiety by adopting, continuing, discontinuing or avoiding a specified course of thought or action” (Spence & Moinpour, 1972, p.40). Politicians use these appeals to communicate to their audience that they will be worse off if the candidate loses. The goal of these appeals is to make viewers worry about the possible physical, financial, or

emotional consequences that would come if they made the wrong decision on election day. Political campaigns hope that after viewing these ads, the public will base their decision on who to vote for through their emotions, rather than their logic. Fear appeals help to make an advertisement memorable to voters and actually do more to motivate people to vote than positive appeals (Brader, 2005). As components of negative advertisements, fear appeals have a greater impact on viewers. Ads employing these appeals warn viewers about possible threats to their lives, causing them to feel anxiety and want to correct the problem by voting a certain way. Positive ads, on the other hand, do not seem to motivate people to action because there is no perceived threat in them.

The production techniques of political ads are a significant part of a politician's campaign strategy. The same techniques that go into marketing a product are used to sell a candidate to voters. Advertisers appeal to voters through verbal, visual and aural channels (Gronbeck, 1995). These channels work together to form unstated propositions, so that the politician does not have to verbally state the entire campaign message but can use other techniques to reach their audience. "Unstated propositions are Sirens calling audiences to the pains, pleasures, warnings and rewards that supplement and extend the claims of discursive talk" (Gronbeck, 1995, p.153) and assist in the delivery of a persuasive message. These messages draw on the familiar memories, experiences and emotions of their audience. Political advertisements use slick advertising production that combines visual images and music to persuade the voter. The techniques that go into making a political ad play a pivotal role in the advertisements ability to hold the attention of the public. Political campaigns use visual and aural techniques to form powerful

arguments that tap into the emotions of voters and can have a major influence over who they decide to vote for.

Visual and Aural Techniques

Visual images symbolically communicate messages to voters. It has been found that people tend to remember visual images more than any other aspect of political ads and that “pictures carry an emotional impact that is more powerful than the spoken word” (West, 2001, p.7). Visual images in advertisements are often symbolic and carry multiple meanings, making them a clever and subtle way to deliver multiple messages to an audience. Nelson and Boynton (1995) and Birdsell & Groarke (1996) examined how the visual aspects of political ads can deliver strong persuasive messages to viewers. “Colors, images, and movements are susceptible also to cultural conventions, symbols and associations” (Nelson & Boynton, 1995, p.544) making them persuasive elements to incorporate into a political advertisement. Visual images and color also elicit powerful emotions from their audience. Certain colors and images are the conveyers of feelings and emotions so that when people see them, they are inclined to feel or think a certain way. For example, bright colors are often used to associate positive characteristics to a candidate and dark colors are used to represent the negative characteristics of a politicians opponent (West, 2001). Certain colors are also tied culturally to group of people and can be used by politicians to reach out to their audience. For instance, in American politics, the national colors of red, white and blue have been used by politicians to portray themselves as patriotic and valuing American traditions. We

associate colors with emotions, feelings and experiences, making them a powerful persuasive tool in political advertisements.

Nelson and Boynton's (1995) study points out how elements such as color and imagery can come together in a political ad. Looking at a 1988 Dukakis ad criticizing G.H.W. Bush's environmental record, these researchers comment on how a dirty gray background was used in the ad, with an image of Bush standing by toxic waste barrels. The dirty gray background combined with powerful imagery worked together to send a warning to voters that a vote for Bush meant life in dirty and dangerous environment. This ad plays upon a viewer's fear of having their lives jeopardized by an unhealthy living situation. The environment a person lives in is valuable to them and influences the quality of life they experience each day. Dukakis's ad is persuasive because it appeals to the public's fear of an unhealthy lifestyle. No one wants to live in squalor and the ad indicates this will happen if voters do not take a certain course of action. This ad is also effective because it connected G.H.W. Bush to a voter's fear of a polluted environment by showing an image of Bush by toxic waste barrels. This ad uses the threat of a toxic environment to warn voters that if they are not careful, their environment will be destroyed at the hands of G.H.W. Bush. The Dukakis ad is an example of how color and imagery can be combined to elicit an emotional reaction from its audience by drawing upon what they fear.

Visible text often accompanies visual images in political advertisements. This type of text grabs its audience's attention through big, bright and colorful lettering. These text messages use words that trigger certain emotions or reactions from their

audience. Text messages use “code words” these short messages communicate a much broader message to their audience than they appear to (West, 2001). Phrases such as “right-wing” or “ultra-liberal” not only describe a candidate but help to foreshadow what type of leader they would be if elected. “Code words are powerful communications devices because they allow voters to associate particular messages with the code word” (West, 2001, p.11). For example the code word “right-wing” suggests to viewers that a particular candidate is conservative and would follow a conservative agenda if elected. The term “conservative” indicates where a candidate will stand on current issues and implies that they will most likely be “pro-life,” against gay marriage and want to uphold the status quo in society. Visual text and code words and phrases that convey multiple meaning support the visual images in the advertisement by giving them a context.

The importance of visual images in political ads is further stressed in Richardson’s (2002) study. He noted that in political ads “how the images and the narratives fit together is significant” and “when a narrative and audiovisual package becomes widely recognizable, it provides especially effective cognitive “shorthand” for communicating emotionally powerful messages” (Richardson, 2002, p.4). Visual images and narratives are used to deliver a candidate’s message by drawing on experiences and familiar structures that people can identify with. One of the main arguments raised by Richardson is that the general public needs to be educated about the audio visual techniques used in these ads to persuade and influence an audience (Richardson, 2002). Political advertisements are developed so effectively that many viewers may not even think about the claims these ads make or why the visual components of ads are able to

appeal to their emotions. Richardson identifies three linkages or connections between visual images and the candidates in political advertisements: “narrative linkages where visuals are linked to a candidate by a storyline, verbal linkages where visuals are linked by a narrator’s or reporter’s words to a candidate and graphic linkages with images of the candidate” (Richardson, 2002, p.11). This study provides a solid foundation for analyzing visual images in political ads because it shows the many ways that visual images can be tied to a candidate in a persuasive advertisement.

Aural techniques accompany visual images providing emphasis and dramatic flair to the message an ad or campaign is trying to convey. Music and other aural effects are used to motivate and stir the emotions of all who listen to it. Music is used in a variety of ways in politics from campaign ads to rallies in hopes of eliciting a desired emotional response from voters. The traditional use for music in presidential campaigns is a candidate’s theme song. A candidate’s theme song is an essential part of their political campaign. A theme song sets the tone for a candidate’s campaign and endeavors to portray a candidate in a positive light. Using theme songs that are up beat and lively are a candidates attempt to put voters in a positive mood when thinking about their campaign (West, 2001). Theme songs such as President Reagan’s “This is America” and President Clinton’s “Don’t Stop Thinking about Tomorrow” all try to induce favorable feelings about a candidate and motivate the public to vote for them. A theme song is a musical tribute that reflects what a candidate hopes to inspire about their campaign and in the country when they are elected.

Music can also deliver powerful persuasive messages in political advertisements. In political advertisements, music and other sound effects can complement visual imagery by setting the mood for the commercial. Music can often mimic movement and add emphasis to a voice-over or moving image (Nelson & Boynton, 1995). Aural delivery is a crucial component in political ads because the “pacing, poetic patterns of syllabic emphasis, musical rhythms (as with time signatures), dramatic intonations and passions, pauses or silences, overlaps or clashes” all contribute to the effectiveness of a political advertisement because they draw upon the emotions of their audiences (Nelson & Boynton, 1995). For example, political ads often use familiar music to set the tone of an ad. Attack ads will often use music from horror films, such as *Nightmare on Elm Street*, which evokes emotions of fear and terror out of their audience (Richardson, 2002). The viewers watching the ad will automatically connect these feelings with the message presented in the advertisement. Music can also mimic words, adding emphasis to the spoken word through its beat and rhythm (Nelson & Boynton, 1995). Politicians can send messages about their opponent by using dark and ominous music accompanied by complementary voice-overs to warn the public about the consequences of voting for their opponent. Music and sound affects are the finishing touch on any political ad, setting not only the mood of the ad, but the tone and the pacing as well.

While variables such as persuasive appeals and images provide a lot of insight as to why political ads are effective, the themes presented in political advertising are also important to take into consideration. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991) have investigated and identified five common themes found in negative advertising. They note

that ads “will utilize more than one thematic design because advertising consultants may be using complementary or overlapping themes in order to create a powerful persuasive message” (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991 p.71). Candidates use many different types of persuasive appeals within an advertisement to reach their audience. The use of multiple themes within one an ad helps ensure that the viewers understood the candidate’s message.

The techniques used in political ads are vital to an ad’s success. Techniques are what makes an ad able to pull on the emotions of viewers and are vital to understanding why advertisements are successful in selling a political candidate. Music, imagery, text and persuasive appeals are all necessary for an ad to deliver a powerful message to voters. These techniques use familiar structures, such as cultural images, to appeal to viewers and are the driving force behind the message of an ad. The previous findings on political advertising will now be used to analyze the persuasive techniques in the 2004 presidential campaign commercials.

Chapter III: Methodology

The mass media is a prominent part of American life. Everyday thousands of Americans receive information and entertainment right in their own homes; making the media a valuable resource for all that it reaches. Mass media such as television or radio are prevalent parts of today's world and convey strong, persuasive messages to the audiences they reach. These messages urge people to take a certain course of action or think a certain way for their own benefit and are useful for understanding why media is such a driving force in our society.

The media mirrors what goes on in society and can give insight to how our culture has evolved, socially and politically. Media criticism acknowledges that all mediated discourse, such as television, advertisements, or magazines, have an impact upon the world and are a reflection of the culture that creates them (Nothstine, Blair & Copeland, 1994). Media criticism is directed at a target audience for the purposes of educating them and making them aware of an important issue or phenomenon in their society. In other words, "media criticism should be considered most valuable and worthwhile when it provokes an audience to think or act differently and in socially responsible ways" (Nothstine, Blair, Copeland, 1994, p.4). A media critic examines how text invests itself in a certain culture.

Criticism analyzes the meaning constructed by media. Criticism of political ads focuses on media strategies that influence society through the different techniques of political communication. This thesis' media criticism focuses on the televised political

ads of the 2004 presidential election, specifically how the theme of September 11th is represented in them. This study will answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How are the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror used in the political ads of the 2004 presidential election?

RQ2: To what extent are the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror used in the advertisements?

RQ3: What strategies are used to portray these themes persuasively?

In order to uncover the different techniques used in the ads to convey September 11th and homeland security a thematic analysis will be employed. The theme of an advertisement is important to take into consideration because a “theme is among the most useful units of content analysis, particularly for the study of the effect of communication upon public opinion because it takes the form in which issues and attitudes are discussed” (Kane, 1986, p.19). Themes are used as persuasive devices in political advertisements and often “appear as both manifest and latent symbolic constructs in the political messages presented in the negative ads” (p.71). In other words, these themes can be presented in both direct and understated ways, using imagery, music and even characters to communicate multiple messages to the audience. What makes this election unique from previous elections is the use of September 11th as a means of persuading voters to vote for a certain candidate.

The political ads of the 2004 election were gathered through the use of the website, “The Living Room Candidate.” “The Living Room Candidate” is a credible and

comprehensive source which makes publicly available the advertisements of the 2004 presidential election. Presented by the American Museum of the Moving Image, the Living Room Candidate includes 250 television commercials, ranging from the 1952 campaign ads, when political advertisements first aired, to the more recent 2004 campaign ads. The American Museum of the Moving Image has obtained these ads through donations from various political groups, research centers, and libraries, and the organization selected the ads they felt reflected the most pertinent issues of the election.¹

The website has thirty-four advertisements from the 2004 presidential election from President George W. Bush and Senator John F. Kerry. Both Bush and Kerry and have seventeen ads each featured on this website. These ads are all paid for by the candidate or their national party and each ad runs approximately thirty seconds long. The ads from both candidates cover a variety of issues ranging from health care to taxes and the War on Terror. Each ad is also accompanied with a transcript of what is said in the advertisement.

For this analysis I watched all of the ads from both political campaigns several times, each time examining a different technique or theme in the advertisements. In my first viewing I noted which ads made references to September 11th. All ads that made references to the events of September 11th or the War on Terror were selected for this study.² Such references include any symbol, image, text or other cue that had to do with

¹ The information regarding how the Living Room Candidate obtained and selected these ads was confirmed through an e-mail with a representative from American Museum of the Moving Image.

² Although the majority of the ads in the 2004 election did reference 9/11 or the War on Terror, there were other advertisements that referenced other important issues in this election. Both Kerry and Bush developed ads focusing on taxes, health care and jobs that did not focus on the War on Terror or 9/11. These ads will not be analyzed for the purposes of this study because they do not address any of these

war, terror, or national security. Images such as a gun, helicopter, helmet, Twin Towers, were considered references to September 11th and the War on Terror. After viewing the ads, I found that twelve Bush ads and eleven Kerry ads made direct references to September 11th for a total of twenty-three ads that used this theme as a means of persuasion. (Please see attached appendix for fuller description). Each of these ads was watched multiple times to understand how September 11th and the War on Terror are represented in them.

The ads were identified by what type (attack, comparative, issue, etc.) and analyzed them for the specific techniques. Techniques such as color, imagery, music and visual text were examined for how they conveyed these themes to the audience. Taking into consideration the different techniques used in these ads, their overall messages were interpreted specifically for how the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror were used for persuasion. From this analysis speculation will occur as to how the use of these themes in political ads might have influenced voters during this election and what this implies about the use of political ads in our electoral system. It is the hope of this study that voters will be more aware of the persuasive techniques used in political ads and why they can be successful in making people want to vote a certain way on election day.

Chapter IV: Analysis of the 2004 Political Ads

The campaign ads of the 2004 election reflect the serious issues that haunt the minds of the American people. The political campaigns of both President Bush and Senator Kerry aggressively promote their images and campaign messages to voters. As Unlike previous elections these candidates composed their campaign ads to touch on a very sensitive and emotional memory held by the public: September 11th 2001. With safety and homeland defense on the minds of the public, these ads attempt to pull on those concerns in order to gain support for their candidate. Throughout the election the candidates tried to appear as strong leaders and advertising proved to be a vital way to accomplish this. With the War on Terror as the backdrop to the election, viewers were reminded everyday that their safety and well being were at stake and whoever was elected would play a key role in protecting their way of life.

This chapter will analyze the ads of the 2004 election to understand how the events of September 11th and the War on Terror were represented in the ads and how they attempted to persuade voters. Patriotism, an overarching theme was found in every ad and foregrounds the three main themes that occur in these ads: 1) danger, 2) leadership, 3) family and safety. These ads have been analyzed for the techniques they use to convey these themes. Although many of these ads convey more than one of these themes, they have been grouped by which theme was conveyed the strongest. These themes work together to offer a political perspective of September 11th. Each of these themes will be discussed in turn.

A Dangerous World: Fear, Terror, and Defense

The use of fear is prevalent in the ads of the 2004 election. Fear is a strong motivating force, making people react based on pure emotion. In this election, fear is linked with the threat of terror and the destruction of the American way of life. Through the use of fear appeals, the Bush and Kerry campaigns are able to draw on the emotions of their viewers to build an argument that the world is an unsafe place and that America needed to defend itself from the constant threat of an attack. A fear appeal, as defined in the literature review, is used to “stimulate anxiety in the audience” in hopes that they will take a certain course of action (Spence & Moinpour, 1972). These ads presented viewers with the idea that terrorist surrounded them both internationally and in their homeland. The following ads will be discussed for how they conveyed a sense of fear or danger to their audience through various persuasive techniques.

Bush's Dangerous World

The use of fear is one of the main persuasive strategies Bush uses in his campaign ads. “Wolves,” one of the most effective commercials of the Bush campaign, uses several techniques to convey the themes of danger and terrorism. The images in the ad are the first clue that this ad is focusing on the threat of terror. In American culture many children grow up hearing fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* or the *Three Little Pigs* where the villain takes the form of the wolf in the story. “Wolves” ad, takes viewers through a dense forest with growling wolves all around them. The use of movement plays an important role in transporting the viewers; the camera angle simulates a person's

view at eye level as they walk through a forest. Throughout the ad we watch glimpses of snarling wolves with yellow eyes. The camera movement is vital to the effectiveness of this ad: so the audience can sense that wolves are all around them, but can never place exactly where the wolves are in the woods. Haunting music plays in the background while an ominous voice narrates the audience's journey through the woods. The movement abruptly stops at a clearing with a whole pack of wolves waiting for them. The commercial ended with the entire pack of wolves rising to their feet to come after the audience.

While this ad might seem fairly simplistic, it verbally and symbolically communicates several things to its viewers. The wolves in the commercial symbolize the terrorists and represent evil. The Bush-Cheney campaign effectively use wolves because American culture automatically links wolves with evil thoughts because of traditional childhood stories, like *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Three Little Pigs*. The instincts of wolves are also remarkably similar to that of terrorists. Like wolves, terrorists roam in packs and work together to bring down their prey. The commercial also mimics the stalking techniques of a wolf pack as the ad is intercut with shots of snarling wolves, ready to attack, conveying the theme of danger. This commercial makes the viewer feel paranoid, as if wolf-like terrorists are all around them, ready to strike at any moment. The Bush-Cheney campaign tells viewers that the world is a dangerous place and that another September 11th event could very easily happen again, appealing to the audience's fears of another attack.

The theme of good and evil is accented through the colors in the advertisement. The wolves are seen running through a dark, dense and lush forest with beams of sunlight streaming through it. The green forest represents a rich nation and the sunlight indicates goodness, since we often connect goodness with the light and evil with darkness in popular culture and religion. The dark areas of the woods hinted that although we are a good and rich nation there are still areas in which terrorists could hideout and do harm. The ongoing narration in the advertisement ties together the frightening message it attempts to deliver which is that terrorists are among us and if Kerry gets into office we will not be prepared to defend ourselves. The ad tries to warn viewers that “in an increasingly dangerous world, even after the first terrorist attack on America, John Kerry and the liberals in Congress voted to slash America’s intelligence operations by six billion dollars” (Bush, 10/22/04). Code words such as “liberal” and “slash” are used to describe and inspire fear for Kerry and his companions. This ad warns that despite all the danger around America, Kerry would still make “cuts so deep they would have weakened America’s defenses. And weakness attracts those who are waiting to do America harm” (Bush, 10/22/04).

The timing on this commercial was impeccable because as soon as the narrator says “those who are waiting to do America harm,” viewers see a clearing of hungry wolves. Through these statements Bush and Cheney are attacking Kerry’s image, making him out to be a threat to the nation. The last scene shows Bush talking on the phone in the Oval Office and suggests Bush is someone who will work to protect America and would be on top of defending the nation. At the end of this ad the Oval office is a

metaphor for a safe haven. The woods outside represent a place where terrorists lurk, but on the inside of the White House, Bush is seen working to protect Americans.

Another Bush commercial that uses September 11th and the War on Terror as persuasive devices is entitled “Risk” and unlike the “Wolves” ad, it directly addresses the themes of the War on Terror and 9/11. The commercial opens with an American flag waving next to the ruins of the World Trade Center. The frightening image of a terrorist dressed in black holding a high powered rifle, morphs into the pupil of a child’s eye, possibly conveying a theme of a fearful future. Children are often looked at as hope for the future and combining the images of a terrorist with a child sends the alarming message about a future of terrorism. This ad emphasizes that Kerry and the liberals “voted to slash intelligence after the first Trade Center attack” and “repeatedly opposed weapons vital to winning the War on Terror” (Bush, 10/18/04). These statements argue that Kerry is an inconsistent leader and has not made wise decisions when it came to war. The inconsistency of Kerry’s voting record serves as an indicator of how he would lead America in the War on Terror. By pointing out Kerry’s questionable voting record, the Bush campaign boldly asserts the idea that if Kerry could not make up his mind on which way to vote that he would not be able to make life saving decisions for America.

A sense of urgency and lack of time is also portrayed in the ad, with background images of soldiers moving impatiently around. In the background the word “today” flashes up in the background with images of a rocket launched and a tank rolling by. The screen then fades to blue with the fading image of a child’s face. The image of the child’s face and the weapons of war signify that one day this child could grow up and still

have to fight this battle. The narration and text asks the viewers: “John Kerry and his liberal allies...are they a risk we can afford to take today?” The fading image of the child is used as a fear appeal because it indicates that if something is not done to protect the homeland, future generations will be in jeopardy. Here again, the goal of this attack is to make Kerry look irresponsible when it comes to defending the country and have Bush appear to be the stronger leader.

The advertisement entitled “Weapons” (4/26/04) also offers another negative take on John Kerry and his voting record. In this ad Bush attempts to communicate to voters that Kerry is a “risk” because he opposed all the weapons that could save the lives of soldiers. This ad directly references the War on Terror and conveys strong themes of war, military and Kerry’s irresponsible voting. The commercial opens with American troops armed and running across the battlefield in the Middle East with a narrator stating that “as our troops defend America and the War on Terror, John Kerry opposed weapons vital to the War on Terror.” Here Bush emphasizes the point that Kerry is not acting in the best interest of the nation’s defenses. Images such as a battlefield filled with soldiers, tanks and fighter jets dropping bombs on the land flow across the screen and take viewers right to the battle scene, giving the audience a sense of what our soldiers are up against in war. A green computer-like-text comes across the screen and notes all the different types of weapons that Kerry opposed. The final image of soldier with a “troubled” look on his face attempts to relate the urgency of the situation to viewers and convey the opinions of the troops. Bush used the theme of Kerry’s irresponsible and dangerous voting record to indicate that Kerry would not protect the good men and women fighting in the war. This

ad appeals to the fears of military personal and their families. It threatens that sons and daughters and other loved ones could go into battle unprepared and lose their lives if they do not elect a leader who will vote to support them.

Bush also uses the War on Terror in his ads to make Kerry look like he could not make a decision on his own and will bend to foreign powers over issues concerning the war. Kerry's indecision or "waffling" are the themes of several of Bush's attack ads. In the attack ad "Global Test" Bush uses Kerry's own words against him, to mock him and send a negative message to viewers. "Global Test," a term that Kerry coined, is redefined by the Bush campaign to mean that Kerry would wait for permission from foreign governments before acting and would wait around while America might be in danger. This ad was simplistically done, with an image of Kerry shown amidst a black background. The color black surrounds an image of a menacing image of Kerry. The color black, long associated with evil or wrong-doing, immediately gives the impression to viewers that Kerry is up to no good. This combined with haunting music and a cautionary male voice over serves to identify Kerry as a danger and a threat to America by putting the other needs of other countries first.

A skeptical male voice mocks his plan, calling it the "Kerry Doctrine" which would have America "seek permission from foreign governments" for protection and would have America "wait for threats to gather" before it defended itself (Bush, 10/02/04). In this ad Bush, deconstructs Kerry's plan to involve incorporating allies into America's War on Terror. He makes Kerry's plan look weak and questionable since it

could involve countries that might not be loyal allies to the United States and would make the country wait around when another terrorist attack could happen at anytime.

Bush's use of fear gives the sense that the threat of terrorism is everywhere. Having the luxury of the public's familiarity, Bush focuses his efforts on launching ads that imply that the country will not be safe without him as leader and that define his opponent, John Kerry as a threat to the country. His ads warn viewers that terrorists lurk around every corner and could even be within the country. Bush uses the theme of defense to transmit the idea that Kerry would fail at protecting the country from the dangerous world of terror.

Kerry's Dangerous World

Attack ads that focus on the dangers of the world are not the main focus of Kerry's campaign. However Kerry does use these attack ads to contrast his image from that of Bush's. In the ad "Defend America," Kerry compares himself to Bush and appeals to the needs and emotions of viewers. The ads narration, image and text all reference 9/11 without directly mentioning the event. The steady beat of military drums and the shaming voice of Kerry first catches viewers' attention, as a black and white image of Bush smirking and walking is seen. In this ad Kerry is defining Bush's image by making him look irresponsible, for spending \$200 billion dollars in Iraq and neglecting the homeland. Text, image and voiceover work together in this ad, as the image of Bush is shown with the text message of "\$200 billion in Iraq" associating Bush with wasting taxpayer's money. Kerry further shows Bush's neglect with an image of a

sad child and a mother holding her baby. Kerry connects these images with the statements about money by showing them at same time. Viewers who watch this ad will see the people who are suffering because of Bush's irresponsibility. As Kerry shames Bush, he implies that he will not only defend America internationally but will defend the quality of American life at home and make sure that Americans have the resources of education and healthcare. The ad conveys Kerry's promise to do this, through the optimistic tone in the music that occurs when Kerry speaks about his plan to "get the terrorists" (Kerry, 9/20/06). The music acts as a mood shifter, going from slow and depressing in tone while talking about Bush and then associating Kerry with uplifting music. It was the goal of the Kerry campaign for viewers to associate Kerry as someone who will bring about positive change to the country.

The ad "Risk" is simplistic in technique but directly communicates Kerry's plan for the War on Terror. This ad directly references the War on Terror, making it the central issue of the ad. However, Kerry uses this issue to help shape his image to voters. Kerry begins his narration by responding to a question he has been asked: "Let me tell you exactly what I would do to handle the situation in Iraq" (Kerry, 4/21/04) and lays out his plan to involve other countries. He touches on other issues related to the war such as the cost of the war and then ended with the most persuasive argument against the war, the deaths of young soldiers. The timing of the music in this ad is strategically planned, as soft string and piano music slowly rises in the background as Kerry mentions the fallen troops in his testimonial. The music draws upon the emotions of the viewers and reminds them of the fact that people are dying in Iraq. Kerry shows two sides of himself: an

individual with a determined plan and a compassionate individual. It is the hope of Kerry's campaign that viewers will see Kerry as competent and concerned about the war and the safety of all Americans. In response to the present dangers, the American people will look for a leader for protection from these threats.

The Knight in Shining Armor: Leadership after September 11th

In the wake of 9/11 and the fearful times of the War on Terror, Americans looked for a strong leader for direction and assurance that America would be safe. With the threat of terrorism as a constant reminder of the nation's vulnerability, people wanted a "strong man," someone who could take control and protect their way of life. During the election, ads stressing leadership qualities became an essential part of both the Bush and Kerry campaigns. Each candidate tried to convey the image of being "the strong man." Bush and Kerry wanted voters to view them as forceful leaders who would stop at nothing to get the terrorists, but at the same time, benevolent and sharing the same values as the rest of Americans. As well as promoting their own leadership images to the public, these ads also served as a way to define their opponent's image and criticize their leadership qualities. The following analysis will critique how each candidate defined themselves as a leader and how they defined their opponent as a leader.

Bush as a Leader: The Great Defender

As the incumbent, Bush's ads focus on his past achievements as President and portray him as both a great defender and an optimist for the future of our country.

President Bush's ad campaign uses the War on Terror and September 11th to convey themes of Bush's good leadership and accomplishments since taking office. The advertisement, "First Choice" (Bush, 7/06/04) features Senator John McCain addressing a crowd of cheering people in a "preacher style," applauding President Bush's leadership. The themes of good and evil and protecting the American way of life, emerge as McCain makes a case for Bush's fight against terror. He focuses on the seriousness of the War on Terror and what a great job President Bush was doing to fight it. While emphasizing how the war is a struggle between "right and wrong," shots of Saddam's statue falling are shown as symbolic of the fight between good and evil in the War on Terror. Images such as Saddam's statue falling and a sniper dressed in black, shooting a high powered rifle, flash across the screen as McCain speaks.

These images are used to trigger the audience's memory of recent events. McCain's speech vouches that Bush is still needed in office because war could be "an even bigger thing" if our enemies acquired biological and chemical weapons, becoming a "fight for our survival" (Bush, 7/16/04). The idea of having to "fight for our survival" is enhanced by black and white images of soldiers in Iraq, indicating that this war is part of that fight. Osama Bin Laden's face is shown, representing the face of the "depraved enemies who oppose our every interest and hate every value we hold dear" (Bush, 7/16/04). Bin Laden's image serves as the face of terrorism and attempts to frighten people into to action by voting for Bush. The timing of this ad is effective because viewers go from being scared by images of war and Bin Laden to hearing about the strong leadership of Bush.

McCain uses code words such as strong, firm and unwavering, when talking about Bush to convey the theme of protection. Images of cheering crowds are shown listening to Bush speak, followed by other images of Bush speaking at different events and conducting business on the phone, to show that Bush is on the job working to protect America. The final scene is of John McCain hugging Bush and saying that he will support Bush for President. The presence of McCain himself sends a powerful message to viewers. As a senator and a war hero, McCain adds credibility to Bush's image of a capable leader. For example, if a strong military leader like McCain endorses Bush and respects him enough to hug him, it sends the message that Bush must be good leader and should be elected. McCain's military background can also be used as a way for Bush to compensate for his lack of military background by associating himself with McCain. This association implies that Bush has just as much military expertise as Kerry because a respectable military leader like McCain endorses him.

Bush further defines himself as a leader that is moving America forward through the ad "Pessimism." 9/11 is only briefly mentioned in this ad but is used by Bush to show how the nation has prospered with him in the White House. Ironically, this ad opens with President Bush sitting next to his wife, Laura sharing that he is "optimistic about America" because he believes "in the people of America" (Bush, 6/04/04). Soft piano music plays in the background adding a soft sentimental touch to Bush's message. Through his statement Bush is sending the message to viewers that despite everything that America has been through, he is a leader with hope and that "even after 9/11, a recession, and more" (Bush, 6/04/04) America has triumphed over all obstacles under his

leadership. The images in this ad create this concept that America has recovered from the attacks. Images such as people going to work, a man at his office cheering while on the phone and a family moving into a new home, all creates a positive feel for the state of the nation.

After 9/11, people wanted the nation more than ever to return to an economically strong country. The images of construction workers and the glowing red open sign of a store serves as a metaphor for the rebuilding and re-opening of America under the leadership of Bush. Here Bush paints his leadership image as a President who can turn a nation around and help it rise from the ashes of terrorism. He also is able to distinguish his leadership image from Kerry's by implying that Kerry is a pessimist who looks at America like it is "the Great Depression" (Bush, 6/04/04) and would never succeed in helping America move forward. An image of a skeptical looking Kerry is shown as a gray transparent screen covers his image, implying that his pessimistic character "would never create a job"(Bush, 6/04/04) while at the same time indicating that it was Bush's strong optimistic beliefs that made America recover. In the ad, Bush is able to attribute positive characteristics with his image and at the same time, negatively define John Kerry's image.

Kerry Defining Bush as a Leader: Lost and Desperate

Bush's portrayal of himself, as the courageous leader, is not met without opposition. The advertisements of President Bush's challenger, Senator John Kerry, argue that Bush does not make wise decisions as president and that the nation deserves

better leadership. Kerry aggressively defends his image from Bush's attack ads pointing out mistakes Bush made as president. Kerry's ad, "He's lost, he's desperate" (Kerry, 10/02/04) and "Juvenile" (Kerry, 9/23/04) all refute claims that Bush makes about Kerry and attempt to falsify Bush's public persona. Several of Kerry's ads were aired in response to attack ads developed by the Bush campaign and form an accusatory dialogue between the two candidates.

In the ad "He's lost, he's desperate" Kerry first defends his background as a prosecutor and debater. Kerry defines Bush as a liar and someone who is a poor loser and has to lie to appear credible. It is the Kerry campaign's intent that viewers will be enraged by Bush's dishonesty and troubled by the fact that America might have been sent to war on false pretenses. Images and text play key roles in relaying this information to viewers. The ad starts with the image of Bush standing at the debate podium, his back turned toward the audience. Bright lights from an auditorium illuminate his figure from the darkness surrounding him. Showing Bush with his back to the audience is symbolic of the fact that Bush was hiding something from the American people.

Kerry then refutes accusations put out by Bush, claiming that he believed that the "president always has the right for pre-emptive strike" and that he would "hunt and kill the terrorists wherever they were" (Kerry, 10/02/04). These statements imply that if Bush was desperate enough to lie about what Kerry said in a debate, he will also be dishonest about other issues. After Kerry defends himself in the ad, the skeptical male voice over warns the audience that they do not know that Bush has already lied to them by withholding "key intelligence information from the American public" (10/02/04).

Newspaper clippings from credible news organizations like the *New York Times* are flash before the audience, to show how Bush has “skewed facts” in order to go to war. Using newspaper quotes to give information validates Kerry’s claims because Americans rely on newspapers for information and look to them for accuracy in reporting. By associating dishonesty with Bush, Kerry is able to imply that he is the honest candidate who would bring “a fresh start” to the nation. This idea of a “fresh start” with Kerry is contrasted with a hopeless reality under the Bush campaign through an ad showing soldiers walking aimlessly around in Iraq with the text and voice over accusing Bush of “rushing us into war”(Kerry, 10/02/04). The word “war” is in bold red letters, attempting to arouse anger from the audience. Kerry is basically saying to his viewers, “Look, Bush is someone who lies about the facts, rushed us into a war, where “we’re paying the price with the lives of our soldiers” (Kerry, 10/02/04).

Bush’s inadequacy as President carries over as a common theme in Kerry’s attack ads against him. Kerry builds on his argument of Bush’s poor performance as President in the ad “Obligation.” In this ad, Kerry accuses Bush of not only being a “lost and desperate individual, but someone who did not fulfill the “obligations” of a president. Kerry associates himself with the presidency by addressing the audience from his office with an American flag in the background. This helps viewers visualize Kerry as the next president and associates confidence with Kerry’s image. Kerry’s expresses to viewers in his opening statement that he already knows that “the obligation of a Commander in Chief is to keep our country safe” and that Bush was failing at it. Kerry, cites several examples of this, from Bush’s failing to secure 380 pounds of deadly explosives that

could have been used against America, to how he “overextended our troops in Iraq” (Kerry, 10/26/06) putting both the nation and the troops in jeopardy. With contempt in his voice, Kerry chastises Bush for failing to dismantle another possibly devastating attack on the country. Kerry’s voice tone changes to hopeful as he promises viewers that he would “bring a fresh start to protect our troops and homeland.” Here again, Kerry associates this idea of “freshness” with his image, indicating to voters that he will bring about change because he will not fail at the very basic and most important obligation of being president, keeping the nation safe.

During the 2004 election, Kerry not only tries to deliver the idea that Bush is not only a leader who could not fulfill the “obligation” of being president and is “lost and desperate” when it came to election issues, but is immature and childish. The ad “Juvenile” attempts to portray Bush as someone who has the audacity to make jokes when people are dying in Iraq. This ad is a response to the comical “Windsurfing” ad released by the Bush campaign. Kerry sought to use one of Bush’s own campaign strategies against him. The seriousness of this ad stands out in stark contrast to Bush’s light-hearted “Windsurfing” ad. Slow, ominous string music sets the somber tone of the commercial, as an American flag is seen unfurling out of the darkness. A cautious and haunting male voice narrates as white, bold, text appears and disappears, emphasizing what he is saying. This ad draws heavily on fear appeals, giving viewers the feeling that the nation is in grave danger of another attack. The white text stands out from the black background giving a dramatic flair to the frightening information it transmits about “1,000 U.S. casualties, two people being beheaded” and “terrorists pouring into Iraq.”

This information is presented to viewers in hopes of increasing their anxiety about the state of the country under George Bush. Viewers are torn from being afraid to being angry. By commenting on the “tasteless attack ad” developed by Bush, Kerry is communicating that with all of these horrible things happening, Bush’s response was to joke about his opponent. Pointing out Bush’s lack of action, Kerry wants the audience to feel that Bush was not taking the war seriously or the safety of the public and is in a sense, “juvenile.” Kerry’s plan of incorporating allies into the War on Terror is then shown through the text messages which he narrates. The text messages are neatly aligned next to Kerry, as if to take on the form of a checklist. The use of a plan makes Kerry appear to be a mature, organized candidate with a concrete plan of action. With his plan Kerry emphasized the fact that he knows what to do in these situations and would take the job of President and war seriously.

In the three ads, “He’s lost, he’s desperate” (Kerry, 10/02/04), “Obligation” (Kerry, 10/26/04) and “Juvenile” (Kerry, 9/23/04) Kerry attempts to mold Bush’s leadership image. The goal of the Kerry campaign is to frame Bush as candidate who failed at the obligations of being president and as a result, has to lie to the American people and launch immature attack ads to compensate for his poor job performance. While tearing down his opponent, Kerry also works on establishing his own leadership image, as respectable and dignified.

Kerry as a Leader: The War Hero

Not many people knew who John Kerry was or what he stood for before the election 2004. As a senator from Massachusetts, the main goals of Kerry's ads are devoted to defining his image and letting voters know his qualifications for the job of president. Kerry wanted to express to voters that he had the qualities of a competent, military leader that would protect America from terrorists. Kerry did not release as many attack ads, rather he tried to convey a sense of optimism and the excitement of "a fresh start" to viewers. With the present war in Iraq and the threat of terrorism in the American mindset, Kerry's image ads centered on his military service in Vietnam and stressed his good character and leadership ability. Kerry's image ads are simplistic in nature, almost reminiscent of the early Eisenhower and Stevenson political ads, featuring Kerry sitting at his desk, addressing the audience. Even in the most simplistic image ads Kerry is able to draw upon the events of 9/11 to gain voter support.

The ad entitled "Commitment" (Kerry, 4/21/04) features a headshot of Kerry sitting in his office, directly addressing the audience with his message. Again, Kerry's essence is tied to that of the presidency, featuring him sitting in his office (which is similar in look to the Oval Office) while official music composed of drums and horns play in the background as he speaks. This music sets the tone of the ad, making Kerry's address seem like an official presidential speech. The themes in this ad are very explicit, relying mainly on text, narration and an American flag in the background to remind viewers of 9/11. While watching this ad, audience members feel as if Kerry is addressing them directly, almost like he is sitting down and having coffee with them. Through the

ad “Commitment” (4/21/04), Kerry attempts to convey to his audience his dedication to the issues of defending the country, health care and the duties of being president. In this ad, Kerry portrays himself as someone who is “committed” and concerned about the same issues that voters are. Viewers are first reminded of 9/11 when Kerry states “First we will keep this country safe and secure.” This point is reemphasized by bold, white, text spelling out “Keep America Safe and Secure” as Kerry says the words. After addressing other issues such as health care and education, he returns to the fact that his “commitment is to defend this country. I am John Kerry and I approved this message because together we can build a stronger America” (Kerry, 4/21/04). Using code words such as “commitment,” “defend” and “stronger America” Kerry implies that he is a worker, who will make America stronger and will prevent another terrorist attack. Even the phrase “and together we can build a stronger America” (Kerry, 4/21/04) sends the message to viewers that Kerry will work with the American people to improve the nation.

“Strength” is another image ad where Kerry uses 9/11 to show that Kerry is a good leader and someone that could be depended on to protect the country. Imagery, music and narration play key roles in delivering a persuasive message. The ad tries to evoke excitement and hope from its viewers. Viewers first hear a cheering crowd and then background music (made up of trumpets and drums) playing triumphantly as Kerry starts to speak. The music alone is enough to get the viewer’s attention, but it is Kerry’s voice that draws us in. Here Kerry is trying to emphasize his plans for Iraq and that he has the leadership qualities needed to track down terrorists. The cheering crowd and the music makes Kerry’s speech even more dynamic as he declares that he defended the

country as a young man and will defend it as president. Images of American flags, Kerry signs and Veterans for Kerry signs are seen in the audience and all convey the theme of patriotism. In using these images Kerry is trying to show that he is patriotic and that other people are excited by his plans for Iraq. By stressing that “we will be able to tell the terrorists we win and you lose” and that the “future doesn’t belong to fear, it belongs to freedom” (Kerry, 7/30/04) he is telling voters that if they support him, they will have a hopeful future. He comes across as a strong leader who will protect America. Many Americans were scared about the future of the country after the attacks of 9/11 and Kerry uses the promise of a better future to persuade voters to support him. Kerry heavily relies on his military background to promote his ability to defeat the terrorists in his advertising campaign.

Another strategy employed by Kerry to define himself as a leader was to have members of his family and people who were close to him speak on his behalf about his qualifications for the position. Although some of these ads do not even verbally mention 9/11 or the War on Terror, they emphasize Kerry’s strong military background and leadership experience. The ads entitled “Three Minutes” and “Rassman” both continue have the theme of Kerry being a war hero. To establish a sense of team work and party unity, Kerry had John Edwards deliver a rousing speech, praising Kerry as a leader. Ceremonial horn music emerges from the background, making Edwards’ speech sound like an official address by a vice president.

Highlighted in Edwards’ speech are the three Vietnam Veterans whose lives Kerry saved as their pictures appear on the screen along with a picture of them serving in

Vietnam with Kerry. This adds credibility to Kerry's image of being a leader in a time of war, because he actually had served in a war, making him qualified to direct the troops in Iraq. The point is further emphasized with Edwards claiming "Just spend three minutes with the men who served with him thirty years ago and (they) still stand by his side"(Kerry, 7/10/04). This implies that Kerry is admired and respected for his service in the military, portraying him as someone who is qualified to protect the country. As Edward's speech continues Kerry is shown shaking people's hands and saluting while walking among American flags conveying his strong sense of patriotism. Showing him among the crowd, shaking hands with everyday people shows Kerry as an approachable leader, who relates well and is touch with the American people.

The concept of the "war hero" was further emphasized in an ad featuring Lt. Rassman, one of the Vietnam Veterans Kerry served with and whose life Kerry saved. The ad begins by immediately attacking the credibility of the people who attacked Kerry's war record, as being "funded by Bush's big money supporters" (Kerry, 7/10/06), implying that Bush paid these people to lie about Kerry. Pictures of these individuals are shown but their faces are blurred by a blue and black haze. Dark colors are often associated with deceit or wrong-doing. By putting this haze over their picture it sends the message to viewers that something is untrustworthy about these individuals. The tone of the commercial changes as the audience hears from "someone who was there, the man whose life John Kerry saved" (Kerry, 7/10/06). Lt. Rassman is shown in full color, contrasting the blurred, to indicate his sincerity and then proceeds to tell his story. The blurred images are Bush supporters, indicating they are untrustworthy and dishonest.

Rassman tells his story of being “blown off the boat” in Vietnam and he “expected to be shot” until Kerry risked his life to save him by pulling him out of the river (Kerry, 7/10/04). Throughout Rassman’s story, images of skiff boats in Vietnam are shown to portray the danger Kerry faced. This ad appeals to the values of courage and heroism in the face of danger. In American culture we have long admired heroes, or people who have risked their lives for the sake of others. Through Rassman’s testimony, Kerry is trying to associate his image with those values. Other images such as a military report documenting Kerry’s service and the award of the Bronze Star are shown to indicate that Kerry was an exceptional soldier: a soldier who would be able to lead effectively in another war. Kerry also pulls at the heart strings of viewers, by sharing the fact that he “still has shrapnel in his legs from his wounds in Vietnam” (Kerry, 8/18/04) as a tactic designed to elicit further admiration for his service. The last image shown is a black and white picture of Kerry dressed in his decorated military uniform. This picture is old fashioned in style, and helps to associate Kerry with war heroes from the past that exemplified American military heroism. This admiration for American heroes was one quality that Kerry hoped would elect him as president.

Bush Defining Kerry as a Leader: The Waffler

Senator John Kerry was the target of much criticism in the Bush campaign ads. As the incumbent, Bush did not need to spend time defining his image or telling about who he was, so his image ads were devoted to negatively defining the image of his opponent, John Kerry. The Bush campaign ads aggressively attempt to deconstruct and

re-define Kerry's image to the nation through attack ads. Several of the attack ads try to tear down Kerry by associating him with the term "Waffler." This term implies that Kerry is not strong in his convictions and will not be able to take a clear position in the War on Terror. In the ad "Windsurfing" (Bush, 9/23/04) the Bush campaign uses humor to attack Kerry's waffling on issues. The image of Kerry windsurfing sarcastically conveys that Kerry will be a dangerous leader for the country. Kerry is shown windsurfing in swim trunks and wearing shades. The goofy expression on his face, combined with his attire, gives the impression that he is not a serious person or a person who could really take a stand on important issues like a leader should. The windsurfing and the popular waltz music acts as a metaphor for Kerry's waffling on issues and lack of a clear direction. The movement of the image further emphasizes the point by giving the effect that Kerry is surfing one way and then the other just, as he would on important issues. The music and text mimics the movement of the image by mocking Kerry's voting record through its cheery, carefree melody. By showing him at one angle and then the next, combined with text that appears on one side and then disappears to the beat of the music, sends the message that Kerry is not a firm or steady person in his beliefs and would be pushed to act by "whatever way the wind blows." The texts highlights the fact that Kerry "voted for the war and then against it" (Bush, 9/23/04) is an attempt to cause viewers who are both for and against the Iraq war to question and doubt Kerry as a leader they could trust by alluding to the fact that Kerry can be swayed to vote one way or the other. The ad comically plays upon a citizen's fear of bad leadership in a time of war.

Through this ad Bush defines Kerry as someone who is unstable and so weak that even the wind could blow him around.

This idea of Kerry “waffling on issues and being indecisive is carried over into other ads. Not only does the Bush campaign attempt to redefine Kerry’s image, but they communicate to viewers that Kerry is someone who “tries to be all things to all voters” and does so by “engaging in a level of doublespeak that makes most voters wince” (Bush, 4/21/04). Here Bush not only implies that Kerry can be swayed by other people but will actually change his persona to get elected. The Bush ad “Doublespeak” implies that Kerry is not trustworthy and is a liar because he never takes a firm stand on an issue and will vote a certain way just to appease a group of people or to benefit himself. Also, Bush further conveys that Kerry is not being truthful in telling who he truly is to voters. Using credible newspapers such as Kerry’s hometown paper, *The Boston Herald*, *The Washington Post*, *The Union Leader* and the non-partisan *National Journal*, this ad flashes headlines from those papers that criticize Kerry’s indecision on several issues. The voice over makes an emphasis on *The Boston Herald* newspaper as if to say, that even the state that Kerry is senator of, questions his leadership ability when it comes to making decisions. “Doublespeak” (Kerry, 4/21/04) only briefly mentions the war in Iraq, but does convey the idea that Kerry cannot make a decision about the war. Images such as helicopters and fighter jets immediately draw on a voter’s memory of the war. Kerry’s incompetence as a military leader is highlighted as the narrator notes that “his attempts to weave a thread connecting and justifying his positions are unconvincing” (Bush, 4/21/04). This ad claims that even if Kerry does make a decision, he still can not justify

them. The word “waffling” is shown in large red letters, driving home the point that Kerry is flaky and can not even explain his positions on issues.

The Bush campaign attempts to define Kerry as a weak leader that without a moments notice can change his mind on an issue or can potentially be swayed by other groups of people, such as foreign officials about the course of the war and thereby affecting the safety of Americans. Attributing code words, such as “waffling,” “liberal,” “unconvincing” and the phrase “all things to all people” helps Bush not only define to voters who Kerry is, but also helps to build up his own image as well. If Kerry is shown to be a weak, waffler, then it silently implies that Bush is the strong, steady leader full of conviction. In using these words to frame Kerry’s image, Bush is again, appealing to the public’s fears of a weak leader, who can possibly be untrustworthy. Strong leadership is an important quality that both Bush and Kerry try to convey through their political advertisements to gain the support of voters.

The Values We Hold Dear: Family, Safety, and the Future of America

After the September 11th terrorist attacks, Americans more than ever realized the value of family and having a safe, secure nation to protect those that they loved. Parents wanted to know that their children would be safe and have a future with the same freedoms they had. Business leaders and workers wanted to know that their businesses would survive so they could provide for themselves and their families. Everyone wanted a sense of security in America’s future and sought reassurance that America would rebuild to be a safe and secure nation. The campaign ads of both Bush and Kerry use the

themes of family and the future to relate to the American people and show that they share the same concerns and values.

The future is a common theme in both Bush and Kerry's ads. Each candidate tries to give the sense of optimism and hope to the American people. In his ad, "A Changing World" Bush, (6/10/04) tries to build solidarity among the American people by appealing to their common value of family. Once again, a child is used to signify the future and is seen opening a door to the outside world. Through the door images of racing bicyclists flash by and morph into an image of Osama Bin Laden, thus serving as a metaphor for an uncertain world. Through these images the narrator is able to convey that the world is changing, in ways that are both good and bad. Bush communicates to parents that their children's future is very unpredictable with the state of the world. Viewers become more alarmed as, with the beat of a war drum, the image of a child fades to a terrorist dressed in black and firing a gun while tanks roam the street. Through the images, the ad is predicting a possible future for America's youth and the world if something is not done.

Then, quickly, a change in mood, as if to show how quickly life changes- from a frightening and ominous mood, to a more hopeful mood, conveying a sense of optimism about the future. Images of smiling children and families playing together emphasize to viewers that "we depend more than ever on our values-family, faith, the freedom we celebrate" (Bush, 7/30/04) and thus we need solidarity within our country to fight the evil uncertainties of the world. In between the shots of smiling children playing with their parents, George Bush is seen with his arm around his wife, Laura Bush, while they stand

on the front porch of a country home. They are dressed in causal clothes to indicate that they are just like any other American family and share the same values.

The message of the ad is that “in today’s changing world, the answers aren’t always easy” and that “we need a sense of purpose, a vision for the future and the conviction to do what’s right” (Bush, 7/30/04). In other words, the freedoms that we have in America need to be protected even if it means going to war for the future of the country. Images of firefighters and a wife embracing her soldier husband attempt to spark admiration from the viewers, making them remember those who gave their lives on 9/11 and the soldiers who continue to give their lives fighting a War on Terror. The overall message of this ad is that we have a good country but we still need to fight to keep it that way in a world that is unpredictable and dangerous.

Bush’s ad “Safer, Stronger” (3/30/04) also conveys the idea of Americans triumphing over adversity. Using imagery, backed by sentimental piano music and sound effects, this advertisement tells a story about America overcoming desperate times under the Bush administration. In a way, this ad is a tribute to Bush’s efforts to rebuild America and keep the people of America safe. Bush’s voice is heard over the music as he is being sworn into office with one of his daughters and his wife by his side. White text starts the story with “January 2001: The Challenge,” and then listed the challenges Bush faced upon taking office, such as “a recession, a stock market in decline and a dot com boom gone bust”(Bush 3/03/04). Faces of concerned and frustrated Americans appear on the screen backed by the sounds of the stock market and the sounds of someone typing on a computer. According to this ad, Bush is saying that he took office

at a very difficult time for America. The situation only gets worse as viewers are taken back to September 11th through the images of fire fighters carrying a flag draped coffin amidst the ruins of the World Trade Center with the red flash of a police siren heard in the background. However, hope is seen through this despair with an America flag shown among the wreckage.

From here, this ad shows several images of people raising flags, conveying this sense that America, having gone through so many hard times, has become one big family. Bush is shown in the rubble of Ground Zero with fire fighters and construction workers- people who were looked to as the healers and re-builders after the attack. By associating his image with theirs, Bush is implying that he is the one who initiated the re-building of America and healed the nation.

The idea of America “turning the corner” is conveyed through the metaphor of families coming together and supporting the nation. Images of a father and daughter running together and of a young boy wearing a military hat with an American flag behind him, show families reconnecting with each other and young people taking pride in their country are all seen in this ad. Other images such as a glowing “open” sign in a store window and construction workers putting up buildings are all were used to indicate that prosperity has returned once again to America. Through this ad Bush is delivering the idea that Americans, despite all they have been through are now “safer, stronger” and more connected as nation than they were before Bush took office. The sense that American people have returned to their normal happy state is shown through a smiling mother and daughter with the peaceful sounds of nature in the background. This ad is

promoting Bush as having “steady leadership in times of change” (Bush, 3/03/04) and that with him as president, America would survive and become stronger and safer.

The Bush campaign not only promotes the idea of America becoming “safer and stronger” but the world as well. In the ad “Victory” Bush conveys the idea that America is winning the War on Terror and is making the world a safer place. Through the use of the Olympic Games, Bush reminds viewers of what he has done to make Iraq and Afghanistan freer nations and to claim that the world has become safer under his leadership. Sentimental music starts plays as a black and white shot of an Olympic stadium is seen. This represents the way the world was in 1972 with only 40 democracies and before this War on Terror began. A male narrator states that today there are 120 democracies in the world as the scene flashes from black and white to color showing a female swimmer ready to dive off the diving board in a race. This break from black and white to color attempts to show that the world has changed for the better. As the swimmer dives into the water and starts to do the butterfly stroke the narrator mentions how there will be two new free nations and the flags of Afghanistan and Iraq appear on the screen for a moment. The images of the flags communicate to viewers the hopeful idea that since this War on Terror began, Iraq and Afghanistan have become free democracies, even as this war raged during the election. The main message of this ad is that “with strength, resolve and courage, democracy will triumph over terror,” implying that the United States must never give up in its fight against terrorism.

The last image is of the female swimmer rising out of the water smiling with her fist clenched in victory. The swimmers journey across the pool in the Olympics is a

metaphor for how America will win the War on Terror. Just like an Olympian needs strength, resolve and courage to win a medal, so will America in winning the War on Terror. Also, the butterfly stroke is one of the hardest strokes in swimming and by showing the swimmer doing this stroke it implies that the War on Terror will be difficult to fight but not impossible. The last line of the advertisement “and hope will defeat hatred” is said just as a picture of President Bush is shown; implying that Bush is the hope America needs to defeat hatred and terror. Through the “never give up” philosophy of the Olympic Games this ad conveys the idea that Americans should not give up on Bush, in his pursuit against terrorism.

Bush also shows his sense of gratitude for the troops and determination in the War on Terror in the ad, “Whatever it takes” (Bush, 10/26/04). The tone of this ad implies that Bush will do “whatever it takes” to fight terror and support the troops in battle. Bush is pictured speaking from a podium, trying to empathize with the families of soldiers: he says that it was a hard decision for him to send the troops into battle and he is meeting with families who had lost loved ones. Shots of soldiers standing in the audience waving flags are shown, sending the message to viewers that the troops support and are behind Bush as a leader. A woman from the crowd is shown looking at Bush when he referenced the many “husbands and wives who received a folded flag” (Bush, 10/26/04). Bush’s speech hit its dramatic climax when he makes the promise that he would stop at nothing to defend Americans and their families. The black background fades behind Bush and in its place is a cheering crowd as Bush goes on to praise the American people for their sacrifices, saying that because of them the nation is defeating the terrorists and

are making America safer. This image symbolically showed the American people as behind Bush, supporting him in his efforts.

During the election, John Kerry also came forward with his vision of the future and his tribute to America's troops. In his ad, "Optimists" Kerry tries to come across as a positive candidate that will move "America in the right direction". Through this ad Kerry shares his notion that America is a strong nation, full of "can-do people." The images in this ad tell a narrative of hope. Although all the images in the ad conveyed "optimism" the first image of a young girl is what really set the tone for the commercial being "optimistic." Like several of the ads used in the 2004 election, children are used to symbolize the future. The smiling child in Kerry's ad implies optimism for a secure and happy future.

This idea of Americans being a "can-do" people is seen through the images of people working in factories, farms and in office board rooms. These images imply that America is moving forward and growing through its labor force and production. Kerry is sending the message to viewers that he will build a stronger homeland as president. 9/11 is referenced through the images of saluting veterans in uniform and showing an oil drill. The oil drill is shown with the text statement "Independence from Middle East oil" (Kerry, 6/01/04) implying that Kerry will move us away from depending on another country. The oil drill symbolizes America's dependency on foreigners for oil. The idea of moving away from depending on these foreigners for oil was appealing to the American people's sense of safety and economic well being. Kerry is telling viewers with this image that we should not depend on a country that is hostile to us and is

charging Americans high rates at the gas pump. The final theme conveyed in this ad is that Kerry wants to make America “more respected by the rest of the world” and develop “strong alliances” (Kerry, 6/01/04) with other nations. This sentiment is expressed through shots of Kerry shaking hands with a variety of different people, from different backgrounds and in different locations. Kerry is telling his audience that he relates well with people from all different backgrounds and will be a good diplomat for the country. By appearing as diplomatic, Kerry indicates that he has the skills to work with international allies in keeping America safe.

Kerry’s ad entitled “Heart” (5/03/04) is an image ad devoted to portraying him as good leader and a family man. Through the use of narrative, music and images, the ad serves as a biography of Kerry’s life, helping voters get to know him and highlighting his military service and personal character. From the very beginning of the ad, Kerry attempts to show viewers that although he comes from privilege; his background also includes a military background and a family that values public service. Images play a key role in this ad as a black and white picture of his dad in the Army Air Corps was shown followed by pictures of Kerry serving in Vietnam. Through pictures, Kerry is showing that his family has a long history of serving the country through military service. Even mentioning that he was born at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital indicates that from the very beginning, Kerry has been around those who served America.

Kerry establishes himself as intelligent by mentioning that he also went to Yale. Viewers see that Kerry comes from a family that values both service to country and education, values that many Americans try to teach their children. Kerry’s strategically

uses those who are closest to him to vouch for his character and experience for the job. His daughter, Vanessa, praises her father's service to the nation and emphasizes that her father would fight "for things that matter whether as a veteran, prosecutor, or senator." This notion of "fighting for things" establishes Kerry as someone who is determined and experienced enough to be president and strong enough to lead the country through a war. Kerry further shapes his image as a hopeful person, full of heart, to voters through his wife, Teresa Heinz-Kerry. While his wife talks, a black and white picture of them embracing is shown, indicating that Kerry is a loving person to his wife and family. Kerry validates his character to voters through his family. It is the Kerry campaign's hope that if viewers saw the people closest to Kerry speaking highly of him, then they would believe he is a good family man and shared the same love of family as they did. While his family is not objective, they help portray Kerry as trustworthy to viewers.

Also in this ad Kerry's crewmates from Vietnam describe him as a man who truly cares for others. Statements from his crewmates like "the decisions he made saved our lives" and "he risked his life to save mine" further helps to establish Kerry's image as a war hero. Their statements imply Kerry would risk his own life to save the country and who better than a war hero to defend the nation against terror?

The ad ends with another close up of Kerry telling how Americans are optimistic people and are "can-do-people" and that "we just need to believe in ourselves again." Here Kerry indirectly referenced September 11th. He is saying that even though we had our confidence as a nation shaken by 9/11, we still could rebuild the nation and that he would be the candidate who is most qualified to do this. Viewers are left with the ending

slogan of “A lifetime of service and strength, John Kerry for President” helping to further impress upon them that Kerry is both qualified and strong enough to be president and take on the War on Terror. The music, pictures, text messages, voice-overs, all make the argument that Kerry has enough military experience to lead the War on Terror and keep America safe but is also a man of compassion, who cares about this family. Safety and family are two things that Americans seemed to care about the most after the terrorist attacks. Knowing this, the Kerry campaign uses two of Kerry’s crewmates to show how he is willing to risk his life to save others and that he shares the common value of family with the rest of America.

Perhaps one of the most influential ads defining Kerry’s image as a protector or someone who cares about family is the one entitled “Ever Since” (Kerry, 10/19/04). This ad featured the testimonial of a woman whose husband was killed in September 11th and was a former Bush supporter. The images, music and testimonial all make arguments about why Kerry should be elected. The ad cuts back and forth from the image of her husband holding the child, to the woman talking and describing how “we are no safer than we were before with Bush” (Kerry, 10/19/04). In her testimonial she mentions that Bush did not even think the 9/11 Commission investigating the attacks was necessary, making Bush appear not to care about the victims of the attacks. The last image shown is the woman’s daughter and ends with the line “I want to look into my daughter’s eyes and know she is safe.”

Viewers watching this ad immediately feel sympathy for this woman and even a little enraged by Bush not wanting to investigate the attacks. This ad appeals to the

audience's fear of something happening to their children or anyone else they love. Many parents are worried about keeping their children safe after the attacks and Kerry uses the fear of another attack to motivate voters to support him. Also, viewers immediately feel for this woman because of the loss of her husband on 9/11 and the picture of a father holding his child represents the value of family, something that people do not want to lose.

"Heroes" (Kerry, 10/27/06) is Kerry's tribute ad to America's troops. This ad uses powerful imagery to convey the themes of gratitude and loyalty to the families of soldiers. This ad uses images to reference several values that Americans hold dear, such as family, strength and patriotism. As the voice over in the ad talks about the need to thank the families of the troops and "making a fresh start with a new president" (Kerry, 10/27/04) images of traditional American homes with American flags appear across the screen. The value of family is expressed through the images of a soldier standing next to his bride. The image of a tractor with an American flag moving through the fields also pays homage to America's roots. Music plays throughout the ad, swelling at points of emphasis. The themes of patriotism, strength and courage are conveyed through scenes of people raising the flag and then the image of an American eagle, America's symbol of strength, appearing on the screen. Over the eagle, text spells out the words "patriotism, strength and courage," summing up some of the core values of America. The ending of the ad conveys the theme of gratitude, with the flag appearing once again and the words "Thank You" spelled out over it. Through this ending message Kerry shows that even though he is skeptical of Bush's War in Iraq, he still respects the men and women who

fought in the military. Kerry makes a special point to pay respect to the troops, in order to show that he is not unpatriotic and is supportive of American efforts during hard times.

Patriotism is a common theme running through all of the ads in the 2004 election. Bush and Kerry constantly tried to convey that they fully support the American people and would defend American values and freedoms against the threat of terrorism. One of the main ways patriotism is represented in these ads is through the use of the American flag. The flag was a prevalent part of political campaigns in America. In Election 2004 the use of the flag and other patriotic symbols were prevalent in both Bush and Kerry's campaigns as a way to show respect and loyalty to the traditions of America. While the flag is a common symbol used by both campaigns there are some differences in the ways Kerry and Bush represented September 11th in their campaigns. The next chapter will offer concluding statements about September 11th and the War on Terror in the 2004 presidential election television advertising campaign.

Chapter V: Conclusions

This study has sought to articulate the legacy of September 11th, 2001 on Election 2004. Specifically I considered the question: how were the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror utilized in the presidential campaign ads of George W. Bush and John Kerry. This research analyzed what tactics were used to persuade voters that the security dangers in a post-9/11 world should dictate their choice for president. Several important conclusions emerged from this study: 1) Bush and Kerry's political ads used slick production techniques to deftly weave themes of September 11th into the campaign discourse; 2) the candidate's political ads placed strong emphasis on leadership as the central factor in presidential qualifications; 3) in light of the outcome of the election, the differences in the Bush and Kerry's ads provide some insight into what strategies of advertising might be successful and 4) the cultural memory of September 11th, and the ongoing War on Terror will continue to affect political discourse for the foreseeable future. This chapter will discuss these findings and then consider directions for further research.

Producing September 11th: Political Advertising Techniques

Every ad in the 2004 election was carefully crafted to touch the emotions of viewers through references to September 11th and the War on Terror. The Bush and Kerry campaigns effectively employed several techniques and strategies to convey these themes to viewers. Images such as children, wolves, weapons and soldiers all were used to send multiple messages to their viewers. For example, the image of the wolf served

the purpose of instilling fear in the audience and served as a metaphor for terrorism. Each image in the 2004 election indirectly conveyed more than one meaning to its audience and referenced the public's collective memories of the attacks. For example, the simple image of the wrecked Trade Towers or grieving children recalls memories of news footage of the terrorists attacks and reminds viewers of their need for protection from another attack. The candidates used imagery in their ads to set the overall theme for the ad and to convey a story to the audience. Images that would appear and morph into another image was an effective way for candidates to transmit messages to viewers without the use of dialogue.

Imagery did not act alone in getting the public to remember 9/11. Music in these ads set an overall mood or tone, and worked to reinforce viewers' feelings toward a certain image. For example, scary or menacing music was combined with images of war to make viewers afraid or worried about the possibility of another attack. Candidates also used music to associate a feeling about themselves or their opponent. Bush and Kerry often used triumphant sounding music with drums and strings to communicate their leadership abilities. Both Bush and Kerry use music to add dramatic emphasis to statements they make in their ads. In ads featuring the candidates addressing the audience in a speech, the music will swell on climatic phrases such as "whatever it takes" or "I will hunt down the terrorists" to reinforce to viewers the seriousness of the candidate's intent. Music also plays a role in less serious ads, such as in the Bush campaign's "Windsurfing," where the playful waltz perfectly coincides with the image of Kerry windsurfing for a comical effect.

In addition to music and images, techniques such as sound effects, voiceovers and on screen texts contributed to the impact of these ads. A bomb blast or the sounds of construction work helped to transport viewers to the scene, whether it was the explosions of September 11th, or the sounds of reconstructing Ground Zero. Combining sound effects with music was a way to reinforce the message the ad was trying to convey by drawing on the memories viewers had of events surrounding the 9/11 attacks. Voiceover and text also worked to reinforce political messages. In many of the ads, the brightly colored text spells out key points in a candidate's speech or in a news article. These textual reminders were visual cues that highlighted the candidates' point. Finally, voiceover contributed to the mood or feeling of the ads. For example, a cautionary voiceover would warn viewers about a threat, almost like a mother would warn her child about danger and would be used to frighten viewers into believing a certain way about a candidate's opponent. Skeptical voiceovers would try to pressure viewers to second guess their feelings about a candidate or an issue by hinting that there was information they were not privy to that may hurt them.

Color also played an important role in transmitting messages to viewer. Color is culturally tied to certain meanings, and was used to relay certain feelings about the attacks or the War on Terror. Certain colors were combined with words or images to convey certain moods. For example, putting the word "war" in red text conveys seriousness and attempted to draw anger out of its audience members. Text and color were often combined to draw attention to a candidate's message and to draw the audiences' attention into the ad. Bright colors would immediately jump out at viewers

and draw their attention to the ad. The candidates also used colors to either help shape their opponent's image or to instill fear in their viewers about another terrorist attack. Both Bush and Kerry used light colors and red, white and blue to attribute certain qualities such as honesty, hope and optimism to themselves, while using dark colors to portray their opponent as being dishonest and dangerous. Color was an easy but effective way for candidates to convey a mood or message to the audience because of the strong cultural meanings and feelings associated with each color. By combining several visual and aural techniques, these ads referenced the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror to develop arguments for why a certain candidate should be elected.

The themes of September 11th and the War on Terror were a prevalent part of the ads in this election. As mentioned earlier in the study, twenty-four out of thirty-four ads were selected for their use of the themes of the War on Terror and September 11th. The high frequency of these themes seen in the ads indicate that 9/11 and the War on Terror were used as major persuasive techniques in the 2004 election. These themes were the main focal points of many of these ads, while other ads indirectly referenced it through techniques such as symbols or music. By combining certain elements in ads, such as color, image, and voice, advertisers were able to produce September 11th in powerful ways that appealed the collective memory of the audience. Within a thirty-second timeframes, elements such as color, image and music were able to pull the memories and feelings of a tragic event from viewers and force them to remember it.

Leadership in the 2004 Election: A Fresh Start or a Steady Hand

The themes of September 11th and the War on Terror are primarily used by both Bush and Kerry to define themselves as leaders. As part of this, these themes were also referenced to attack the image of their opponent by causing viewers to doubt their leadership abilities. Furthermore, the themes were employed by the candidates to convey to voters their sense of the future for America and their plans for the growth of America. Bush largely used 9/11 to show how the nation came together under his leadership after the attacks, establishing himself as a leader that could hold a country together, even after a tragic event. Ads like “Safer, Stronger,” and “First Choice,” all portrayed Bush as a leader who triumphed over adversity. Through these ads, Bush told his audience that even through hard economic times, a terrorist attack, and a war, Bush has in fact, improved America by making it “safe and stronger.” By associating himself with construction workers and fire fighters, Bush reminded viewers of that morning when grabbed a megaphone at Ground Zero and vowed to “get the people who knocked over these buildings.” He also used the theme of the war to justify why he got America into war. Bush had an ongoing theme in his ads that fighting this war was not only a noble thing to do but the right thing to do. Through these themes, Bush tried to convey that he was the type of leader that would never give up when times were hard and could overcome adversity.

Another strategic element in Bush’s ads was to show him as a leader that people could identify with and trust. Bush tried to accomplish this with images of himself and his wife Laura, dressed in casual clothes by a country house. Here, Bush was trying to

accomplish two things: to identify with the average middle class America and to distinguish his own image from that of John Kerry's image as a rich, privileged New Englander. Identifying with voters was an important part of how Bush defined himself as a leader, because people wanted a leader that they could trust and would more than likely trust a leader that they could identify with. The idea of the benevolent leader was also seen in the Bush's ad, "Whatever it takes." Here, Bush tried to convey the concept that he was a compassionate man, who cared enough about the troops and the country, to do whatever it took to win the war. In this ad he attempted to reach out to American families and communicate that he cared about their sons and daughters and he would stop at nothing to protect this cherished value in America.

Bush also used 9/11 and the War on Terror to attack Kerry's leadership skills and define him as a "waffler." Bush portrayed Kerry's erratic and misguided voting record as a danger to the country. He wanted people to fear for their safety with Kerry in control. Ads such as "Global Test" and "Windsurfing" reference 9/11 to make their viewer nervous about how Kerry would handle the war by casting doubt on the plan he conveyed in his ads.

Bush drew on the theme of 9/11 to convey that Kerry would not be able to make the tough decisions required of the leader of the free world, and attacked Kerry's plan to build international alliances as a waste of time and a risk by conferring with the rest of the world, Kerry would not make the best decisions about defending America. Kerry defined his personal image through his leadership experience and tried to associate the concept of "a fresh start" with his campaign. Unlike Bush, Kerry stressed his military

and educational back ground as qualifications for being elected. In his ads, Kerry made sure that viewers knew that he went to Yale and fought in the Vietnam War. I feel in some ways that Kerry was trying to align with John F. Kennedy, as someone from a wealthy background but who believed in service to country. Bush, on the other hand, did not even mention that he also went to Yale and served in the military. In fact, you would never guess that Bush was the son of a former president from the way he portrayed his image in his ads.

Kerry used 9/11 to convey the concept of “a fresh start” and a new direction in his ads. Kerry really tried to stress optimism in his campaign and get viewers excited about the idea of a new leader that would bring about needed change. By focusing on his service in Vietnam, Kerry implied through his ads that since he was a war hero in Vietnam, he would be the most qualified candidate for the job, because he has actually served in a war and has the know-how to direct the troops. He also incorporated the themes of September 11th and the War on Terror to portray himself as a leader who was courageous and determined, and had a plan to “track down the terrorists.” Several of Kerry’s ads features him talking about a plan that involves allies and that will make America “more respected in the world.” Here Kerry uses 9/11 to imply that since Bush has been in office, America was no longer a respectable citizen in the world community because of Bush’s poor leadership. To distinguish his leadership image from Bush’s, Kerry associated Bush with the phrase “more of the same” which implied that more casualties and hard times would come in Iraq and in the country if Bush remained

president. He also used the war to cite facts about Bush's leadership misjudgments in Iraq, to convey the idea that it was Bush that was the danger to the country.

Kerry also referenced 9/11 to accuse Bush of being immature by the attack ads in his campaign and tried to define Bush as someone who was irresponsible in handling the War on Terror. Kerry shamed Bush several times, for his childishness, amidst the suffering of so many American citizens. In some of his ads, Kerry communicated to viewers that he believed in America and that although there had been some hard times, he would be the one to put America on the right track again. Kerry broadcast a tribute ad to express his gratitude to the troops. He used 9/11 to express thanks for all they had done and sacrificed, further helping him to distinguish that he was a man who truly respects the soldiers and their families, even though he felt that the war effort was headed in the wrong direction. Bush, on the other hand, related a sense of accomplishment to viewers through 9/11. It was interesting to note that both Bush and Kerry actually tried to convey a sense of optimism by using 9/11. Through some of his ads, Kerry communicates to viewers that he believes in America and that although there had been some hard times, he would be the one to put America on the right track again. Like Bush, Kerry also expressed his gratitude to the troops, through a tribute ad. Kerry used 9/11 to express thanks for all they had done and sacrificed, further helping him to distinguish that he was a man who truly respected the soldiers and their families.

Leadership was a major theme of importance in the 2004 election. Viewers wanted a leader who was strong and could guarantee protection from another terrorist attack. The American people wanted to know that their leader would aggressively defend

their way of life and compared Bush and Kerry for these qualities. They also wanted someone who they could identify with and that shared the same values as they did. Knowing this, Bush and Kerry infused their ads with references to their leadership qualifications. Although both candidates' goals were the same; to appear as a strong leader, there were some differences in their overall campaign strategies.

Political Strategy and Effectiveness of the Bush and Kerry Campaigns

While both Bush and Kerry used a variety of techniques to convey themes of September 11th and the War on Terror to viewers, there were some differences in their overall campaign ad strategies that allow for speculation as to why Bush's ads helped him win the election. One of the main reasons that I feel Bush was able to win the election was because he ran more negative ads, which appealed to voters' fears of physical harm to themselves and their families. More attack oriented in nature, Bush's ads allowed him to negatively define Kerry's image and associate negative feelings toward him. From the earlier literature review, it was found that negative ads were more memorable than positive ads. Perhaps, Bush's negative messages were more memorable to viewers, helping him win the election. As the incumbent, Bush's advertising campaign had an advantage over Kerry's; Bush did not have to spend ad time promoting his image to America. People already knew who Bush was from his first term, so Bush's ads focused on casting doubt on Kerry's leadership in the face of a war. In ads such as "Wolves," and "A Changing World," Bush warned his audience that the world was a dangerous place, where terrorists lurked at every corner. With this, Bush called for solidarity from the

American people and for them to hold tight to their values and faith in the face of adversity. However, his ads suggest that part of this solidarity included re-electing him as president, because choosing a new president would be like breaking the bond of solidarity that formed after the 9/11 attacks.

Bush's ads used more imagery and special effects than Kerry's, having one object quickly morph into another. For example, Bush combined images of war, such as a tank or sniper with softer images of children to give the audience the fearful sense that the future was in jeopardy. The quick moving images were eye catching and immediately hold a viewer's attention. Bush's ads rarely had him speaking or delivering a speech, rather they showed images of him with his wife or fire fighters and had the narration convey his message to the audience. This idea of the "log cabin campaign" was largely employed by the Bush campaign as he tried to appeal to the values and the fears of the average American through his personal appearance and the images he placed in his ads. Concepts such as "faith," "family," and coming together in the nation were common messages in his ads and effectively associated Bush with that of the average American.

Senator John Kerry took a different approach in his use of the 9/11 attacks. His ads are more simplistic in nature, mainly featuring him addressing the audience as if he were having a conversation with them. Many of these testimonials featured him in an office setting, which was designed to evoke his presidential qualities. In these testimonial ads, Kerry tried to come across as the candidate who was honest and straightforward with the public. He also tried to associate a feeling of hope and competence with his image and toward this end, he did not release nearly as many attack

as ads as Bush did. Kerry worked to define his image as a war hero and a man of action. He frequently referenced the veterans he fought with in the Vietnam War and even had his wife and daughter speak for him. While this was effective, viewers were not familiar with Kerry's family or the veterans, making their testimonials not as compelling as that of the well-known Senator John McCain who stumped for Bush in an ad. Kerry could have used public figures more familiar to the public to speak on his behalf. As mentioned earlier, Bush and Kerry both highlighted different personal qualities in their campaigns. While the focal point of many of Kerry's ads was his military service, Bush did not even mention his military record or the fact that he went to Yale or came from privilege. I feel that in some ways, that by mentioning his background and education, Kerry could have actually distanced himself from viewers because not many average Americans come from privilege or attend Yale. Bush's failure to mention his background actually worked for him because it made him appear to be like the "average American." Perhaps if Kerry had spent more time attacking Bush's image and tried to appeal more to the common person, voters might have been able to identify with Kerry more and would have voted for him.

Advertising strategy was a key element in the 2004 election. Both Bush and Kerry tried different ways of reaching viewers with their message. However, it appears that Bush's ads did a better job of resonating the feelings associated with September 11th and using them to gain vote. I feel that Bush's strategy of identifying with the American people and his use of attack ads made them more memorable in the minds of viewer, helping him win the election. While Kerry did try to relate with the average middle class

American, by shaking hands with Veterans and workers, he also distinguished himself from them as well, through his background and military service. Although Kerry's testimonials did convey that he would be a competent leader and had a plan of action, they were not as memorable because they did not use as many advertising techniques in them, such as imagery or fear appeals.

The Aftermath of 9/11: Will we ever be able to escape it?

September 11th has forever changed the political landscape of America. In 2004 voters for the first time, voted with their safety and livelihood in mind. However, 9/11 did not just change the way Americans voted in 2004, but changed how they saw the rest of the world. Now terrorism is a real fear for Americans to live with. Sadly, the events of September 11th will more than likely echo in the 2008 election, as sadly terrorism will most likely still be prevalent in the world. Since Bush will have finished his second term, election 2008 will feature new Republican and Democratic candidates. In this election, it is possible the Republican candidate might align themselves with Bush, and preach that America should "stay the course" in Iraq and in the War on Terror to build party unity. It should be the goal of the Democratic Party to find a strong candidate who can point out the number of American lives lost in this war and convince the American people to put an end to the war by choosing a new party to run the country. More over, the terrorist attacks have made fear tactics more appealing to voters who still feel shaken and less secure about their families and their future.

Future Inquires

Although I have thoroughly analyzed these ads for how September 11th and the War on Terror is used in them, I do acknowledge these are some limitations to my study. First of all, The Living Room Candidate does not feature all the ads developed by the Bush and Kerry campaigns during the election. This website selected the ads that they thought reflected the most pertinent issues of the election. Also, it would have been better if I could have shown the ads to other groups of people for their feedback on the ads. While I informally did have a few groups of people view the ads, I was the one who made the decisions on how the themes were conveyed in the ads.

This study opens up the possibility for several future studies on 9/11 influence on the political landscape. One possible study would be to view all the ads developed by Bush and Kerry for how 9/11 was used in them and show them to focus groups for feedback. Other investigations could examine the how the “shadow campaigns” or special interest groups used September 11th to support their candidate for president. However, to truly see if 9/11 has had a lasting impact on American politics, a study should focus on the political ads of the 2008 election. If September 11th continues to be referenced in this election, then we will know that 9/11 has truly changed our political landscape.

Advertising and its relationship to politics is important to take into consideration. Viewers need to be aware of how ad campaigns can take a certain event, like 9/11 and use it to promote a candidate. I think that we all need to take time to analyze exactly why and how ads are able to have a persuasive effect on us. Thinking back to the day that I

first saw the political ad that reminded me of a horror movie, I realize that had I not taken the time to analyze my feelings after seeing the ad, my decision on who to vote for would have been a lot harder. Due to the information in the ad, I would have kept questioning my choice and would have felt a lot more apprehensive about the candidate that I did vote for. Doing this study made me realize how every single element in an ad is designed to persuade and send a message. I also realize the importance of questioning ads and not basing my decision on who to vote for around an ad that appeals to my fears.

After doing this study I encourage Americans during election time to take a step back from the political ads they see on television to question why a particular ad had an effect on them. If we do not take the time to question these things, we may not be electing the candidate that was the most qualified for the job, but the candidate who ran the most persuasive advertising campaign. Now as I sit down to watch the 2006 California gubernatorial ads, I will not be taken off guard by emotional appeals in their ads and I will always, always, take the time to question the claims made in political ads that I see on television because a vote is too valuable to base around fear alone.

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Appendix

Bush Ads

- *Safer, Stronger*: Bush talking about making American a stronger and safer nation
- *Doublespeak* : Bush is attacking Kerry about not taking a strong position on issues, including the war in Iraq
- *Weapons*: Bush is criticizing Kerry's voting record on national security
- *Pessimism*: Bush is talking about Kerry's negative attitude about the country after the war
- *First Choice*: Senator John McCain is praising Bush for his leadership qualities
- *Changing World*: This ad focuses on how the world is changing since September 11th and how the country needs a sense of purpose
- *Victory*: This ad talks about how freedom and democracy is spreading and beating the terrorist regimes
- *Windsurfing*: Bush is criticizing Kerry's "flip flopping" on issues
- *Global Test*: Bush is attacking Kerry's plan of involving other countries in the war against terror
- *Pessimism*: Bush is telling how America has made great strides since 9/11 and criticizes Kerry for his negative attitude toward America.
- *Risk*: Bush is attacking Kerry's voting records on war and national security
- *Wolves*: Using the wolves as a symbol of terrorism, this ads criticizes Kerry and the liberals for their weak stance on national defense
- *Whatever it takes*: This ad has Bush praising the soldiers who have fought in Iraq and mentions how he will do anything to protect America

Kerry Ads

- *Commitment*: Kerry is talking about the commitment to the issues of healthcare and defending America, if he was elected president
- *Risk*: Kerry is talking about what he would do to defend American and win the War on Terror
- *Optimists*: Kerry is mentioning about building a stronger America while reaching out to the rest of the world
- *Three Minutes*: John Edwards is talking about Kerry's qualifications for keeping America safe and praising Kerry's leadership qualities.
- *Strength*: Kerry is talking about how he defended the country in the military and would defend the country as president
- *Defend America*: Kerry is telling the audience how he plans to defend America
- *Juvenile*: Kerry is criticizing Bush's attack ad against him and points out how it is childish of him to produce an ad like that while a war was going on
- *He's Lost, He's Desperate*: Kerry is defending himself against Bush's accusations and points out Bush's short comings

- *Ever Since*: A widow is talking about why she is voting for Kerry and how our country is not safe under the rule of Bush
- *Obligation*: Kerry is talking about responsibilities of the Commander in Chief and how Bush is failing at them
- *Heroes*: Kerry is praising the troops fighting the War on Terror