

EXAMINING THE USE OF FEAR APPEALS IN POLITICAL SPOTS DURING THE 2004
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR CAMPAIGN
SUPPORTERS

By

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To the memory of my grandmothers Reynalda Farías Farías and Benita Urriste Jiménez, both of whose thirst for knowledge, and inquisitive minds showed others the value of an education.

En memoria de mis abuelitas Reynalda Farías Farías y Benita Urriste Jiménez quienes a través de sus esfuerzos personales les enseñaron a las siguientes generaciones el valor de la educación.

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By

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My study attempted to analyze the nature of fear appeals used in political advertisements. Building upon past research in general, and political advertising, the study explored the types and levels of fear appeals used most commonly in political advertisements, what issues the appeals related to, and whether they related more to issue, or image based advertisements. A content analysis of the verbal and nonverbal components of videostyle revealed a significantly greater use of economic fear appeals in general, and more economic appeals in issue ads than image ads.

Because of the small sample size generalization outside of the 2004 Presidential elections is not possible. Results suggest that further research is necessary. There were not enough data to refute the hypothesis, which suggested that low fear appeal levels would be used most in the 2004 Presidential election campaign advertisements. Many issues present in the political advertisements paralleled the issues voters considered important when casting their votes in the 2004 elections.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A brief history of political advertisements. The introduction of the first television sets to American homes gave birth to a whole new era of communication. Visual imagery suddenly became a more important part of entertainment, and politics. Where previously families would sit around the radio and listen to their favorite shows, suddenly they could actually see them as many were transformed from a radio format to a format more suitable for television. By 1951 there were over 1.5 million television sets in the United States. Within that decade that number grew to around 19 million. This indicated that the television could be used to reach the masses. By 1952 Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first presidential candidate to integrate advertising into his campaign.

By the end of his campaign, Eisenhower had spent \$1 million on advertising (McNair, 1999). Since then politicians have devoted increasingly more campaign money to political advertisements, or “spots.” In 2004, the candidates, their parties, and political action committee (PAC) groups spent \$620 million dollars. Compared to just the previous presidential campaign there was a 235% increase in spending (Devlin, 2005).

Since the birth of presidential political advertisements in 1952, candidates have always used negative advertising to increase their own likeability and reduce the likeability of their opponents. However, it was not until 1964 and the airing of the spot titled “Daisy Girl” that strong words and visual images were used to invoke fear in the electorate. The ad opens in black and white with a little girl picking the petals off of a daisy and counting them. When she reaches number nine, her voice fades out as an ominous voiceover picks up where she left off but instead begins to count down. As the countdown continues, the little girl looks up to the sky as the camera continues to close in on the little girl’s face. When the countdown is near one, the camera

closes in on her eye blocking out all light. At zero, a massive explosion occurs and the voiceover says, “These are the stakes, to make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We- must either love each other, or we must die.” A different voice then says, “Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The Stakes are too high for you to stay home.”

In fact, the reaction to the Daisy Girl spot was so strong that it aired only once on television during the campaign, although it was also covered by the television news media and aired in its entirety during different broadcast segments. Later advertisement spots that have been notorious for inspiring emotional, usually fearful responses are ‘The Bear in the Woods’ used by Reagan in his 1984 bid for the Presidency against Mondale, and ‘Revolving Door’ used by political action committees in support of Bush in 1988 against Dukakis. These three ad spots are generally regarded as ads that have a high recall level because of their emotional appeal. Additionally these ads can be considered to be utilizing fear appeals to evoke emotional responses from viewers (Kaid, Johnston, 2001). There is little research on the various types of fear appeals that are used in political spots.

Fear appeals have been studied extensively for over half a century since the birth of propaganda and propaganda theories (Perloff, 2003). Perloff, Witte, Meyer, & Martell (2001) best define fear as “an internal emotional reaction composed of psychological and physiological dimensions that may be aroused when a serious and personally relevant threat is perceived” (p. 188). A fear appeal defined by Perloff (2003) is a “persuasive communication that tries to scare people into changing their attitudes by conjuring up negative consequences that will occur if they do not comply with the message recommendations” (p. 188).

The present study will examine fear appeals in presidential advertising spots, specifically looking for their presence using content analysis and coding for the types of fear appeals used.

The media to be content analyzed will be a sample of political advertisements from the 2004 Presidential election campaign. This media format was examined to see whether there was a significant difference in the level of fear appeals used by the candidates, their campaigns, and third party political advertisement providers during the 2004 Presidential campaign. The bulk of the research done on political advertisements has focused on campaign attempts to attract the mainstream public through political advertisement spots. Fear appeals in advertisements have often been associated with negative advertisements (Kaid, Johnston, 2001; Kaid, 2004), however no formal study was done on the topic to make a distinction between negative advertisements and fear appeals.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have been conducting research on political campaigns since Lazarsfeld's first studies and likewise have been conducting research on fear appeals for much longer (Baran & Davis, 2003). There is a vast body of literature that examines various aspects of political spots. Despite this, there has been little to no research where these two areas of study intersect. The specific study of fear appeals in political advertising has generally been limited to the use of Videostyle. The most extensive work on the topic is the book *Videostyle in Presidential Campaigns*, which reports the presence of fear appeals in presidential ads since 1964. Videostyle, however, has only noted the presence or absence of fear appeals in advertisements and has not focused on the nature or level of the fear appeal. The present study intends to address this gap in the literature.

Theoretical Approaches

The nature of this study requires the examination of persuasion theories specifically related to fear appeals used in advertising and political communication theories. The theories most relevant to the present study are traditionally used in health communications, social marketing, and political communication. A basic premise of the effective use of fear appeals in advertising suggests that a fear appeal must elicit some type of emotional response in order for a behavioral change to occur (LaTour & Nataraajan, 1993). Most of the body of literature dealing with fear appeals assumes that fear appeals deal with peripheral cognitive processes. Lazarus (1970) himself stated that emotions were associated with the viscera (Rogers, 1975).

Theories and Model Constructs of Fear Appeals

According to Perloff, Witte, Meyer, & Martell (2001) fear appeals are best defined as "an internal emotional reaction composed of psychological and physiological dimensions that may

be aroused when a serious and personally relevant threat is perceived.” (p. 188). A fear appeal defined by Perloff (2003) is a “persuasive communication that tries to scare people into changing their attitudes by conjuring up negative consequences that will occur if they do not comply with the message recommendations.”(p. 188). Several theories and models that will be discussed in the following pages deal precisely with the problem of attempting to identify what aspects of fear appeals are effective. Fear appeals have been used extensively in advertising to the general public, they have been used the most in the area of social marketing (Arthur & Queter, 2004). Though there has been an extensive use of fear appeals, their effects have been contested in advertising research where some studies show positive effects of fear appeal advertising, others find negative effects, or no effects (Arthur & Queter, 2004; Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Bennet, 1996; Hovland, et al., 1953; Henthorne, LaTour & Natarajan, 1993; Janis & Feshbach, 1954; Keller & Block, 1996; LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997; LaTour, Snipes & Bliss, 1996; LaTour & Tanner, 2003; Quinne et al. 1992; Ray & Wilkie, 1970).

Extensions of the Drive Reduction Model

One of the first studies conducted on fear appeals showed that medium level fear appeal messages were more effective than high or low levels of fear appeals messages about the consequences of dental hygiene (Janis & Feshbach, 1954, in Ray & Wilkie, 1970). Janis and Feshbach’s research suggested a curvilinear model where a weak threat will not attract the attention desired and a strong threat will be avoided (Arthur & Queter, 2004). This model was used and replicated by others (Henthorne, LaTour & Natarajan, 1993; Keller & Block, 1996; Quinn, Meenaghan, & Brannick, 1992; Ray & Wilkie, 1970). Janis (p. 173, 1967), according to Rogers (1975; p. 105) has combined on different occasions two of the three variables that lead to differing levels and kinds of fear appeals, which may exclude the possibility that the variables act independently of each other in regards to the fear appeals.

An article by Ruiters, Abraham, and Kok (2001) defines specifically what a fear appeal is and gives a comprehensive look at how fear appeals have been used and interpreted throughout the years in numerous studies done by seminal authors in the field of persuasion. As stated by Ruiters, et al. (1983), fear appeals provide the public with a threat that is designed to arouse fear, and a method of combating, or countering the threatening scenario (p. 614). The Drive Reduction Model created by Carl Hovland and his colleagues (1953) is discussed in some detail, as well as the extensions of the model created by Janis (1967) and McGuire (1968, 1969). The Drive Reduction Model portrayed fear as a behavior that may reduce the drive or motivation of a person (Ruiters, et al., 2001). The theory proposed that low levels of fear arousal increased the acceptance of the message when the message prompted a mental rehearsal of the recommendation given to offset the induced fear, while high levels of fear may fail to prompt change because the rehearsal of the recommendations given may be insufficient to reduce fear (p. 615). According to Ruiters et al. (1983), Janis (1967) and McGuire (1968, 1969) drew upon learning theory and predicted that moderate levels of fear arousal achieved maximum persuasion, while low levels of fear obtained moderate results; although Ruiters, et al. state that empirical evidence for the drive reduction model is weak (p. 615). The point of this in-depth analysis of fear appeals was to suggest that fear appeals have less to do with the “adoption of self-protective behavior,” and that the advice given to preserve oneself is actually the cause of changing behavior (Ruiters, et al., 2001).

Protection Motivation Theory

Rogers (1975) proposes that instead of the traditional models which state that behavioral change is caused by a fear appeal, the attitude change is not a result of an emotional state of fear, and is instead a result of "protective motivation aroused by cognitive processes." This cognitive process occurs when the person (or animal) has analyzed the likelihood that a certain event will

occur, and has chosen to adhere or not to the recommended response in hopes of reducing the discomfort. Rogers called this the Protection Motivation Model or PMM.

PMM moves fear from peripheral cognitive processes to central cognitive processes. Instead of "escaping a state of fear" the Protection Motivation theory emphasizes the fact that a person (or animal) is avoiding an unpleasurable event. Using this theory attention is refocused back onto environmental stimulations; the components of a fear appeal (Rogers, 1975). In other words, instead of trying to measure attitudinal effects of fear, we try to deconstruct fear appeals. This theoretical model suggests that when dealing with a fear message, cognitive processes are more important than peripheral activity, which is usually associated with emotional arousal (Arthur & Queter, 2004). The other approach discussed by Rogers (p. 105) is the cognitive approach, which he and Leventhal (1970) contributed to. Rogers suggests the Protection Motivation Theory which stipulates that protection motivation stems from the cognitive appraisal of an event whose result is perceived to be negative, its likeliness to occur, and the belief that the event can be prevented by the coping response (p. 99).

Parallel Response Theory

Leventhal (1970) suggests the Parallel Response Model (Rogers, 1975, p. 109). The Parallel Response Model incorporates two independent variables he names "danger control" and "fear control" (p. 108), which are variables that are used in later models to expand on the existing literature on fear appeals. The difference between the Parallel Response Model, the Protection Motivation Theory, and later research is that the Parallel Response Model and the Protection Motivation Theory focus primarily on threat perception and less on fear arousal (Ruiter, Abraham, & Kok, 2001). Rogers distinguishes his theory from Levanthal's by pointing out that Levanthal refers frequently to the stimuli that cause fear but does not elaborate on what they are or how they affect either of his processes. Both the Parallel Process Model and the

Protection Motivation Model were at least initially developed post hoc, and are perhaps theories that were shaped by the data, as Rogers openly admits (1975).

The Fear Driven Model and Thayer Arousal Model

LaTour and Zahra discuss whether fear appeals should be used when discussing the strategizing that occurs in advertising (1989). Three models that incorporate fear are defined and discussed. The Fear Driven Model is defined by LaTour and Zahra (1989):

having fear appeals depend on the perceptions people develop concerning the extent of the pending danger and their evaluation of its perceived effect. It functions where a danger leads to an emotional response. The response then causes some tension and then the presentation of a recommended solution. The recommended solution must be equal to the fear induced otherwise the recommended solution may go unheeded because the person ignores it all together, in which case the danger may occur. (p. 63)

The other model, the Parallel Response Model, has two forces acting simultaneously in response to a fear, danger control and fear control, both of which were mentioned previously (p. 64). The Thayer Arousal Model suggests that arousal occurs with the interaction of a “continuum ranging from an energized feeling to feeling of fatigue” with “a dimension that ranges from inner tension to a feeling of calm.” The energy continuum is associated with positive cognitions and the tension continuum is associated with negative cognitions. These continuums vary in people so an ad can evoke tension in some people and energy in others (p. 64). When dealing in the realm of advertising, despite the vast amount of research done on the use of fear appeals in advertising, the results seem to be widely varied, although they generally show that the use of strong fear appeals do not seem to have positive persuasive effects.

Extended Parallel Process Model

Kim Witte’s Extended Parallel Process Model (1992) is a frequently cited model in fear appeal literature. In recent versions of the model she discusses the need to take into consideration other aspects of messages aside from the fear aspect in order to understand how they affect

attitudes and attitude change (Perloff, 2003). Accordingly, Witte's theory states that there are two components of a fear-arousing message, threat and efficacy information (Perloff, p. 191).

In her study, Witte (1992) examines the applicability of the Extended Parallel Model in the realm of fear appeals. The EPPM model is found to be for the most part consistent with Witte's findings. As stated in previous studies, Witte finds that danger control processes are predominantly cognitive processes. Witte also found that when dealing with a danger control process, people were more willing to avert the threat and implement suggested plans of action (p. 129). Results also showed that fear as an emotion was not directly related to message acceptance, further reinforcing the assumption that danger control processes were primarily cognitive (p. 129). Also consistent with EPPM were Witte's findings on fear control processes. These she found to be primarily emotional processes. The results suggested that the participants engaging in this process were too busy controlling their fear to think about the methods of prevention given by the fear message. The more defensive avoidance and message aversion occurred the less frightened the respondents became of AIDS (p. 130). Accordingly, participants fulfilled the function of fear control. One of the shortcomings of the study seems to be the small size of her manipulation and confound check. This study is particularly important because it is taking a problem that is widely known and testing people's perception of the issue itself and of the methods used to counter the threat (which would be to acquire AIDS). The EPPM perspective is one to bear in mind when considering a theoretical framework for the present study.

Fear Appeal Levels

A study done by Janis and Feshbach in 1954 examined the responses of high school students to a 15 minute slide presentation on the consequences of improper dental hygiene using strong, moderate and mild fear appeals as well as a control. Janis and Feshbach found that stronger fear appeals lessened the likelihood that the recommended steps be taken to guard

against the effects of improper dental hygiene (Janis & Feshbach, 1954). Niles (1964), found the same effect in his study of participant's perceived vulnerability to lung cancer. A more recent finding shows that fear appeals in an advertisement do not result in negative responses from the respondents (Maciejewski, 2004).

Insko et al. (1965), on the other hand, found high fear appeal advertisement messages to be more effective against smoking among 7th graders because the high fear appeal was an "it can happen to you" discussion along with a graphic depiction in color of cancerous body parts along with suggestions to avoid smoking. The low fear appeal mentioned the smoking lung-cancer link but this was discussed analytically and there were only black and white slides of the diseased tissue as opposed to full color slides used in the high fear appeal. Similarly, Brooker (1981) found that mild forms of humor in advertisements about dental hygiene and flu vaccines were more persuasive than mild forms of fear appeals. The finding was a result of a negative effect the fear appeals had compared to a positive effect in the humor appeal ads (Brooker, 1981). He uses the fear-drive paradigm (Janis, 1967) and the Parallel Response Model (Leventhal, 1971) to suggest that greater levels of a fear appeal message would further increase the negative effect, although it is possible for a moderate fear appeal to result in a positive effect (Brooker, 1981). LaTour & Rotfeld (1997) and Bennett (1996) both found that the relationship between threat and persuasion remained positive for respondents viewing advertisements, despite using a high threat appeal (Arthur, 2004).

Another study that examines the level of fear evoked by an advertisement to identify specifically the nature of the fear appeal used, applied the Terror Management Theory (Hunt & Shehryar, 2002). This takes a more critical approach but is important nonetheless. This study argues that "self esteem and cultural world views function to protect the individual from

potential existential terror that is engendered by awareness of inevitability of death” (Hunt & Shehryar, 2002, p. 53; Simon, et. al. 1997). Additionally any attack on the person’s world view by a fear appeal advertisement would weaken their buffer against the inevitability of death so this could only serve to create negative feelings toward the advertisement, which was postulated to be related to high ego-involved individuals (p. 52). An advertisement threatening pain does not evoke the same effect as does threatening to alter a person’s world view. Results showed that viewing a fear appeal advertisement containing a death-related message evoked mortality-salience as opposed to a non-death related fear appeal advertisement which did not (p. 57). Further, it was found that fear aroused through death related threats in the advertisement induced an increase of the defense of cultural world views of those that were highly ego-involved (p. 57). In short, what this experiment found was that the nature of the fear appeal used in an advertisement is as important as the level of fear appeal used.

This may not immediately seem relevant but, if self-esteem and cultural world views function to protect the individual from existential terror that is engendered by the awareness of the inevitability of death in an advertisement against drunk driving, political advertising, news casts and appealing to a disruption of cultural world views may be used to create a fear that mobilizes or shifts attitudes of voter and increases the chance of their voting for one candidate over the other. The campaigns could have used the disruption of the voter’s cultural world view when relating to 9/11 as some political advertisements inevitably did. In addition, this research introduces the necessity to examine not only the level of fear appeal that is used in advertising but the type of fear appeal.

As can be noted here, there are certain inconsistencies within the findings of these various investigations. Ruiter, Verplanken, De Cremer, and Kok (2004) postulate in their article the

reason for these inconsistencies when examining the effects of fear appeals on people is that people desire cognition as opposed to discord (p. 15). The purpose of their study was to investigate whether the need for cognition alters, or moderates the response to fear appeals (p. 14). Ruiter, Verplanken, De Cremer and Kok (2004) operate using the Extended Parallel Process Model. Ruiter et al. found evidence in their research that allowed them to conclude that people with a higher need for cognition were more likely to implement the recommended actions that would counter any negative effects or threats. People with low cognition, were found to be less likely to implement the recommended actions (p. 21). They also found that higher threat information resulted in more defensive avoidance than when people were confronted with low threat information. These results were consistent among the individuals, meaning these effects were noticed even among high cognitive thinkers (p. 22).

Effective Fear Appeal Advertisements

Over the course of the years several aspects of a message appeal have been noted to contribute to effective fear appeal advertisements. These are best synthesized by Arthur and Queter (2004) as: severity of harm, probability of occurrence, segmentation, and social context. Each of these aspects of fear appeals have in various studies had significant effects.

Segmentation

Research has suggested that there is no optimal fear level but instead an optimal fear type (LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997; Bennett, 1996; LaTour & Tanner, 2003). Fear levels are said to be less important than fear types because the type of fear appeal used in an advertisement will affect people in a variety of different ways, hence varying results in fear appeal research (Arthur & Queter, 2004). Market segmentation is cited as a way to narrow the individuals affected by fear appeals (Arthur & Queter, 2004). In order to show the different responses obtainable by market segmentation Ray and Wilkie compare a study conducted by Insko et al. (1965) to Janis and

Feshbach's 1954 study (Ray & Wilkie, 1970). Janis and Feshbach recommend using mild fear appeals while Insko et al. recommend using high fear appeals (Janis & Feshbach, 1954; Insko et al., 1965). Ray and Wilkie reason that the marked difference in results can be attributed to the fact that the researchers were studying different segments of the population. Further, they posit that if both groups had received the same treatment, the results would still vary because the appeals that affect 7th graders and high school students differ because they are a part of different segment groups (Ray & Wilkie, 1970). Another study positing a segmentation effect is Brooker's 1981 study on the effect of mild humor and fear appeals. His specific suggestion is that the effectiveness of fear-appeals is subject, product or situation-specific (Brooker, 1981; p. 39). Moore & Harris' (1996) research showed that the affect intensity of a person is linked to increased responsiveness to a positive emotional advertisement, but found no difference between high and low affect intensity individuals and their responsiveness to negative emotional appeals in advertisement. They suggest that in order for advertisers to identify relevant market segments the link between individual differences in affect intensity and measurable patterns of behavior should be considered (Moore & Harris, 1996; p. 47).

Severity of Harm

Research has led to the conclusion that the intensity of perceived threat increases tension and energy up to a point, beyond which it creates anxiety (Arthur & Queter, 2004; Henthorne, LaTour & Nataraajan, 1993; Keller & Block, 1996; Quinn, Meehaghan, & Brannick 1992; Ray & Wilkie, 1970;).

In his 1966 study Leventhal found that the perceived severity of a highly threatening fear appeal increased the effectiveness of the fear in advertising. Bagozzi & Moore (1994) found a positive relationship between a fear appeal and helping others. This finding is further strengthened by the real world application of strong physical fear appeals when targeting parents

of adolescents in efforts to reduce drug use among youth (Kelder, et al., 2000). A specific example of this is a message used to encourage parents to have zero tolerance of drug use, “Inhalants are so easily available, yet can be fatal. Telling my tween that he must never sniff anything to get high may save his life” (p. 21). Other social marketing advertisements have found diminished effectiveness in using strong fear appeals.

Leventhal and Watts (1966) found a negative relationship between usage of cigarettes and acceptance of strong fear message advertisements. Ray and Wilkie suggested that high fear appeal levels can cause avoidance reactions that decrease the effectiveness of the appeal (Ray & Wilkie, 1970). Berkowitz and Cottingham’s research results showed that strong fear messages advocating the use of seatbelts diminished in effectiveness with greater automobile usage (1960). Goldman and Glantz (1988) found that advertisements containing fear appeals about long and short-term health effects did not impact the participants of his study. The mixed findings in this area suggest that the threshold beyond which anxiety is created and effectiveness decreases is unknown.

Probability of Occurrence

A frequently cited study that adopts and expands the PMM model to observe the probability of an advertised threat actually occurring is LaTour and Rotfeld’s 1997 study on threats that lead to fear arousal. In this study LaTour and Rotfeld investigate the effect of a threat appeal in an infomercial about a stun gun device, as it related to women’s feelings about their ability to defend themselves and their purchasing intent (LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997). The threat appeals used were from a segment in the infomercial where the participants listened to police testimonials of how tragic assaults could be stopped with the use of the stun-gun, and a 911 call where a woman was assaulted and raped (p. 51). They hypothesized that the threat appeal would result in direct and indirect effects of assault probability and self efficacy. If a woman felt

competent about her ability to defend herself with the stun-gun she would find the state of mind energizing and thus, would have a more positive feeling about the ad and herself. Thus, if the perceived probability of occurrence was high (i.e. felt real and salient), women would “feel an enhancement of value toward the product and an increased desire to obtain it for peace of mind” (p. 49). The results of the study showed that “probability of future assault” was associated directly and positively to purchase intention.

A study done by Roser and Thompson (1995) suggests that the anxiety created by a fear appeal and the desire to reduce that anxiety may be tied to a drive to become more involved in a particular message, even “latent publics” as they put it, can be motivated to organize or at least become involved. A high fear appeal relating to a local environmental problem was used to test the ability to engage a low involvement public with a local issue (p. 107). They wrote: “Exposure to fear will increase involvement, perceived risk, and perceived severity of harm” (p. 109), evidence strongly supporting this hypothesis was found, in addition to an increase in efficacy (p. 114). The research found that emotional responses played an important role in the effects of the post-test public, which means that in this case, high level of fear appeal was successful in engaging a low involvement public because of the high emotional response generated (p. 119).

Social Context

Stuteville (1970) suggested that social threats are the most effective form of fear appeal. Personal hygiene products most commonly use this form of fear appeal (Anderson, 2004). A real world example of a social fear appeal being used is the advertisement of Degree Ultra Clear deodorant which is directed toward women. The particular advertisement in question states that “Others go on clear. Degree Ultra Clear stays clearer” appealing to women’s fear of going out in public with white deodorant marks on their clothes.

Research in social marketing has shown that drug prevention advertisements that apply social fear appeals were more persuasive than appeals that highlighted the physical implications of using drugs (Schoenbachler and Whittler 1996). The National Youth Anti-Drug Media campaign used primarily social fear appeals to show the effects of engaging in drug use (Kelder, et al., 2000). The campaign's strategic message platforms directed at children and tweens included social exclusion fear appeals such as, "If you want to be accepted by other kids, smoking pot won't help" (p. 20).

Political Advertising

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the study is to examine fear appeals present in political spots. In order to do so it is necessary to review past research done in the realm of political advertising. Particularly important are issue and image ads as well as negative ads, as these three types of advertisements are commonly associated with fear appeals.

Videostyle

Videostyle is a form of content analysis that examines the strategies, narratives and symbols that candidates use in television advertising to project an image that serves to represent him or herself to voters (p. 26) (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Specifically videostyle examines the verbal and nonverbal content, and the film/video production techniques that are utilized in political ads (Kaid & Davidson, 1986, in Kaid, & Johnston, 2001). This method was first outlined in detail by Kaid and Davidson in 1986, and was further elaborated upon by Kaid and Johnston in 2001.

The verbal component of videostyle relates to the semantic characteristics of the candidate's message. Language utilized in a spot is an important part of verbal content as it can express a particular candidate style. Any mention of specific issues (foreign policy, economy, education, etc) or image characteristics of the candidate (honest, weak, dependable, etc) is

identified as verbal content. The identification of an advertisement as “positive” or “negative”, depending on whether it focuses on the candidate or the opponent, is also classified as verbal content. Explicit strategies are also considered verbal content. These vary according to a candidate’s status as incumbent or challenger. Examples of these strategies are escalating foreign issues to crisis proportion as an incumbent, and attacking the opponent’s record as a challenger (Trent & Friedenberg, 1983).

Nonverbal content in videostyle is composed of visual and verbal cues devoid of specific semantic meaning (Kaid & Davidson, 1986). Environmental cues such as symbols (the White House, The Constitution, etc.), music, lighting, and colors are often used to interpret communication from a source (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1989; Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 29; Knapp & Hall, 1992;). Physical cues, such as the appearance, absence, or behavior of a candidate in a political advertisement can influence the message he or she is trying to convey, as well as an audience’s perception of him or her (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Various studies have shown that nonverbal cues are essential in evaluating a person’s trustworthiness, composure, sociability, and competence, and that people use nonverbal messages to check the validity of what is being said (Abraham, & Nakagama, 1998; Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998; Buller & Woodall, 1989; Burgoon & Goffman, 1959; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Knapp, 1978; Seiter, 1999;).

While verbal and nonverbal content in a political advertisement is important, the third and final aspect of Videostyle refers to the television production techniques used to achieve the “presentation style” of the candidate (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). The argument for including film/video production techniques in a videostyle analysis is that political advertisements are designed using certain techniques with the intent of creating a particular effect, evoking a certain

emotion, or conveying a specific message (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). A number of researchers have found that the use of varying production techniques (camera angles and shots, special effects, editing, music, staging, setting, lighting, etc.) can result in evoking emotions or manipulating the mood of the viewer (Edmunds, 1982; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Metallinos, 1996; Millerson, 1972, 1990; Monaco, 1981; Primeau, 1979; Zettl, 1976, 1997). Millerson's 1972 book described how by using certain television production techniques one (an artist) can link a variety of subjects, create deliberate falsification, provide interpretation, and imply certain ideas (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). For example, a close-up shot of a subject can create the feeling of intimacy between the viewer and the subject, as well as influence the viewers' perceptions of the subject (Edmunds, 1982; Zettle, 1997). The camera angle and lighting will tell a viewer what is important in the shot and may be related to perceptions of source credibility and attraction (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; McCain, Chilberg, & Wakshlag, 1977; Mandell & Shaw 1973).

As a result of the extensive use of videostyle in analyzing political advertisements it is now possible to compare how the style of candidates has evolved over time. Researchers in the area of political advertising have applied videostyle analysis techniques to analyze positive and negative political advertising (Kaid & Johnston, 1991), issue and image advertising (Kaid, Johnston, 2002), sampling of challenger versus incumbent spots over time (Kaid & Davidson, 1986), comparison of candidates in the U.S. and other democracies (Holtz-Bacha & Kaid 1995; Holtz-Bacha, Kaid & Johnston 1994; Kaid & Tedesco, 1993; Tak, Kaid, & Lee 1997; Khang, 2005), in specific election campaigns; congressional, gubernatorial and presidential (Johnston, 1999; Kaid 1994, 1998; Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco 2000; Kaid & Tedesco 1999; Kaid, Tedesco, Chanslor & Roper 1993), and between male and female candidates (Bystrom, 1995; Bystrom & Miller, 1999; Johnston & White, 1994).

The traditional Videostyle codesheet asks coders to code whether a fear appeal is present in the advertisement. In Kaid & Johnston's 1991 article they find that 32% of the negative ad spots and 10% of positive ad spots coded contained fear appeals (p. 55). In this paper they also showed that negative ad spots were more likely than positive ads to appeal to voters' fears, and that negative ad spots were more likely to use logical appeals. Johnston and Kaid (2002) found that issue ads (26%) contained more fear appeals than did image ads (14%) (p. 287). Issue ads were also more likely to use emotional language to appeal to voters (p. 295). If, as they put it, the findings were surprising, a plausible explanation would be that it is riskier to use fear appeals against an opponent's image, than it is to use fear appeals against an opponents issue stances (p. 288).

According to Kaid and Johnston (2001), candidate ads usually attempt to offer reasons to vote for a candidate and thus offer up "proof" to support the claims made. These claims are categorized as either logical, emotional or ethical. In their study of twelve presidential campaigns Kaid and Johnston (2001) found that most of the ads (44%) offered emotional proof for the claims made in the ads. As a specific type of emotional appeal, fear appeals were used in roughly one-fifth (19%) of all of the presidential ads analyzed (p. 58).

In the past fear appeals have been on the following issues: war and peace, nuclear weapons, crime, Social Security, and healthcare (Johnston & Kaid, p. 288). The 1964 Johnson Goldwater campaign saw the first use of strong fear appeals in a presidential campaign (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 58). Both campaigns used a higher than average number of fear appeals, 48% of all spots by Johnson and 52% of all Goldwater spots.

Image and Issue ads

Within the realm of political advertisement research, there has been a discussion of issue versus image advertisements. Ansolabere & Iyengar (1995, 1996), and Brians and Wattenberg

(1996) found ads to feature more issue appeals (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). Kaid and Johnston (2001) found that both image and issue advertisements play a strong role in political campaigns. They also found that certain years have been shown to be more heavily oriented toward either issue or image advertisements. A later study showed that while ads contain issue information, many use the issue as a setting into which they can feature image construction of the candidate (Kaid & Johnston, 2002). According to Kaid & Sanders (1978) image ads for a lesser known candidate produced greater recall of information, and issue ads produced higher image ratings for a candidate (Iyengar & Simon, 2000; Kaid, Chanslor, & Hovind, 1992; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Thorson, Christ, & Caywood, 1991a, 1991b; in Kaid & Johnston 2002). More specifically, ads have been found to function in order to activate image characteristics in the minds of voters, which they (the voters) associated with individual political leaders (Cwalina, Falkowski, & Kaid, 2000). According to Devlin (2005), Bush was considered the candidate of “values” in 2004, at a time when values and character topped issues in the minds of the electorate.

Negative Advertisements

The negativity of political spots has also posed an issue in past research. Research on negative advertising in campaigns suggests that voters dislike negative political spots in part because they consider them unethical, uninformative, and may produce a backlash against the sponsor (Garramone, 1984; Pinkleton, Garramone 1992; Steward 1975; Surlin, Gordon 1977; Merritt, 1984). Positive ads have been found to engage people actively by directing the viewer to be engaged in reason, and use cause-effect logic at times. Negative and mixed ads mainly appealed to the sensory processes, and as such are probably more prone to stronger reactions from people (Gunsch, et. al., 2001). Comparisons on image and issues are used as an alternative to purely attack advertising (Pfau et al., 1990). Issue-advocacy ads generally exhibit a more negative tone (Groenendyk, & Valentino, 2002). A focus group found that messages that

resonate with citizens have audio and visuals that are also salient to voters (Kern, 1997). Negative information is also what citizens remember the most about ads they recall having seen (Kern, 1997). In comparing negative and positive advertisements, audience recall is higher for negative advertisements, and increases the speed of visual recognition of an ad (Basil et al., 1991; Kahn & Kenney, 2000; Lang, 1991; Newhagen & Reeves, 1991 in Kaid, 2004). In fact, research has shown that emotional appeals generate high levels of audience in general advertising recall (Choi & Thorson, 1983). This suggests that although people often backlash against sponsors of negative ads, it is still worthwhile to run negative ads, as these are recalled more readily.

Because Bush's negative ads appeared later in the campaign than did Kerry's, aired more frequently on select channels, and were considered more effective by political campaign analysts, Bush's campaign was thought to be more negative than Kerry's (Devlin, 2005; Kaid, 2004). Bush had more than 80 political spots, 58 of which were contrast comparative or attack negative advertisements. As McKinnon stated, because Bush was so well known, his advertising campaign leaders felt that they were able to discuss the problems with a Kerry presidency and his record (Devlin, 2005).

Kerry's campaign on the other hand was a mixture of positive and negative advertisements. Research shows that Kerry had more negative ads than Bush, but the percentage of negative ads was lower for Kerry. The pro-Kerry groups however were more negative than the pro-Bush groups (Kaid, 2006; Kaid & Dimitrova, 2005). His campaign was perceived to be less negative than Bush's however (Devlin, 2005). This may be the result of how Kerry's campaign chose to air the ads. There were more positive Kerry ads early in the campaign with most of the negative

ads airing during the middle of the campaign. Bush's negative ads however aired nearer to the election and aired more frequently on select channels (Kaid, 2004).

Research is inconclusive as to whether negative advertising is more or less effective than positive advertising. Negative ads, in 2004 were used to intensify partisanship, and positive ads, which are traditionally targeted to swing voters, were utilized to maintain the partisan voting base (Devlin, 2005). An alternate view of negative ads has shown that language utilized in image ads is designed to construct an image of the credibility of the presidential candidate, and not so much as a way of creating fear or stirring the emotions of the voters that counters the common belief, especially during the last elections, that the purpose of negative ads was to cause intense reactions among the electorate (Kaid & Johnston, 2002).

Potential news and issues that become available to the public can affect the public's response and attitude toward that issue or news depending on the strength of the fear appeal, the audience, which may previously have been unengaged, will become more active (Roser & Thompson 1995). This rationale can be applied to political communication as well. How the message is presented to the public can have an impact on how the public responds, which could later be associated with voter behavior.

One of the few studies done on the effects of fear appeals on dealing specifically with political campaigns examines fear appeals as induced by a credible source such as Time magazine or Newsweek (Calatone & Warshaw, 1985). This study by Calatone and Warshaw looked at fear appeals, rebuttals and the effect they have on voters (p. 628). The results were that fear-inducing charges by a credible source reduced the attacked candidate's votes. When another credible source countered the first's charge, the resulting effect was that it cancelled the negative impact on the candidate's vote (p. 632).

While the Calatone and Warshaw study is instructive, it falls short of examining whether candidates and their campaigns use fear appeals directly, which is one of the foci of the present study. Instead, this study focuses on the delivery of a fear appeal through a specific message source. Because the message source of any campaign can contribute greatly to the attitude change of an audience, it may be that Calatone and Warshaw's results are affected by the fact that they varied the source so few times, as it does not seem they take the importance of message source into account (Parrot, Egbert, Anderson, & Sefcovic, 2002). As Rogers (1975) states, it is necessary to refocus attention to environmental stimulations, which are the components of a fear appeal. In other words, instead of trying to measure attitudinal effects of fear, we should try to deconstruct fear appeals, which is the purpose of this paper.

Political cynicism has been attributed to negative political advertising and attack advertising. Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), and Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon & Valentino (1994) found that voters exposed to political spots became more cynical and demobilized. Hill (1989) used a survey to examine voter's reactions to sponsor-positive, comparison and opponent-negative advertisements from responses to a survey about the 1988 presidential advertisements. The results showed that voters' responded more positively to sponsor-positive advertisements, negative responses were reported for the comparison ads and opponent-negative advertisements (Hill, 1989). In a 2000 study on students, Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco found that young voter's political cynicism increased after viewing political advertisements. According to some research, some aspects of negative advertisement such as mudslinging and partisan attacks are likely to demobilize voters (Lawton & Freedman, 2001 in Groenendyk & Valentino, 2002). On the other hand, Groenendyk & Valentino's own study did not find such adverse effects, and instead found that some Issue-advocacy spots were less damaging than earlier research suggested

(Groenendyk, & Valentino, 2002). In 2002 Kaid exposed college voters to political advertisements of the 2000 presidential race and found that neither television nor the Internet impacted the participant's level of cynicism. A repeated experiment by Kaid in 2004 found the results mixed for Bush and Kerry (Kaid & Postelnicu, 2005). Others such as Wattenberg and Brians (1999), Freedman and Goldstein (1999), Kahn & Kenney, (1999), Pinkleton, 1998, and Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton & Cole (1990) have found no support to suggest negative ads demoralize the electorate, nor have they found any impact on cynicism, alienation or efficacy. It was suggested in various studies that resistance to demoralization is the result of possible "inoculation" toward the negative message, or that voters may exhibit a "third-person effect", whereby the voters believe others to be more affected by the advertisements than they themselves (Groenendyk & Valentino, 2002).

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The difference between previous fear appeal research and the present analysis is that this analysis does not intend to study the effects of the potency of a fear appeal. Since past research shows that there is an effect on behavior and attitudes as a result of the potency or type of fear appeal, the goal of this analysis was to study the frequency of use of the varying degrees of fear appeal levels in advertisements, specifically political advertisements. As stated in previous videostyle research, emotional appeals invoke particular feelings or emotions in viewers (Kaid, & Johnston, 2001). Testing for the presence of fear appeals in political advertisements is common in videostyle and expanding the analysis of fear appeals is a natural progression from videostyle analysis.

The terms "low, medium and high fear appeal levels" or "mild, medium, and strong fear appeals" are words almost synonymous with fear appeal effectiveness. Seminal authors (Janis, 1967; Janis & Feshbach, 1954; LaTour & Rotfeld 1997; LaTour & Zahara, 1989; Leventhal,

1971; McGuire, 1968, 1969; Niles, 1964; Ruiter et. al., 2004) have used these words to categorize their interpretation of the potency of a fear appeal message. Using fear appeal levels as a control, experimental research has utilized the categorization of fear appeals in order to measure the effectiveness of advertisements containing fear appeals. This basis for the use of fear appeal levels serves as a basis for the present study. This paper suggests that the design of the message, containing fearful elements that vary in intensity and content, purposefully appeals to a person's sense of fear.

Because there is a suggestion in both Roser and Thompson (1995) as well as in Calatone and Warshaw (1985) that political campaigns use low fear levels, the study will examine the level of fear used in advertisements analyzed. Previous research also suggests that low fear levels are used in political campaigns. As a result an informal hypothesis would expect low fear levels to be used most of the time.

H1: The 2004 political advertisements will utilize low levels of fear appeals

Another important aspect of fear appeals that has not been addressed in previous studies is whether fear appeals are issue or image based. Previous research states that image ads for a lesser known candidate produced greater recall of information, and issue ads produced higher image ratings for a candidate (Kaid, Chanslor, & Hovind, 1992; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Thorson, Christ, & Caywood, 1991a, 1991b). When addressing the public, a candidate will use either character presentation, issues, or both to appeal to them (Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert, 2001; Carlin, 2000; Hellweg, 1993). Thus, it is important to identify which methods the campaign or candidate is attempting to use even though the study is not immediately attempting to identify voter effects. It will be interesting to see whether fear appeals were more likely to be issue- or image- based. Kerry, as the lesser known candidate would, in this case be expected to have more

image ads, although this might have been tempered with the campaign's desire to increase his ratings, thereby using more issue ads.

RQ2: Were the fear appeals in the 2004 presidential spots issue-, or image-based?

RQ3: In the 2004 presidential spots, what level of fear appeal is used most frequently in issue and image ads?

Calatone and Warshaw (1985) identified the fear appeal they controlled for as physical, and stated that there were also social and economic fear appeals that were not tested. This suggests that these are different types of fear appeals, and as such it is necessary to test for their presence/absence, thus the following question is:

RQ4: What type of fear appeal is used most frequently in the 2004 image and issue ads?

RQ5: What issues are addressed using fear appeals in the 2004 presidential spots?

A breakdown of the sponsorship of the ads would be useful in analyzing why a certain issue, or fear appeal type/level was used.

RQ6: Did the non-campaign sponsored ads contain higher fear appeal levels than the campaigns in the 2004 presidential spots?

RQ7: What fear appeal types were used by the campaigns vs. the non-campaign sponsors in the 2004 presidential ads?

CHAPTER 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the study is to analyze fear appeals present in political advertising spots. The study will therefore use content analysis to examine the political advertisements of the 2004 presidential elections. Aspects of quantitative and qualitative content analysis were used on a sample of political advertisements from the 2004 presidential elections. The political advertisement spots are part of a larger dataset collected from local and national network and cable television stations. The period of time in which the ad spots were collected was from the end of both the Democratic and the Republican national conventions, up until November 5. The candidates' websites were also used to ensure that all of the political advertisements sponsored by the candidate had been obtained. Those that had not yet been obtained were downloaded from the candidate's website.

The ads were part of a larger set of data that was coded using Videostyle. Videostyle is a framework that is used to analyze political advertisements (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). When coding this larger dataset, 38 advertisements resulted in having a fear appeal present. This smaller dataset was used to conduct a separate content analysis to examine fear appeals in this study.

In expanding upon the existing videostyle concept to a sample of ads, a written coding instrument and codebook were developed to further detail the verbal, nonverbal and television production components of videostyle with regard to fear appeals. A copy of the codesheet is contained in Appendix A. In keeping with the traditional codebook coders were asked to code for the presence of a variety of issues found in the ad. Expanding upon this base, coders were then asked to identify which of the issues in the ad the fear appeal related to.

Pretest

The unit of analysis for the present study was each political advertisement spot. The pretest was conducted on television news broadcasts relating to the elections from the beginning of August 2004 until two weeks after the election. The information obtained from coding television news broadcasts allowed for the development of more exhaustive categories. The codebook was updated to reflect the changes and additions made. Television news broadcasts relating to the election, while different from political advertisements were deemed an acceptable pre-test environment for several reasons. In 1992 major news networks began regularly reviewing political advertisements during their broadcast segments (Capella, & Jamieson, 1996). When the news media began covering political advertisements it was only a matter of time before the candidates began designing ads to attract news coverage. Iyengar and Simon argue that politicians utilize the mass media to promote their own objectives and agendas. (Iyengar & Simon, 2000, p. 150). As a result of this, a host of research explored and compared the information voters acquired from both news coverage of campaigns and advertisements themselves (Zhao & Chaffee, 1995; Iyengar & Simon, 2000). It is debated whether news coverage or political advertisements provide more issue information, although Capella & Jamieson (1996) found that those that saw political spots were able to identify the issue positions of the candidates with greater ease than those that had seen news coverage. They claim that this is the case because the news media will often reframe political spots and then the audiences may be induced to see the spot's claims as unjustified or more justified than they would normally (Capella & Jamieson, 1996).

Coding Scheme

Descriptive Categories

The political spot was coded for issues discussed, and the dominant issue was recorded. It was also important to identify whether the political spot was focused on the opponent or on the candidate that it supported. The type of appeal used was also determined, so that the researchers could identify whether the advertisement used emotional, logical, or source credibility appeals to evoke the fear appeal. The coders also coded whether the advertisement was an issue or image advertisement spot. Appendix A contains the codebook for the content analysis of the political spots.

Fear Appeal Level

Having previously been coded as having a fear appeal present, the fear appeal is then divided into three levels of fear that are determined by the threat level, found in both Roser & Thompson (1995) and Calatone & Warshaw (1985). Fear appeals were determined to convey low medium or high levels of threat.

Low fear appeal levels: The fear appeal represents a relatively low threat level, the consequences is not very likely to happen or the possible risk is not great, not likely to happen any time soon, but could happen sometime in the distant future.

Medium fear appeal levels: The fear appeal represents only a moderate risk, the risk is present but not likely to happen quickly or in the immediate future, or without warning, but it could still cause some undesirable consequences.

High fear appeal levels: The fear appeal represents a very high risk, the threat is great and/or the consequences could be terrible if they occurred, the threat could also be in the immediate future.

Fear Appeal Types

LaTour and Zhara (1989) distinguished between a variety of fear appeal types. These are economic fear appeals, social fear appeals and physical fear appeals.

Economic fear appeals: The ad includes an appeal that relates to loss of income, loss of job, higher taxes, lower benefits, loss of social security, etc.

Social fear appeals: The ad includes an appeal that suggests a risk or fear related to social conditions. Examples are, statements or visual images that play on fears of homosexuals, fears related to religious values and norms, and/or fears related to ethnic or racial differences.

Physical fear appeals: The ad includes an appeal that relates to safety or physical well-being of the viewer or those the viewer cares about. Examples are statements or visual images about someone being hurt from crime or accidents, statements about deaths and injuries resulting from war, statements about the consequences of a chemical or nuclear explosion, statements about the consequences of terrorism as they relate to the viewer's personal safety.

Issues

The presence or absence of 20 issues determined which issues were those that were present in the spot. Coders recorded what issue a fear appeal was referring to. Coders could select an "other" option for the issue and also were able to write what the "other" issue was about. The issue for which a fear appeal was most used determined the dominance of the issue. Secondary to that was which issue was on screen longest.

The data was coded for visual symbols, references to verbal and visual values, the issues present in the ads, and whether the ads were positive or negative, and whether there was an attack made in the ad. Coders were encouraged to write in any significant image or key words that would show what the fear appeal was about.

These categories were modeled after the Videostyle framework (Kaid, Johnston, 2000). All of the ads in this dataset were coded as having fear appeals present, as such this study only examines those advertisements that were classified as having a fear appeal.

The unit of analysis for this study is the entire political advertisement spot. Each spot consisted of 30 or 60 second sound bites. The data set consists of 37 spots, of which 19 were Democratic, or liberal and 18 were Republican or conservative. The terms “liberal” and “conservative” are used loosely to define those political action committee advertisement spots that were created specifically for either of the candidates. The dataset was coded independently by three graduate students. Five advertisements (10% of the sample) were used for testing intercoder reliability. Using the software program PRAM, Holsti’s (1969) formula was used to obtain the average intercoder reliability, which was 0.86. The intercoder reliability for each of the categories is listed in Appendix A. Despite retraining, some categories resulted in varied percents of agreement, ranging from .53 to complete agreement.

Usually intercoder reliability is much higher, but there are several factors that may have contributed to the lowered reliability. Upon examining the reason for the disparity it was found that the greatest variability was in the categories that contained questions dealing with latent content. One of the three graduate students coding the advertisements was an International student. While this coder was trained with the codebook and knows English very well, it is possible that the coder may have missed some of the subtleties in American culture, and/or the language. Another possible reason for the low reliability in some categories is that since the study deals with latent content, the meanings are open to various forms of interpretation. It also may have to do with individual perception of the fear appeals within the advertisement. Due to

the nature of the investigation, the intercoder reliability was deemed acceptable because most of the categories that resulted in a low intercoder reliability were not used.

Analysis

The study will be looking for the presence, and type of fear appeals used in the advertisements. Since there is no research to date that applies videostyle to fear appeals in the same manner, this research will be exploratory in nature. The statistics will remain largely descriptive as the dataset is small, and cannot be generalized outside of the 2004 presidential elections. Chi-squares will be reported where cell size permits. Fisher's Exact Test is reported where cell size falls below five.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Fear Appeal Levels

The small sample size of advertisements analyzed made it impossible to generalize outside of the 2004 presidential elections. Few tests of significance were possible because the data set was so small the results were not reliable enough to make general inferences about the data. Reported where possible are Chi-squares and Fisher's Exact Test.

The results of a frequency table showed that most of the advertisements (48.6%) used a medium level of fear appeal. An example of a medium level fear appeal is an advertisement titled, "Changing World." The first scene is a little boy holding his teddy bear by the arm as he opens a door to reveal a video image of a woman in a lab coat next to a microscope followed by a still image of Yasser Arafat, and bicyclists rounding the corner of a track. A male voice-over states, "The world is changing, sometimes in ways that astound, and others, that terrify." As these words are uttered the camera zooms in on the door until only the video in the door can be seen. The color in the video has changed to scales of black, grey and red. Shown in this video is a masked man dressed in black shooting to his right, in front of a wall with Arabic writing on it. This scene cuts to another showing a tank making its way along a street that has been transformed into a combat zone. The scene cuts to a view from another doorway to a group of firemen standing outside in the bright sun. The voice-over says, "We depend more than ever on our values; family, faith, the freedom we celebrate." As the voice-over speaks the firemen scene melds into another where Bush is shaking hands with a small black child. Another scene of a smiling girl follows and shifts into one where a father is hoola-hooping with his children. A still shot of George Bush and Laura Bush standing on a porch is followed by a picture of a happy family hugging and posing, as if for a picture. The voice-over continues, "In today's changing

world, the answers aren't easy," as we see another scene of children getting off of a school bus. Following is a picture or still shot of someone running across a sunny meadow; the voice-over says, "We need a sense of purpose, a vision for the future." The advertisement continues in this manner until the end where the camera zooms out of the doorway the little boy is still holding open. The ad is labeled a medium fear appeal ad because it began with some very frightful images. The images of a man dressed in black pointing a gun at an unknown target, followed by scenes of street warfare conjures up images of insurgents or terrorists in Iraq. This leaves the viewer with a very unsettling feeling which is soon countered by positive images of families, children, rescue workers, etc. The ad leaves viewers feeling confident that all the pleasant things mentioned in the ad will happen with George Bush as president.

Low level fear appeals followed medium level appeals in frequency, representing 37.8% of the advertisements in the sample.

Low fear appeal levels were those where the fear appeal represents a relatively low threat level, the consequences is not very likely to happen or the possible risk is not great, not likely to happen any time soon, but could happen sometime in the distant future.

"My fault," an ad sponsored by Citizens United, represents an example of a low fear appeal advertisement. The advertisement begins by showing a copy of Bill Clinton's book, "My Life," including pictures of the terrorist attacks on the WTC in 1993, a bombed military base in Saudi Arabia, bombed embassies, and the USS Cole. The next scene shows a picture of a military funeral, with a flag draped coffin carried by Marines in uniform. The voice-over states, "Americans died, all while Bill Clinton was President. So who is responsible for leaving us vulnerable?" The final scene shows a statement in black letters that is also reiterated by the voice-over that says, "Winning the war on terror demands a President who is willing to fight it."

The advertisement offered abstract insinuations about the previous Democrat Presidency which implied that another Democrat president, just like his predecessor, would not be willing to fight the war on terror. Since the advertisement did not define any immediate threat it was considered a low level fear appeal.

High fear appeal levels were not used as frequently, representing 13.5% of the ads coded. An example of a high level fear appeal would be one of the 527 independent group advertisements, sponsored by the Media Fund. The ad, titled “Stand Up” used black and white as opposed to color images, and used still photos of tanks on the move, a fallen soldier- presumably Black- to convey a sense of unease. It also informed viewers in white letters hovering over a close up shot of a Black man’s eyes that, “The Black community is in a state of emergency,” and finished with a voice over stating, “The way this war is going, our fourteen year olds will be fighting in Iraq in four years.” This advertisement was considered a high level fear appeal because it gave the viewer a sense of alarm by suggesting the security of fourteen year olds is at stake if action is not taken now. A concrete timeline further emphasized the urgency; the risk although not immediate suggested a threat to teenage children and showed a new perspective on the war in Iraq. The message implied that the threat to teenage children was avoidable depending on who you voted for.

A Chi-square test determined whether the observed frequencies differed from their expected value. The frequency distribution of the ads between low, medium and high fear appeal levels showed that 14 ads had low fear appeals, 18 had medium fear appeals, and 5 had high fear appeal levels (N=37). The expected frequency of occurrence for each was 12.5. The chi-square was 7.19, with 2 degrees of freedom. The p-level was .03 indicating that at the .05 significance level, there was a significant relationship between the observed frequencies and their expected

value. This showed a relationship between the percentage difference between low, medium and high fear appeal levels. Thus, the results suggest that the hypothesis could be rejected. The data showed that in 2004 medium fear appeals were more common in the 2004 presidential campaigns.

Image and Issue-based Fear Appeals

As mentioned previously, there were three types of fear appeals coded in my study. A physical fear appeal included those appeals that related to the safety or physical well-being of the viewer or those the viewer cared about. Statements regarded as physical fear appeals included those that mentioned: someone being hurt from crime or accidents, death and injuries resulting from war, the consequences of a chemical or nuclear explosion, and the consequences of terrorism as they relate to the viewer's personal safety. Economic fear appeals used an appeal that related to loss of income, loss of job, higher taxes, lower benefits, loss of social security, etc. Social fear appeals suggested a risk or fear related to social conditions. Social fear appeals included statements that play on fears of homosexuals, fears related to religious values and norms, fears related to the loss or erosion of values, and/or fears related to ethnic or racial differences.

Using frequencies, Chi-squares where possible, and Fisher's Exact Test, Research Question 2 was analyzed, "Were the fear appeals used in the 2004 presidential spots issue or image based?"

Image based fear appeals are those where fear appeal emphasizes personal characteristics, background or other qualifications. An example of an image based fear appeal ad is one that suggests that Kerry is indecisive and would not be a good leader because of his indecision, or that Bush is unintelligent and thus would put the country at risk. Issue based fear appeals are

those that emphasized the candidate's broad issue concerns or specific policy position. Those ads dealt with issues such as the candidates' positions on the war in Iraq, or Social Security.

The results showed that 54.1% of the advertisements used image-based fear appeals and 45.9 % of the advertisements used issue-based fear appeals. 20 of the 37 advertisements contained image-based fear appeals and 17 contained issue-based fear appeals.

Research question 3 asked, "In the 2004 presidential spots, what level of fear appeal is used most frequently in issue and image ads?" A cross tabulation of the fear appeal level and the type of ad (issue/image) showed that 47.4% of the issue ads used a medium fear appeal level. Medium fear appeal levels were used in 50% of the image ads, the other 50% being distributed among low (38.9%) and high (11.1%) fear appeal advertisements (Table 4-1).

Overall, 18.9% of both issue and image ads used low fear appeal levels. The overall percentage of medium fear appeal levels in issue and image ads was 27% in issue ads and 21.6% in image ads. Of the total number of ads, the percentage of high fear appeals in issue ads was 8.1% and for image ads it was 5.4%. Chi-square and Fisher's Exact Test analysis revealed that no significant relationships existed between issue ads and the fear appeal levels, or between image ads and the fear appeal levels (Table 4-2).

Physical, social, and economic distinctions defined the three fear appeal types. Research Question 4, "What type of fear appeal is used most frequently in the 2004 issue and image spots?" was analyzed by taking the cross tabulation of the fear appeal type and the ad type. Overall, the most frequently used fear appeal was the economic fear appeal. A chi-square tested the significance of the findings in 2 x 2 cross tabulation tables of the type of ad (issue or image) and each of the types of fear appeals that could be used (physical, economic, or social). The results revealed that economic fear appeals were employed more frequently in issue ads than in

image ads, and that these findings were significant ($\chi^2 = 6.06$, $df = 1$, $p = .01$, $N = 37$). 14 issue ads contained economic fear appeals compared to 6 image ads. Use of physical fear appeals and social fear appeals was less frequent. Physical fear appeals were used in 11 issue ads, and 12 image ads. A chi-square showed that these findings were not significant ($\chi^2 = .30$, $df = 1$, $p = .42$, $N = 37$). Social fear appeals were used in 4 issue ads and 5 image ads. The findings for social fear appeal ads were not significant ($\chi^2 = .23$, $df = 1$, $p = .63$, $N = 37$). Further, 2 of the cells (50% of the cells) had an expected cell count less than five. Fisher's Exact Test did not reveal any significant results either, $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .71$ alpha-level .10 (Tables 4-2 and 4-3).

Issues and Fear Appeals

To answer Research Question 5, "What issues are addressed using fear appeals in the 2004 presidential spots?" it was necessary to clarify a few things. The coders coded for all of the issues present in the advertisement and later specified, of those issues coded, which issues involved the use of fear appeals (Code sheet located in Appendix A). The coders selected the three most prominent issues involving fear appeals. Analysis included the use and reporting of Pearson's Chi-squares where cell size permitted and Fisher's Exact Test where cell size fell below five to test the significance of the relationship between each of the fear appeal types and the issues. Fisher's Exact Test is used as an alternative to the Chi-square when the observed cross tabulation cells are less than five (Fleiss, 1981; Garson, 2007; Simon, 2006) for 2 x 2 contingency tables.

The results showed that a greater number of advertisements applied fear appeals to the issues of "Terrorism and homeland security" (29.7%), and "Military, defense spending" (29.7%). Issues addressing "Economic concerns" (18.9%) followed "Terrorism and homeland security" and "Military, defense spending" in the frequency of use. Following "Economic concerns," 16.2% of the issues "Healthcare," "International affairs," and "The war in Iraq/Afghanistan"

contained fear appeals. Table 4-5 shows the frequency of all issues mentioned utilizing fear appeals.

Fear Appeal Types and Issues

An analysis of the frequency of use of the three types of fear appeals relating to the issues revealed that the fear appeal type used most was the physical fear appeal followed by the economic fear appeal. Based on frequency, “Terrorism and homeland security” and “Military, defense spending” contained more physical fear appeals than any of the other issues, Table 4-6. A two-sided Fisher’s Exact Test revealed that the only significant relationship between physical fear appeals and issues was that between “Terrorism, homeland security” and the physical fear appeal, $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .03, \alpha = .05$. Table 4-7 shows the results of the analysis.

The issues relating to “Economic concerns” used economic fear appeals more than any other type of appeal, followed by “Healthcare” and “Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly” issues (Table 4-8). A 2 x 2 Chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship between the economic fear appeal and “Terrorism and homeland security” $\chi^2(df = 1, p < .01, N = 37) = 8.11$, indicating a relationship between economic fear appeals and issues concerning “Terrorism and homeland security.” Using the Exact Fisher Test, the results for the 2 x 2 contingency table for “Economic concerns” and economic fear appeals showed a significant relationship $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .01, \alpha = .01$, as did the economic fear appeal 2 x 2 table with “Healthcare” $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .02, \alpha = .05$, and “Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly” $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .05, \alpha = .05$. Not significant were the relationships between issues relating to “Military, defense spending” and economic fear appeals. Not significant was the relationship between economic fear appeals and “Military and defense spending” $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 37) = 1.97, p\text{-value} = .16$ as well as other economic fear appeal and issue relationships (Table 4-9).

Ads containing social fear appeals also contained “Concern for children” and “Military, defense spending” issues with greatest frequency (Table 4-10). The results of the analysis showed a significant relationship between “Concern for children” and the presence of a social fear appeal, and no significant relationship between “Military, defense issues” and the presence of a social fear appeal. The relationship between “Concern for children” and social fear appeal types was significant, $P = (df = 1, N = 37) .01, \alpha = .01$; there was no significant relationship between “Military, defense issues” and social fear appeal types. “Concern for children” was the only issue with a significant relationship with social fear appeal types (Table 4-11).

Since coders coded for all fear appeals present in an ad, and coded for three issues mentioned using fear appeals in each ad, the overlap of fear appeal types with the same issues was possible. Thus, the frequency of mention of one issue could be the same across all fear appeal types. “The war in Iraq/Afghanistan” issue was coded across physical, economic, and social fear appeal types equally. Ads containing “Welfare reform” issues also used economic fear appeals, followed by equal usage of physical and social fear appeals. “Concern for children” issues appeared more frequently across ads also containing social fear appeals than across ads containing economic or physical fear appeals. “Medicare/Social Security/problems of the elderly” issues were coded for across both economic and physical fear appeals. “Other” issues had more physical fear appeals present than any other fear appeal type. In the case of Terrorism and Homeland Security, there were ten ad spots utilizing the physical fear appeal, two ad spots using the economic fear appeal, and three using a social fear. Seven ads containing “Military Defense Spending” used a physical fear appeal, and four used economic and social fear appeals respectively. Tables 4-6, 4-8, and 4-10 show the frequency of fear appeal use the ads had across each issue.

Fear Appeal Levels and Issues

Fear appeal level analysis revealed a higher frequency of use for low fear appeal levels than for either medium or high fear appeal levels. Medium level fear appeals appeared more frequently than low or high fear appeal levels in ads with issues relating to “Terrorism and homeland security.” The appeal level used most frequently for ads containing “Military, defense spending” issues was low. Ads with “Economic concerns” and “Healthcare” issues also used low fear appeal levels. “Welfare reform” ads used low and medium fear appeal levels. Ads containing “Education” used only medium fear appeal levels. The ads containing the issues “The War in Iraq/Afghanistan” used a medium fear appeal level more frequently than the other appeal levels. Issues referring to “Concern for children” contained medium and high fear appeal levels. “Medicare/Social Security/problems of the elderly” issues contained both medium and low fear appeal levels. “Other” issues used low fear appeal levels, followed by medium fear appeal levels. “Taxes” issues also contained low and medium fear appeal levels. Low and medium fear appeal levels applied to issues related to “Welfare reform.” Issues concerning “the deficit” or “the need to balance the budget” contained high fear appeal levels. Ads containing “education” related issues used both physical and social fear appeals, and used only medium fear appeal levels (Table 4-12).

Analysis showed a significant relationship between low fear appeal levels and “Economic concerns”, $P = (df = 1, N = 37) .09, \chi^2 = .1$ and “Healthcare” $P = (df = 1, N = 37) .02, \chi^2 = .05$. The results showed a significant relationship between medium level fear appeals and the issues, “Military, defense spending” ($\chi^2 = 2.86, p\text{-value} = .09, df = 1, N = 37$) and “Economic concerns” $P = (df = 1, N = 37) .09, \chi^2 = .1$. No significant relationships existed between high fear appeal levels and any of the issues coded (Table 4-13 through 4-15).

Presidential Campaigns and Other Supporters

Research question 6 asked, “Did the non-campaign sponsored ads contain higher fear appeal levels than the campaign sponsored spots in the 2004 presidential spots?” The results showed that the 527 issue group sponsored ads did use higher fear appeal levels than either of the two presidential campaigns. The relationship between campaign sponsored ads and ads receiving other sponsorship was significant ($\chi^2 = 3.27$, $N = 37$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-level} = .07$) at the .10 alpha-level. The relationship between fear appeal levels and ad sponsorship was not comparable due to the small sample size, but the results were still useful in observing the overall use of fear appeals in the 2004 presidential elections (Table 4-16). Another aspect of the fear appeal analysis investigated what groups sponsored the advertisements, and what level of fear appeals did the ads they sponsored use (Tables 4-17 and 4-18).

Most of the pro-Democrat advertisements received sponsorship from 527s or Political Action Committees (PACs) and contained medium fear appeals. Medium fear appeal levels were used in ads sponsored by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) (two ads, 5.4% of the total number of ads), The Media Fund (three ads, 8.1% of the total number of ads), MoveOn.org (one ad, 2.7% of the total number of ads), and Communities for Quality Education (CQE) (one ad, 2.7% of total). Those ads that used high fear appeal levels were sponsored by the Democratic National Committee (one ad, 2.7% of the total number of ads), the Media Fund (one ad, 2.7% of the total number of ads), and The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (one ad, 2.7% of the total number of ads). Only two of the Kerry campaign sponsored ads contained medium fear appeal levels (5.4% of the total number of ads).

Most of the pro-Republican advertisements that contained medium and high fear appeal levels received sponsorship from the Bush campaign. The Bush campaign sponsored five medium fear appeal ads (13.5% of the total number of ads), and two high fear appeal ads (5.4%).

The pro-Republican sponsor breakdown is as follows: The Republican National Committee, the Progress for America Voter Fund (PFV), Club for Growth, and the Swiftboat Veterans each sponsored one medium fear appeal ad (2.7% of the total number of ads). None of the pro-Republican sponsors used high fear appeal levels.

Question 7, “What fear appeal types were used in the 2004 presidential ads sponsored by the campaigns and PACs?” was useful in furthering the analysis of fear appeal types as they relate to ad sponsorship. As stated earlier, coders coded for all fear appeal types present in an ad so one ad could have multiple fear appeals present. Thus, the results showed what type(s) of fear appeals each of the 37 ads contained.

The results showed that thirteen pro-Democrat sponsored ads contained an economic fear appeal, including ads sponsored by the Kerry Campaign. Of these ads, the Kerry Campaign sponsored three, the DNC sponsored four, both the Media Fund and Moveon.org sponsored two, and the AFL-CIO and the Band of Sisters each sponsored one. The Kerry sponsored campaign ads contained more economic fear appeals than any other type of fear appeal. Physical fear appeals were present in ads sponsored by the Kerry campaign and the pro-Democrats, but not as much in comparison to the pro-Republican sponsors or even the Bush campaign. Two of the DNC sponsored ads used physical fear appeals, as did two of the Media Fund sponsored ads. MoveOn.org, Texans for Truth, Band of Sisters, Communities for Quality Education and the Kerry Campaign all sponsored one ad that used a physical fear appeal. The Media Fund sponsored three ads that used social fear appeals. MoveOn.org, the DNC, and Communities for Quality Education (CQE) each sponsored one ad that used a social fear appeal.

The pro-Republican sponsored ads, used physical fear appeals the most (13 ads), and economic and social appeals equally (3 ads). Ads sponsored by the Bush Campaign contained

the most physical fear appeals (8 ads). The RNC, the Progress for America Voter Fund, and Club for Growth each sponsored one ad that used a physical fear appeal. Two Swiftboat Veterans sponsored ads used a physical fear appeal. The Bush campaign used 4 ads that contained economic fear appeals. One RNC ad and two Club for Growth ads contained economic fear appeals. Citizens United, Club for Growth and Swiftboat Veterans each employed one ad containing a social fear appeal. Tables 4-19 and 4-20 show the difference in the use of fear appeals according to party affiliation.

Table 4-1. Comparing fear appeal levels within issue and image ads

Fear appeal level	Issue ad %	<i>Image ad %</i>
Low	36.8	38.9
Medium	47.4	50.0
High	15.8	11.1

Table 4-2. Issue ads containing different fear appeal levels

Fear appeal level	Df	Chi-square	p-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Low	1	.05	.82	-
Medium	1	.30	.87	-
High	1	-	-	1.00

Table 4-3. Image ads containing different fear appeal levels

Fear appeal level	Df	Chi-square	p-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Low	1	.05	.82	-
Medium	1	.03	.87	-
High	1	-	-	1.00

Table 4-4. Percent of total: Fear appeal levels within issue and image ads

Fear appeal level	Issue ad %	<i>Image ad %</i>
Low	18.9	18.9
Medium	27.0	21.6
High	08.1	05.4

Table 4-5. Issues addressed using fear appeals

Issues addressed with fear appeals	Number of ads	<i>Percentage of ads</i>
Military, defense spending	11	29.7
Terrorism, homeland security	11	29.7
Economic concerns	7	18.9
Healthcare	6	16.2
International Affairs	6	16.2
War in Iraq/Afghanistan	6	16.2
Concern for children	5	13.5
Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly	5	13.5
Other ^a	3	3.1
Welfare reform	2	5.4
Taxes	2	5.2
Deficit, need to balance budget	1	2.7
Education	1	2.7

^a Topics are: Candidate dishonesty, government corruption, dairy industry.

Table 4-6. Issues mentioned using a Physical fear appeal

Issues	<i>Frequency</i>
Terrorism homeland security	10
Military defense spending	7
International foreign affairs	5
Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly	3
Other	3
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	3
Concern for children	2
Economic concerns	2
Healthcare	2
Taxes	2
Education	1
Welfare reform	1

Table 4-7. Significance of association between presence of physical fear appeals and issues

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Terrorism, homeland security	1	-	-	.03***
Military, defense spending	1	-	-	1.00
International Foreign Affairs	1	-	-	.38
Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly	1	-	-	1.00
Other	1	-	-	.28
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	.65
Concern for children	1	-	-	.35
Economic concerns	1	-	-	.08
Healthcare	1	-	-	.17
Taxes	1	-	-	.52
Education	1	-	-	1.00
Welfare reform	1	-	-	1.00

Note: SS is an abbreviation for Social Security. N = 37.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-8. Issues mentioned using an Economic fear appeal

Issues	<i>Frequency</i>
Economic concerns	7
Healthcare	6
Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly	5
Military defense spending	4
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	3
Concern for children	3
International foreign affairs	2
Taxes	2
Terrorism homeland security	2
Welfare reform	2
Deficit, need to balance budget	1

Table 4-9. Significance of association between economic fear appeals and issues

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Economic concerns	1	-	-	.01***
Healthcare	1	-	-	.02**
Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly	1	-	-	.05**
Military defense spending	1	1.97	.16	-
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	1.00
Concern for children	1	-	-	1.00
International foreign affairs	1	-	-	.38
Taxes	1	-	-	.49
Terrorism, homeland security	1	8.11	<.01****	-
Welfare reform	1	-	-	.49
Deficit, need to balance budget	1	-	-	1.00

Note. N = 37.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-10. Issues mentioned using a social fear appeal

Issues	<i>Frequency</i>
Concern for children	4
Military defense spending	4
International foreign affairs	3
Terrorism homeland security	3
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	3
Deficit, need to balance budget	1
Education	1
Other	1
Taxes	1
Welfare reform	1

Table 4-11. Significance of association between presence of social fear appeals and issues

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Concern for children	1	-	-	.01***
Military defense spending	1	-	-	.40
International foreign affairs	1	-	-	.14
Terrorism homeland security	1	-	-	1.00
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	.14
Deficit, need to balance budget	1	-	-	.24
Education	1	-	-	.24
Other	1	-	-	1.00
Taxes	1	-	-	.43
Welfare reform	1	-	-	.43
Concern for children	1	-	-	1.00
Military defense spending	1	-	-	1.00

Note. N = 37.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-12. Fear appeal levels across issues

Issues	Low Fear Appeal	Medium Fear Appeal	High Fear Appeal
Military, defense spending	6	3	2
Terrorism, homeland security	3	6	2
Economic concerns	5	1	1
Health care	5	1	0
International foreign affairs	2	4	0
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	3	2
Concern for children	1	2	2
Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly	2	3	0
Other ^a	2	1	0
Taxes	1	1	0
Welfare reform	1	1	0
Education	0	1	0
Deficit, need to balance budget	0	0	1
Column total	29	27	10

Note: SS is an abbreviation for Social Security.

a Topics are: Candidate dishonesty, government corruption, dairy industry.

Table 4-13. Low level fear appeals and issues containing fear appeals

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Military, defense spending	1	-	-	.27
Terrorism, homeland security	1	-	-	.48
Economic concerns	1	-	-	.08*
Health care	1	-	-	.02**
International foreign affairs	1	-	-	1.00
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	.38
Concern for children	1	-	-	.63
Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly	1	-	-	1.00
Other ^a	1	-	-	.54
Taxes	1	-	-	1.00
Welfare reform	1	-	-	1.00
Education	1	-	-	1.00

Note: SS is an abbreviation for Social Security. N = 37.

a Topics are: Candidate dishonesty, government corruption, dairy industry.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-14. Medium level fear appeals and issues containing fear appeal

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Military, defense spending	1	2.86	.09*	-
Terrorism, homeland security	1	.22	.64	-
Economic concerns	1	-	-	.09*
Health care	1	-	-	.18
International foreign affairs	1	-	-	.41
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	1.00
Concern for children	1	-	-	1.00
Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly	1	-	-	.66
Other ^a	1	-	-	1.00
Taxes	1	-	-	1.00
Welfare reform	1	-	-	1.00
Education	1	-	-	.49

Note: SS is an abbreviation for Social Security. N = 37.

a Topics are: Candidate dishonesty, government corruption, dairy industry.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-15. High level fear appeals and issues containing fear appeals

Issues	Df	Chi-Square	P-value	Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)
Military, defense spending	1	-	-	.62
Terrorism, homeland security	1	-	-	.62
Economic concerns	1	-	-	1.00
Health care	1	-	-	.58
International foreign affairs	1	-	-	.57
War in Iraq or Afghanistan	1	-	-	.18
Concern for children	1	-	-	.13
Medicare, SS, problems of the elderly	1	-	-	1.00
Other ^a	1	-	-	1.00
Taxes	1	-	-	1.00
Welfare reform	1	-	-	1.00
Education	1	-	-	1.00

Note: SS is an abbreviation for Social Security. N = 37.

a Topics are: Candidate dishonesty, government corruption, dairy industry.

* = .1.

** = .05.

*** = .01.

Table 4-16. Ad Sponsorship and Fear Appeal Level

Fear Appeal Level	Bush & Kerry Campaign Sponsorship	Other Sponsorship
Low	4	10
Medium	7	11
High	2	3
Total	13	24

Table 4-17. Threat level of fear appeals and pro-Democrat ad sponsorship

Fear Appeal Level	Kerry Campaign	DNC	AFL-CIO	Band of Sisters	CQE	Media Fund	MoveOn.org	Texans for Truth
Low	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1
Medium	2	2	0	0	1	3	1	0
High	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Total	3	5	1	1	1	4	3	1

Table 4-18. Threat level of fear appeals and pro-Republican ad sponsorship

Fear Appeal Level	Bush Campaign	RNC	PFV	Club for Growth	Citizens United	Swiftboat Veterans
Low	3	0	0	1	1	2
Medium	5	1	1	1	0	1
High	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	1	1	2	1	3

Table 4-19. Fear appeal types in Kerry and pro-Democrat sponsored ads

Fear Appeal Type	Kerry Campaign	DNC	AFL-CIO	Band of Sisters	CQE	Media Fund	MoveOn.org	Texas for Truth	Total
Physical	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	9
Economic	3	4	1	1	0	2	2	0	13
Social	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	6

Table 4-20. Fear appeal types in Bush and pro-Republican sponsored ads

Fear Appeal Type	Bush Campaign	RNC	Citizens United	Club for Growth	PFV	Swiftboat Veterans	Total
Physical	8	1	0	1	1	2	13
Economic	4	1	0	2	0	0	7
Social	0	0	1	1	0	1	3

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

As a type of emotional appeal, fear appeals are more effective in advertising abstract products and services such as health or life insurance than a rational appeal (Bruzzone, 1981, Johar Sirgy 1991, Vaughan 1980). The abstract nature of certain products or services can be alleviated through the use of emotional appeals (Albers, et. al.; Unwin, 1975). The issues discussed in political advertisements are similar to abstract products and services as they are of no immediate value to the voter, nor do they offer any visible benefit. When a person buys health insurance they do not *see* their purchase, nor do they gain any immediate results from the purchase. It is a service that a person buys trusting that the insurance company will serve them when needed. A political advertisement features a showcase of issues that a presidential candidate is promising to address when in office. When a person votes for president, they do not see any immediate gain from their vote. Instead, the person trusts that the president will serve him or her as promised and address the issues mentioned in advertisements, debates and political stumps. In general advertising the goal of the advertisement is to create a need for a good or service. Likewise, the goal of the political advertisement is to create the need for a certain candidate to gain office. The goal of the fear appeal within the political advertisement is to create a fear that the opponent might gain office instead.

Early fear appeal studies have approached fear from an experimental standpoint in order to examine the acceptance or rejection of the message and manner in which the threat is managed (Hoveland, 1953; Janis, 1967; McGuire 1968, 1969; Ruiters, et. al., 2001). As a result, a variety of behavioral and attitudinal theories and models emerged. The theories and models discussed in the literature review section rely on research based on the categorization of the levels and types of fear appeals used and the increased or decreased effectiveness of a message as a result of the

level of fear used (Arthur, 2004; Bennett 1996; Brooker 1981; Hunt, and Shehryar, 2002; Insko et al. 1965; Janis 1967; Janis & Feshbach, 1954; LaTour & Rotfeld 1997; LaTour & Zahara, 1989; Leventhal, 1971; McGuire, 1968, 1969; Niles, 1964; Rogers, 1975; Ruiter et. al., 2004).

One of the first, the Drive Reduction Model suggested a relationship between message effectiveness and the potency (or level) of a fear appeal. The majority of theories and models that followed adopted the idea of the dependence of message effectiveness on the potency of a fear appeal. Variations to this model occurred over the course of time when researchers discovered new ways of interpreting the wide range of results that have occurred in experimental studies of fear appeals. Instead of approaching the topic from a different perspective, researchers continued to focus on varying explanations of the *effects* of the fear appeal message and the neurological processes that are involved in the stimulation of fear. The message itself has gotten little attention. Videostyle and a few other content analysis methods have tested for the presence of fear appeals in advertisements but an analysis of the levels of fear appeals, types of fear appeals, fear appeals mentioned with regard to issues, or the presence of fear appeals related to ad sponsorship are aspects of the message not previously considered.

Fear Appeal Levels

The results showed that neither PAC's, nor the presidential campaigns limited themselves to using low fear appeal levels in the spots, and were significant ($\chi^2 = 7.19$, $df = 2$, $N = 37$, $p\text{-level} = .03$). This finding was not supported by the hypothesis which stated that low fear appeal levels would be used more by the campaigns. Instead, the majority of the spots contained medium (48.6%) and low (37.8%) fear appeal levels, although high fear appeal levels were used, if only sparingly (13.5%). This range of use was not surprising since the 2004 presidential elections featured the most negative advertising to date (Kaid, 2006). An increase in negative advertising might suggest an increase in the use of higher fear appeal levels. Negative ads are

generally more memorable and emotionally evocative than positive ads. Not only do emotionally evocative ads attempt to motivate change in behavior (Batra and Ray 1986; Edell and Burke 1987; Holbrook & Batra 1987; in Moore, & Harris, 1996; Arthur & Quester, 2004), but Ray & Wilkie (1970) suggest that fear appeals are more effective when entering new markets, in this case, motivate people who ordinarily do not vote to do so.

Image and Issue Based Fear Appeals

Most of the 37 advertisements with fear appeals were image based, however the difference between issue and image based ads in this study was very small (20 and 17) and was not statistically significant. Previous research suggests that the better known candidate (incumbent) can devote more ads to attacking the image of the other candidate because he (the incumbent) is better known and does not have to show people who he is (Devlin, 2005). The opponent is also likely to devote a significant portion of his media campaign to developing his image, as he is lesser known (Devlin, 2005).

Issue ads contained primarily medium fear appeal levels (47.4%), followed by low fear appeal levels (36.8%). Only 15.8% of the issue ads contained high fear appeal levels. Of the image ads, half used medium fear appeal levels, 38.9% low, and 11.1% used high fear appeal levels. A Chi-square, and Fisher's Exact Test analysis indicated that none of the relationships were significant. Tables 4-2 and 4-3 show the results of the analysis.

"January Surprise" was an issue ad containing a medium fear appeal level. The ad opens with bold white letters on a black background that read, "The truth is coming out..." while a voiceover states, "stating, "George Bush has finally admitted that he intends to privatize social security in his second term." A still photo of Bush raising his right hand standing next to an enlarged photo of a social security card are shown on a black screen. The voiceover continues, quoting a newspaper quote of Bush, "I'm going to come out strong..." Bush said, "With

privatizing of social security.” The voiceover lists grievances against Bush with regards to social security as the issues appear in white with a red outline over the still of Bush and the social security card. The voiceover reiterates what the white letters outlined in black read, “Threatens social security with record deficits of \$400 billion dollars”, “Now Bush has a plan that cuts social security benefits by 30 to 45%”; at the same time, the quote appears in white letters over the still photo of Bush and the social security card. The final quote, placed in white letters over a black screen and reads, “The real Bush plan: Cutting Social Security.”

“Yakuza” was an image ad that contained a medium fear appeal level. This ad opens with a picture of Kerry’s book “The New War” on a black background next to a large grey question mark outlined in red and the word “strategy” placed over the question mark. The voice over states, “John Kerry says he is the author of a strategy to win the war on terror...” The next image is of an anime style cartoon character holding a gun with a picture of Kerry in black and white to the left of it. The voice over continues, “...against the Japanese Yakuza...” The screen blackens leaving the black and white photo of Kerry on the left as blurry color pictures flash by with a red question mark superimposed over them. The first scene is of a man in a blue vest and black shirt carrying a gun followed by an out of focus picture of Osama bin Laden which blurs out replaced by a picture of Yasser Arafat. All the while the voice over is saying, “Never mentions Al Qaeda, or Osama bin Laden, calls Yasser Arafat a ‘statesman’.” After the image of Yasser Arafat, a color picture of *The New Republic* appears with white letters superimposed over it reads quote, “misses the mark.” The voiceover says, “The New Republic says that Kerry misses the mark. And Kerry’s focus?” By this time the words “Kerry’s focus” appear in white on a black screen, and as the ad continues the black background turns white with a silhouette of a man spinning a globe on his finger. Above the man’s head black letters read “Global Crime.” The voice over

continues from the question asked in the previous scene, "...Kerry's focus? Global Crime, not terrorism" As the word "terrorism" is said, a picture of Osama bin Laden appears on screen with the words "not terrorism" superimposed in white letters to the right of his head. Next the same black and white photo of Kerry appears on a black background with a thought bubble superimposed on the background with a black question mark in the center of the bubble. The voiceover says, "How can John Kerry win a war if he doesn't know the enemy?"

Analysis of physical, economic and social fear appeal types resulted in the following, economic fear appeals were used most frequently, and the finding was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 6.06$, degree of freedom = 1, $p = .01$, $N = 37$). This type of fear appeal probably captured a larger audience demographic because problems such as health care, taxes, Medicare and Social Security are salient in the minds of the public. As such, it is easier to target this large demographic using something that all can identify with. Another reason for the presence of economic fear appeals may reflect the popular sentiments regarding the slow growth the economy was experiencing at that time; the percentage of unemployed Americans has risen since the 90's.

Issues and Fear Appeals

Fear appeals were most often employed with regards to "Terrorism, homeland security" and "Military, Defense spending" (both 29.7%). This finding supported previous content analysis research that found fear appeals present in issues relating to war and peace, nuclear weapons, crime, Social Security, and healthcare (Johnston & Kaid, 2002, p. 288). A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center from November 5, 2004 to November 8, 2004 indicated that the most important issues for voters in descending order were: "Moral values", "Iraq", "Economy/jobs", "Terrorism", "Healthcare", "Education", "Taxes" (Pew, 2004).

The type of fear appeal used with regards to terrorism and homeland security was physical, and significant $P(df = 1, N = 37) = .03, \eta^2 = .05$. Although terrorism is still an abstract term, events like the anthrax scare, and the color-coded terror threat meter kept terrorism salient in people's minds. According to Pew, there was a vast partisan divide with regards to the war on terrorism (Taylor, Meredith, 2005). Republicans believe relying on overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism while Democrats believe relying on excessive force leads to more terrorism (Taylor, Meredith, 2005).

The military/defense spending issue is another that is salient in people's mind due to the War in Iraq and Afghanistan. The advertisements that employed these types of fear appeals used the divisive issue of providing adequate funding for the war in Iraq. These advertisements often combined military defense spending with data on the deficit. One of the advertisements with higher fear appeals tied military spending now to future social problems by suggesting that our children and their children will be paying for our mistakes. This advertisement was created by the Media Fund, a PAC supporting Kerry. The ad spot is called "Ball and chain", and shows a little girl shackled to a ball and chain labeled "\$\$\$ Iraq War." This image then fades into a still picture of George W. Bush, onto which the word "LEADER" is imposed. After the appearance of the word "leader" the letters "MIS" appear in front of the word "leader", spelling "MISLEADER." The classification of the ad as medium level fear appeal ad occurred because the perceived threat suggested a consequence that would occur in the near future. This threat used low level fear appeals probably due to the fact that while it was a current event, the Bush administration has removed its immediacy from people's mind by emphasizing that the way to help with the war effort was to be active consumers. It was hard to create immediacy about the War in Iraq when its location is half way around the world, and it does not pose a direct threat to

the security of the United States or its people. This seems to be related to “severity of harm” studied earlier by Bagozzi & Moore (1994), Leventhal (1966), and Kelder et al. (2001). Hunt & Shehryar (2002) found that viewing a fear appeal advertisement containing a death-related message evoked mortality-salience in an audience, compared to a non-death related fear appeal (Hunt & Shehryar, 2002). If, however, a high level of a fear appeal is employed the subjects are more likely to despair and fail to act (Ruiter, Abraham, Kok, 2001).

Following “Terrorism and homeland security” and “Military, defense spending”, fear appeals were used in issues concerning “International affairs”, “Concern for children”, “Healthcare”, “the War in Iraq/Afghanistan”, and “Economic concerns.” “Concern for children” used medium and high economic fear appeal levels the most. An example of a fear appeal concerning children, terrorism, and international affairs is “Risk”, sponsored by the Bush campaign. The ad begins with a voice-over stating, “After September 11, our world changed” with a scene of one of the World Trade Center towers in shambles in the background and an American flag in the foreground, followed by a scene in which a man wearing a black hood is aiming a rifle outside the scene. A picture of an adorable, sad, little boy with sandy colored hair and blue eyes follows this scene. The camera closes in on his eyes to reveal a timeline on which a series of terrorist acts are shown. This is followed by assertions that despite these attacks, John Kerry and liberals in Congress failed to take action against terrorists by slashing defense funding, and voting against bills important to the fight against terrorism. The ad closes with the voice-over asking, “John Kerry and his liberal allies, are they a risk we can afford to take today?” This was coded as containing a high fear appeal because of the immediacy in which the danger was framed, the immediacy of the risk was reemphasized by the ending words, which used the present tense. The rest of the ad employed several other fear appeals, the most potent perhaps

being the scene of the masked man preceded by a scene of 9/11 and followed by a picture of a small child. Bagozzi & Moore (1994) say that fear appeals can be motivational to help others. Kelder et al. (2000) provided examples of fear appeals used in anti-smoking campaigns directed at parents which also appear to be high level fear appeals. Probability of occurrence is a theme that is applicable to ads relating to concern for children since most of the advertisements suggested an immediate, or near immediate effect, it is possible that these ads are particularly effective.

Fear appeals in relation to concern for children may be highly effective because many voters as parents place priority on the welfare of their children, and anything that might pose a risk could mobilize them to counter the adverse effects. In fact, Pew cited the National Election Pool exit poll which stated that Bush led 57-42% among Americans and 59-40% among married people with children (Taylor, Meredith, 2005). Further, the results of my study showed that there was a significant relationship between the issue “Concern for children” and the social fear appeal type $P = (df = 1, N = 37) .01, \beta = .01$.

Fear appeals made in regards to healthcare were, low level economic fear appeals. During the 2004 elections affordable healthcare was mentioned often by the candidates in various stump speeches, and during the presidential debates, so it only makes sense that the advertisements support the candidates’ stances on the issue. To demonstrate the importance of healthcare issues, survey data suggested that 65% of the American population favors a guarantee of healthcare for all Americans even if it means an increase in taxes (Taylor, Meredith, 2005). With regards to fear levels, past research has shown that in regards to health, low level fear appeals are most effective because if higher fear appeal levels are used, there is the risk that the message will be ineffective (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003). Health related topics, “Healthcare”, and “Medicare,

Social Security, problems of the elderly” resulted in having a significant relationship to economic fear appeals (Fisher’s Exact Test 2-sided, $P=.02$ for “Healthcare” and $P=.01$ for “Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly”).

The most significant number of relationships between a fear appeal type and an issue existed between economic fear appeals and various issues. These issues were “Economic concerns”, “Healthcare”, “Medicare, Social Security, problems of the elderly”, and “Terrorism and homeland security.” The economic fear appeal’s significance with relation to these issues may be a reflection of, or reaction to the public’s views on issues that mattered to them. These issues seem to parallel the public’s reported views of the issues that mattered during the 2004 elections (Pew, 2004). The emphasis on economy is attributable to a number of reasons. Devlin (2005) suggested that the Bush campaign stressed domestic issues in order to avoid attacks on his foreign policy. Likewise, Kerry might have focused on the economy because his campaign may also have picked up on voters’ dissatisfaction with the slow economy (Devlin, 2005).

An example of a low level economic fear appeal is an ad sponsored by the Democratic National Committee that opens with a side view of Bush walking out onto a stage with confetti falling around him and people chanting “Four more years!” in the background. The camera shifts and as he stands in the middle of the stage; a man’s voice says, “He stood with the big drug companies, signing their Medicare law blocking low cost drugs from Canada...” As the voice-over says this, the scene changes to a black and white still shot of a mortar and pestle that is replaced by color video of Bush smiling and waving to the crowd. The scene of Bush blacks out and a black and white video of an old man shaking his head as he holding up a bottle of pills takes its place. During this interchange of scenes the voice-over continues, “...And under George Bush, prescription costs are up by 22%.” After that image is another color video of Bush

chuckling onstage which is replaced by another black and white video of a woman on the phone shaking her head to a worried man with a mustache. The voice over continues, “He sided with the insurance industry as health premiums soared 57%....”

The images and voice-over give the viewer the sense that Bush only cares for the rich and powerful and is willing to let normal people suffer. The advertisement ends with the voice-over asking “Four more years?” At the same time the question appears in large white text superimposed over Bush’s laughing face. Another line of large white text appears reiterating what the voice-over is saying, “America can’t afford to wait.” The fear appeal is clearly an economic one, however the timeline (Four more years) suggested by the letters and voice-over put distance between the negative consequence and the viewer.

Presidential Campaigns and Other Supporters

To fully understand the meaning of these results it is necessary to give a brief synopsis of each of the pro-Republican and pro-Democrat groups. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations is a “voluntary federation of 54 national and international labor unions” (www.aflcio.org). Progress for America Voter Fund is “a conservative issue advocacy organization dedicated to keeping the issue record straight on the campaign trail and serving as a “Political Truth Squad”” (www.progressforamerica.org). Communities for Quality Education is a national education advocacy group (www.qualityednow.org). The Media Fund formed in 2002 by a former aid to President Clinton, Harold M. Ickes; is speculated to be inactive due to loss of funding from large media corporations (www.answers.com). MoveOn.org Civic Action is a nonprofit organization, formerly known just as MoveOn.org. Its intent was to focus on education and advocacy on important national issues (www.moveon.org). Texans for Truth is a now inactive political advocacy organization that was formed to oppose Bush’s campaign bid for Presidency in 2004 (www.answers.com). The “Band of Sisters” was a group of

five women who were intent on chasing Cheney to tell the other side of the War in Iraq. They have been in a MoveOn.org PAC advertisement (www.washingtonpost.com). Club for Growth is a conservative group that endorses Republican candidates who want a limited government and lower taxes (www.clubforgrowth.org). Citizens United want to reassert American values of limited government, free enterprise, strong families and national sovereignty (www.citizensunited.org). Swift Vets and POWs for Truth counter Kerry's claims of war crimes committed by Vietnam Veterans and accurately portray Kerry's tour in Vietnam (www.swiftvets.com).

Fear Appeal Levels: Comparisons among Sponsors

Examining the results of the comparison of the use of fear appeals among the different sponsors we see some interesting results. Of the pro-Democrat sponsors the sponsors that used medium fear appeal levels were the Democratic National Committee (DNC), The Media Fund, MoveOn.org, and Communities for Quality Education (CQE). Those that employed high fear appeal levels were the Democratic National Committee, the Media Fund, and The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). The Kerry campaign ads employed low and medium fear appeals. The DNC and MoveOn.org each employed low fear appeal levels in 2 of their ads. Texans for Truth, Band of Sisters and the Kerry campaign each sponsored 1 ad that employed low fear appeal levels. Of the pro-Republican ad sponsors Swiftboat Veterans sponsored 2 ads that employed low level fear appeals. Both Club for Growth and Citizens United sponsored 1 ad that had low level fear appeals. The Bush campaign sponsored 3 ads that contained low level fear appeals. The Bush campaign sponsored 5 ads that were considered medium fear appeal levels while the other pro-Republican sponsors such as the RNC, PFV, Club for Growth and Swiftboat Veterans each sponsored 1 ad that contained medium

level fear appeals. Interestingly the Bush campaign was the only Republican ad sponsor that had any high fear appeal levels in their ads (3).

Medium Fear Appeal Levels

Since medium fear appeal levels were used the most, the discussion will start with those. The ads in question were primarily issue ads attacking a specific policy or policy stance of the candidates. For instance, an ad sponsored by the Bush campaign suggested that Kerry's health care plan would be too bureaucratic and would not permit doctors to make the correct choices for their patients. An issue ad sponsored by Kerry attacks Bush's Social Security privatization stating, "He has a plan that would cut Social Security benefits by 30 to 45%...." These issue ads targeted a specific segment of the population. The ads suggested a threat that was tempered by the fact that there is ambiguity in terms of implementation of the strategies. One of the image medium fear appeal ads was by the Media Fund which illustrated Bush's close connections with the Saudi Royal family and suggested the existence of links between the Saudis that attacked the country on 9/11 and the Saudi Royal family, which made Bush guilty by association. This guilt by association decreases the fear effect because it does not suggest that Bush is directly responsible for the occurrences on 9/11 but the connection is suggestive enough to cause some concern, although the effectiveness of this ad could be questioned since it is not targeted at a specific demographic and research has shown that the most effective fear appeals are those that target a specific audience (Arthur & Quester, 2004; Ray & Wilkie, 1975).

Low Fear Appeal Levels

Low fear appeal levels were used in 37.8% of the ads in the 2004 Presidential campaign. One of the more poignant low fear appeal ads was sponsored by the Band of Sisters. This ad showed a group of women sitting around a television, presumably watching the debates discussing how Bush is not taking the War in Iraq seriously because "He still isn't taking it

seriously, he's still going around wearing that silly grin." The women are also criticizing the lack of planning that went into the War in Iraq and one states, "If there was a plan for progress my brother would still be alive today..." Shortly before the end of the ad the screen blacks out and large white letters say "George Bush: Out of touch with reality." The ad closes with one of the ladies standing up to turn the television off. This ad is not categorized as a high fear appeal ad because it does not suggest an immediate threat; it only shows past and present mistakes the women believe the President has committed. Another interesting example of a low fear appeal is an ad sponsored by Club for Growth. The spot is unique because it combined a low fear appeal with humor. It starts with a man about to make a deal with a car salesman on the car lot when he sees another car driving by that he likes better. The man takes the check back, which he had just handed to the salesman. The next scene is of a man at the altar getting ready to say his vows when his eyes alight on one of the bride's maids and he takes her by the shoulders, dips her tango-style and presumably kisses her off camera while the bride and the priest look on horrified. The next scene is one of Kerry at a podium making gestures with his left and right hands and over each white text appears for a few moments that read, "Iraq, Patriot Act, \$87 billion, Terrorism, Taxes." This scene is replaced by a picture of a clock counting down from ten with wires wrapped around several red sticks, which is presumably a bomb. The bomb squad leader is sweating and cannot decide what wire to cut, has a nervous fit and is rushed away by his teammate leaving a fireman that was in the vicinity alone with the bomb. That scene fades away into another of Kerry gesturing in the air with his left and right hands while white text hovers over each as he gestures. The words are, "Welfare reform, Patriot Act, Marriage penalty, Gas tax." A flash returns the viewer to the previous scene where the bridegroom is kissing the bridesmaid and then dropping her to kissing the old lady playing the keyboard at the reception.

This flashes back to Kerry and the same gestures. The ad suggests that you would not change your mind on important issues that really matter and that you shouldn't vote for someone like Kerry who does. As stated previously, this ad is particularly interesting because it marries the two concepts of humor and fear in a low level setting. A study done previously by Brooker (1981) compared low level fear appeal ads and low level humor appeal ads and found that the humor appeals were more effective than the fear appeal ads. His separation of low humor and low fear appeals was ill-defined because some of the humor appeals also contained fear appeals. An example of this was the use of a limerick for brushing teeth:

If your lady friend turns aside her nose

Whenever you begin to propose

The halitosis demon

Might be what sends her screamin'

And your toothbrush could help to solve your woes. (Figure 2, p. 34).

This would suggest that the possibility that the Club for Growth ad is in fact, a persuasive humor/fear appeal ad is not unfounded. Further research should examine whether this type of appeal, where more than one emotional appeal is present, is effective.

High Fear Appeal Levels

The AFL-CIO, and the Media Fund sponsored ads used high fear appeal levels, as did the DNC. The DNC ad is targeting parents, particularly the Baby Boomers and appealing to their fears as parents by stating that their children and grandchildren will be most affected by Bush's economic plans. The ad ends by stating, "America and our children can't afford four more years." The AFL-CIO sponsored ad targeted white collar workers. The high fear appeal ad is about outsourcing a white woman's engineering job to India. The Media Fund ad is targeted at the Black community. A voice-over states that John Kerry understands who is disproportionately

affected by war, suggesting that the Black community is affected more so than others. As the three advertisements were targeting a specific segment of the public they could afford to use high fear appeals. Insko et al. (1965) found high fear appeal advertisement messages to be quite effective in their study and Ray and Wilkie (1975) suggest that the reason for this is because their fear appeal message was targeted at an audience that would be positively affected by the advertisement. Arthur & Quester (2004) argued that effective market segmentation can narrow the effects of a fear appeal.

The Bush campaign high fear appeal ads discussed fighting terrorism. As such, it is not surprising that his campaign spots should use high fear appeal levels to keep terrorism and personal security salient in the public's mind. Leventhal's research showed that perceived severity of a highly threatening fear appeal increased the effectiveness of the fear in advertising (Leventhal 1966). LaTour and Rotfeld's 1997 study furthers the reasoning. Their research showed that if a perceived threat resonates with the viewer, they are more likely to report the intention of taking steps to prevent the threat from occurring. In the Bush ads, the suggested step is to vote for him.

Fear Appeal Types: Comparisons among Sponsors

Physical Fear Appeals

As mentioned earlier the Bush campaign and pro-Republican ad sponsors utilized physical fear appeals the most, followed by both social and economic fear appeals. Bush used the greatest number of physical fear appeals which is not surprising as these fear appeal ad spots were intended to mobilize people to action. There were several types of physical fear appeal ads that were created in order to segment different portions of the population. One of these is called "Practical v Big Government" which suggests that "Big government in charge, not you, not your doctor." This ad is a low physical fear appeal ad spot because it presented an issue that directly

related to American's health and healthcare but does so in a manner that is not posing an immediate threat. This was probably particularly appealing to those in the U.S. that do not have any healthcare. Another physical fear appeal used by Bush has been discussed previously, called "Risk." This ad was coded as a physical fear appeal because the primary issue was the defense against terrorism and how John Kerry and the liberals in Congress continually opposed legislation that might have prevented, or prepared the country for a terrorist attack. This was another example of severity of harm and probability of occurrence. The ad asks, "John Kerry and His Liberal Allies Are They a Risk We Can Afford to Take Today?" This gave the message immediacy, and made it also very probable if a person voted for John Kerry. Two more Bush physical fear appeals are "Differences" and the direct Spanish translation, "Diferencias." Both targeted a wide audience appealing to those that work for small businesses and have limited healthcare, people on Social Security, taxpayers, and car owners/drivers. The ad says that Kerry approved increasing the tax on gas, increasing taxes in general by \$900 million dollars all within the first 100 days of his Presidency. This particular ad not only has employed physical fear appeals in discussing issues related to healthcare, but has also utilized economic fear appeals in discussing taxes and Kerry's supposed plan to increase taxes. On the pro-Democrat side, the spot "Stand Up", sponsored by The Media Fund previously mentioned is one of the high level physical fear appeals used by the pro-Democrats. "Stand Up's" threat appealed to the Black community and the very real threat of their 14 year old children going off to war in the next four years. Like the campaign against drugs which used strong physical fear appeals to motivate parents to talk to their children in order to prevent drug use, this ad was targeted at parents motivating them to vote against Bush so that their children do not end up in Iraq. Another ad spot sponsored by the DNC dealt with Social Security and how it was endangered by Bush's plans to

privatize it, which would adversely affect “So many lives that depend on it.” Again, this is an example of market segmentation, appealing to those already on Social Security and presenting Bush’s plan as an immediate risk to their livelihood.

Economic Fear Appeals

The pro-Democrat groups including the Kerry campaign utilized economic fear appeals more than the pro-Republican sponsors, including the Bush campaign. The DNC created the most economic appeal spots followed by Kerry and the other pro-Democrat groups. “Stare” an ad sponsored by the DNC appeals to baby boomers that have children and/or grandchildren by saying that “George Bush’s budget deficit will leave our children with debt for decades to come.” Another ad that also dealt with concern for children is called “Ball and Chain” which is described in Chapter 4. This ad also appealed to parents but used the cost of the war in Iraq as the reason children today will be “chained” to debt. This ad was paid for by the Media Fund. Mentioned earlier, “Dig your own grave” sponsored by the AFL-CIO is an example of an ad that played on people’s fears of losing their jobs. This particular ad is not about the blue collar worker, instead it appeals to the fears of white collar workers that could just as easily lose their jobs to outsourcing. As mentioned previously, the ads “Differences” and “Diferencias” sponsored by the Bush campaign contained physical fear appeals but also economic appeals that suggested that if Kerry was elected president, in the first 100 days of his presidency he would increase taxes by \$900 billion dollars, and voted to increase the taxes on gas in the past. Another pro-Republican ad sponsored by Club for Growth used humor and fear together in the ad. The ad states, “John Kerry says he’ll only raise taxes on the rich, the problem is he thinks YOU’RE rich.” The ad is humorous because of the visuals it used to convey its message and a flippant voice-over that also used ironic tones to suggest the absurdity of Kerry’s tax plans. The ad used clip-art like images of a car, house, dollar sign, and medical sign to convey the fact that if you

own a car, house and are on Social Security; John Kerry is going to raise taxes on you. Many of the ads that used physical fear appeals that relate to Social Security and the War in Iraq also used economic fear appeals because the physical and economic issues were interrelated in voter's minds, for example the economic aspect of healthcare and the physical well being aspect. If a person loses their job for instance, that economic issue suddenly also becomes physical because the person's livelihood is lost and now that person has to worry about their survival. In the case of the War in Iraq and terrorism, the threat is physical because either the viewer or a loved one could be sent over to Iraq, or terrorists could come and terrorize the country again, which is in the realm of a physical appeal. These issues also represent economic appeals as well when the ads begin to discuss how the country is going to pay for things like the War in Iraq or for increased defense.

Social Fear Appeals

Social fear appeals were used the least, probably because of the difficulty of making an ambiguous threat likely and immediate to viewers. "Stare", sponsored by the DNC, was considered to have a social fear appeal because although the threat suggests that "your child will be burdened with Bush's budget deficits"; it explicitly says "our children" will carry the same burden. Thus, the fear appeal moves from being just an individual fear to a fear that is shared by all parents. Through the course of the advertisement still shots of different children of different ethnicities and race are shown in black and white, furthering the idea that all children will be affected. Another thing that contributes to the social aspect of the ad was the ending statement where the voice over stated, "America and our children can't afford four more years." An ad sponsored by MoveOn.org titled "Hooded" was probably the clearest representation of a social fear appeal. The ad begins with a shot of the Statue of Liberty's green base, and as the camera pans up the statue a voice-over says, "They said we went to Iraq to bring American values,

democracy, liberty. But something has gone horribly wrong...” As this last portion is said, the camera pan nears the statue’s head which is draped with a black cloth. The voice over continues, “Now its bee reported that Donald Rumsfeld initiated the plan that encouraged the physical coercion and sexual humiliation of prisoners.” The scene fades and in its place is a picture of Donald Rumsfeld in the foreground and Bush in the background. The scene, with the exception of Rumsfeld’s face is opaque and the voice-over continues, “Rumsfeld has endangered our soldiers and America.” At the end of that statement the scene clears up and the camera zooms in on Bush’s face with the voice over asking, “Why hasn’t George Bush fired this man?” The ad suggested that Donald Rumsfeld and George Bush by association have not only put Americans at risk, they have also razed the values that America was founded upon.

Conclusion

In terms of the level of fear appeal, it was found that the most common level was the medium fear appeal level. This fear appeal level would probably appeal most to producers and sponsors of ads because they would avoid the pitfalls of low and high fear appeals. For low fear appeals the potential pitfall is that the fear appeal is ineffective because it does not generate enough immediate threat. For high fear appeals the pitfall is that the appeal is so high that viewers ignore both the message and the solution. All fear appeals however have to address the probability of occurrence, so even a medium fear appeal level could remain ineffective if the perceived threat is not something that the viewers can readily identify as a possible risk to themselves.

More ad spots contained physical and economic fear appeals than social fear appeals. It could be that people are by nature more inclined to perceive a physical and economic threat than a social threat. For instance, the characteristic of a social fear appeal is one that suggests a risk or fear related to social conditions. Examples of these are statements that play on fears of

homosexuals, fears related to religious values and norms, and/or fears related to ethnic or racial differences. While people may have these fears, it was difficult to convey any immediacy about the risk to their own person regarding these. Someone may be afraid of the lack of importance placed on religious values in today's society, but that lack of importance will not immediately affect the person in question. Thus it would seem that it was harder to generate a perceived threat, and/or immediacy that are generally regarded as necessary for a fear appeal to be effective. Physical and economic fear appeals on the other hand are easier to manipulate. Threatening a person's livelihood or health, and placing the threats in an immediate context are what past research has found to be an effective usage of fear appeals.

The pro-Republican ad sponsors used physical fear appeals more than any other type of appeal and the pro-Democrat sponsors used economic fear appeals the most. This probably has to do with each individual candidate's platform during the campaign. The Bush campaign platform was that of national security, and fighting terrorism. The most logical use of fear appeals dealing with those issues would be physical fear appeals. Appeals that would suggest that without Bush as President the country and you are at risk. The Kerry platform on the other hand was domestically focused. His campaign emphasized the economy, jobs, and healthcare. Therefore it is reasonable that the ad sponsors would focus on economic appeals more so than on any other type of appeal.

The issues that most frequently had fear appeals applied were Terrorism/homeland security and Military/defense spending. Other issues related to those were the war in Afghanistan, and international affairs. The 2004 Presidential elections took place during a period of time in which the country was at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and was also fighting "The War on Terror" so the mention of these issues was not unordinary. Other issues that were addressed with fear

appeals were economic concerns, healthcare, concern for children, Medicare/Social Security. These issues dealt with the economic status of the United States, which in 2004 was in an economic slump. According to one ad, Bush lost more jobs than any other president in 75 years (DNC sponsored ad titled “No One”). Both Republican and Democrat groups used anything that might pose a potential risk to the livelihood of people in order to appeal to the fears of people.

The 2004 Presidential ad spots were very diverse and used all types and levels of fear appeals. Segmentation, probability of occurrence, and severity of harm were used in the advertisements in order to effectively appeal to the American public. Future research should study the extent of the effectiveness of political ad spots.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research Directions

One of the more obvious limitations of the research was the size of the dataset. If the dataset were larger, it would have been feasible to use more Chi-square tests in order to strengthen the evidence suggested in this work. Another problem with the design is that the study focused on latent content, which can be open to various interpretations. Therefore, repetition of the same study, using the same parameters may lead to different findings. Upon reviewing the data, it was found that several ads were coded with a lower fear appeal than perhaps should have been. This seemed to happen most for the high fear appeals. The “medium fear appeal level” category seemed to be a “catch all” for the fear appeals. Discussing this with the other coders, the general sentiment was that coders were hesitant about categorizing a fear appeal as high because they were concerned with bias.

Since this was the first analysis of its kind, the codebook may not have been as exhaustive as needed; it may be possible to refine the categories and descriptions of the terminology in order to create a more rigorous study. Future research should look to analyze a larger dataset that incorporates past presidential campaign spots in order to increase the dataset size and

generalizability of the findings. Future campaign advertisements should also be analyzed in this manner to create a larger body of literature that will help future researchers systematically categorize the nature of a fear appeal.

Central to the discussion of fear appeals is whether the fear appeal is in the message or in the reception of the message. The literature reviewed assumes that fear appeals exist but have not examined what specifically triggers the fear emotion. My study has analyzed and coded for different aspects of the “trigger” that moves an ad from being negative to being fearful. Neither this study nor past studies have been able to systematically identify the specific video/audio “trigger” that creates the sense of fear in a person. An area for expansion could be the analysis of fear appeal advertisements in order to test their effects experimentally. It would be useful to determine whether the fear appeals detected in a Videostyle analysis were the same fear appeals participants detect when viewing campaign spots. An aspect of this study could incorporate an analysis of whether high affect intensity individuals are affected more than low affect intensity individuals by the ad spots. This would be an advancement of Moore & Harris’ (1996) research. In their research they suggest that neither high nor low affect intensity individuals had any increase in their responsiveness to low level fear threats. Further they suggest a need to focus ads on a specific market segment in order to maximize its effectiveness. This could lead to a study on whether political advertisements are segment-specific enough for fear appeals to be effective. One last interesting area of research would be to replicate the study done by Brooker (1981) utilizing clear distinctions between fear appeals and humor appeals, to study the effects of both separately and together.

No direct comparison against the experimental theories and models is possible, other than to suggest that the conventional categorization of fear appeal levels may need revisions. In

determining the fear appeal levels for their studies, researchers relied on one of two methods in deciding whether a message contained fear appeals or invoked fear. Of the literature reviewed, the majority of the researchers describe using their own discretion in determining the fear appeal level they would use in their experimental analysis. The rest appealed to second opinions, also academics, to support their initial analysis of an appeal. The problem this created was a lack of standardization in determining whether a message contained a fear appeal, and if so what level of fear appeal was used.

Perhaps the revision of what a fear appeal is in political advertising needs to be considered from a rhetorical standpoint. A reexamination of the psychological cause of fear, and how the message is presented and received may help in clarifying and standardizing the classification of the intensity and types of fear appeals, and assist in clarification of the terminology for fear appeal levels and types was necessary.

The anonymous author of "The Lady's Rhetorick" describes the function of deliberative speaking as one which turns the mind, commands the heart, governs the will, tames the passions and moves to anger fear and hope. To effect these ends the speaker is to employ the lines of argument which grow out of the conceptions of honesty, facility, usefulness, and pleasure. (Lee, p. 80)

This rhetorical understanding of fear is useful for future work in order to refine the qualifications needed to classify an advertisement as containing a fear appeal, and further analyze the different aspects of fear appeals.

APPENDIX A
FEAR APPEAL CODE SHEET

Coder Initials:

Ad ID Number:

- 1. Mark all issues/topics mentioned in the ad**
 - a. international, foreign affairs (.733)
 - b. health care (1)
 - c. taxes (1)
 - d. military, defense spending (.733)
 - e. terrorism, homeland security (.867)
 - f. war in Iraq or Afghanistan (1)
 - g. economic concerns (.867)
 - h. deficit, need to balance budget (1)
 - i. crime, prison, penalties, gun control (1)
 - j. drugs (.867)
 - k. concern for children (.867)
 - l. medicare, social security, problems of the Elderly (1)
 - m. other social policies (1)
 - n. abortion (.867)
 - o. environmental concerns (.867)
 - p. immigration (1)
 - q. smoking, tobacco abuse (1)
 - r. welfare reform (1)
 - s. education (.867)
 - t. civil rights, affirmative action (1)
 - u. other: _____

- 2. Dominant issue: (.467)**

- 3. Is ad candidate or opponent focused? (1)**
- 4. Is this an issue or image based ad? (1)**
 - a. Issue
 - b. Image
- 5. What types of appeals were used? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**
 - a. Logical appeals: (1)
 - b. Emotional appeals: (.867)
 - c. Source credibility/ethos appeals (.867)

- 6. What was the dominant appeal used? SELECT ONE (.467)**
 - a. Logical appeals (use of evidence in the story)
 - b. Emotional appeals
 - c. Source credibility/ethos appeals (appealing to qualifications of candidate)

- 7. What type of fear appeal is used? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**
 - a. Physical fear appeal: (.6)
 - b. Economic fear appeal: (.733)

c. Social fear appeal: (.6)

8. What is the dominant fear appeal used (if more than one was used)? (.533)

a. Physical _____ b. Economic _____ c. Social _____

9. About what issue(s) was the fear appeal made? Pick the top three if there is more than

1
1st Issue No.: _____ 2nd Issue No.: _____ 3rd Issue No.: _____

- a. international, foreign affairs (.867)
- b. health care (.6)
- c. taxes (.733)
- d. military, defense spending (.867)
- e. terrorism, homeland security (.867)
- f. war in Iraq or Afghanistan (.867)
- g. economic concerns (.867)
- h. deficit, need to balance budget (1)
- i. crime, prison, penalties, gun control (1)
- j. drugs (1)
- k. concern for children (.733)
- l. medicare, social security, problems of the Elderly (.867)
- m. other social policies (1)
- n. abortion (1)
- o. environmental concerns (1)
- p. immigration (1)
- q. smoking, tobacco abuse (1)
- r. welfare reform (1)
- s. education (1)
- t. civil rights, affirmative action (1)
- u. other: _____

10. How is the fear appeal being employed?

a. Visual fear appeal-describe imagery:

-
- b. Voice-over: (.6)
 - c. The candidate: (.867)
 - d. A supporter of the candidate: (.867)
 - e. Running mate: (1)
 - f. Family member: (1)
 - g. Government official: (1)

Provide any key words that were important in the fear appeal:

11. How threatening was the fear appeal in the ad? SELECT ONLY ONE (.867)

- a. Low fear appeal
- b. Medium fear appeal
- c. High fear appeal

12. Is the fear appeal directed at the candidate's opponent? This is to be marked "yes" if it refers directly to the opponent by name or party. (1)

- a. Yes
- b. No

APPENDIX B
FEAR APPEAL CODE BOOK

Coder Initials:

Ad ID Number:

13. Mark all issues/topics mentioned in the ad

- a. international, foreign affairs
- b. health care
- c. taxes
- d. military, defense spending
- e. terrorism, homeland security
- f. war in Iraq or Afghanistan
- g. economic concerns
- h. deficit, need to balance budget
- i. crime, prison, penalties, gun control
- j. drugs
- k. concern for children
- l. medicare, social security, problems of the Elderly
- m. other social policies
- n. abortion
- o. environmental concerns
- p. immigration
- q. smoking, tobacco abuse
- r. welfare reform
- s. education
- t. civil rights, affirmative action
- u. other: _____

14. Dominant issue:

15. Is ad candidate or opponent focused?

- a. Does the ad focus on the opponent, or the candidate who the ad is created for?

16. Is this an issue or image based ad?

- a. **Issue-** Emphasizes the candidate's broad issue concerns or specific policy position
- b. **Image-** emphasizes personal characteristics, background and/or qualifications

17. What types of appeals were used? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- a. **Logical appeals:** use of evidence in the ad- Facts are presented in the story in order to persuade viewers that the evidence is overwhelming in favor of some position. This can be use of statistics, logical arguments, etc.
- b. **Emotional appeals:** The ad presents appeals designed to invoke particular feelings or emotions in viewers. This includes happiness, good will, pride, patriotism, anger, etc.
- c. **Source credibility/ethos appeals** (appealing to qualifications of candidate): The ad presents appeals made to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of candidate by telling all he/she has done or is capable of doing, how reliable he/she is. Endorsements or testimonials are often in this category, particularly if they rely

on the credibility of a famous person to enhance the candidate or attack the opponent.

18. What was the dominant appeal used? SELECT ONE

- a. Logical appeals (use of evidence in the story)
- b. Emotional appeals
- c. Source credibility/ethos appeals (appealing to qualifications of candidate)

19. What type of fear appeal is used? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- a. **Physical fear appeal:** The ad includes an appeal that relates to safety or physical well-being of the viewer or those the viewer cares about. *For example, statements about someone being hurt from crime or accidents, statements about deaths and injuries resulting from war, statements about the consequences of a chemical or nuclear explosion, statements about the consequences of terrorism as they relate to the viewer's personal safety.*
- b. **Economic fear appeal:** The ad includes an appeal that relates to loss of income, loss of job, higher taxes, lower benefits, loss of social security, etc.
- c. **Social fear appeal:** The ad includes an appeal that suggests a risk or fear related to social conditions. *For example, statements that play on fears of homosexuals, fears related to religious values and norms, and/or fears related to ethnic or racial differences*

20. What is the dominant fear appeal used (if more than one was used)?

- a. Physical _____ b. Economic _____ c. Social _____

21. About what issue(s) was the fear appeal made?

1st Issue No.: _____ 2nd Issue No.: _____ 3rd Issue No.: _____

22. How is the fear appeal being employed?

- a. **Visual fear appeal-describe imagery:**

- b. **Voice-over:** There is an unseen speaker making a statement that contains a fear appeal
- c. **The candidate:** the candidate is making a statement that contains a fear appeal
- d. **A supporter of the candidate:** someone who supports the candidate is the person making a statement that contains a fear appeal
- e. **Running mate:** the running mate is making a statement that contains a fear appeal
- f. **Family member:** family member of the candidate is making a statement that contains a fear appeal
- g. **Government official:** a senator, house representative, mayor, etc. is making a statement that contains a fear appeal

Provide any key words that were important in the fear appeal: If anything said was particularly compelling, and contributes to understanding the nature of the fear appeal provide the word, or short phrase here

23. How threatening was the fear appeal in the ad? SELECT ONLY ONE

- a. **Low fear appeal:** The fear appeal represents a relatively low threat level, the consequences is not very likely to happen or the possible risk is not great, not likely to happen any time soon, but could happen sometime in the distant future.
- b. **Medium fear appeal:** The fear appeal represents only a moderate risk, the risk is present but not likely to happen quickly or in the immediate future, or w/o warning, but it could still cause some undesirable consequences
- c. **High fear appeal:** The fear appeal represents a very high risk, the threat is great and/or the consequences could be terrible if they occurred, the threat could also be in the immediate future.

24. Is the fear appeal directed at the candidate's opponent? This is to be marked "yes" if it refers directly to the opponent by name or party.

- a. Yes
- b. No

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Urriste graduated from South Lake High School in 2000. Urriste earned a B.A. in Political Science with a Minor in Spanish and a Certificate in International Relations in 2004 from the University of Florida. Urriste began her Master's program in mass communication at the University of Florida in 2004. In the fall of 2004 Urriste participated in the Cingular Wireless Election Connection, a newsblog developed by the University of South Carolina to cover a variety of activities associated with the 2004 presidential elections. Urriste is also a member of UVote, a national nonpartisan organization that aims to increase youth voting and civic awareness. During this time she conducted survey research in the area of political communication, focusing on American political advertisements, and debates, as well as international political communication. Urriste is the co-author of several papers presented at the National Communication Association conference and the Midwest Political Science Association conference. She is also co-author of several book chapters including the book chapter "Campaigns in new Europe: The representation of the European choice 2004 in the media" in the German titled book, *European choice 2004: The mass media in the European election campaign*.