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THE SOUND BITES OF GEORGE W. BUSH DURING THE 2004
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION EXAMINED AND UNPACKED

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition


by
Jack McKelvey
December 2008

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Approved by:



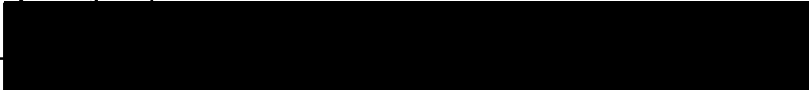
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ABSTRACT

Television has changed the way politicians communicate their views, ideas, and biographies. Television as the main media source provides a visual communication. Politicians use visual symbols and images to present their messages. The tool of choice is the thirty-second or less sound bite. The brevity of the sound bite is appreciated by politicians, network news managers, and society. This brevity is one of the reasons for the critics' opposition.

The sound bite will be defined. Reasons for its use as well as the reasons critics oppose its use will be discussed. Three sound bites of President George W. Bush during the presidential election of 2004 will be explored and unpacked.

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT SOUND BITES ARE AND HOW THEY WORK

The sound bite as discussed in this thesis is generally a thirty second or less political commercial or advertisement on television. Television is used as the primary vehicle for the sound bite as it allows for employment of many of the modern tools of persuasion. Very little written material is able to utilize what is available to the visual and audio media. The best sound bite products of the written word lie mostly in the use of slogans and bumper stickers but these are seldom used in mass communications.

The sound bite is a form of mass communication used by political candidates of all parties. Communication suggests an exchange of ideas, opinions, and information. The way in which sound bites are used provides no opportunity for a meeting of the minds. Sound bites contain as tools of persuasion the use of symbols, images, written words, music, innuendo, camera angle, lighting, and a myriad of others that help to persuade without the ability of the viewer to get more information through inquiry or discussion. These are the reasons most critics oppose their use. However, the sound bite has proponents

who cite the need for their existence because of societies' need for brevity, because of our ever shortening attention spans, our proclivity toward multi-tasking, our need to summarize more and more information, the shrinking of the reading public, and the idea that a sound bite is memorable. Upon researching these views and the sound bite phenomena, my conclusion is not that sound bites are good or bad. They may be used by anyone. The sound bite with its flaws and merits is not only simply what we use today but it is what we accept and expect.

The sound bite has become one of the more familiar forms of rhetoric in contemporary politics. This rhetoric of images, slogans, and symbols has become an important part of political discourse. This rhetoric as today's form of political communication is the choice of politicians and network news managers alike. For example, politicians like that their message can be delivered in a quick thirty seconds. The brevity also enhances a constituents' memory. Similarly, television journalists find sound bites useful in providing language that helps present the candidate's message clearly and quickly. Moreover, the sound bite lives in and is used by a society accustomed to instantaneous information that may often be doled out in

installments. These bits provide only limited information and offer no supporting evidence, no details, no specifics, nor any opportunity for discussion of issues or ideas. These sound bites are one-sided statements of simplified responses to complicated issues. This provides many with reason enough to question the use of sound bites. Many critics argue that the sound bite is responsible for the failure of genuine democratic debate. However, the sound bite as used today may speak to how things have not changed that much since the ancients in the way words are used for political purposes.

The first chapter of this thesis will define the sound bite, investigate how and why television sound bites work, and link these reasons and examples not to each other but to their influence on the birth and life of the sound bite. I will examine how television, symbols, images, captions, emotions, short attention spans, and a decline in reading become factors of influence in society's propensity to the quick but memorable sound bite. These factors are not so much linked together as they share an influence upon our reason for and use of sound bites.

American society today takes the news of the day much like its meals: fast. In addition, electronics has moved

society into the information age where messages, information, and time are digitized. As Anthony Smith notes "today's form of communication is digitization or the breaking down of all information into the basic unit or the bit" (40). One result of this is the development of sound bites: concise (typically thirty-seconds or less) and memorable messages. Likewise, Marshall McLuhan explains that sound bites are an "audiolinguistic phenomenon characterized by a short, meme-like phrase or sentence that captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say" (7). Similarly, Jeffrey Scheuer observes that sound bites are "nominally simple, atomized messages" (82). Additionally, Lawrence K. Grossman and Lesley Stahl agree, noting that the sound bite provides little more than "staccato bits and pieces as message bursts on television" (Grossman 227, Stahl 315).

These message bursts are commonly seen during a newscast or as political advertisements. Consequently, the form appeals to politicians because the use of brief, simple messages provides candidates two very important benefits. First, a candidate's message is more likely to be picked up and aired on television. Secondly, a simple short message televised briefly is memorable to voters (Scheuer 9).

At the same time, effective sound bites are well thought out and well scripted. Not only is the message carefully choreographed but so, too, is their delivery. Each sound bite is produced for a specific audience which may be determined geographically, economically, or for any number of reasons. Therefore, the message to be delivered is the one the audience expects to hear. This message is meticulously orchestrated for emotional effect. Because says Scheuer, "sound bites appeal more to emotion than possess cognitive impact" (117). Since the goal of the politician is to persuade the audience through their feelings and emotions, the audiovisual message of the sound bite is employed.

Even so, many critics of the sound bite point out that television shifts the viewers' focus from issues to images. They point to the poor performance of Richard Nixon in his debates with John F. Kennedy in 1960. People judged Nixon negatively because he looked tense and wore no makeup which made it appear he needed a shave. Appearance never before played such a major role in politics. Images sell and the sound bite's effective use of visual techniques "are a call to action through emotion-laden images," says Todd Gitlin (113).

The call for action is found in the candidate's use of catchphrases, slogans, memes, and hooks hoping that the message is at once memorable and differentiating. Thus, the candidate seeks to separate himself or herself from other candidates while connecting with the voters. For example, George H. W. Bush's campaign sound bite promise: "Read my lips, no new taxes," is frequently blamed for his defeated reelection bid because he raised taxes after he was elected president. The slogan became the candidate.

The candidates' sound bite is very carefully scripted. Meaning can be found in the words of the caption, if provided, in the bits and pieces of images, in the background or foreground, in the colors of the picture; or in the music playing, or in the voice-over, or in the camera angle of the shot, or by any combination of these. Careful construction of the message and purpose of the political sound bite has remained constant but it has become more compressed.

Critics today emphasize how the length of the sound bite has shortened. Professor Kiku Adatto reports that "during the 1968 presidential race between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon, the average candidate's sound bite was 42.3 seconds. But in mid 1992 the average had shrunk to 7.3 seconds" (201). A candidate's uninterrupted statements

are limited in length allowing for a better fit into ever shortening television air time. Agreeing, Dr. Joseph Atkinson says,

Biteability or the ability of an idea to be expressed in a short sound bite is profoundly hostile to constructive political discourse. Where brevity is over-valued, argument is apt to be replaced by assertion (321).

The sound bite is shown as a flashy thirty-second clip because it receives more attention than a whole speech and is much more memorable. Short sound bites are most effective. Also, a news sound bite, like a print headline, is effective often by substituting as a symbol or mnemonic that represents or summarizes the message (Grossman 225). The candidate's sound bite on television newscasts or as commercials between television programs does not vary except as how the sound bite is presented or introduced. It will most often be the same thirty-second clip with the same message and the same images.

The use of images in the television medium is most important in understanding how and why sound bites work. In essence, we see what we want to see; we see what reinforces our own beliefs. In this way suggests Daniel J. Boorstin, "an image is believable and serves its purpose

becoming a likeness of the real thing" (188). Further, he believes that viewers in the target audience understand that images reflect more than the surface level meaning (Boorstin 191). Dr. Frank Luntz says,

A candidate may have the best message in the world but the person on the receiving end will always understand it through the prism of his or her own emotions, preconceptions, prejudices, and pre-existing beliefs (1).

Understandably then, we see and hear what we want to see and hear. The images we see represent what we feel to be true, what we already accept. These images are confirmation. Images are says Boorstin, ambiguous and exist somewhere between the senses and imagination, between expectation and reality (193).

At a Bette Midler concert and from the eighth row center, the young man next to me watched the performance not right in front of him live but on a ten by ten foot screen just to the right of the stage. He seemed to prefer the image to real life. Boorstin explains, "the vivid image comes to overshadow pale reality" (7) as heard in this exchange between a new mother and her friend, "my that's a beautiful baby you've got there. Mother, oh, that's nothing you should see his picture" (13) and "the

Grand Canyon itself became a disappointing reproduction of the Kodachrome original" (14). Thus, the image becomes reality and replaces the real thing. John Berger asserts that "images are more immediate than words. Seeing comes before words. Unlike words symbols do not need to be fully understood to evoke a strong emotional response" (Berger 122). The image can be viewed quickly and at will, containing many visual messages.

Boorstin opines "the hypnotic appeal of the image replaces the persuasive appeal of argument" (192). Images and words in the sound bite are chosen for their ability to persuade through manipulation and emotion. If the audience is persuaded, they may be more inclined to vote for the candidate. Agreeing, McLuhan postulates that,

If the messenger is attractive so too must be the message known as the halo effect (the tendency of an audience to infer other characteristics from a knowledge of only one is a well documented phenomenon) (102).

Boorstin proposes that "image building is the building of reputations not character" (189). Richard Sennett agrees saying "the presidential candidate is credible based on what kind of a man he is not on his issues or programs" (62). The message we get comes from the image being

projected upon us. We have all heard that a picture is worth a thousand words but Gitlin suggests that "images drown out words" (211).

National politics in the United States has become more a competition of images than ideas or issues (Boorstin 249). Images say more in less time and affect the emotions needed to cause us to act. A politician's image may well tell us more about a candidate than his prepared written statement on issues. David Greenberg posits that,

We vote for the one who moves us as determined by a candidate's background, passions, intellect, earthiness, rhetorical style, maturity, temperament, empathy, vision, and related elements of image (321). Television has caused the voting viewer to pay more attention to the appearance of candidates than to ideas or issues. Greenberg believes issues don't really matter much (223). Referring to how candidate's who address issues prior to the vote may act otherwise post vote. After the first presidential debates of 1960, Richard Nixon commented, "at the conclusion of our postmortem, I recognized the basic mistake I had made. I had concentrated too much on substance and not enough on appearance" provides Newton Mino, John Martin and Lee

Mitchel (30). On television, asserts Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the candidate is judged on looks while his personality becomes his major asset (60). Many critics argue that this emphasizes style over substance. They credit television for this reversal in roles.

Television is a major factor affecting how and why the sound bite works. Because candidates are heard for only seconds on television commercials or newscasts, "the advantage goes to the one who appeals to a viewer's pre-existing prejudices. These appeals reinforce what has been heard many times before and are already inclined to be believed" says Norman Solomon (287). Accordingly, the sound bite of about ten seconds allows only time enough for approximately fifteen words. About all a politician could hope for in ten seconds is to appeal to prejudices or emotions. Audiences are encouraged via the sound bite to take one of two positions. "Support a position that is already theirs or adopt the position because they adopt the politician" advises Jamieson (13). We listen for what we recognize.

This means we hear staccato like bursts of information, of messages, and of language meant to motivate or arouse emotion. It means complex ideas either are ignored or simplified and argument is replaced by

assertion (Jamieson 116). In addition, when politicians talk like bumper stickers, we become accustomed to listening for one-liners, mistaking buzzwords for ideas, says Solomon (111). Jamieson tells us that slogans act like a hook in our memory (90). Valerie Noble asserts that an effective sound bite with a musical structure (patterned rhythm or accented beat) is used to create an image in the mind (211). Thus, the image may be embellished by the mind's eye of the viewer and the sound bite need not be long to affect this picture. We hear the words but we see and remember the picture.

We are often told that pictures don't lie! How do we dispute what we have seen with our own eyes? As a proxy for our eyes, the camera determines what we see, the angle, the viewing time, and everything relative to our perception of the scene. This is the view predetermined by another. This view will always portray a candidate in a positive light. This is certainly understandable and even expected if not immediately acknowledged. The television camera through a predetermined view allows us to witness history in the making (Minow et al 6).

Additionally, television requires our attention as we must do more than listen to it from another room because as McLuhan says, it is a cool medium indicating that

information is received visually (178). Images on the screen are visual messages often with multiple meanings. Arguments are made and supported visually through the shared experiences of the nation (Jamieson 127). Television is used in many ways. It is used to inform and to entertain. Television sound bites, too, have replaced the traditional discussion of ideas and issues. As a medium of political information Scheuer indicates that images of sound bites use the language of appearance (93). Jamieson believes that the audience's demand for evidence has given way to hyperbole (13) and exaggeration is the norm in the sound bite media.

McLuhan submits, "societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of that communication" (213). Skilled speakers always find a way to communicate by reducing the distractions of the medium (McLuhan 333). Our busy lives require a quicker, more efficient means of communicating. Today's sound bite audiovisuals may well be considered the instant message of television. As a result, candidates hope that their one-line sound bites are played over and over by television stations until they are accepted as part of our everyday language. Furthermore, Smith posits that somewhere in the space between the audience and the

screen, representations turn into realities (166). Additionally, McLuhan and Fiore submit that we become the screen because, when we view television, images are projected at us and wrap around us (117). Moreover, Kenneth A. Myers, former producer of National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* notes,

Television is not simply the dominant medium of popular culture it is the single most significant shared reality in our entire society. I can think of no entity today culturally unifying role except television (163).

Television's news departments operate under strict time constraints which produces a real need to compress information into saleable segments. Also, the brevity of the news precludes a full review or discussion of issues and views. This is the result of the push to maximize ratings and revenue. The cost of airtime is another reason for shorter sound bites. Quick sound bites allow television stations and news editors to focus on the candidate's message. Generally people accept the sound bite as a way to summarize more and more information in their busy lives. Nevertheless, Jamieson believes that television manipulates and persuades audiences because

In the age of the sound bite, the language of persuasion includes knowledge of staging, camera angles, sound-play, color, and symbols, as well as, how to speak, gesture, move, and appear presidential (92).

Hence, we have moved from print to "moving pictures of meaning and when the verbal and visual dance in step the power of each is magnified" (Jamieson 60).

Meanwhile, television has changed how we view and discuss political campaigns because public discourse reveals that eloquence is visual not verbal says Jamieson (44). Today we are not persuaded by language that paints a picture because that picture is the thing itself viewed in our own homes on television. Now the camera shows what words once told. Jamieson tells us that candidates spend a great deal of time providing their constituents with irresistible pictures because visual images summarize longer verbal messages (61). R. E. Wileman stresses that visual communication is capable of dispensing information more effectively than almost any other vehicle of communication (203). The television sound bite provides both the visual and verbal (the caption or voice over) message which becomes cemented in our memory. Although we

forget much of what we hear, Jamieson suggests that, we remember more when listening and watching (116) and that

Visuals on television are staged dramatizations of images that identify the politician with us - images and symbols we associate with a person, place, or concept - as something we already approve or disapprove of (115).

Visuals speak volumes when words themselves are not quite representative. Visuals are the words and metaphors for a multitude of meanings and they're easily remembered.

Studies comparing memory of pictures to memory of words indicate that pictures are not only better remembered they were retained longer partly because pictures provide for a more vivid understanding of data and information concludes A. Paivio (16). Additionally, posits K. L. Alesandrini, learning is quicker and more effective when presented pictorially (188). Also, concrete information is more influential when delivered pictorially says R. E. Nisbett, E. Borgiada, R. Crandall, and H. Reed (189).

Similarly other researchers suggest that our decreasing attention span may be another factor that influences how and why we use sound bites. Per Milo O. Frank research says that the average attention span is

only thirty seconds (15). Our attention is required in many ways, at different levels, for various reasons throughout the day. Some critics say that television is an influential factor upon our attention span. Some people have a television with one large screen on which they can also view two or three different programs at the same time. Many of these same people can be found listening to an iPod, talking on their Bluetooth cell-phone, or playing video games as they watch television. This is the result of a society bored when only watching television in the age of multi-tasking. Research indicates a link exists between the amount of television viewed and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The study was conducted by researchers at the Children's Research Medical Center in Seattle. The study found that for every hour of television watched daily, the chances of developing ADD rose by 10%. Dr. Dimitri Christakis, the study leader, reports that because things happen so fast on television, children's brains may come to expect this pace, making it harder to concentrate if there's less stimulation (19). Our attention span is affected, too, in another way.

Moreover, the "addictive nature of web browsing can leave you with an attention span of nine seconds" says Dr. Ted Selker of MIT in the BBC report of February 22, 2002

titled *Turning Into Digital Goldfish*. Our attention span, he believes, is affected by the way we do things. For example, "flitting from one thing to another" affects our concentration. We surf the internet with a finger on the mouse ready to move to the next site if our attention is not immediately summoned by the current web site. There is much competing for our time and attention. This may provide some insight into society's ability to sit still long enough to listen to political speeches of candidates for a myriad of offices.

True political debates require our time and attention. George Will believes this word "debate" might best be retired as "it is nothing the candidate's of today do" (53). He spoke of the 1858 presidential debates (seven total) of Lincoln and Douglass in which each spoke for an hour and a half presenting their arguments and he proffers that "perhaps the American attention span [of today] has shrunk so much that people cannot sit still for even ten minute exchanges" (53). Our time and attention is also required in another area that mandates our "sitting still" for a period. Some critics also blame our short attention span on a decline in reading.

The decline of reading whether newspapers or literature may well provide another factor that

contributes to our use of sound bites. Currently, newspaper subscriptions are declining yearly as our lives become busier and our time at once fills and shortens. "Fewer people read newspapers as readers have declined by 600,000 a year for the last ten years" reports James Adams, the Chief Executive Officer of United Press as reported by David Winston at the Democracy and Digital Media conference held at MIT on May 8, 1998. Adult "readership has gone from 81% to 64% over the thirty years while the majority of 18 to 24 year olds don't read newspapers at all" per Winston at the MIT conference. The reading public is reading less and even fewer are reading literature.

For example, the percentage of American adults who "read literature dropped from 56.4% in 1982 to 46.7 in 2002" according to the 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA). The report also indicates that this "trend reflects a larger decline in other sorts of reading and that the decline is accelerating especially among the young" (SPPA). Moreover, this decline in reading corresponds with the "decline of participation in civic and cultural life such as volunteerism, philanthropy, and even political engagement" this according to the survey (SPPA) as reported by the National Endowment for the Art's

report titled *Reading At Risk, A Survey of Literary Reading in America* conducted in August 2002.

Consequently, we have become accustomed to extracting information not from the content of any report but from the bottom line. We obtain news from television because its format allows for short segments of news on each topic. Television requires less of our time and attention. The brevity of the hour's newscast takes less time than a front page to back page reading of the daily newspaper. Our attention span may well influence our proclivities toward the internet, reading of any kind, and watching television (one or more channels at a time). We are a society that travels in fast cars, eats fast food, sends instant messages, and tells time digitally. In short, we are in a hurry. We not only accept sound bites as a way to communicate but find them useful as a solution to life in the fast lane.

I propose that the above factors contribute to and advance our tendency for summarization, condensation, and an immediacy to all our activities. The critics of the sound bite raise valid concerns but the truth is that all politicians use words and the language of images to persuade and motivate not unlike the ancients. Images and visuals act quickly to provide meaning. Television is

convenient. Time is finite and thus provides the impetus
for the influence on the birth and life of the sound bite.

CHAPTER TWO

UNPACKING TECHNIQUES AND INTENTION OF THREE

SOUND BITES OF GEORGE W. BUSH

This chapter will mine the techniques, means, and intentions of campaign sound bites used by George W. Bush during the 2004 presidential election. I will unpack and examine three specific sound bites. They are: Whatever It Takes (55 seconds), Safer, Stronger, and War on Terror Agenda (the last two are 30 seconds each). These sound bites may be found at: <http://pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/2004/archive.html>. These sound bites were aired on television in selected states beginning on March 4, 2004 with Safer, Stronger, September 20, 2004 with War on Terror Agenda, and October 27, 2004 with Whatever It Takes.

These sound bites were selectively chosen for particular states according to the content and message to be delivered to a perceived television audience.

"Television is the dominant medium of a media dominated age," says Jeffrey Scheuer (1). The language of persuasion is a predominant theme in the media especially in politics and advertising. Typically this language employs feelings, images, and words shaped in such a way as to manipulate

the emotions of the audience. These words and messages do not have the same affect in newspapers, magazines, or radio. The sound bite on television is more attention-getting, efficient and effective. R. E. Wileman asserts that, "visual communication is capable of disseminating knowledge more effectively than almost any other vehicle of communication" (133). It is with this knowledge that the sound bites I examine will have been born of and lived in television. The political campaign rhetoric used in sound bites on television is not unlike the rhetoric of persuasion in ancient times.

"Aristotle defines rhetoric as the art of discovering the means of persuasion available for any occasion" (Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg 30). This was the art of practice and imitation. They practiced and imitated the ways of previous successful rhetoricians using the tools of the trade. This ancient rhetoric was used in the courts, in religious and civic ceremonies, in politics, and in performances as entertainment. During these times, males were taught the art of rhetoric as different cultures demanded different kinds of oratory.

In our time, rhetoricality has taken the place of classical rhetoric. John Bender and David E. Wellbery posit, "ours is an age not of rhetoric but an age of

rhetoricality" (25). Which is to say, rhetoricality marks the language of everyday speech. Social pressures and changes in political culture advanced speech into a "discourse of participants as equals, born of a shared human experience and human existence" (Bender et al 25). Bender and Wellbery posit that,

The demise of rhetoric coincides with what we know as modernization: the replacement of a symbolic-religious organization of social and cultural life by rationalized forms; and the move from a divided society according to rank, property, or class to a society that operates along functional axes or individual work capabilities (7).

Rhetoricality moved discourse from functioning within a society based upon a ranking system of status to one of functionality. The individual was defined by his work, his function in society. Individuals thought differently about their participation in the world around them and fostered a change that ensured more involvement in their own culture.

Bender and Wellbery argue that rhetoricality replaced classical rhetoric as the "dominant system of education and communication during the periods known as Enlightenment and Romanticism" (5). The language of

society became less formal and less traditional. This made for a more transparent and more neutral kind of speech. Today the rhetoric of politics and political campaigns remains less formal, less traditional, but more organized and just as manipulative with the goal still being to persuade. We see this in the way each sound bite is meticulously assembled, orchestrated, designed, and choreographed. These issues and the contribution of Kenneth Burke's theory of identification will be presented throughout the remainder of this chapter embedded in the discussion and unpacking of the three previously mentioned sound bites.

Whatever It Takes

As the video opens, we see a black screen with words in capital white letters that spell out: President Bush. At this same time, we hear the voice of George W. Bush as he says, "These four years have brought moments I could not foresee and will not forget." As the voice continues, he comes into view. He is standing in front of an American flag waving freely behind him. The flag symbolizes freedom, patriotism, liberty, and democracy. This image is the symbol of a people of privilege and opportunity that comes from the rights guaranteed by the United States

Constitution and the idea that success is hampered only by one's abilities and motivations. He is wearing a black suit, white shirt, and blue tie. Old glory hanging in the background with the red and white stripes is completed by the president himself with his blue tie. He is at once the red, white, and blue of the flag and the symbol of freedom and freemen everywhere. He is the ultimate patriot, the commander-in-chief, the protector of freedom and free people around the world. As the president speaks, violins play softly in the background. The president stands behind a podium with a protruding microphone. Blackness envelops the president. All scenes in the video are drab, half lit, with a blurred darkness to them. As he speaks the words, "and will not forget" his volume decreases, the cadence slows, and the tone becomes more somber. He takes on a kind of solemn assurance, a dignified serious formality with a ceremonious like gravesite manor. The event feels gloomy and cloudy as we are taken back in our minds to the events of September 11, 2001.

The president continues, "I've learned firsthand that ordering Americans into battle is the hardest decision, even when it is right." With these words, "hardest decision," we see the look of concern as furrows wrinkle his brow. His head and shoulders lower and rise in

salutation as he expresses respect and honor for the men and women who have answered the call to duty. With the words, "even when it is right," we watch him shake his head from side to side indicating the conflict within as this painful decision weighs heavily on him. We understand that this is a regrettable but necessary and correct decision. We are left to ponder these last few words as his voice trails off with the word "right."

The president speaks, "I have returned the salute of wounded soldiers who say they were just doing their job." As we hear these words, the camera cuts to a uniformed soldier looking tall and proud with several miniature American flags waving around and in front of him. He represents a kind of visual synecdoche all the wounded who have faced the enemy. He is the brave war hero soldier who triumphed over death and lives valiantly to fight again, protecting America. His facial expression evokes a sense of pride. We, too, are expected to feel pride in these men and women who put themselves in danger to keep us safe. The soldier appears to have some sort of medal on his uniform hat. Medals are worn as certificates of service, patriotism, and honor. The soldier holds a flag as another is waved back and forth in front of him. The flag, free to

wave, because of men and women who fight to protect Americans and American freedom.

The president continues; "I've held the children of the fallen who were told their dad or mom was a hero but would rather just have their mom or dad. I've met with the parents and wives and husbands who have received a folded flag. And in those military families, I have seen the character of a great nation." These words "I've held the children of the fallen," are emotion laden, image-creating words that provide a visual of sad, crying children in the arms of a single parent. As we hear the words, "I've met with the parents and wives and husbands who have received a folded flag," we understand the meaning: that someone, a brave soldier, has been killed in service to the country. We can imagine the image of two soldiers in dress uniform at the front door delivering the bad news and, at the same time, we can feel the pain of that news. The words "folded flag" are emotion-packed words that provide the stimulus that activates our own images. Frank Luntz quotes Michael Deaver, who while talking with Lesley Stahl said, "when the pictures are powerful and emotional, they override if not completely drown out the sound" (29). These powerful pictures conveyed powerful messages. Audience members are comforted in the knowledge that the President of the

United States understands. As the president continues, the camera pans to a young woman with dark worried eyes and lips drawn up narrow and tight. She wears the anxiety and concern of a wife for her soldier husband who faces death to protect her, her children, and America. Behind her are many people who appear concerned as their faces confirm the lady's apprehension and fears for the future. As we hear the last few words, "and in those military families, I have seen the character of a great nation," we are shown a large crowd of people holding signs and banners and waving to the camera. The crowd is composed of women and children smiling, jumping, yelling, and waving. We are to understand that these are the women of men in the military. They are the women who are keeping America going. They represent the hard working, God fearing families across America who have come together in honor of their men at war. As we view this crowd, we focus on the faces of the people in the audience looking for their actions and reactions because it's how we process information (Luntz 30).

As the president speaks the words, "because of your service and sacrifice," we again see the soldier mentioned earlier who may have been wounded. He is sitting quietly and solemnly as the cadence, tone, and mood of the speech

exemplifies the seriousness of the job at hand while also serving to dignify the soldier's character as well as all the soldiers he represents. As we witness this scene, we feel a chest inflating silent pride. A calm reverential sacredness envelops the viewer. We experience what it is to be a patriot.

The soldier remains seated as flags continue to wave about his head. He waves his flag. Superimposed behind him, we see the crowd of women and children waving and cheering. They represent the character of a great nation. A free people united in the cause of democracy and freedom.

The president continues, "we're defeating the terrorists where they live and plan and you're making America safer." As these words are spoken, we see the soldiers he is talking to and about. They are facing the camera. There is some controversy about this picture as it was cropped to suggest more soldiers in attendance than was the case. I make this observation to point out how what we see in pictures may not be representative of the facts. In the next scene, in the middle of the frame with his back to us, we see a young boy in a white T-shirt holding the American flag. The white T-shirt speaks to the youth's purity and innocence. The young boy represents not

only the children of America but the young men and women fighting the war on terror in Iraq. He is the symbol of what our soldiers are fighting to protect. He holds the flag high in the air demonstrating the patriotism felt by a grateful youth and a grateful America.

Lastly, the president speaks, "*I will never relent in defending America, Whatever It Takes.*" These words are spoken with emphasis. We hear an increase in the volume of these words. The pitch rises with the tone which is serious. There is a rhythmic flow as the words coincide with head movements that display a defiant commander-in-chief who will not give quarter. The end of the speech finds the crowd on its feet clapping, waving hands and flags and signs. The American people will fight terrorism and applauds the president's resolve to do the same.

This is what they wanted to hear. We find in Maxims the desire of listeners to hear universal truths about which they already hold a similar opinion when listening to a speaker (Bizzell and Herzberg 224). Such a maxim can be found in this sound bite as the president speaks the words, "and in those military families, I have seen the character of a great nation." I doubt that anyone in the United States would argue with the idea that we are a

great nation. Susan Jacoby suggests that "Americans today have become a people in search of validation for opinions that they already hold. At the same time, we tend not to hear opposing views" (M10). However, for those who do pay attention to the words of politicians, Richard Cohen submits that although we use the same language we each hear something different (A7). Luntz agrees saying, that it's not what is said, it's what people hear (106). This may explain why politicians direct selected commercials to air in certain states or locations within a state. The three sound bites being explored in this thesis were never shown in California because it was a foregone conclusion that California would vote for the Democratic presidential nominee in 2004. Candidates do not want to spend campaign dollars in an area in which there is no likelihood of success. Success is dependent upon the language of the candidate being the language of the people. Additionally, the people identify with the language of their politician. That is to say that people identify with the language of the politician they listen to and agree with to confirm beliefs already held by both. This concept is instrumental to political campaign commercial sound bites.

This first sound bite is representative of most political campaign sound bites. Symbols, images, spoken

words, movements, specific camera angles, gestures, facial expressions, and music are played softly or with a crescendo. The purpose of this sound bite was to present information on the emotional hardships of soldiers and their families, as well as, to reinforce the president's resolve to win the war on terror. This advertisement is a good example of how the sound bite is used to summarize a very large and complex issue: the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. The advertisement was meant to appeal to our emotions but, as was seen, there was no mention of issues much less a discussion of them and this is a persistent problem with sound bites in political campaigns.

Critics like Todd Gitlin (97), Jeffrey Scheuer (85), Austin Ranney (73), and Pierre Bourdieu (7) complain that this abbreviated form presents the electorate with an argument of emotion in place of a discussion of issues, concepts, and solutions. There is no elaboration of positions. No ability to answer questions, provide explanations or evidence to support or oppose a position.

Conversely, there are reasons for its existence as found in the writings of Neil Postman (130), Milo Frank (17), Lesley Stahl (316), Neil Postman and Steve Powers (81), and Lawrence K. Grossman (93). Sound bite proponents

claim they are only providing information in a way that is acceptable and even requested by society. Television news producers and politicians like that the political message is short, defined, and memorable. The sound bite is more concise than a lengthy oratorical discourse. It is a new rhetoric that resembles ancient rhetoric only in that it is used to persuade. In the sound bite, the language is found in the lighting, the camera angle, the body and facial expressions, the gestures, the music, the symbols, the images, and the speech is completed by every aspect of the visual and audio presentation. The event is planned and orchestrated to manipulate our feelings and emotions. These manipulations provide the words and images that allow viewers to reflect on experiences shared by a society that also shares this discourse as equals.

A community that communicates as equal participants sharing in conversation and sharing the human experience supports the theory of rhetoricality through Kenneth Burke's theory of identification which allows us to connect with others. Burke says that the use of everyday language employs identification more powerfully than persuasion (1296). It is not uncommon to find that our colleagues have similar likes, dislikes, experiences, and values. Members of a shared worldview with a common

ideology are encouraged via language to some course of action (Burke 1338). This language enables like-minded people, although consubstantial (separate and distinct), to come together acting together (Burke 1325). W. C. Blum has stated, "in identification lies the source of dedications and enslavements, in fact of cooperation" (Burke 1325). We become members of a group actively advancing cohesion with others as equals while remaining distinct and separate. Burke's theory of identification also addresses the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Burke examines how the terms we use create identification by the way we use language to include members of a group with a common ideology, while at the same time excluding others with competing ideologies (1296).

This concept suggests that identification implies division. We have all heard the phrase: if you're not with us you're against us. If you're against us, you're not like us. If identification is made, there is a likeness. When we act together there is sameness. When we are the same, we are separating ourselves from something or someone else.

Identification is one way in which rhetoric helps to persuade others. This identification may be in the sharing of issues, interests, values, and experiences. According

to Todd Gitlin, "it's a comfort to share your life with fellow believers: to read the same articles, get the same references, wince at the same insults, and pass around the same jokes" (121). Burke asserts:

A speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws an identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience (1340).

In other words, persuasion is more likely to take place if you talk the listener's language. Luntz says this is the most effective communication tool (3). In addition, Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric "lists typical beliefs, so that the speaker may choose among them the ones with which he would favorably identify his cause or unfavorably identify the cause of an opponent" (Burke 1335).

In the campaign ad, *Whatever It Takes*, we all identify with the soldier sitting and waving an American flag. We share the pride of knowing that men and women are fighting to protect our freedoms. We share in his patriotism. We share in his belief in the United States. Then when the camera cuts to the wounded soldier and the

president quotes him as saying, "he was just doing his job," as Americans, we are proud of our young men and women in the military. We are honored by their service and it is right that we honor them. At the same time, we feel a sense of pride and sadness knowing the grave possibilities for the future. When the camera pans to a young woman who has apparently received a folded flag, we can understand the pain and loss she feels. We understand, too, that she may now be a single mother who must explain to her child or children why their father is not coming home. We can all share this devastation and loss because most of us have at some point in our lives lost a loved one. This advertisement brings us together through our shared experiences and feelings. We share, too, fear of another attack. Lastly, we share hope for the future. Aspirational language, believes Luntz, personalizes and humanizes the message allowing for an emotional response (18). President Bush's words in this advertisement are very effective at personalizing the shared experiences of the audience and the president. He humanizes the situation wherein a grieving spouse receives a folded flag. Luntz tells us that, "psychologically this language is a kin to saying: you can do it, I have faith in you (19). This campaign advertisement for Mr. Bush was effective in

delivering words of compassion and understanding. Luntz quotes Peggy Noonan regarding word smithing, she says, "your style should never be taller than you are" (3). In this advertisement, the president's words matched his style and his campaign. He seems affable, warm, and friendly in a neighborly kind of way. Luntz posits that in "effective communication, small beats large, short beats long, and plain beats complex" (8). The president has a knack for speaking and appearing to be the "guy next door." His speech is like ours. He represents the moral character of the community. A contemporary sense of what Aristotle called ethos. His second campaign advertisement, Safer, Stronger, continues this theme.

Safer, Stronger

As the advertisement starts, we see in capital block white letters the words:

P R E S I D E N T B U S H

The president quickly moves forward toward the camera. He is looking directly at us (the camera) while a calm and quiet solo piano music is played in the background. His posture is erect, confident, and presidential. He is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, red tie, and the nearly ubiquitous small American flag is

pinned to his left lapel. The president walks slowly but deliberately, sternly confident, and resolutely looking at and moving toward the viewing audience. In a rare occurrence, he is looking straight into the camera. As he walks, we hear the president's voice-over from off screen while walking. His voice proclaims: "I'm George W. Bush and I approve this message."

The screen goes black and the next image we see is that of George W. Bush, his left hand apparently on a bible, his right hand raised and we hear: "I, George Walker Bush, do solemnly swear" and then the audio fades out but we recognize this scene as the president taking the oath of office. Super-imposed over these images are the words written in white:

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 1

The Challenge

We see his wife and daughter standing nearby as the red and white stripes of an American flag wave in the background. Again the screen goes black, but then we see the words in white, always in white:

An economy in recession

The background is a dark blue and we see what appears to be the stock market ticker tape. There is much movement

and many messages are conveyed in a very few seconds. We hear the familiar sound of the stock market ticker tape. We see another ticker tape under the first but this one is in red letters and numbers. All who understand the principals of or imagery used in accounting know red figures represent a market in peril, profits falling, the worth of companies in decline, and the financial nest eggs of investors in jeopardy. Then super-imposed over both ticker tapes in very large block red letters we see the word:

R I S K

We watch this word move from the bottom to the top of the screen. This movement symbolically suggests that the risk is rising and that it will continue to increase if we don't reelect President Bush. It represents, too, the risky gamble of the market place in troubled economic times and, perhaps, most of all, the risk we would be exposed to if the liberal Senator Kerry were elected president. The use of fear has been prevalent in this campaign but this is the first use of fear toward our economic future. This is the fear of a declining economy and of asset devaluations. As the advertisement continues, we see the word:

F A L L

This word is also in large red letters and moving from the top to the bottom of the screen. The word, together with its action, amplifies and solidifies the gist and meaning of the visual. The movement of the word implies that prices, equity, and the hope that comes with a strong stock market are all in danger if the democratic candidate is elected president. Life itself would change. Then to the right side of the screen and moving toward the left until they fade, we see the following words in this order this time in green displayed underneath the word FALL:

Capitol

Dollar

Fall

Down

Markets

The order of these words is not lost: "dollar fall down" is very plainly understood. No graphic is needed. These words under the big red word, "FALL", and moving to the left until they fade alludes to how the market would react if a democrat were elected president. All would fail, be devalued, and would fade away worthless. We see the ticker tape image moving across the screen from right to left. Visible on the ticker tape are the words Yen and Euro with

numbers following. We are to conclude that the dollar would continue a downward spiral while the Yen and the Euro enjoyed rising values. The American dollar would be devalued in the world market place. This is confirmed by the string of red numbers in the second ticker tape. At the end of these few seconds super-imposed is, first, a man in glasses squeezing his lips together as he hangs his head and shakes it from side to side in a disbelieving disheartened way. His hand moves up to his forehead, massaging his temples and the expression turns to worry and concern. The second person in the scene is a male shown with the same worried and anguished look. As the ticker tape runs by, we see the words in white written on the screen:

THE CHALLENGE:

A Stock Market in Decline

The music in the background is the same. As fast as the above message appeared it is replaced by the next:

A dot com boom...gone bust

The screen fades to black and we see before us one word in white against the dark blackness:

Then...

A short ominous pause and then the words:

Then...a day of tragedy

To this point, the music in the background was quiet and calm but now the music is louder and frantic. Screaming sirens join the music. We hear in the background the sirens of emergency vehicles like those that would have been dispatched to the twin towers at ground zero in New York on September 11, 2001. This event angered and brought together the American people. There was a feeling of sadness for the victims and their families. This day of tragedy was and is shared today by all Americans. We identify with each other because of this shared experience and a shared discussion of the events. The message is very clear: if you don't want this to happen again, vote for President Bush.

We see next the ruined frame of a building and the flag of the United States. As the next scene appears, we hear a siren and we see firemen carrying a flag draped coffin, apparently a fallen colleague. The flag draped coffin pulls at the heart strings of Americans saddened by this vision of death. We see a man attaching and then raising another American flag while a young girl helps. Next we see two men, one wearing a hard hat and the other apparently holding a fireman's hat, both perhaps just coming from ground zero where the Twin Towers once stood in New York City. Did this fireman's hat belong to the

person in the coffin? To the left of these men, we see George W. Bush behind a podium on which there are two microphones. He is speaking but we don't hear his words. Then a fade to black but quickly we see three people behind the words:

Today America is turning the corner

On the right hand side of the screen, we see a young person, maybe ten, with flowers in his hat. On the left, we see two people apparently a father and daughter smiling and laughing as they run while playing. The message clearly indicates that Americans have gone about their daily activities secure in the knowledge that we are safe during George W. Bush's watch. Americans free to live in freedom. A fade to black with the words:

W O R K I N G

Rising to the Challenge

America has risen to the challenge of terrorism by going back to work and by getting back to our daily routines. We have maintained our freedom by not fearing to live and work as we did before 9/11. As we see in the next scene, the president is speaking while in the same frame men and women are going about their daily work schedules. A young girl about nine comes into view. She is smiling and her hair is in a pony tail. She looks off to the

right, directing our attention to a soldier in combat gear and helmet driving an army jeep in the opposite direction. The symbol of strength and protection comes from the right, the republicans and George W. Bush. Another soldier also wears camouflage fatigues with a rifle slung to his side. This soldier is walking and is in this way a reminder of a soldier walking the perimeter while on guard duty. We understand by this message that soldiers are protecting our children and us. We take solace in this knowledge. Without this soldier, we understand this little girl's safety would be in jeopardy. We are aware, too, that soldiers are protecting our future as well as hers. In fact, the security of the free world would be in danger without the watchful eye of the American soldier. We can all smile knowing that the American soldier is on patrol, on guard. Appearing on the screen are the words:

Approved by President Bush

And paid for by Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

The music continues and the soldier disappears. Words fill the screen. Behind the words, we see the white and red stripes and the white stars on the field of blue of the American flag as it moves and waves freely, not only in this ad but as it does the same across America, the

land of the free. As the flag waves, new words in white bold block appear:

P R E S I D E N T B U S H

Steady leadership in times of change

This campaign advertisement promoted a fear tactic. In this ad, questions of fear arose from the possibility of the economy getting even worse at the hands of a liberal. Secondly, the nation was kept on fear alert intimating that the democratic opponent was not strong on defending America. We display our patriotism and values regarding defending and protecting America in as many ways as there are people. Richard Cohen believes that the little flag pin is a "kitschy piece of empty symbolism that tells you nothing about that particular person except that he or she thinks like everyone else" (A7). He sees the pin as representing conformity not patriotism. Gitlin posits that a patriotism of substance is more important than a patriotism of symbols (M3). The purpose of this ad was to use the strong emotion of fear to discredit the challenger, John Kerry, while reminding the nation of the president's resolve in fighting terrorism and any economic downturn. In order to show that Bush was running a positive campaign and to indicate leadership, his message did not mention the challenger by name, nor did he speak

negatively about the challenger's policies. Although the president did not take credit for "an economy in recession," he takes credit for the nation "turning the corner." By innuendo, we are to understand that the liberal challenger is not up to the job. The president's language is simple and direct. It is to the point. We will find more symbols and visuals that speak volumes in the last sound bite to be examined:

War on Terror Agenda

This ad opens with the words in bold white print inside a brown border:

P R E S I D E N T B U S H

A N D C O N G R E S S I O N A L L E A D E R S

Unlike the other advertisements, this ad is in black and white from beginning to end. The look of this ad throughout is ominous and dark. Mark Danner posits that fear is the most lucrative of all political emotions and that this, too, is the intended product of terrorists (M11). At the bottom of the screen, we see three symbols. One is a small box with an American flag in black with a white background. Next is another box with the silhouette of an armored tank in black on a white background. On a third box, the black silhouette is not distinguishable.

While these words are displayed, the male voice-over is saying, "President Bush and our leaders in congress have a plan..." Simultaneously, we see trucks, eighteen-wheelers and smaller, driving away from the camera toward what looks in the background to be stopping stations at a border crossing. We are to understand that today under President Bush we are safe at our borders and there is a plan to further strengthen our safety. Now over these images, a female announcer continues, "enhance border and port security..." and we see in white letters:

1. Border and Port Security

As the trucks roll on toward the inspection station, we hear the male announcer, "increase homeland security measures..." New on the screen is the next agenda item:

2. Homeland Security

A line drawn under the first item connects or links to the second item, and as it continues it links each new item with the previous. As this line is drawn moving from item to item, the eye follows the line, sees and reads the words, and at the same time the ears hear the same words...this kind of repetition encourages us to attend to the message and to accept what is being conveyed. When we use multiple senses to accept input and encode information it enhances acceptance of the concepts proposed and

confirms the credibility of the information. It is how we teach children and adults. We provide information verbally and visually and then reinforce what has been learned through repetition. The next agenda item:

3. Reform and Strengthen Intelligence

Superimposed behind these letters, we see puffs of smoke coming from a cannon on an armored tank. We see seven puffs of smoke as we watch the barrel mechanism recoil. Again, we hear the female voice say, "reform and strengthen intelligence services." Then the male voice, "renew the patriot act giving law enforcement tools against terrorists." We feel safe knowing that soldiers in armored tanks are protecting our families and communities. Our military personnel are on guard. The next item:

4. Renew Patriot Act

Behind these letters, still in view, is the cannon as it begins its move out of the picture to the left. Coming into view is an army Chinook helicopter used as a troop transport. As it descends, we see soldiers rappelling to the ground on a rope at the back of the helicopter. These troops join others on the ground and begin to run off screen to the right. We are protected by paratroopers who can secure our safety. We feel better. Next:

5. Tools Against Terrorists

The best tools America has are its fighting force: an all-volunteer army trained to keep America safe and free. The line under this agenda item moves on to the next item and we hear the female voice: "create a national counter terrorism center" while at the same time the following appears on the screen:

6. Counter Terrorism Center

The line moves quickly and our eyes follow and focus on the next agenda item being underlined:

7. Transform Military

While looking at these words on the screen, we hear the male announcer saying, "transform our military" and at the same time the voice announces this, behind these words is an example of America's military might in the form of a very menacing and dangerous B1 bomber in what appears to be a take-off ready position. It represents our resolve, our strength, our stealth and silent but deadly technology, and our threat of using it in defense while warning other groups or other nation states that would do harm to America or its citizens. This image represents our capability to respond quickly with deadly force to an attack. With this image still in view, we hear the female announcer say, "give the military all it needs." The

screen continues to move to the left as we watch the line move to and under the next item:

8. Find Terrorists

As these words are displayed in white letters, we again hear the male voice, "find terrorists where they train and hide." The screen continues to move to the left and our view appears to support the audio portion at this very same time because what we see looks like men in military gear riding in some kind of military vehicle purportedly on their way to a training compound. Everything about this scene appears ominous. The dark vehicle, the dark figures, the dark weapons, the dark language of the audio: "where [terrorists] train and hide." The dark messages are all too familiar as Americans understand the darkness of death and worse, the darkness of fear. Lastly, the lady speaks, "learn more." The man, "at agenda for America dot com." While these words are being spoken, we see on the screen the booklet entitled:

Agenda for America
A PLAN FOR
A SAFER WORLD
AND MORE
HOPEFUL AMERICA
Agenda for America.com

In these sound bites, George W. Bush has made good use of the space above and around his head to spell out his message for us to read over and over again. This space has been filled either by words or with a kind of visual shorthand in the form of images and symbols. Luntz asserts that the context of the visual that supports and reinforces the verbal provides a multiple effect that increases the strength of the message (29).

The message of President Bush was made effective through the use of two of Aristotle's classifications of persuasive speech: the political or deliberative and the ceremonial or epideictic (Bizzell et al 3). Each of these forms of persuasive speech could be found in all three of the sound bites examined. The president's ads appealed to pathos or the emotions of listeners, to logos or his appeal to reason, and lastly to ethos or an appeal to his character and values. The president's sound bites appeal to his constituents through the audio voice-overs, the printed dialogue, along with the images and symbols in videos. All are proxies to his leadership, patriotism, and his resolve to defeat terrorists. The problem with visuals, however, is that we are, according to David Gelernter, "vulnerable to video lies" (B11). An announcer's voice-over helps to explain but also

determines the meaning of what is being viewed, and at the same time we understand that what we're seeing is either true or false but not both. Gelernter asserts that disproving a video report is much harder than getting people to believe it (B11). Still, there are many reasons for its use. The sound bite in the form of a television ad provides viewers with a look at the candidate and the issues they feel important. We appreciate the brevity. As to the ability of the sound bite to deceive, this may be negated with the knowledge that all candidates are free to use them. We thus are listeners of all candidates' rhetoric that today is the language of everyman. Because we identify with others who share our world view and who communicate in it, we find that rhetoricality and identification as the fabric of shared experiences and shared expectations employs the tools of persuasion found in the modern television sound bite.

CHAPTER THREE
CONCLUDING REMARKS ABOUT SOUND BITES AS THE
RHETORIC OF PERSUASION

Television networks and politicians have a symbiotic relationship. This association is mutually beneficial because network news needs pictures and politicians need to get on network news (Postman and Powers 81). As Postman et al observe, network news programs are an ideal vehicle for running political advertisements because the news audience is more attentive, better educated and have more dollars to spend (5).

Television has changed the way politicians communicate during a political campaign. Because visuals tell stories more quickly and effectively, candidates seek to provide viewers with irresistible pictures (Jamieson 7). Moreover, given the demands already placed on their time, viewers want information quickly as a full discussion of issues requires too much time and attention to detail. Thus, these pictures become the symbols of messages that otherwise might not be received because of their length.

The sound bite meets society's and network news directors' requirements: a quick and clear message that is

concise and memorable. This makes the candidate's message more likely to be aired on television while keeping airtime costs at a minimum. Each ad is delivered to specific audiences and becomes an emotional appeal for action.

Nevertheless, critics point out that the sound bite has moved political discourse from a discussion of issues and ideas to a battle of images and professionally scripted performances. These critics attribute these events to a number of things: they may be the result of an ever-decreasing attention span, a decrease in reading of all kinds; an increasing video literacy, an increasing disinterest in following the direction of lengthy debates, an increasing demand upon our time, an increase in multi-tasking, and an increase in the use of the internet.

Currently, many of us obtain news and information, political or otherwise, from the internet. Internet users can access any major news organization's website for up-to-the-minute news. Candidate profiles as well as a full disclosure of positions on the issues can be found on the candidate's website.

The importance of the internet, some like David Winston believe, is in the revival of the political conversation because he believes we are moving from the

Age of Information to the Age of Communication (4).

Winston proffered his ideas about the constructive use of the internet to open political discussion in 1998. To date this possibility has not been realized.

However, the potential exists for a more open and free exchange via the internet. The internet could provide the soundboard against which dialogue from participants may be posted representing many points of view making it possible to discuss issues, ideas, and complex concepts without expending excessive time or contributing to excessive airtime costs. Political discourse on the internet allows for dissemination of information without the filters of the news media (Winston 4). Information and clarification can be requested on our terms and in our time, suggests Winston (2). Winston assumes that requests will not only be honored but that these sites will provide for interactivity. Thus, the possibility exists for active participation in the Burkean Parlor of the internet where we are moved to act, to vote, and to a meeting of the minds.

This meeting of the minds, however, exists only in those who share the same world view. The websites of candidates are more likely to be visited and read by those who hold the same positions as the candidate. These

viewers are seeking confirmation of these views. Burke's theory of identification is easily applied here. We identify with the candidate who holds our preconceived beliefs and whose images and symbols on the internet reinforce the sound bites of television.

Finally, I believe, the sound bite will not be affected by the internet or television because our world view provides likeminded people to seek confirmation and a meeting of the minds with those who share the same world view. This view determines the message we see and hear. This message of images and symbols is currently still best delivered quickly, concisely, and visually as sound bites of the rhetoric of persuasion.

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