ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Arguments Across Symbolic Forms: An Analysis Of Presidential Popularity

Abstract:
This project embraces a visual turn in argumentation studies by analyzing visual arguments alongside their print-based companions. The paper works to understand how images make arguments in the news, specifically focusing on images of President George W. Bush as they relate to public opinion polls. The analysis spans five years of the Bush presidency by examining 125 articles and accompanying images illustrating job approval ratings. The findings suggest that images are performing a variety of argumentative functions especially during a national crisis. However, often images project arguments that are incongruent with the articles they accompany.

Key Words: visual argument, images, opinion polls, crisis

1. *Introduction*

Sometime between the debut of the USA Today newspaper and the emergence of a commercial internet people begin consuming news laden with visuals. This reading of photographs, charts and caricatures is not a new phenomenon as comics and children's books, for example, have employed a similar literacy; however, the generic shift from literature to news marks a significant literacy shift. This turn occurs while argumentation scholars are writing about discursive forms of argument, the aestheticians are dedicated to high art, and media scholars are searching for an effect. Yet, journalists are dressing news like collage art. This trend in the making alters notions of literacy and suggests a fusion of the above mentioned experts.

The technological shifts of the 20th Century cast individuals into an age of secondary orality**[i]** (Ong, 1982). According to many argumentation theorists, our grounds, warrants, enthymemes, and entire claims are packaged in images (Palczewski, 2001; Birdsell & Groarke, 1996). These conclusions challenge the

classification of images as being distinctly separate from words. In a Cartesian world, image and word are conceptually dichotomous; the image as argument fails to measure up to the stability, transparency and rationality of the word. Adhering to this typically Modern notion of rationality (and argumentation) is no longer tenable considering the reality of a communicative environment dominated by images (Molwana 1992; Stephens 1998).

This project arises because argumentation, rhetoric and media scholars are beginning to develop the language and methods necessary to critically examine images used in argument (Scott, 1994, 252). An important step in this visual turn is a reexamination of the rigid image/word dichotomy. This split characteristically frames the image as presentational emotive baggage tainting rational discursive claims. In terms of rhetorical appeals, the word is to logos what the image is to pathos. These distinctions are no longer necessary or accurate given the shifting notions of literacy in an era of secondary orality. While challenges to this dichotomy can be traced to 20th century artistic movements**[ii]**, the tension between the presentation of word and image demands further examination by argumentation scholars. In line with art historian Michael Holly, this paper questions "the possibility of ever keeping separate the discursive and the visual" (1996, p. 8).

Embracing a visual turn in argumentation studies assumes that "argument need not be fixed as a category" (Palczewski, 2001, p. 14). Redrawing the lines of argument comes with the burden of rethinking political discourse as it functions in the public sphere. This project builds upon argumentation scholarship that examines the role images play in political arguments (DeLuca, 1999; Lake & Pickering, 1998). In this analysis a significant form of political discourse, opinion polls, are analyzed. Opinion polls are a rich artifact in terms of their symbolic form, as they are commonly presented in both visual and word-based forms, and for their ideological strength – "polls are one of the communicative means by which the collective 'we' of democracy maintains and projects itself" (Lipari, 2000, 98). Opinion polls are symbolically diverse and powerful argument structures that project a consensus of seemingly unrelated citizens.

Opinion polls can be used to analyze how traditionally discursive forms of argument compare and contrast with their visual companions. This analysis hopes to demonstrate the role and relationship between words and images in a manner that challenges the modern word/image schism. A ubiquitous polling question in US political discourse is the Presidential job approval rating. President George W.

Bush's job approval ratings are especially telling as major shifts in public support has been reported throughout his five years in office. The shifting approval ratings offer fertile ground to explore the argumentative quality of opinion poll stories. For this paper, images of President Bush are analyzed in relation to the word based descriptions of public opinion poll data.

This paper begins by addressing the theoretical tension between word and image, a tension manifest in secondary orality. It continues by delineating the artifact and method used to analyze news stories. Theory and method are followed by an analysis of images and news articles conveying public opinion data concerning George W. Bush's popularity. Specifically, the articles and images illustrating public opinion polls are examined to determine if they convey congruent arguments. This analysis generates conclusions regarding the presentation of public opinion polls, distinctions between newspapers and magazines, and the relationship of images to words when used in advancing arguments.

2. *Image, Word, and Public Opinion Polls*

Argumentation scholarship and social scientific studies traditionally categorize images similarly, with the former relating them to affect and the latter conjoining them with emotional appeals. According to both positions, images are thought to bypass rational processing in a manner that goes straight to the heart. Linda Scott, detailing the study of images in the sciences, argues that social scientists rooted in the classical conditioning/affective response model assume that "the impact of the picture is passively absorbed; no interpretation activity is invoked." She adds that the image "appears to work in the absence of cultural mediation, cognitive activity, or judgment" (1994, p. 256).

The classical conditioning model concurs with anxiety Habermas reserves for the image-laden mass media. For Habermas, news media "draw the eyes and ears of the public under their spell but at the same time, by taking away its distance, place it under 'tutelage,' which is to say they deprive it of the opportunity to say something and to disagree" (1998, p. 171). Images pose danger, the argument goes, because they seduce the mind and ultimately block dissent. The culture produced by such media is one of "integration." Habermas is referring to the mixture of debate, journalism, literature, advertising and slogans involved with mass media. These presentational shifts influence the thinking of mass-mediated cultures; they move "from a public critically reflecting on its culture to one that merely consumes it (1998, p. 175)." Habermas' conclusions derive from the assumption that images lack the semantic content necessary to think in a rational

manner.
It is beyond the scope of this project to reconfigure the semiotic workings of image processing; however, it is important to understand what is at stake when attempting to understand how images argue. Conducting an investigation on the argumentative quality of news involves analyzing images in a systematic manner. Understanding the function of image-laden media hinges on a view of image processing that runs counter to the affect model and Habermas' anxiety.

A flawed logic has relegated images to an inferior emotional realm. Stephanie Larson debunks a classic example of how positive images of President Ronald Reagan triumphed over a reporter's supposed critical remarks (2000, p. 120-121)**[iii]**. Larson recounts journalist Lesley Stahl's caustic critique of President Reagan's 1984 presidential campaign. Her news program prompted Reagan officials to applaud Stahl for granting the Reagan campaign free press. The Reagan administration held that people would only remember amiable images of the President and ignore verbal criticisms. Stahl was dejected and so were many news personalities who felt their reporting was being trumped by seductive images.
Larson dispels the logic of image triumph with a close analysis of the news segment. She finds that Stahl disproportionately weights her news coverage with complimentary words, sounds, and images of President Reagan. Larson writes, "[T]his is a bad example of pictures speak louder than words because in this instance the pictures and sounds were overwhelmingly positive and the voice-over was a confusing mix of explicit compliments and implicit criticisms" (2000, p. 120). The Reagan example fails to support the claim that images necessarily triumph over words by circumventing reason.
Larson's findings illustrate an important move for scholars working to explain how images argue; it emphasizes the significance of analyzing the relationship between words and images in advancing arguments. Privileging one symbolic form over the other delimits the interpretive possibilities of a given argument and ignores the presentational form of new media.

News stories produced by "new media" are immersed in the workings of secondary orality – using images, sounds, and animation to accompany the printed or spoken word. Delli-Carpini and Williams contend that today's media are "leading to a convergence" of types and genres of media (2001, p.166). With the rise of new media, traditional news sources, even daily newspapers, have been

using more image-oriented techniques to convey the news. Shifting to a more visual format is significant when considering the significant impact news media have on the outcome of political races and public policy (Jamieson & Capella, 1998, p.129).

A common topic tied to national politics is presidential popularity. News sources commonly illustrate the President's job performance in the form of photos, drawings and graphs/charts. Research has found that these images can, and do, influence the way a President is perceived (Waldman and Devitt, 1996, p. 303). Impressions of candidates are molded by how they appear in visual form.

Beyond extensive use of images, journalists and their readers look to opinion polls as sources of information (McLeod, 1996, p. 401). Reporting the voice of the American public through polling data has become such a common practice that it serves as news in and of itself. Every year since 1935 the number of polling questions asked has increased from 1880 questions in 1945 to 13,297 questions in 1995 (Lipari, 2000, p. 2). Public opinion polls have become the dominant tool to measure-up Presidents. Lipari contends that polls have become a "cultural symbolic form" that are a modernized form of ritual communication (2000, p. 7).

While polling methods are an important area of inquiry, the manner in which the poll results are presented to the public is most significant for this project. Polling has become such an integral part of campaigns that it has developed a language specific to its practices (Bauman & Herbst, 1994, p. 133). The language of Presidential job approval polls is conveyed through word (news articles), and images (photographs and graphs/charts). This paper works to better understand the fundamental structure of this language as it is presented to readers, specifically through the traditional mediums of newspapers and magazines.

There has been much focus on the power, bias, and effectiveness of opinion polls (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000, McLeod, 1996), yet, little has been done to determine the congruity between the stories and images that illustrate polling data. Concurring with Lipari, scholars need to approach polls as if they were a distinct form of discourse (2000, p.8)**[iv]**. "Researchers have refined methods for measuring opinion, but still do not know how the products of their efforts are managed in the political arena" (Herbst, 1993, p. 41). There is a need to assess the complete message and minimal work has been done looking at both the images and stories readers are greeted with in newspapers and magazines.

3. *Artifacts and Method*

To assess how images function as argument, this paper analyzes the congruence between three message forms commonly found in news media:
(1) *polling data,*
(2) *articles interpreting and/or incorporating polling data,* and
(3) *images displayed in conjunction with the articles.*

Throughout the paper, any combination of these three forms is referred to as a story. Stories involving George W. Bush's popularity between August 2000 and April 2006 are included in the analysis. News stories were collected from a prominent US daily newspaper, *Washington Post***[iv]** and a US national weekly news magazine, *Newsweek***[vi]**. These publications were chosen because they represent main stream news publications both owned by the Washington Post Company. Assuming like ideological structures guide the production of both publications, more accurate distinctions can be made about these mediums. Furthermore, analyzing two related but distinct mediums illustrates the differences and similarities between media as they relate to visual argument.
The Washington Post Company may provide ideological consistency, but the two mediums draw from separate sources to attain their polling data. The newspaper polls are part of the *Washington Post – ABC poll***[vii]**, while *Newsweek***[viii]** employs Princeton Survey Research to conduct their poll. News stories were chosen for analysis if Bush's popularity, as measured by a poll, was mentioned in the article and the article was accompanied by an image (either photographs or chart/graph).

All news stories in the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* that met the above two criteria were gathered. The dramatic political flux during these 68 months provides a rich text for analysis. A set of unique situations propelled Bush's popularity through five distinct phases: the accidental President, post 9-11-01 commander in chief, invasion of Iraq, 2004 election victory, and war in Iraq.
(1) The accidental President stems from August 2000 through September of 2001.
(2) The post 9-11-01 commander in chief phase includes the tragic events of 9-11-01 and continues through February 2003 when the invasion of Iraq is imminent.
(3) The invasion of Iraq polling begins in March and continues until November 2003.
(4) The 2004 election victory starts in November 2003 and culminates in November 2004.

(5) The war in Iraq begins after the election and continues through the spring of 2006.

The *Washington Post* search yielded 86 separate news articles and numerous images (more than 50 photographs and over 100 graphs/charts), and *Newsweek* produced 39 news articles incorporating numerous images (64 photographs/drawings and a few graphs/charts). These 125 news stories are analyzed to determine the positive or negative tone derived from the approval rating polls. For instance, if the article reports that Bush's popularity marks are decreasing, the feature is considered "negative" press. In a few occasions, specifically during the campaign for presidency, the articles are labeled "neutral" because the polling data indicates that Bush and Gore are equal in popularity.

The photographs are analyzed to determine the argument they are advancing. Although readers may use idiosyncratic cues to make sense of images, this study assumes certain structural features work to define and give meaning to images. This does not mean that structural features are wholly deterministic. Rather, the structural features are normative in that they delimit the range of interpretation. Thus, analyzing the grammar of an image allows for a probable explanation as to the manner in which a news story functions as a coherent message.

Each photograph is analyzed for structural and nonverbal features. Research by Moriarty provides tested categories to conduct analyses of news photographs. Moriarty & Garramone organize a coding schema that involves 10 key visual attributes significant to how viewers make sense of images (1986, p. 730). A more recent study by Waldman and Levitt analyzes photographs of the 1996 Presidential Campaign using a simplified version of Moriarty's coding variables. The authors found that "expression, activity, and interaction can be particularly illustrative of strategic stories" (1998, p. 310).

For the purpose of this paper, Waldman and Levitt's criteria of expression, activity, and interaction are used to determine the general tone of each Presidential photograph. *Expression* refers to the facial expression of the primary subject in the photograph. For example, President Bush smiling or looking determined are positive expressions while frowning or awkward poses are negative expressions. Activity involves the action of the speaker. Speaking at a podium or shaking hands is a strong positive action while sitting or resting is inactive. *Interaction* involves the response of those in crowd or background of the picture. Cheering crowds or attentive colleagues suggests a positive message while being alone or inattentive is coded as negative. These criteria directly affect

the viewer's perspective, what advertising scholar Paul Messaris deems a significant feature of visual persuasion (1997, p. 34).

Waldman and Levitt do a thorough job of coding and analyzing photographs, but their study does not analyze what these images mean in the context of the entire news story. The authors stop short of examining if images correlate with news articles. They acknowledge that "photos are meant to illustrate stories," but their scope limits their ability to make this claim with sufficient backing (1998, p. 310). An analysis specifically focused on the relationship between actual news articles and the images that accompany these stories is warranted. Furthermore, past research has focused on photographs, but they do not consider other prevalent predominantly visual forms like charts and graphs. This paper incorporates the entire range of symbolic expression involved with news stories.

4. *Analysis*

Phase One: Accidental President

The *Washington Post* combines articles, graphs and photos in a majority of news features that cite election campaign opinion polls. In every story that incorporates images a line/bar graph and/or a pie chart is used. These visuals pertain directly to the article's main argument. However, making sense of these images requires a visual literacy that hinges upon an understanding of the logic at work in graphs and charts. Charts and graphs are filtering mechanisms that locate, for readers, the topos most deserving attention. In each of the graphs, moving from top to bottom, a title summarizes the poll for readers. The titles of extensive reports make a central claim about the data. For example, the poll headline on Sept. 8, 2000 reads, "Tight at Labor Day" (A. 10). This headline functions as an interpreter – it translates the poll numbers into a claim. In addition, headlines serve as filters, guiding readers to certain poll findings. For instance, on August 8, 2000 the poll title reads, "Bush Maintains Lead;" however, only a third of the poll data confirm this statement. The remaining data argues that Gore's running mate is slightly better than Bush's. The poll headline guides the reader away from the more ambiguous or complicated findings. These interpretive moves of charts/graphs advance arguments of opinion poll stories.

The newspaper graphs and charts tend to portray topics in dichotomies. Largely, the 2000 election is portrayed in graphs/charts as a horse race for votes between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore. Surveys ask respondents, "If the election were being held today, whom would you vote for?" (Nov. 6, 2000).

Results are illustrated by a line graph that uses two thick lines for both Bush and Gore, while totals for the other candidates are summarized in a small box below the line graph. Visually, the race for President is a dichotomy.

Newspaper graphs and charts tend to portray messages congruent with the news article. This was not the case when comparing accompanying photographs to the articles. From the *Washington Post* articles that were accompanied by photographs during the 2000 election, a third of the stories delivered incongruent messages. For example, the October 30, 2000 poll data indicates that Bush's early lead in the polls has disappeared, while the article emphasizes that Bush is taking Sunday off from the campaign trail. Making the story even more disjointed is a photograph that shows Bush happily greeting potential voters before entering church. When reading these three messages together, one is hard pressed to develop a coherent argument. When the image and word are incongruent, readers are likely to read this article in line with their previously held opinions. When images and articles send mixed messages, readers will likely choose the message that aligns their expectations. Presenting incongruent arguments works only to further support existing opinions.

During the election, the photographs of Bush largely are staged events depicting activities on the campaign trail. In terms of expression, positive features dominate. Other than shaking hands with supporters, levels of activity and interaction are minimal with only one photo showing an audience. The photos tend to be cropped so that waste-up or headshots are the norm. This supports the conclusions of an audience reception study that associated politicians with upper-body photographs (Adams 1980). Absent in every newspaper photograph are Bush's feet, indicating the norm in newspaper visuals is inactivity. These images function more as appeals to ethos, visuals building credibility and interest for the story.

From Nov. 16, 2000, through September 11, 2001, Bush's approval ratings range from 50%-60%. These approval ratings are historically low for a President's first year in office. While the graphs/charts tend to compliment the articles, the photographs tell another story. In five of the eight stories, the photograph and article convey incongruent messages. On November 27, 2000, for instance, an article proclaims Bush the winner of the election with 60% of Americans agreeing that Gore should concede the election. Accompanying this article is an upper-body photo of Bush with an awkward and ambiguous facial expression captured during a speech. If there was ever a time to show Bush as confident, smiling, and

interacting with a host of supporters, it was then. Yet, the photograph fails to produce a message that reflects the general theme of the article.
In contrast to the newspaper, *Newsweek* stories use images to illustrate action. Charts are nearly obsolete with only one used to depict key swing states. However, photographs dominate Newsweek's stories. In the four stories discussing the election and opinion polls, 10 photographs, each taking up at least half a page, are used instrumentally. For Newsweek, the photograph functions as more than ethos building, it displays a certain manner of being active in the world.

The August 7, 2000, *Newsweek* uses a shaded box with large typed font to announce, "Bush has gained in the *NEWSWEEK Poll*, leading Gore by 47% to 40%, the widest margin since February." Three photos in this article all positively show why Bush is leading the polls. One photo shows Bush and Cheney with their wives posing in a room that looks similar to the White House. Heuristically, this is a powerful image because the setting provides legitimacy to the Bush ticket. The other two photographs are body shots; these show Bush and Cheney interacting with one another in a schoolroom and Bush with his wife posing at their ranch. These photographs provide readers with pertinent aesthetic information about George W. Bush. The image places the full body in the world, a more immediate, lively and informative space compared to the stale rhetoric of campaign stump speeches.
Of the 15 photographs in *Newsweek* printed after Bush wins the election, 13 are full body shots revealing a great deal of aesthetic information. The May 7, 2001 focus on Bush's first 100 days uses seven photographs (six are full-body shots) to show the President in action. We see Bush meeting with advisors, talking with assistants over coffee, reading policy papers with Dick Cheney, and walking down a corridor with his back to the camera. These photos illustrate "activity;" the President is doing executive committee duties in executive committee confines. More importantly they show us a body.

If we read bodies as having aesthetic qualities, these images have the potential to reveal something about acting properly. Robert Hariman (1995), writing about political style, suggests that images work to shape our "aesthetic sensibility." Aesthetic sensibility is the unique and indirect relationship human beings have with reality (p. 186). The image can function as a teacher of how one should act in the world, a manner of being decorous. This accounts for using one third of a

page to show Bush walking down a corridor with his back to the camera. The photographs in *Newsweek*, like the photograph of Bush sleeping on his wife's shoulder (Nov. 20, 2000), provide a candid and full-body aesthetic of the President. These photographs reveal a Presidential aesthetic typically not accessible to the public.

Phase two: Post 9-11-01 Commander and Chief

The *Washington Post* greets readers on the morning of 9-11-01 with poll data showing George Bush losing favor with the American people as the economy is lagging. The approval rating of 55% soars more than 30 points in the next 48 hours. On Sept. 14, 2001, the *Washington Post* reports that 86% of Americans approve of the job the President was doing (and the full-body photograph included Bush's feet). Here, in a time of crisis, the full-body aesthetic is necessary to describe the actions of a President.

These two occurrences – overwhelming support and full-body photographs – are commonplace after the attacks of 9-11-01. Seven stories between September 14 and November 8 use photographs to accompany opinion poll data. Four of these are full-body shots, something omitted in the first eight months of coverage. These photographs provide the reader with contextual and aesthetic information. This information provides readers with a visual sense of how President Bush is acting. This shift illuminates the nature of reporting a national crisis. Times of crisis are filled with ambiguity and call for certainty; the full-body image answers this call. Photographs compared to words, in this case, are more concrete and interpretively certain. They are sound evidence that brings a reality before our eyes.

Another shift in coverage is Bush's facial expressions. During this phase, Bush is never smiling; his expression is consistently firm and/or stoic. Each of these pictures works with the article in a coherent and unified manner to create a strategic story. These unified stories provide certainty for readers in all too uncertain times. The September 14, 2001 *Washington Post* headline declares, "Crisis brings shift in Presidential Style." The crisis not only spawns a shift in presidential style, it alters reporting styles. Stories make unified arguments and images play a primary role in news stories.

The shift in *Newsweek's* coverage is less dramatic. Each of the five articles reports highly supportive poll numbers illustrated with seven photographs of President Bush. In each frame his face and body reflect the act of doing. The

September 24, 2001, *Newsweek* states, “A President finds his voice” and the photographs show Bush participating in a church service and speaking on the phone. His “real” voice is reflected in the polls, where 82% of people approve of the President’s job performance. After 9-11-01 Bush is never pictured in a posed frame, this active President has little time to be still.

Newsweek makes another significant argumentative move by juxtaposing competing photographs. The Oct 8, 2001 story displays suit-wearing Bush walking over the White House plush grounds. Next to this photograph is an equally large panoramic image of a shabbily dressed man walking toward a village down a dirt road. The headline reads, “Bush’s Reality Check.” The photograph illustrates the material tension between the US and Afghanistan. Although *Newsweek* stops short of questioning what the US gains by attacking a country already pummeled by past wars, they offer the impetus for critique – a jumping off point – through their presentation of contrasting images. These images can introduce marginalized or dissident voices into the realm of argument.

Phase Three: Invasion of Iraq
Like the crisis of September 11, 2001 the invasion of Iraq enhances Bush’s job approval ratings (77% during the fall of Baghdad). However, unlike the 9-11-01 stories, the *Washington Post* articles do not include photographs of George W. Bush. From 11 *Washington Post* stories that focus on approval rating data only two include images of Bush. The other nine stories during this phase advance public opinion arguments using charts/graphs. In each of these stories a pie chart dichotomously labels those “for” and “against” the President’s decisions concerning Iraq. The lack of photographs indicates a categorical difference between 9-11-01 and the invasion of Iraq. It is this difference that the Bush administration has tried to erase in effort to argue that the two events are part of the larger “War on Terror.”

Newsweek also covers the invasion of Iraq with less attention tied to Bush’s job approval ratings. While the magazine dedicates much space to the details of the invasion, the connection back to opinion poll data is largely absent. Only four articles mention the approval ratings with two of these stories presenting words and images that are incongruent. For example, on March 28, 2003 Bush is shown actively hitting tennis balls to his dog with a golf club, while the story focuses on his high approval ratings. Yet, the following photograph shows a passive Bush staring out a White House window. Neither photograph is attuned the argument

that the news article advances.

Phase Four: 2004 Election Victory
During the 2004 election victory phase the *Washington Post* continues to present incongruent verbal and visual arguments concerning President Bush's approval ratings. In seven of the eleven photographs, images do not correlate with opinion poll data. In most cases, images are positive while the opinion polls indicate that President Bush is trailing John Kerry. In all but one instance, the photograph of Bush is generally positive. Unlike the stock photographs cropped around the face, the newspaper includes multiple action photographs with interactive backgrounds. Also, Bush gets his smile back, a gesture largely absent since 9-11-01. Similar to the election of 2000, charts/graphs present the horse race for President in dichotomous images.

Newsweek presents the President in a more ambiguous manner mixing both positive and negative photographs. This pattern mirrors the fluctuation found in the opinion poll results. One photograph makes an especially powerful argument as the camera looks up to a towering and smiling Bush. The semiotic connection between camera angles and power are well documented. This image further demonstrates that photographs are not mere representations of reality but rather arguments concerning the pictured person/thing.

Phase Five: War in Iraq
The final phase is the most lackluster phase of Bush's job approval ratings. The *Washington Post* reports ratings of 55% after the 2004 reelection to a dismal 38% in April of 2006. While numerous national events (i.e. Hurricane Katrina) contribute to the decline, the ongoing war in Iraq is the dominant theme throughout the polling questions. Even though most of the news articles demonstrate slumping approval ratings, over half of the images are positive. Again, a pattern of incongruity between word and image is evident.

In addition to photographs, the line graph becomes a prevalent tool of longitudinal comparison. With over five years of data, a graph filled with peaks and valleys presents a clear argument as to the dramatic shifts in job approval ratings. The sliding line from 92% after 9-11-01 to a paltry 38% makes a powerful and concise argument.
As with previous phases, *Newsweek* presents photographs of the President that more closely match the tone of the article. There is a mixed bag of positive,

neutral, and negative images. Taken as whole, this is congruent with the ups and downs associated with this phase of the Bush Presidency.

5. *Conclusion*

This paper attempts to understand how images function alongside their word-based companions. The *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* stories pertaining to George W. Bush's popularity reveal that often images are not projecting messages congruent with the articles they accompany. The incongruity between word and image emphasizes the theoretical issue of separating these two symbolic forms by function and effect. Furthermore, the analysis illustrates how images can perform a variety of argumentative functions traditionally reserved for printed words. The newspaper tends to use photographs for ethos building and attention seeking; whereas, the magazine uses photographs as a form of evidence.

The most significant trend discovered is that distinctions between mediums of image use diminish after 9-11-01. Both newspaper and magazine rely upon full-body photographs to illustrate their stories. This finding suggests that times of crisis call for stories that concretely describe a President's actions. Full-body photographs answer the call by providing an aesthetic sensibility of presidential behavior. Ambiguous times call for a brand of certainty that images can provide.

Another finding that deserves further study is the relationship between images and the representation of marginalized voices. Images could be an effective way to open up an argumentative space of dissent. Lance Bennett writes, "Moments of license to report politically sensitive or challenging material are generally triggered by events that contain powerful images, or new icons, that authenticate the politically volatile content. Because such images appear to be both spontaneous and credible, they provide authority to construct narratives that may challenge official definitions of political reality" (1996, p.379-380). Future studies could work to explore images that are most effective in articulating dissenting views.

Immersed in secondary orality, argumentation scholars play a significant role in the process of building and shaping a visually literate population. The study of argument benefits by collapsing the typical Cartesian distinction between word and image, as opinion polls suggest that images are doing the work typically reserved for the printed word. This analysis reveals that when images and words are conceived of as distinct and separate forms, incongruity results. This incongruity renders an argument null as it allows readers to simply maintain their given point of view.

NOTES

[i] A term employed by Walter Ong to characterize the technological environment where modes of communication borrow and reinvent an ancient oral tradition (Orality and Literacy, 1982).

[ii] Futurists and Dadaists challenged the transparency of the word in the early to mid 20th century. See Richard Lanham The Electronic Word. University of Chicago, 1993.

[iii] Lesley Stahl did a news piece on Ronald Reagan's 1984 campaign for President. She alleged that Reagan was misleading the public with staged photo opportunities that ran counter to his policy agenda. During a news segment on CBS she showed the positive footage of Reagan while critically commentating on the footage. After the segment aired, Reagan's chief of staff, Richard Darman, phoned Stahl and thanked her for five free minutes of airtime. The logic being that the "pictures are powerful and emotional" to the point that they will "override if not completely drown out the sound" (Larson 2000, 116).

[iv] Admittedly, readers can (and do) approach texts with degrees of individuality; however, these subjective readings do not thwart an analysis locating the structural patterns of discourse at work. This initial study would be best complimented with audience analysis research.

[v] Washington Post Stories Analyzed (86) 08-12-00, 09-8-00, 10-17-00, 10-27-00, 10-30-00, 11-02-00, 11-06-00, 11-16-00, 11-27-00, 12-18-00, 02-27-01, 03-27-01, 04-24-01, 06-05-01, 06-01-01, 09-11-01, 09-14-01, 09-15-01, 09-20-01 , 10-14-01, 11-07-01, 11-08-01, 11-29-01, 12-21-01,1-27-02, 3-11-02, 5-17-02, 5-21-02, 7-17-02, 9-29-02, 1-19-03, 1-22-03, 3-4-03, 3-21-03, 3-25-03, 3-29-03, 4-11-03, 5-2-03, 7-12-03, 8-13-03, 9-14-03, 9-20-03, 10-15-03, 11-2-03, 11-5-03, 11-18-03, 12-23-03, 3-9-04, 3-31-04, 4-4-04, 4-20-04, 5-14-04, 5-25-04, 6-22-04, 7-22-04, 7-27-04, 8-1-04, 8-19-04, 8-23-04, 8-29-04, 9-10-04, 9-28-04, 9-29-04, 10-19-04, 12-21-04,1-18-05, 1-22-05, 1-16-05, 4-26-05, 5-31-05, 6-8-05, 6-12-05, 6-30-05, 8-31-05, 9-13-05,10-30-05, 11-4-05, 11-12-05, 12-20-05, 1-3-06, 1-11-06, 3-5-06, 3-7-06, 4-11-06, 4-17-06

[vi] Newsweek Stories Analyzed (39) 08-07-00, 08-14-00, 10-09-00, 10-23-00, 11-20-00, 12-11-00, 02-19-01, 04-23-01, 05-07-01, 07-09-01, 09-24-01, 10-01-01, 10-08-01, 10-15-01, 10-22-01, 7-29-02, 8-02, 9-9-02, 11-18-02, 2-3-03, 4-21-03, 4-28-03, 9-1-03, 1-5-04, 1-19-04, 3-23-04, 5-23-04, 9-6-04, 9-20-04, 10-11-04,10-18-04, 10-25-04, 1-24-05, 2-14-05, 3-28-05, 6-27-05, 9-19-05, 10-10-05, 11-28-05

[vii] The Washington Post – ABC poll, conducted by TNS Intersearch, tracks

public sentiment for George W. Bush. The poll surveys 500-1200 registered voters randomly, asking a series of questions relating to Bush's job popularity. The number of respondents is adjusted to determine "likely voters". The polls conducted during the 2000 & 2004 election campaigns ask voters who they intend to vote for in the Presidential election. After each election, the opinion polls shift to focus on the President's job approval rating, a tradition in political news reporting for the past 70 years. The standard question reads: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President" (Washington Post, Sept. 11, 2001). The campaign and post-election surveys have a 3-4% margin of error and often are motivated by newsworthy issues.

[viii] The Newsweek poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, surveys between 700-1200 registered voters. The margin of error tends to be between 3 and 4% according to their disclaimer (Newsweek, Aug. 7, 2000).

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