

Cultural Influence of Storytelling:
An Examination of the Use of Narratives in Political Campaigns

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Abstract

Television has changed political discourse. The thirty second commercial has replaced typography and rhetoric. After losing the popular vote in 5 of the last 6 presidential elections, the Republican National Committee concluded that the GOP has lost the ability to persuade. Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm states that meaningful communication is in the form of storytelling, which enables public discourse to observe not only differences, but commonalities. In a postmodern culture that does not believe in absolute truth, this study asked the following question: Are conservatives still using statistics and facts to communicate conservative principles? The rhetorical research conducted here examined the 2013 gubernatorial race in Virginia, specifically television advertisements, to describe, analyze, and compare the rhetoric in campaigns, specifically the narrative elements. As evidenced in this study, conservatives are communicating using rational rhetoric, statistics and facts. Using only 17 percent personal narratives, the Republican candidate's ads failed to provide identification and realism, but the Democrat candidate captured the audience by using narratives 100 percent of the time and first person narratives 66 percent of the time.

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Introduction

“The concepts of public and social knowledge should be reconceived in light of the narrative paradigm. The effect would be to give shape to these ideas as identifiable entities in the discourse of the citizenry, to give public knowledge in the form of being.” Walter Fisher

Clearly, television has changed political discourse. Postman (1985) maintains that campaigns have “been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business” (p. 3). He argues further that “the decline of typography and the ascendancy of the Age of Television...dramatically and irreversibly shifted the content and meaning of public discourse” (1985, p. 8). Concurrently, three million Republican voters who voted in 2008 did not vote at all in 2012 (Limbaugh, 2012). While 49 percent of Americans who identify themselves as “very religious” lean Republican and only 36 percent of the same group identify with the Democrat Party (Newport, 2014), a Pew Research report reveals that nearly 42 percent of Christian voters who went to the polls voted for Barack Obama in the 2012 election, despite his rejection of the Christian worldview and the Bible’s influence in forming morals and governing people (How the faithful voted, 2012). The Republican Party, which has traditionally adhered to conservative ideals, has lost the popular vote in 5 of the last 6 presidential elections.

After the 2012 election losses, the Republican National Committee led by Chairman Reince Priebus studied the problem. The resulting report, the *Growth and Opportunity Project*, identifies persuasion issues in the message, and it advocates shifting the message to reach a broader audience: “We have lost the ability to be persuasive with, or welcoming to, those who do not agree with us on every issue. ...Our standard should not be universal purity; it should be a more welcoming conservatism” (Priebus, 2012, p.15).

Colbert (2014) believes the answer is not found in reaching out to moderates and liberals, but in maintaining the base of the Republican Party, conservatives themselves. Responding to the conservative voters who did not show up at the polls, Colbert (2014) wrote in *American Thinker*, “The attempt to have a ‘big tent’ for the Republican Party caused the Party to lose its branding...As long as the GOP lacks branding, conservative voters simply stay home, causing further Republican defeats, which further advances the Progressive agenda” (para. 2). This idea is further supported by a 2014 Gallup Report that found that Republicans who identify as “conservative” has increased, from 62 percent in 2000 to 70 percent in 2013 (Jones, 2014). While the Republican Party is messaging to moderates “a more welcoming conservatism,” the number of Republicans who identify as moderate has dropped in the last 13 years, 31 percent to 23 percent (Jones, 2014). Instead of changing the message, Republicans need to look at messaging.

Purpose of the Study

Fisher’s (1984) Narrative Paradigm states that meaningful communication is in the form of storytelling: “The concepts of public and social knowledge should be reconceived in light of the narrative paradigm. The effect would be to give shape to these ideas as identifiable entities in the discourse of the citizenry, to give public knowledge in the form of being” (p. 14). Fisher’s (1984) narrative paradigm is a “theory of symbolic actions—words and or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (p. 2). Ideas are created and communicated through stories, which gives order to the human experience. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to describe, analyze, and compare the rhetoric in campaigns, specifically the narrative elements of political commercials in the 2013 gubernatorial campaign in Virginia, using Fisher’s model as our primary method of analysis.

Before the rise of television, American politicians used a rational world paradigm to persuade (Postman, 1985). Fisher (1984) argues that people in our postmodern culture interpret rhetoric and make decisions based on stories, rather than statistics or rational argument. Before television, people were essentially rational (Postman, 1985); today, people are essentially storytellers (Fisher, 1984). The research question this study addresses is the following: “Are conservatives still using statistics and facts to communicate conservative principles?”

Background

Conservatism is a belief that tradition carries wisdom, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are worth preserving, and America is a leader to the world (Friedersdorf, 2012). With a principled belief in federalism and the fallibility of man, conservatives embrace free market capitalism, community and family ties, and traditional morality (Friedersdorf, 2012). Conservatives believe that government should be small, taxes should be low, and budgets should be balanced (Friedersdorf, 2012). Internationally, conservatives believe that democracy should be exported, but America should not interfere with other nations (Friedersdorf, 2012).

Kirk (1985), the political theorist who gave shape to the conservative brand, described “conservatism at its highest” as concerned with the “regeneration of spirit and character...the restoration of ethical understanding and the religious sanction” (p. 472). America’s Founding Fathers agreed: George Washington said, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports” (U.S. National Archives). Similarly, John Adams said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other” (Faith, n.d.).

While conservatism as Washington, Adams, and Kirk describe has been present since the beginning of American history, the movement received a new name in the 20th century. The so-

called “Religious Right” became more politically active coincident with the secularization of American public policy in the 1960’s and 1970’s (Chapman, 2010).

It will be argued here that conservatism is good for America. Data shows the individual benefits from embracing biblically based conservative ideals: lower rates of drug abuse, alcohol dependency, and depression and increased physical health and self-esteem, to name just a few (Fagan, 2006). Families are strengthened under conservative principles: greater marital happiness and parent-child relationships, and lower out-of-wedlock births and domestic violence (Fagan, 2006). Societies profit from Kirk’s “conservatism at its highest”: crime is lowered and communities are unified (Fagan, 2006).

Despite the benefits of a moral and virtuous society, “more and more, our culture seems to take the position that believing deeply in the tenets of one’s faith represents a kind of mystical irrationality, something that thoughtful, public-spirited American citizens would do better to avoid” (Carter, 1994, pp. 6-7). MacIntyre (1981) maintains that our postmodern society is without a common moral foundation.

A postmodern worldview essentially maintains there are no absolutes, but rather adheres to moral relativism. Veith (1994) describes a postmodern culture this way:

Although postmodernists tend to reject traditional morality, they can still be very moralistic. They will defend their “rights” to do what they want with puritanical zeal. Furthermore, they seem to feel that they have a right not to be criticized for what they are doing. They want not only license but approval. Thus tolerance becomes the cardinal virtue. Under the postmodernist way of thinking, the principle of cultural diversity means that every like-minded group constitutes a culture that must be considered as good as any other culture. The postmodernist

sins are “being judgmental,” “being narrow-minded,” “thinking that you have the only truth,” and “trying to enforce your values on anyone else.” Those who question the postmodernist dogma that “there are no absolutes” are excluded from the canons of tolerance. The only wrong idea is to believe in truth; the only sin is to believe in sin. (pp. 195-196)

While moral absolutism and conservatism are inspired by a Biblical worldview and are concerned with whether an action is right or wrong, moral relativism and liberal secularism maintains what may be a right conduct for one person, may not be right for another (Adarkwa, 2013).

Theoretical perspective

There are numerous studies on why conservatives have had only a limited influence on public policy in recent years. Bruce (1994) blames it on cultural pluralism, where a dominant culture coexists with other sub-cultures, each keeping its own unique cultural identity, rather than just one group dominating or dictating policy. Vinson and Guth (2003) maintain that conservatives’ influence has been limited by disunity and lack of funds within the movement. Noelle-Neumann (1993) believes the influence has been limited because people do not discuss topics in which they believe their opinion is in the minority in order to avoid social isolation. Under this “spiral of silence,” those who are in the prevailing majority speak about the issue, while those in the self-perceived minority remain silent.

Postman (1985) said television has devastated political discourse by presenting information that is simplistic and without history or context. Postman (1985) also points out that capitalism and democracy grew out of the Enlightenment, when citizens were mature, well-informed, and reasonable. Political advertisements have moved away from linguistic discourse

rich in propositions and ideas to pictorial commercials rich in emotional appeal. Business expenditures, including that of campaigns, have shifted from product research to market research or from “making products of value and toward making consumers feel valuable” (Postman, 1985, p. 128.)

As the television has become the chief instrument in presenting political ideas, well-articulated position papers have been replaced with the thirty-second video. Instead of being wise and experienced, the candidate has only to appear wise and experienced. Postman (1985) says, “Because the television commercial is the single most voluminous form of public communication in our society, it was inevitable that Americans would ... accept them as a normal and plausible form of discourse” (p. 130). Television does not allow voters to determine who the best candidate is, but rather makes it impossible. This author remembers going to the public library and reading through a file of clipped articles before casting a ballot in the 1980s. Today, one wonders if that library is still clipping election articles. Postman (1985) says that one of the most powerful effects on political discourse is that the politician does not just offer the public an image of himself, but an image of what he perceives the audience wants him to be. Instead of picking the candidate with the most knowledge and executive skills, voters pick the one whose image “is best in touching and soothing the deep reaches of our discontent” (Postman, 1985, p. 133).

With these studies in mind, this research investigates if conservative truths can be communicated and accepted in a postmodern culture if conservatives follow the trends moving away from rational discourse and towards a more blended approach, which includes emotional appeal, specifically narratives. Fisher (1985) says that man communicates best not from a “rational world paradigm,” but rather a “narrative paradigm,” where storytelling and metaphors

create understanding. Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm is "a theory of symbolic actions, words and/or deeds, that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, and interpret them" (p. 2). In other words, communication is influenced by people's experiences

The use of the narrative to influence people to do something that they don't want to do can be seen in DeWit, Das, and Vet's (2008) work: they found that the narrative is more likely to influence homosexual men to get vaccinated for Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) than factual or abstract data. The persuasiveness of narrative rather than statistics is due to the consideration of message (DeWit et al, 2008). Content is more likely acknowledged when the receivers feel involved in the issue (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). DeWit, Das, and Vet (2008) found that a narrative from a first-person account of a peer who experienced HBV would make other homosexuals feel more involved, thus it would affect the message recipient more than statistics.

Slater and Rounder (1996) found that persuasion is contingent on the relation between the initial position of the receiver and the content of the message. The closer the content is to current beliefs and thoughts, the more likely the receiver will be persuaded (Slater & Rouner, 1996). However, the researchers found that by using narrative evidence, a sender is more likely to persuade a receiver with views and beliefs that are inconsistent with the message (Slater & Rouner, 1996).

Persuasion is dependent on whether the receivers will elaborate on the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The Elaboration Likelihood model predicts that the receiver will most likely consider the message if he is highly involved in the issue. DeWit et al. (2008) found that by using a narrative rather than statistics, the receiver will more closely consider problem-solving techniques that utilize self-education and discovery.

Tversky and Kahneman (1974) found that the narrative increased elaboration on the message because it is more vividly presented than statistics and therefore comes to mind more easily and is best used to imagine an event or construct a scenario. Fisher (1984) says the “narrative impulse is part of our very being because we acquire narrativity in the natural process of socialization” (p. 6). MacIntyre (1981) believes “humans are, above all, storytelling animals” (p. 201). Other theorists would disagree: Rowland (1987) says, “If we define humans as “storytelling animals” than we obscure the fact that humans are also the “theory building animal,” the “argument making animal,” and so forth (p. 268). Yet in either case, it can be agreed that everyday people build our democratic republic through *communication*.

Arnett and Arneson (1999) argue that the narrative paradigm is more democratic than the elitist rational paradigm. Requiring higher education, knowledge, argumentative skills, and advocacy abilities, rationality is left to the elites, but storytelling is universal and innate (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Common people, not just educated officials, live and tell stories. When a story hangs true with other stories (coherence) and can be agreed upon by the community (fidelity), it becomes a public narrative and policy (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Storytelling promotes sociological bonds: narratives unite people through shared experiences and mission (Roberts, 2004). Through narratives, decisions are made based on a common center rather than selfish whims (Roberts 2004). George Barna says, “One of the great challenges to our nation’s leaders is to help people of different spiritual and ideological perspectives maintain dialogue” (as cited in Survey, 2009, para. 15). Arnett and Arneson (1999) recognize that society’s diversity requires more dialogue. Within this diverse society, humans should use narratives that build relationships and create hope, rather than “an unceasing attitude of negativity” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 13). James (1996) agrees: “Stories are also richly

textured sources of information to others, conveying those meanings often lost in arguments” (p. 215). Finally, Arnett and Arneron (1999) promote “dialogic civility,” based on mutual narratives and cooperative dialogue. The values of the mutual narratives are virtually unassailable, and according to Fisher (1985), are to be assessed using coherence and fidelity.

In summation then, it the position of Fisher and this study, that public meaning is formed through storytelling, not argumentation or rationality. People relate to stories, they share them with their family and friends, and in doing so, they affect culture change: “Discussion of stories has the potential to be profoundly transformative - of the group's culture, the individual identities of participants within it and therefore, ultimately, of practices: (James, 2006, p. 214).

James (1996) posits dramatic changes in ideologies and practices may result “if people are able to ‘connect’ with the story-teller and yet explore other interpretations and perspectives along with them” (p. 215). “Stories appear immensely powerful, both in developing and storing pedagogical knowledge and in generating principles to be transferred to other contexts” (James, 1996, p. 215). While there is no guarantee that society will not adopt “bad” stories or rationalizations, the paradigm does lead one towards “critical self-awareness and conscious choice” (Fisher, 1985, p. 349).

Research Question

The central research question for this study is this: *Are conservatives still using statistics and facts to communicate conservative principles, or are they utilizing the narrative paradigm?*

The following Literature Review will outline the failure of conservatives to promote conservative public policy and win elections in recent years and explain the narrative paradigm in more detail.

Literature Review

Background of Problem

“Christian conservatives, for more than two decades a pivotal force in American politics, are grappling with Election Day results that repudiated their influence,” the front page of the *New York Times* reported the day after the 2012 election (Goodstein, 2012). Political analysts, including heavy weights such as Karl Rove and Dick Morris, predicted a Romney win in the 2012 Presidential election, but when less than half of Christians voted in 2012, 32 million out of 80 million, a Republican defeat followed (Hallowell, 2012). “If Christians are upset [about the results of the 2012 election], they need to be upset at themselves,” said Rev. Franklin Graham (Hallowell, 2012, para. 3). “We need to do a better job of getting our people — the Church — to vote” (Hallowell, 2012, para. 3).

While many “Grand Old Party” (GOP) leaders blame the Republican losses on so-called “outdated,” conservative values, the problem may be found in the messaging. “Storytelling, and not argumentation (rationality), forms the basis for public meaning creation” (Caldiero, 2007, p. 1). While liberals tend to share narratives, conservatives have unsuccessfully used argument and logic to win votes. By relating stories to people, they in turn relate those stories to their family and friends, and affect culture change. This research examined the messaging in the 2013 Virginia gubernatorial campaigns of Republican Ken Cuccinelli and Democrat Terry McAuliffe.

To restate it, the purpose of this research was to investigate if the decline of conservative ideals can be overcome using first person narratives. In a postmodern era where truth is relative, can stories convey meaning subtly without sounding pious or preachy bridging the gap between America’s Founding Fathers and postmodernism?

Historic Framework

The father of American conservatism, Russell Kirk, said that America was formed on conservative principles found in the Bible:

From Israel...America inherited an understanding of the sanctity of law. Certain root principles of justice exist, arising from the nature which God has conferred upon man; law is a means for realizing those principles, so far as we can. That assumption was in the minds of the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. A conviction of man's sinfulness, and of the need for laws to restrain every man's will and appetite, influenced the legislators of the colonies and of the Republic. Thomas Jefferson, rationalist though he was, declared that in matters of political power, one must not trust in the alleged goodness of man, but "bind him down with the chains of the Constitution." (Kirk, 1977, p. 29)

America was founded on the conservative ideals of men like Patrick Henry, who said "virtue, morality, and religion render us invincible" (The Importance of Religion, 2013). Samuel Adams agreed: "While the people are virtuous, they cannot be subdued; but once they lose their virtue, they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader" (The Importance of Religion, 2013). John Adams said, "Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other" (Faith, n.d.).

Kirk (1985) stated further that the “Conservative is concerned, first of all, for the regeneration of spirit and character—with the perennial problem of the inner order of the soul, the restoration of the ethical understanding, and the religious sanction upon which any life worth living is founded. This is conservatism at its highest” (p. 472). Echoing this deep sentiment in his oft quoted Farewell Address, George Washington said that religion and morality are the pillars of government:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness -- these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. ... 'Tis substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

(U.S. National Archives)

John Harmon McElroy (1999) looked at large patterns of behavior throughout American history and studied cultural artifacts, such as pioneer diaries, American literature, and historical

papers. McElroy (1999) identified seven sets of cultural beliefs that are a part of the American tradition. Interestingly, these core, cultural beliefs are found in the Republican Platform today.

- Primary beliefs include “Everyone must work.”
- Immigrant beliefs include “Improvement is possible.”
- Frontier beliefs include “Each person is responsible for his own well-being.”
- Social beliefs include “Every person’s success improves society.”
- Political beliefs include “The people are sovereign,” “The least government possible is best,” “A written constitution is essential to government,” “A majority decides,” and “Worship is a matter of conscience.” McElroy (1999) posited, “In America during the 1600 and 1700s, the sovereignty of ‘We the people’ replaced the European belief in the sovereignty of persons of ‘noble’ birth,” (p. 165).
- Beliefs on human nature include “Almost all human beings want to do what is right,” and “Human beings will abuse power when they have it” (McElroy, 1999, p. 222).
- Religious and moral beliefs include “God created nature and human beings,” “God created a law of right and wrong,” “Doing what is right is necessary for happiness,” “God gave man the same birthrights,” and “America is a chosen country.” McElroy (1999) says that despite the Theory of Evolution, Americans still believe in a Creator-God. In opinion polls, up to 87 percent of Americans say God created man, but only 12 percent say man was created by evolution (McElroy, 1999). McElroy (1999) cites an international survey commissioned by the United Nations that found while only 19 percent of Europeans believe God is

very important to their lives, but 58 percent of Americans said God is an important part of their lives.

Religion and morality continued as the foundation of 20th century conservatism. Labeled the Religious Right during the 1960's and 1970's, conservatives became more politically active coincident with the secularization of the American public, exhibited by teaching evolution instead of creationism in the public schools, banning school prayer, liberalizing divorce, among others (Chapman, 2010). Concerned about the future of America without the pillars of morality and religion, conservative voices debated the liberal ideas of legalizing abortion and removing God from the public square (Chapman, 2010).

Significance of Study

Patrick F. Fagan, a Research Fellow in Family and Cultural Issues at The Heritage Foundation, found that religion, foundational to conservatism, has beneficial effects in nearly every aspect of public policy and social concern (2006). Data agreeing with what this study argued earlier indicates that religion positively affects marital happiness, parent-child relationships, education, physical health, self-esteem, charitable donations, and community cohesion (Fagan, 2006). Religious practices are also associated with lower rates of the following: divorce, out-of-wedlock births, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, crime, and domestic violence (Fagan, 2006). Despite these positive attributes, conservatism is being treated with apathy and even disdain among many Americans.

In a large, nationally representative sample of high school seniors, Wallace (1998) found that relative to their peers, youth who held conservative, religious ideals are less likely to engage in behaviors that compromise their health, such as carrying weapons, getting into fights, and

driving while under the influence of alcohol. In addition, these youth were found to be more likely to behave in ways that enhance their health (e.g., proper nutrition, exercise, and rest).

Thornton and Cambum (1989) similarly found that young people who participate in church are less likely to be sexually active before marriage. Even more, Thornton and Cambum (1989) found a reversal causal relationship between sexual attitudes and religious involvement.

With the “greying of America,” King, Ledwell, and Pearce-Morris (2013) found that Biblically based, conservative ideas influenced adult children to provide assistance to parents. The researchers found that adult children who go to church regularly were more motivated to spend time with their aging parents and maintained higher quality relationships (King, et al., 2013).

Despite these benefits, Carter (1994) found a “trend in our political and legal cultures toward treating religious beliefs as arbitrary and unimportant, a trend supported by rhetoric that implies that there is something wrong with religious devotion. More and more, our culture seems to take the position that believing deeply in the tenets of one’s faith represents a kind of mystical irrationality, something that thoughtful, public-spirited American citizens would do better to avoid” (p. 6). MacIntyre (1981) maintains that our postmodern society is living “after virtue,” void of common moral narratives that can give us hope for a civil social life because individuals live only for themselves, not the needs of others. Postmoderns, according to MacIntyre (1981), are driven by “emotivism,” where ethical and value judgments are based on feelings, rather than truth and morals.

As stated earlier and strongly supported in the philosophical literature, a postmodern worldview maintains that there are no absolutes, but rather adheres to an undiluted form of moral relativism. Veith (1994) described the postmodern attack on Christian values:

While Modernist attacks on Christianity are losing their force, postmodernists are attacking Christianity on different grounds. For example, modernists would argue in various ways that Christianity is not true. One hardly hears this objection anymore. Today the most common critique is that “Christians think they have the only truth.” The claims of Christianity are not denied; they are rejected because they purport to be true. Those who believe “there are no absolutes” will dismiss those who reject relativism as “intolerant,” as trying to force their beliefs on other people. Postmodernists reject Christianity on the same grounds that they reject modernism, with its scientific rationalism. Both Christians and modernists believe in truth. Postmodernists do not (p.19).

While moral absolutism and conservatism are inspired by a Biblical worldview and are concerned with whether an action is right or wrong, moral relativism and liberal secularism maintains what may be a right conduct for one person, may not be right for another (Adarkwa, 2013). An example of this type of thinking is abortion: nearly half of Americans define abortion as “women’s choice” or “reproductive healthcare,” despite the fact that empirical evidence shows that abortion is dismembering preborn babies in the mother’s womb (Anderson, 2013).

The same can be said for same-sex marriage. Today, two thirds of Americans agree that two men engaging in sexual relations is a civil right (Gallup, 2014), rather than a biologically unnatural and dangerous act (United States, 2013). Rather than use the facts from “a substantial body of evidence [that] suggests that family structure matters and that children do better, on average, when they are raised by the household of their own married mother and father,” (Gallagher & Baker, 2004) postmoderns accept a redefinition of the centuries old definition of

marriage (Gallagher & Baker, 2004). This opinion is shaping public policy and leading to the legalization of same-sex marriage across America (Same-sex marriage, 2014).

As early as 1951, Burke advanced the idea that rhetoric has evolved from rational persuasion to identification with an image or idea. “The key term for the old rhetoric was ‘persuasion’ and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the ‘new’ rhetoric would be ‘identification,’ which can include a partially ‘unconscious’ factor in appeal” (Burke, 1951, p. 203). A forerunner to Fisher, Burke emphasized the performance aspect of identification, rather than the scientific orientation of facts and statistics.

Other Reasons for Conservative Decline

Pluralism. Bruce (1994) suggested that the conservative’s influence on public policy has failed because of the inevitable consequences of cultural pluralism in a democratic industrial democracy. In a pluralistic society, a dominant culture coexists with other sub-cultures, each keeping its own unique cultural identity, rather than just one group dictating policy. Bruce (1994) found that conservatives have failed to influence public policy in many cases because people are not “Moral Majoritarians” and the “knowledge class” are more liberal than average (p. 238).

Lack of Funds and Disunity. Vinson and Guth (2003) found that the influence of conservatives has been increasingly limited by the lack of funds and disunity. Those who oppose conservative public policy have more resources and more effective mobilization (Vinson & Guth, 2003). Secular organizations have the advantage of working through the Democratic Party which is not timid about taking on social issues, as demonstrated by the LGBT advances during the Obama Administration. Not only that, but many Republican leaders helped raise funds and lead the charge of same-sex marriage. While natural marriage remained a plank in the GOP Platform, Ken Mehlman, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, helped

collect nearly \$3 million for the cause (Nagourney & Barnes, 2012). Theodore B. Olson, a solicitor general under President George W. Bush who argued *Bush v. Gore*, challenged California's Proposition 8 all the way to the Supreme Court. Olson, often seen on television news opposing traditional marriage, helped raise funds and conservative support for same-sex marriage (Nagourney & Barnes, 2012). Paul Singer, a hedge fund manager and chairman of the conservative Manhattan Institute donated more than \$8 million to defeat traditional marriage in California, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Oregon (Nagourney & Barnes, 2012). Other Wall Street types and Republican leaders joined their ranks, such as investor Henry Kravis, hedge fund manager Lewis Eisenberg, and presidential campaign manager Steve Schmidt (Nagourney & Barnes, 2012).

Even when Republicans can agree on an issue, division has erupted over candidates. “Religious conservatives have often been unable to reach a consensus on the candidates ... Even the ‘unifying’ moral issues have divided religious conservatives on occasion” (Vinson & Guth, 2003, pp. 36-37). Another issue is the lack of conversation about conservative principles for fear of isolation.

Spiral of Silence. Barna Research found that one-third of all adults (32 percent) consider themselves to be “mostly conservative” on social and political matters, but only half as many (17 percent) claimed to be “mostly liberal” (Survey, 2009). So why have Republicans lost the popular vote in five of the last six presidential elections? Many conservatives are not discussing conservative principles at all because of a belief that that they are in the minority (Colson, 2012).

Noelle-Neumann’s (1993) spiral of silence theory states that fear of isolation keeps individuals from expressing opinions if they perceive they are in the minority. Noelle-Neumann (1993) wrote in her book *Spiral of Silence* that the idea came to her during the university

students' unrest in the sixties. She tells of meeting a student wearing a button on her jacket that said, "Christian Democrat." When Noelle-Neumann questioned her about being a Christian Democrat, the student said that she wasn't, but that she just wore it to see the reaction. Later, the two students met again, but the button was gone. The student explained that it was too awful to wear it, so she took it off (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

In this often precipitous spiral of silence, those who are in the prevailing majority speak about the issue, while those in the self-perceived minority remain silent. The result is those in the majority find their ideas strengthened (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The more an individual feels secure that his opinion is supported, the more he is willing to speak out (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). In the end, one opinion—whether right or wrong—drowns out the other. Noelle-Neumann (1993) writes the following:

Public opinion inheres in those attitudes and models of behavior at a specific time and place which are adhered to with vigor; which in any environment of established viewpoints, one must exhibit to avoid social isolation; and which, in an environment of changing viewpoints or in a newly emerging area of tension, one can express without isolating oneself. (p.110)

As Colson (2012) put it, "The most important thing we can do today in obedience to Christ is to break the culture of silence that is pervasive in our culture" (para. 2). Using narratives, courageous men and women have broken through the spiral of silence and affected public opinion change. A recent example is the trial of Dr. Hermit Gosnell.

Major social organizations, including news agencies, political parties, and churches, were silent on the trial of Hermit Gosnell, a man found guilty of performing illegal late-term abortions by inducing labor on uninformed women and then murdering infants born alive, in addition to

involuntary manslaughter in the death of a woman who died as a result of her injuries during an abortion. The *Washington Post* freely reports cultural stories when they fit a liberal viewpoint. For example, when the Komen Foundation ended its support of Planned Parenthood (which it later reversed), Sandra Fluke insisted that the government pay for her birth control, and Rep. Todd Akin spewed about “legitimate rape,” the *Washington Post* ran over 80 stories (Hemingway, 2013a). But when the same health reporter was asked why she hadn’t covered the Gosnell trial, she replied that it was a local crime issue (Hemingway, 2013b).

Thus this research found that while the McAuliffe gubernatorial campaign in Virginia was calling Cuccinelli’s public policies affecting women “way too extreme,” Cuccinelli remained silent about the Gosnell trial. The Gosnell trial would have provided the Republican candidate a rhetorical moment to explain his position on abortion by using the narrative of women and babies dying at the hands of the abortionist Hermit Gosnell, but his campaign remained silent on this issue.

Colson (2011) counters: “The good news is these kinds of spirals are fragile: Once exposed, they unravel” (para. 13). Kirsten Powers broke the Gosnell spiral of silence when she covered the story in *USA Today*. Suddenly social media was humming about the lack of attention Gosnell was getting in the mainstream media. In the end, Dr. Gosnell was charged with 237 crimes, including third-degree murder of babies born alive, involuntary manslaughter of a woman, hiring untrained clinicians, and unsanitary conditions. The *Washington Post* and others began giving the issue some coverage.

The church’s response to the Gosnell trial was mixed. The General Board of the United Methodist Church issued a statement saying, “Both those who oppose abortion and those who support it find the illegal and immoral actions of Dr. Gosnell reprehensible” (Gosnell’s Actions,

2013). Bishop Harry Jackson, senior pastor of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Maryland, held a press conference after the sentencing, drawing attention to harm abortion is doing to minority women (Jessup, 2013). Likewise, Pastor Herb Lusk of Greater Exodus Baptist Church in Philadelphia used the guilty verdict to tell of the plight of black babies: “One out of every two pregnancies in the African American community right now are aborted -- one out of every two” (as cited in Jessup, 2013, para. 17) More evidence of the spiral of silence in the church includes a June 2014 vote of the nation’s largest Presbyterian denomination, which failed to win approval of a motion that denounced the killing of babies born alive after an abortion (Smith, 2014).

In an August 2014 report, Barna Research reported that 90 percent of pastors believe that the Bible speaks to today’s issues, but less than 10 percent are willing to speak about them (LeClaire, 2014). “When we talk about the separation of church and state, it’s that churches have separated themselves from the activities of the state—and that’s to the detriment of the state and its people,” Barna told *Charisma Magazine* (as cited in LeClaire, 2014, para. 5). According to Barna, pastors identify success based on attendance, giving, programs, staff members, and church buildings ((LeClaire, 2014). Pastors are influenced by the spiral of silence, which keeps them from speaking the truth. Pastors are concerned that controversy will cause people to leave the church and stop giving money (LeClaire, 2014).

Though not the central purpose of this study, the question that begs to be asked by someone and very soon: What would happen if pastors broke the spiral of silence in churches and began sharing the stories that the mainstream media ignores? Would church members share those narratives with their families and friends? Would this lead to culture change? One can only surmise that it would at least increase the nation’s potential for moral and political reform. But

that is for another study. Suffice to say for now, that the present research is ultimately concerned with an answer to such pressing questions.

Staver contends, “For years, leftist groups, such as Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (AU), have used deception and fear tactics to censor the church and muzzle pastors” (as quoted in Liberty Counsel, 2012, para. 2). In a letter sent to 60,000 pastors, Barry Lynn, (2012) President of Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote, “Any activity designed to influence the outcome of partisan election can be construed as intervention. If the IRS determines that your house of worship has engaged in unlawful intervention, it can revoke the institution’s tax-exempt status or levy significant fines on the house of worship or its leaders” (para. 3). Staver (2000) counters, “Churches are tax-exempt inherently. They don’t need a letter from the IRS to be tax exempt, so their tax-exempt status cannot be taken away by the IRS ... The Court pointed out that under the Internal Revenue Code, churches are the only institutions that are not required to apply for tax-exempt status” (para. 4).

When Christian conservatives have spoken out about the issues of the day, they have used rational debate rather than narratives. For example, conservatives tend to use statistics and rational studies on the importance of raising a child with a mom and a dad when discussing same-sex marriage, as a quick view of the National Organization for Marriage website reveals. Conversely, when advocating same-sex marriage in California, Venka Anderson shared the story of her deceased brother-in-law with *USA Today*: “His partner's family wouldn't let him visit in the hospital as he was dying. They weren't married, so he couldn't do anything about it” (as cited by Weise, 2013, para.5). While most Americans at the time did not support same-sex marriage, few would deny a dying man a visit from a loved-one. Through narratives such as this, secular

progressives have successfully redefined the importance of natural marriage and ushered in special rights for homosexuals.

Narrative Paradigm

Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm communicates using stories or "symbolic actions (words and/or deeds) that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, and interpret them" (p. 2). Foss (2004) contends that narratives have four criteria: (a) contain two events, (b) events are temporally ordered, (c) first event has a causal relationship with second, and (d) at least one unified subject. Ideas are communicated through a narrative give order to the human experience (Fisher, 1984).

As has been stated previously, contemporary Western society has used education and a rational world paradigm to persuade. Fisher (1984) argues our postmodern culture relies on natural socialization where it interprets rhetoric using society's history and stories and makes decisions based on that narrative, rather than just the statistics or rational argument. The rational world paradigm says that people are essentially rational; the narrative paradigm maintains that people are essentially storytellers (Fisher, 1984). The rational paradigm says that people make decisions based on argument; the narrative paradigm says people make decisions based on good reasons or values in the narrative (Fisher, 1984). The rational paradigm says that the best argument is the most rational; the narrative paradigm maintains coherence and fidelity determine whether a story is rational (Fisher, 1984). The rational paradigm is a system of argument used by experts and professionals; the narrative paradigm is a series of stories told by people everywhere (Fisher, 1984).

Fisher (1987) found that reasoning is not disregarded in the narrative paradigm, but reconstituted into stories in order to communicate more effectively. Fisher (1987) saw the

narrative paradigm as a combination of the argumentative, persuasive theme with the literary, aesthetic theme. Humans innately know that the underlying story contains the truth of the matter. “What is the story behind that?” one may ask. The narrative paradigm explains the story behind the fact. Fisher (1984) further stated that no communication type is beyond the narrative paradigm: “Any epic, whether social, political, legal, or otherwise involves narrative” (p. 3). The narrative paradigm is not a specific genre, but it is found in every form of discourse—philosophy, rhetoric, poetic, and more (Fisher, 1985b). “There is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of life,” Fisher says (1985b, p. 347).

The narrative paradigm engages the listener, not just the orator. By using stories, the orator subtly creates meaning for those listening. “We all live out narratives in our lives...and we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 197). The narrative paradigm interprets new ideas through one’s experiences. “Narration comes closer to capturing the experience of the world, simultaneously appealing to the various senses, to reason and emotion, to intellect and imagination, and to fact and value. It does not presume intellectual contact only” (Fisher, 1984, p. 9). Another important element in Fisher’s model is the idea of public moral argument.

“Public moral argument is moral in the sense that it is founded on ultimate questions—of life and death, of how persons should be defined and treated, of preferred patterns of living” (Fisher, 1984, p. 12). Public controversies are public moral argument (Fisher, 1984). Fisher (1984) lists “pornography, ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], and crime and punishment” as the controversies of his day. Today’s controversial public moral arguments might include homosexual rights, religious liberties, marijuana legalization, and abortion, to name just a few.

Fisher (1984) suggested that society's problems are the result of rejection of intelligent design, separation of morality, evolution of sense of self, and rise of emotivism. Because ethical statements today are not based on fact but instead the speaker's feelings, "ethical arguments in public are rendered ineffectual because of conceptual incommensurability" (Fisher, 1984, p.14). Fisher (1984) used protest as a case in point: "Advocates of reform argue from a position of 'rights' and those who oppose them reason from the stance of 'utility'" (p. 14). Such is the case of the current homosexual marriage debate. Liberals see same-sex marriage as a matter of homosexual equality and feel homosexual couples should be given the same "rights" as heterosexual couples to marry; conservatives see natural marriage as the best way to raise children and rationalize rights and benefits of natural marriage based on that fact (Gallagher & Baker, 2004). In the decades-long debate, there has been no consensus of understanding.

To Fisher (1984), "arguers appealing to justice and equality contend with adversaries who base their case on success, survival, and liberty, they talk past each other" (p. 14). To bridge the gap, Fisher (1984) suggested telling stories that do not deny a person's self-conception: "To consider that public-social knowledge is to be found in the stories that we tell one another would enable us to observe not only our differences, but also our commonalities, and in such observation we might be able to reform the notion of the 'public'" (Fisher, 1984, p. 14).

As effective example of this line of thought, President Ronald Reagan was a man who was able to present statistics and argument in a narrative fashion, and in so doing, he won the hearts of men and women from different backgrounds and political parties. "The Great Communicator" discussed controversial matters such as welfare, government spending, taxation, and national debt, focusing on individual goals, needs, and shared experiences. Jamieson (1988) explains, "By employing a self-disclosive, narrative, personal, 'womanly' style, Ronald Reagan,

an ideological conservative, pioneered a revolution not only in televised communication, but implicitly in women's participation in politics on their own terms" (p. 89).

On October 27, 1964, Ronald Reagan launched his national, political career with the speech *A Time for Choosing*. In this speech, Reagan (1964) tied the economy, national debt, big government, and individual freedom to personal stories:

Today, 37 cents out of every dollar earned in this country is the tax collector's share, and yet our government continues to spend 17 million dollars a day more than the government takes in. . . . This is the issue of this election: Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves. (para. 3)

You and I are told increasingly we have to choose between a left or right. Well, I'd like to suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There's only an up or down—[up] man's old—old-aged dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. And regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would trade our freedom for security have embarked on this downward course. (Reagan, 1964, para. 7-8)

By discussing tax percentages in terms of cents on a dollar, Reagan put complicated taxation rhetoric in a narrative to which everyone could relate. Reagan discussed Americans' shared national history to bring coherence to conservative values. "The Great Communicator" captured the fidelity and importance of his message, its principles, and the election by replacing "left or right" political parties with "up or down": "individual freedom" or "totalitarianism."

Fifty years later, Republicans still pay tribute to the Reagan years. His narratives brought confidence back to Americans, and with voters' support, his principles brought freedom not only to Americans but to people around the world. The first actor-turned-President, Reagan was a master of the television, and his use of the narrative led the way.

Jamieson (1988) found that television has led the shift from a rational world paradigm to narrative paradigm: "The broadcast age has rendered the combative, date-driven, 'male' style obsolete" (89). Jamieson (1988) classified narratives as women's style of communication that is used to communicate bed-time stories as well as community news: "The talent for capturing ideas and lessons in brief narratives is one cultivated by mothers telling bedtime stories to their children. It is a talent of use as well to those who transmit the goings-on of the community" (1998, p. 84). She maintains that television has increased the public's desire for narratives and replaced rational argument with dramatic narratives. Because television focuses on narratives, "the once spurned womanly style is now the style of preference" (Jamieson, 1988, p. 84).

Fisher (1984) suggested that narration lifts up the individual and puts him in the decision making process, rather than traditional rationality which "implies some sort of hierarchical system, a community in which some persons are qualified to judge and to lead and other persons are to follow" (p. 9). In the narrative paradigm, qualified experts should not so much lead as to counsel (1984). Arnett and Arneson (1999) agreed that traditional rationality tends to be elitist. In *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, the researcher concluded that the narrative paradigm is more democratic than the elitist rational paradigm (1999). Arnett and Arneson recognized that society's diversity requires more dialogue (1999). Common people, rather than just educated government officials and community leaders, live and tell stories. When a story hangs true with

other stories (coherence) and can be agreed upon by the community (fidelity), it becomes a public narrative and policy (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Communication should focus on what is best for society and others, not the self-interest of the speaker (Arnett & Anderson, 1999). Arnett and Anderson (1999) discussed a “dialogic civility,” based on mutual narratives and cooperative dialogue. America is a diverse society, with unique ethnic backgrounds, cultural perspectives, and world views. They also looked to the narrative paradigm in order to build a consensus within the diverse society and create hope, rather than “an unceasing attitude of negativity” (p. 13). According to Jamieson (1988), the narrative “transports us out of ourselves. ... The speaker and the audience are united in the common experience of the story. In that collective experience, they may find a commonality not otherwise apparent in the real world they inhabit” (p. 148).

Finally, it should be noted that the narrative paradigm is hostile to elitist politics. “From the narrative paradigm view, the experts are storytellers and the audience is not a group of observers but are active participants in the meaning-formation of the stories” (Fisher, 1984, p. 13). As such, the “narrative paradigm provides a radical democratic ground for social-political critique” (Fisher, 1984, p. 9).

Rowland (1987) disagreed: traditional rationality is not elitist, and the rational world paradigm’s “expert” and Fisher’s “counselor” are essentially the same. According to Rowland (1987), the narrative is not necessarily democratic because elites could still control the story. The two largest totalitarian movements in the 20th century, National Socialism and communism, relied on stories to control people, (Rowland, 1987). That is exactly the point. People were stirred by the Aryan myth (Nazism) and worker’s rights narrative (Communism), and culture changed. People will be stirred and adopt “bad” narratives as well as “good” narratives.

Furthermore, Rowland (1987) found Fisher's definition of narrative too general: the "narrative has been defined so broadly that the term loses much of its explanatory power" (p. 265). White (1980) agrees: "Historians do not have to report their truths about the real world in narrative forms; they may choose other non-narrative or even anti-narrative modes of representation" (p. 6). These theorists defined a narrative succinctly as "a chronological account of an event or process, in other words a fictional or factual story" (Rowland, 1987, p. 266). Using a political example to clarify his point, Rowland (1987) said that a politician trying to raise public support for a mass transit project might use statistics and expert testimony. That type of speech, Rowland maintained, is markedly different than the politician that shares stories of mass transit (1987). The first speech "relies primarily on the capacity of the audience to evaluate the evidence and reasoning," but the second "relies on the audience interest with the characters to produce persuasion" (Rowland, 1987, p. 266).

According to Rowland (1987), "without a plot and characters, rhetoric cannot serve the functions generally fulfilled by storytelling, and thus should not be considered narrative (p. 266). To further clarify his point, Rowland (1987) uses two books on nuclear war as examples: *The Day After* shows the effects of nuclear war on the citizens of Lawrence, Kansas, and it is clearly a narrative; but *The Fate of the Earth* describes the effects of nuclear fallout void of characters or plot so it is not narrative. Fisher (1984) responds that all rhetoric can become narratives because people interpret them based on their own life stories or society's stories.

Coherence and Fidelity

While social and political scientists have studied the various ways people come to *adopt stories* that guide behavior, the narrative paradigm provides the logic for how diverse people *assess stories* (Fisher, 1985b). It looks at whether one *should* accept stories as a basis for

decision making (Fisher, 1985b). Other social scientific theories ignore values and disregard good and evil (Fisher, 1985b). “No science of values has appeared or seems likely to do so,” (Fisher, 1984, p. 5). Using Fisher’s narrative paradigm, “shared knowledge, biography, culture, and character determines good reasons...elements that provide warrants for a accepting or adhering to the advice (Bush & Bush, 1994, p. 34).

Culture is built on practical wisdom, similar to Aristotle’s *phronesis* (Fisher, 1985b). The narrative paradigm persuades using a compelling story, and that story is persuasive to the extent that it is has coherence and fidelity (Fisher, 1985b). There is no guarantee that those using the narrative paradigm will not adopt “bad” stories or rationalizations, but the paradigm does lead one towards “critical self-awareness and conscience choice” (Fisher, 1985, p. 349). So when judging a story, people determine if it “hangs together” and is free from contradictions (Fisher, 1985b).

In sum, messages must make sense to the listener and be what Fisher calls, *coherent*. The structure must be clear, the resemblance to other life stories consistent, and the characters credible (Fisher, 1985b). Besides coherence, the listeners judge the story’s *fidelity*, the truthfulness of the narrative, the soundness of its reasons, and the importance of its message. “To weigh the [fidelity] values, one considers questions of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and transcendent issue” (Fisher, 1985b, p. 350).

Judging the values of a narrative based on these two important criteria helps people see the relevance, impact if adopted, and quality of life in general (Fisher, 1985b). An example of someone who uses narratives to affect culture change is Lila Rose, a young woman who goes into abortion clinics undercover and secretly videos groups like Planned Parenthood. Rose’s organization, Truth Action, has changed the narrative of Planned Parenthood being a “women’s

healthcare organization” by showing undercover videos of them refusing to provide mammograms or other women’s healthcare. Her videos uncover Planned Parenthood advocating sex-selection abortion, race-selection abortions (racial genocide), and even their assistance to human traffickers and child molesters. As one views her stories, Planned Parenthood clinic workers caught on tape, one judges whether the conventional wisdom is right. This confirms or disconfirms one’s views on abortion.

Another group using narratives to defend the sanctity of life is Silent No More, a group of women who tell their abortion stories of trauma and regret. They share abortion’s negative consequences, which is a narrative that has been largely untold because of the shame women often feel. Stories like that of Kelly who appeared on Bill O’Reilly have been very instrumental in restricting late-term abortions. The Dr. Tiller patient (2006) explained her experience:

Dr. Tiller came in and injected into the amniotic sack a saline solution, which suffocated and burned my baby to death. And on the last day they put you in a room with other women — there’s, like, maybe six to 10 beds in a big room. And every woman is lying there. And they kind of go down the line and whoever’s ready, you know, they decide that you’re dilated enough, and they put you in wheelchair and wheel you out to another room. And in this other room there’s basically a toilet, and they told me to sit on the toilet, lean on the nurse, and push, push my baby into a toilet. ... this is all very graphic, and I think that that’s very important that people know that that’s going on in our country.

Through Lila Rose, Silent No More, and other narrative messaging, the culture is changing in regards to life. For the first time since the United States Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, more people are pro-life than pro-choice (Anderson, 2013). These narratives are providing good reasons for “accepting or adhering to the advice fostered” (Fisher, 1985b).

“Good stories function in two ways: to justify decisions or actions already made or performed and to determine future actions or decisions” (Fisher, 1985b, p. 362). Groups such as Truth Action and Silent No More are hopeful that by using narratives, abortion will meet the same demise as slavery in America.

These examples support the narrative paradigm notion that diverse people can come together as they accept and adhere to stories. People gravitate to stories that are coherent to life as it should be (Fisher, 1985b, p. 362). While fighting against evils of culture, it is easy to get caught in the mire of the sin that is corrupting culture. In the past, pro-life activists have stood holding big billboards of aborted fetuses. While that might have persuaded a few, the narratives that are being told today are much more effective, as evidenced by public opinion surveys (Anderson, 2013). People are more interested in stories that exemplify how life should be (Fisher, 1985b). Perhaps that is why the church has largely ignored the homosexual attack on Christian values. Christians do not want to read about sexual perversion, and they feel turned off by rhetoric that sounds like it is “gay-bashing.”

For years, pro-family groups have shown pictures of gay parades and exposed the homosexual perverse lifestyle, but people have looked the other way. A recent Pew Report found 83 percent of white evangelicals say gay marriage violates their religious beliefs, but only 44 percent of white, mainline Protestants say same-sex marriage goes against their religious beliefs, despite the Bible’s clear definition of marriage and view on homosexuality (Masci, 2014). Only a third (32 percent) of white, mainline Protestants opposes same-sex marriage, despite the Bible’s definition of marriage as one man and one woman (Masci, 2014). The church has largely ignored the homosexual rights movement and remained unengaged.

Stories are engaging. Social change happens when people are engaged with their own education (Horton & Freire, 1990). Horton and Freire (1990) found that liberation is only achieved through popular participation. While their work focused on the liberation of the poor from the bonds of poverty, it parallels Fisher's democratic narratives in which a new society emerges when people are participating. Participatory education leads to liberation and social change (Horton & Freire, 1990). The work of these civil rights activists urging ordinary men to learn and to take control over their own destinies can be applied to any oppressed people.

A well-known narrative of the end of the Constitutional Convention still rings true today. As Benjamin Franklin exited Independence Hall, a woman approached him and asked, "Well doctor, have we got—a republic or a monarchy?" Ben Franklin's answer still rings true today, "A republic—if you can keep it." With federal powers increasing, our republic is weak, but we can keep it by effectively communicating constitutional conservatism. Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm tells us how: people are more likely to listen and share a narrative than rational rhetoric.

Methodology

Qualitative research studies “things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). “Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Creswell (2013) identifies five traditions to qualitative inquiry: narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and ground theory. The researcher selected narrative study because visual advertisements such as television commercials can influence perceptions and help the audience remember the product—in this case, the candidate—even in 30 seconds (Bush & Bush, 1994). The narrative paradigm is the most effective rhetorical tool for analyzing, criticizing, and evaluating narrative advertising (Bush & Bush, 1994).

Bush and Bush (1994) found that using the narrative paradigm, specifically the probability and fidelity of stories, advertisers can better anticipate public reactions. They suggested that a qualitative approach is better than the quantitative approach, which relied on audience reactions, because a survey does not expose the values of the audience (1994). Studying narrative probability and fidelity helps marketers better predict public reactions (Bush & Bush, 1994).

This research used rhetorical research to examine the 2013 gubernatorial race in Virginia, specifically television advertisements. The researcher believes these commercials reflect a larger set of communications within campaigns of Democrat and Republican Parties. Rhetorical research aims to analyze, criticize, and evaluate advertising. Instead of focusing on audience reaction and behavior after exposure, rhetorical research focuses on evaluating the content of the artifact (Bush & Bush, 1994).

The 2013 Virginia gubernatorial campaign commercials that were analyzed were found on YouTube.com. The video sharing website tallies and displays the amount of online views of each commercial. All of the commercials from each candidate were listed with the amount of views. The researcher analyzed the top 12 most viewed commercials from each campaign, approximately half of all the commercials produced.

Creswell (1998) describes sixteen types of sampling, including “critical case” and “politically important” cases. A critical case sample collects a number of important cases that yield the most information. In selecting political commercials, the researcher used the campaign communication form that has the greatest impact on shaping public knowledge and possesses a “logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases” (Creswell, 1998, p. 119). “The television commercial has been the chief instrument in creating the modern methods of presenting political ideas” (Postman, 1985, p.129). Image advertising is an appropriate communication strategy for generating loyalty in a postmodern culture (Stutts & Barker, 1999). Brians and Wattenberg (1996) found that citizens who can recall political commercials have the most accurate knowledge of the candidates' positions on public policy. Gerber, Gimpel, Green, and Shaw (2011) found that televised campaign advertisements have strong but short-lived effects on voting preferences.

In addition, campaign commercials from a gubernatorial election were specifically picked because they fit Creswell’s definition of “politically important cases.” Studying a state-wide election may increase the possibility that the research is noticed and impacts conservative messaging.

Because a narrative rhetorical criticism is interpretive research, it is important to identify the researcher’s involvement in the campaign in particular or politics as a whole. Foss says, “a

critic can know an artifact only through a personal interpretation of it,” thus one “cannot be objective, impartial, and removed from the data” (2004, p. 21). Further, researchers are tasked with finding “one perspective on an artifact” (p. 21). That said, this researcher had absolutely no involvement in the Virginia 2013 gubernatorial campaign, except that of voting. However, with an undergraduate degree in government and politics and a lifetime of involvement in campaigns and public policy, the researcher brings to the study biases towards conservative ideals, such as were held by the Republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli.

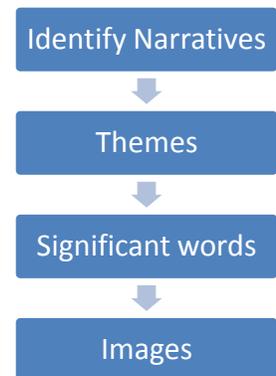
Presently a communications director for a conservative 501(c)3 public policy, litigation, and education organization, the researcher’s career has been rich in conservative messaging. This year, the researcher began to muse over the question: are conservatives still using statistics and facts to communicate the conservative principles? While the researcher is a conservative, she does not think Republicans are messaging well. Any bias the researcher brings will be toward the Democrat messaging.

While it is assumed that objectivity does not exist in qualitative research, the researcher provided data as evidence to support the claims made (Foss, 2004). The research included generous amount of quotations, descriptions, and documentation of findings. The researcher also linked between the data of the artifact, interpretations, and claims made.

The researcher transcribed all of the television commercials to analyze the raw rhetoric, and also examined the aesthetic themes in the narrative as described below. The researcher provided quotations and descriptions as evidence to support the claims made, and linked data from the artifact to the claims made. Narratives were identified using Foss’s (2004) four criteria for a narrative: (a) contain two events, (b) events are temporally ordered, (c) first event has a causal relationship with second, and (d) at least one unified subject.

The advantage of studying audio-visual material is the unobtrusive method of collecting data. In addition, commercials are creative, visually stimulating, and provide the study of words and pictures of the narrative (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) identified three limitations to audio-visual data types: may be difficult to interpret, may be inaccessible, and may be disruptive to have a photographer in the field of study. Since the last two are clearly not an issue with this research, the only concern was the difficulty in interpreting the commercials for narrative elements, which was overcome using the data analysis procedures below.

In answering the question, “Are conservatives still using statistics and facts to communicate the conservative principles?” the researcher investigated the “frequency” of narratives in the artifact in coding, as suggested by Foss in *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (2004). In addition, the researcher examined the themes of the narratives, significant words, and images, as suggested by Foss (2004). Ryan (as quoted by Albrecht & Surprenant, 2006) maintains that narrative meaning is not only found in linguistic texts but also in media-specific, non-verbals that elicit narrativity, such as images. This researcher examined the images in each commercial and their capacity to help communicate the narrative. Finally, the researcher tested the narratives against Fisher’s criteria for persuasion: coherence and fidelity. Coherence asks if the story hangs together, does it have internal consistence with characters acting as one would expect. Fidelity looks at truthfulness and if it strikes a responsive chord.



The researcher employed certain procedures to ensure the accuracy of the findings and qualitative validity (Creswell, 2012). First, the researcher used rich description to give the readers detailed explanations of the setting for each advertisement. Next, the researcher checked commercial transcripts and code definitions to ensure accuracy.

The narrative report presents an analysis of the Republican and Democrat gubernatorial campaign commercials during 2013, specifically looking for narratives that tell a story. An in-depth analysis of the narratives are recounted with detailed descriptions. The accounts use embedded quotes from the advertisements along with the researcher's interpretations.

A preliminary pilot study found that Terry McAuliffe, the Democrat gubernatorial candidate for Virginia, used narratives rich with Burke's idea of 'identification,' a deliberate device politicians use to identify themselves with voters using narratives (1951). McAuliffe's campaign used what Foss (2004) called "satellites" or subplot narratives to support major themes. Accordingly, pilot studies of Republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli's campaign found few narratives, particularly first person narratives. The pilot studies suggest, and this research verified, that the Republican candidate relied on rational rhetoric and 3rd person narratives.

Results

The results of this study will be presented with an overview of the campaign commercials’ use of narratives, themes, and images. Next the research will present a detailed analysis of each commercial studied.

Using Foss’s (2004) definition of a narrative as the standard, a third of Cuccinelli’s commercials utilized statistics and facts to persuade voters, and two-thirds used the narrative paradigm, as Table 1 conveys. Conversely, 100 percent of McAuliffe’s commercials utilized the narrative to communicate ideas and influence voters, as itemized by Table 2.

Table 1		
<i>Cuccinelli Commercials</i>		
Commercial Name	Narrative 1st/3rd Person	
Showman & Salesman	yes	3rd
Release the Documents	no	n/a
All About	yes	3rd
Your Side	no	n/a
Garbarino	yes	1st
Scandal	yes	3rd
Opportunity	yes	3rd
Deserve	yes	3rd
Justice	yes	1st
Serious	no	n/a
Tichi	no	n/a
Dispicable	yes	3rd

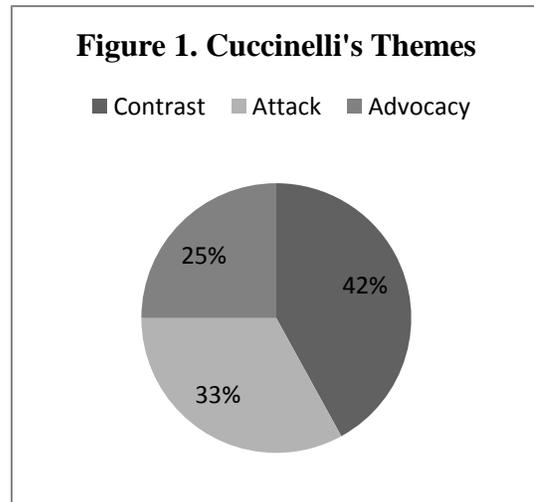
Even more key to identification with the speaker and the ability to influence is the use of the first person narrative. Electronic eloquence is characterized by Jamieson as conversation, self-disclosure, synoptic, and visually dramatic— characteristics found in a first person narrative (Borchers, 2013). As Tables 1 and 2 indicate, only 17 percent of Cuccinelli’s commercials utilized the first person narrative. While two-thirds of his commercials told a story, only 17 percent were told by a character who shared events that he or she had experienced. In contrast, 66 percent of McAuliffe’s commercials featured a Virginian sharing their personal story to influence voters.

Table 2		
<i>McAuliffe Commercials</i>		
Name	Narrative 1st/3rd Person	
Paul	yes	1st
Interfering	yes	3rd
As Governor	yes	1st
Twisting Facts	yes	3rd
Offended	yes	1st
Honored	yes	1st
The Pill	yes	1st
Over the Brink	yes	3rd
All Supporting	yes	1st
Bunch	yes	1st
Callahan	yes	1st
Sensible	yes	3rd

Themes

Political advertisements serve to advocate a candidate, attack the contender, or contrast the differences between the candidate and contender (Borchers, 2013). When divided into

Borcher’s three groups, a quarter of Cuccinelli’s ads were advocacy ads, focusing on the candidate’s qualifications, but not including policy. A third of the ads were attack ads, which did not offer any other theme of policy or contrast. Forty-two percent of the commercials contrasted Democratic past failings on jobs, education, and taxes, with the



policy objectives of Cuccinelli. One of the contrast ads included an attack against McAuliffe with the theme of increasing jobs. Adding that with the other attack ads, forty percent of Cuccinelli’s commercials focused on McAuliffe being untrustworthy.

Table 3 shows “McAuliffe is not trustworthy” theme far outnumbered the commercials about jobs or education. These attack ads focused on

McAuliffe’s questionable business ventures, including co-founding an electric car company that produced few jobs or cars and was under federal investigation. The last attack ad was on McAuliffe’s investing in an insurance annuity scheme that profited from the death of the

Theme	# of Ads
McAuliffe not trustworthy	5
Cuccinelli is caring	4
Jobs	3
Education	3
High Taxes	2
McAuliffe misleading ads	1

terminally ill. Furthermore, 4 of the 5 ads on McAuliffe were single issue ads, where no other theme was developed. However, none of these attack ads were narrated by a first person who

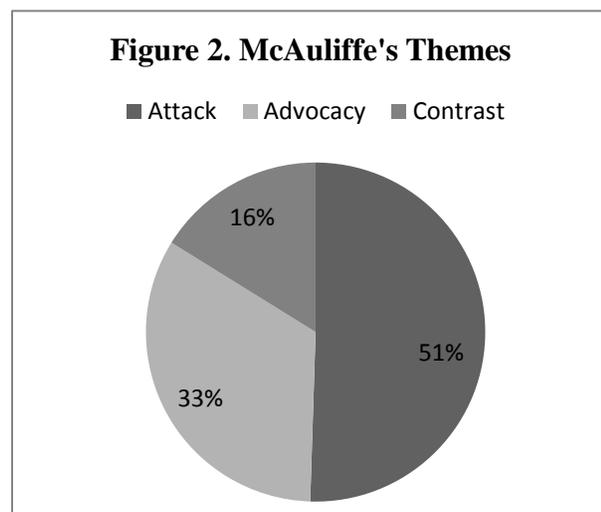
had been personally affected by McAuliffe or his policies. Politicians use attack ads to foster Fisher's coherence or strike a responsive chord. The first person narrative attack appeals to the emotions and raises fears or concerns about a candidate. By using rational rhetoric or a third person narrative, Cuccinelli missed the opportunity for voters to identify with someone who had been personally injured or offended by McAuliffe's positions or policies.

Cuccinelli's caring character, jobs, and education were themes in 24 percent of the commercials. Taxes were the theme in just 16 percent, despite taxes being a top issue of both the Republican Party and the sub-groups of tea party members and conservatives.

Only one commercial indirectly responded to McAuliffe's attack ads on Cuccinelli. "It is important to respond to attack ads immediately" (Borchers, 2013, p. 337). The Clinton campaign created "the War Room," which monitored news and advertisements and quickly responded (Borchers, 2013). Cuccinelli's "war on woman" was the dominant theme in McAuliffe's campaign, but Cuccinelli did little to rebut that assertion. The significant words of each commercial are detailed in the Individual Commercial Analysis.

Using Borchers's (2013) categories, fifty percent of McAuliffe's narrative ads were attack ads, another 33 percent were advocacy, and the final 16 percent contrasted McAuliffe and his policies against Cuccinelli.

McAuliffe combined themes in 40 percent of his advertisements. While he promoted jobs in 50 percent of his commercials, he also supported bipartisanship in half of those. The themes were advanced with the



first person narrative.

The 66 percent of the attack ads used a first person narrative to share a personal experience with Cuccinelli’s policies. As will be detailed in the analysis of each commercial, a woman asks “Why is Ken Cuccinelli interfering in our private lives?” In one commercial, a female doctor from Norfolk, Virginia, says “My job is to protect the health of women, so I’m particularly offended by Ken Cuccinelli.” The doctor accuses Cuccinelli of “interfer[ing] in the lives of women across Virginia.” Female voters identified with first person narratives from other women, and, as will be discussed later, largely voted for McAuliffe.

Themes	# of Ads
Cuccinelli not trustworthy	2
Cuccinelli’s War on Women	5
Jobs	6
Bipartisanship	3
Cuccinelli misleading ads	1

Images

“Electronic eloquence is most effective when it combines words with images” (Borchers, 2013, p. 199). Images increase the persuasive and motivational power of political ads (Brader, 2005). Images serve as words for persuaders and are evaluated by the audience’s perspective, not the sender/creator’s (Borchers, 2013). While an in-depth evaluation of the images was out of the scope of this study, the researcher assessed whether the images assisted in telling a narrative.

With that said, the images in the Cuccinelli commercials would have been stronger if the stories had been told by a first person, and the images had shown that person and pictures of his or her story. In so doing, the images would have fostered identification between the receiver and the message (Burke, 1951). Instead, Cuccinelli relied heavily on images of typography and newspapers, which foster little emotion or personal connection. Pictures of his opponent dominated personal photographs.

As Table 5 points out, the most frequently used image was that of typography. Of the top twelve commercials evaluated, 27 images of typography were presented. Unlike McAuliffe’s ads that placed typography over scenes of Virginia, workers in the workforce, or children, Cuccinelli usually used a black background or a newspaper background. While typography of a newspaper ads to fidelity, it lacks the emotion of someone telling a story. Only in “Justice” and “Garbarino” does the audience see and hear a personal testimony of Cuccinelli helping someone.

Table 5. <i>Cuccinelli's Most Used Images</i>	
Images	Number
Typography	27
McAuliffe	16
Businesses	15
Schools/Children	11
Cuccinelli	11
News Reporters	7

“Justice” had a brief but strong image of a wrongfully convicted, black man walking out of prison after more than two decades behind bars. Others are disappointing, like those in “All About” that depict Cuccinelli’s wife praising her husband, rather than images of people he aided and places where he served

While Cuccinelli’s commercials were nearly all voice-overs and only two featured images of a first person testimony or narrative, 22 images in the 12 McAuliffe commercials featured the person speaking, telling their personal story, testimony, or views. Images of McAuliffe talking to people in the workforce and students in schools combined with scenes of Virginia worked to strengthened coherence. The images of Republican mayor and a retired Republican legislator

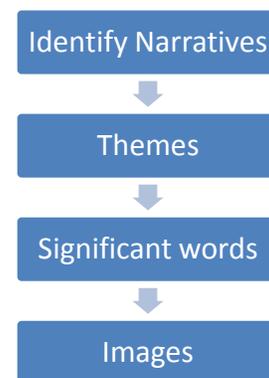
Table 6. <i>McAuliffe's Most Used Images</i>	
Images	Number
Typography	23
Person Telling the Narrative	22
Virginia Scenes	17
McAuliffe	14
Workers in Workplace	8
Cuccinelli	7
Children/Young People	5

supporting the Democrat candidate powerfully produced evidence in McAuliffe’s message that Cuccinelli was untrustworthy and McAuliffe was bipartisan. Women speaking of Cuccinelli’s stand on issues of divorce and abortion helped create an emotional message. Further details of the images are included in each commercial analysis.

Images serve to garner attention, make emotional appeals, provide proof for the message, express ideas, and represent reality (Borchers, 2013). In other words, images help tell the story. Cuccinelli showed images of McAuliffe, news reporters, and newspapers with an anonymous announcer when attacking the Democratic candidate. By contrast, McAuliffe's attack ads featured Virginians using emotional language against Cuccinelli provided coherence and fidelity to McAuliffe's message.

Individual Commercial Analysis

Below is the analysis of the top 12 most watched campaign commercials from the Republican and Democratic candidates of the Virginia 2013 gubernatorial campaign, Ken Cuccinelli and Terry McAuliffe. The commercials are judged to be most watched from views on YouTube. The analysis begins with all the Republican ads, followed by the Democrat ads. Each candidate's ads are listed chronologically. The analysis of each ad utilizes the following pattern: narrative analysis, themes, significant words, and images. The analysis begins with a look at the Republican commercials, followed by the Democrat commercials.



1. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Terry McAuliffe, Showman & Salesman

“Showman & Salesman” fits the criteria for a narrative: two or more events, temporally ordered, with a cause and effect and a unifying subject. Using a typewriter-like typography, the 3 minute commercial tells the story of McAuliffe promising that his business was providing thousands of new jobs, and later admitting about 15-20 people were working in the plant he was bragging about. The piece ends with news reporters saying that McAuliffe quietly stepped down

from the business several months previously, but he was still saying that he produced thousands of new jobs in campaign stops.

The commercial used a third-person narrative to focus on jobs and McAuliffe's dishonesty. Significant words were about jobs:

- "About 2,000 new American jobs";
- "Promise to spur Virginia's economy";
- "Terry McAuliffe has created thousands of jobs";
- "I am creating thousands of new jobs";
- "How many employers do you have currently? [McAuliffe] 15-20"; and
- "It hasn't created the jobs or cars McAuliffe promised" (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013a).

Instead of showing the actual newspapers, twelve different screenshots of moving texts with the sound a typewriter were used. Dispersed between the typography of the news stories were five videos of McAuliffe and three of talking about the success of this business. A first person narrative from someone who lost their job in a failed plant, or someone telling her story of disappointment when there were no jobs like McAuliffe had promised, would have been stronger than the third person typography telling the story. While the piece held together (coherence), the fidelity could have been increased with pictures of the actual papers or stories from actual people, rather than moving typography.

2. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Release The Documents

"Release the Documents" is not a narrative, as it does not have a temporally ordered, causal event. The first couple of clips are aimed on McAuliffe, but the remainder of the two minute commercial uses clips from the Obama/Romney campaign: President Obama, Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, White House

spokesman Josh Earnest, White House Senior Adviser David Axelrod, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Virginia Congressman Jim Moran, and Terry McAuliffe himself discussing why it is important for candidates (in that case Romney) to release tax returns.

The theme is calling on McAuliffe to release his tax returns and showing how hypocritical he is for not doing so. Over 15 times in the two minute, the commercial uses phrases calling on democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe to release his tax returns, such as “transparency” and “tax return should be made public” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013b).

The images of the commercial are four images of typewriter-like, moving text of newspaper quotes and nine videos of liberal candidates and Democratic pundits urging Romney to release his taxes in the 2012 Presidential campaign. Twenty seconds of the 2 minute commercial is of Terry McAuliffe on a talk show saying that Romney should release his tax returns.

3. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: All About

“All About” features Tiero Cuccinelli, Ken’s wife, talking about her husband’s history of community leadership. “All About” meets Foss’s (2004) four criteria for a narrative. It contained several events from Cuccinelli’s life, temporally ordered, with a causal relationship and unified subject of Cuccinelli’s good character.

The theme of “All About” is that Cuccinelli is caring. The significant words the following: “standing up for the vulnerable,” “worked the night shift in a homeless shelter,” “prevent sexual assaults,” “represented those suffering from mental illness, and “prosecute child predators and human traffickers” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013c).

The majority of the images of this commercial are of Cuccinelli’s wife Tiero talking from her kitchen. Only once during the line “He has worked the night shift in a homeless shelter” was

there a picture of a place or person he helped (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013c). The rest of the significant words in the narrative were not enhanced by images. It failed to enhance the story with images, using the medium, television, to its fullest capacity in eliciting a rich emotional appeal. For example, an aerial picture of his university was used during the narrative, “Spent his college days leading efforts to prevent sexual assault” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013c). A picture of a crying woman or a man in handcuffs would have made a stronger emotional appeal.

Another example of the piece not effectively using the medium of television was when Teiro was pictured narrating “represented those suffering from mental illness” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013c). A picture from the back of a courtroom of Cuccinelli representing someone poorly clad would have made a stronger emotional connection. Teiro is again pictured saying, “As Attorney General, Ken sought to find and prosecute child predators and human traffickers” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013c). Video of a playground with an empty swing still moving, a man typing on a computer in a darkened room, or another image alluding to child predators would have had more of an emotional appeal.

Listing all of Cuccinelli’s humanitarian efforts in 30-second commercial failed to communicate effectively, especially without images. Highlighting one of those efforts with a personal narrative from someone helped by his efforts would have provided a rich emotional appeal with coherence and fidelity.

4. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Your Side

“Your Side” does not meet all of Foss’s (2004) criteria for a narrative. While it has two events—“small business are the backbone of our economy” and “they are being overtaxed and over regulated” and a unifying theme of the economy, there is no sequence or cause-and-effect (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013d).

The significant words are about taxes:

- “Over taxed,”
- “Closing tax loopholes,” and
- “Cut taxes” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013d).

The 30 second video is narrated by Cuccinelli inside a small store, and uses four additional images of Cuccinelli talking to people at different places of business, which strengthens the narrative and adds coherence.

A first person narrative from an overtaxed and overregulated small business owner would have been stronger and would have added fidelity.

5. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Garbarino

“Garbarino” fits the criteria for a narrative of two or more temporally ordered events with cause and effect and meaning: Mike Garbarino was severely injured, lied in the hospital fighting for his life for nine days, Cuccinelli was there every day, Garbarino died, and the commercial ends with Cuccinelli speaking at his funeral.

The theme of the piece is Cuccinelli’s character of helping others. The significant words came from Garbarino’s wife and daughter: “Every time I was in the hospital, I would see Ken Cuccinelli,” “He was a figure I came to expect to be there every day at the hospital. Ken Cuccinelli really cared about us, and that meant a lot to me,” and “Ken Cuccinelli is genuine guy who has a deep commitment to helping other people” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013e).

The commercial uses six pictures of Garbarino and his family, five pictures of the funeral, two of Cuccinelli, and one of a news reporter. The first person narrative from the wife and daughter was sweet, but didn’t provoke a deep emotional appeal.

While the piece provided a strong narrative, it lacked coherence and fidelity. One might ask why a politician whose office is in Richmond would be visiting a hospital in Northern Virginia every day for nine days. That scenario doesn't hang true. Secondly, the fidelity or ethics of using the death of a police officer for personal benefit or political advantage does not strike a responsive chord, but instead seems unethical.

6. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Scandal

“Scandal,” an ad that sheds light on shady funding of Terry McAuliffe's campaign and his company GreenTech, fits Foss's (2004) criteria for a narrative. The temporally ordered events with cause-and-effect include the following: McAuliffe allegedly provided a Chinese executive a visa in exchange for a large campaign donation, which led to two federal investigations.

The theme of the ad is McAuliffe is not trustworthy. The significant words throughout the 30-second commercial are about money raised unethically: “visa-for-sale scheme,” “shady dealings,” “shady money,” and “visa...for large donation” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013f).

The images of the commercial include full screens of typography made to look like a newspaper, a television reporter, and three shots of McAuliffe. The newspaper pictures give the piece fidelity, but it lacks the emotional appeal and coherence of a first person narrative.

7. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Opportunity

“Opportunity” is a third person narrative fitting Foss's (2004) criteria for a story: cause-and-effect, temporally ordered events with a unifying theme. Ken Cuccinelli narrates that America should be a land of opportunity, but because of failing educational programs and unfair tax codes, families and small businesses suffer. Meanwhile special interest groups and powerful businesses thrive due to special treatment.

The significant words add to the theme of good education and lower taxes: “equal opportunity,” “everybody has a fair shot” “no child should be sentenced to a failing school,” and “tax codes should encourage middle class families and small businesses” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013g).

Ken Cuccinelli narrates this 30-second commercial outside a home with a white porch and American flag waving in the background. The nine images of Virginia businesses and landscapes give the narrative coherence and fidelity: a farm house, young African American selling goods at a farmers’ market, man working at a hardware store, restaurant workers in a commercial kitchen, middle class neighborhood, small business, and a city view. Three pictures of children at play and at school add to the education narrative.

8. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Deserve

“Deserve” is a third person narrative meeting each of Foss’s (2004) four criteria. The temporally ordered, cause and effect, events include the following: our children’s future opportunities depend on good schools, but public interest groups are more concerned about “protecting perks than protecting schools” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013h).

The repeated, significant words all strengthen the educational theme: “education system,” “education dollars,” “schools,” “classroom,” “class,” “teachers,” and “children” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013h). The third person narrative and images give coherence and fidelity to the education theme. Cuccinelli narrates the commercial from a classroom, which helps the piece “hang together” with other educational experiences of the listeners. The videos of six additional educational scenes add to the truthfulness or fidelity of the message. The commercial would have had stronger fidelity if it was a first person narrative from a teacher or parent. As it is, people

may have been able to identify with Cuccinelli more if he had referred to students using a first person pronoun of “our children,” rather than “your children.”

9. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Justice

“Justice” is a strong narrative that incorporates first person stories. Meeting Foss’s (2004) criteria of at least two events, temporally ordered, with cause-and-effect, “Justice” tells the story of Cuccinelli investigating a 27-year-old rape conviction of Thomas Haynesworth, concluding that he had been wrongfully accused, and then working to get his conviction overturned.

In addition to the theme of “justice for all” highlighting Cuccinelli’s role as Virginia’s Attorney General, this commercial ads fidelity to the campaign theme of Cuccinelli is caring. The significant words are the emotional story told by Cuccinelli: “A Democrat Commonwealth’s Attorney told me...I think this guy might be innocent....After going through all of the evidence, I was convinced that Thomas Haynesworth was innocent. And I took that case on myself” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013i). In the first person narrative, Haynesworth says, “I never thought that the Attorney General himself would be involved in a case like this....He didn’t have to get involved. But he said an injustice was done and he was trying to correct it....To me, he’s a hell of a guy” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013i).

The most emotionally moving part of the one-minute commercial is when Cuccinelli introduced Haynesworth before a group of legislators, and he choked up while saying, “The Attorney General’s job is not convictions. It’s justice. And today, we got justice” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013i). The words strengthen the “justice for all” theme. The piece repeats the word “innocent” three times, in addition to “injustice,” and “crimes he didn’t commit” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013i).

Typography of the newspaper stories and the image of Thomas Haynesworth walking out of prison add fidelity to the story. Six images of Haynesworth, including his praising Cuccinelli provide coherence. Additional images include five of Cuccinelli, a board room, and a news reporter. The first person narration, images, and significant words all work together to bring fidelity and coherence to the narrative.

10. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Serious

Cuccinelli's "Serious" ad uses quotes from newspapers to create the script; however it does not meet Foss's (2004) four criteria for a narrative. While the commercial contains more than one event, they are not temporally ordered with a causal relationship. "Serious" attempts to contrast Cuccinelli's endorsement from the Northern Virginia Technology Council and Terry McAuliffe's lack of professionalism, but the contrast is weak and confusing because the two do not hang together. It is difficult for the audience to jump from an endorsement from a technology organization to silly pictures of McAuliffe.

The significant words include the following: "Virginia's most important business PACs says their choice is Ken Cuccinelli" (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013j). The Washington Post is quoted to contrast Cuccinelli and McAuliffe. "Cuccinelli concise, committed, and detailed oriented. While Terry McAuliffe was uninformed, superficial, flamboyant, not details, all bull-[expletive deleted]" (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013j).

The first 13 seconds of the 30-second commercial uses typography video of the newspaper articles. The next six seconds shows three videos of Cuccinelli outside a trucking company and inside a board room. The commercial has six images of McAuliffe acting silly: drinking from a shot glass, shaking his head up and down, hollering, showing signs of excitement, holding a bottle of liquor, and talking to a reporter outside a black tie event.

The images of the piece lack coherence. This commercial highlights the endorsement of the Northern Virginia Technology Council's TechPAC, however, the images are of a trucking company and a conference room, rather than a technology company. No visuals of technology or high tech jobs are shown. Instead, of sharing a narrative about how high tech jobs are good for Virginia, Cuccinelli focuses on silly pictures of McAuliffe. Fisher (1985b) says, that people judge a story by determining if it "hangs together" and is free from contradictions. Certainly pictures of a trucking company and mixed messages of McAuliffe's irrational behavior does not "hang together" with the announcement of the technology PAC endorsement: "One of Virginia's most important business PACs says their choice is Ken Cuccinelli."

11. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Tichi

"Tichi" did not meet Foss's (2004) requirements for a narrative. The events in this ad are "the attacks against [Cuccinelli] are false and misleading" and an endorsement because of his plans for jobs and education (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013k). The attacks against Cuccinelli were about his so-called war on women, so Tichi's support based on jobs and education does not carry any temporal order or cause and effect. The themes of the 30-second piece consisted of McAuliffe's misleading ads, jobs, and education.

Rather than using Democrat Tichi Pinkney Eppes, member of the Richmond School Board, to endorse specifics in Cuccinelli's K-12 Education Plan, Eppes gives a general endorsement and says she supports Cuccinelli because he is focused on creating jobs, improving education, and fighting for Virginia. Eppes responds forcefully to the attacks against Cuccinelli by McAuliffe, however it lacks fidelity because no specific story is involved

With three themes, jobs, education, and misleading ads, the 30-second commercial is short on specifics. The significant words are the following: "The attacks against him are false

and misleading,” “agenda against women? Ridiculous,” “plan to create 58,000 new jobs,” and “improve schools for our children” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013k).

The 30-second commercial images include 25 seconds of Tichi. When the piece talks about Cuccinelli’s plan to create new jobs, it shows him talking to a group of men wearing hard hats around a construction zone. It shows a classroom when it talks about improving education.

This ad would have had stronger fidelity and coherence if she had said, “As a member of the Richmond School Board, I see the problems facing our educational system” and then used a narrative to highlight a couple of those issues and Cuccinelli’s ideas to address them (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013k). With an African American, life-long Democrat, school board member, endorsing Cuccinelli’s candidacy, this could have provided a powerful commercial if a narrative and enhancing images had been used.

12. Republican Candidate Ken Cuccinelli Ad: Despicable

“Despicable” is a narrative in that it contains two causal, temporally ordered events with a single subject: Terry McAuliffe’s investment in an insurance scam that stole the identities of the terminally ill. “Corrupt insider Terry McAuliffe made millions while workers lost jobs and pensions. Now, a shocking new discovery: court documents reveal Terry McAuliffe invested in an insurance scam that preyed on dying people. They stole the identities of the terminally ill then cashed in when they passed away” (Ken Cuccinelli, 2013l).

The images of newspapers breaking this story add fidelity to the commercial. Other images enhance the narrative: two of McAuliffe, the lawsuit, and three senior citizens lying in the hospital. However, an elderly person as the narrator, rather than a woman, would have added more fidelity and coherence.

At the same time this commercial was released, the McAuliffe campaign publicized an AP report stating, “There is no allegation of wrongdoing by McAuliffe or that he or other investors knew of efforts to defraud the terminally ill” (as cited by Hohmann, 2013, para. 12). The AP report made voters question the fidelity of the story. This could have been overcome if the campaign had used a personal narrative of a family member of a victim. A personal narrative, inspired by real life experience, would have carried more emotion, and it would have provided coherence and fidelity to the story, the criteria for narrative persuasion (Fisher, 1985b).

Next, the researcher studied the commercials of Democrat candidate Terry McAuliffe and identified each of these commercials as a narrative, using Foss’s criteria. As the election results indicate, McAuliffe’s commercials resonated more with the voters of Virginia.

1. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Paul

“Paul” is a 30 second story, temporally ordered with a cause and effect and a common theme, fitting Foss’s criteria for a narrative. In the piece, Paul Osborne, a Virginia native and landowner, shared his experience of losing his land to an out-of-state, energy company, which he blamed on Ken Cuccinelli. “My family has been in Southwest Virginia since the mid-eighteen hundreds. My grandfather would roll over in his grave if he saw what was going on today with the energy companies. Ken Cuccinelli is helping energy companies take all that they can take from the landowners. He's received over a hundred thousand dollars for his campaign. I can't trust him now as the attorney general. How am I going to trust him as a governor?” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013a). The dominant words in the commercial are Mr. Osborne’s Virginia roots, “energy companies take all they can,” and “I can’t trust him” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013a). The theme is Cuccinelli is selling out landowners to energy companies for his personal gain.

Images strengthen the fidelity 30-second commercial. Paul Osborne is shown leaning against his truck on his Virginia farm surrounded by big trees native to Virginia. The negative emotion of Cuccinelli's aiding the energy companies is furthered by images of an eight foot, chain link fence and energy extracting equipment scarring the landscape. The first person narrative and images give the piece fidelity and coherence. While Cuccinelli's commercials used typography to tell the story, McAuliffe used a personal account and used typography to highlight Mr. Osborne's narrative: "Consol Energy is extracting coal bed methane gas and playing legal games to avoid paying landowners" is followed by "Cuccinelli has taken over \$100,000 from ConSol Energy" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013a). The personal story supported by facts gives the commercial coherence.

2. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Interfering

"Interfering" uses Foss's (2004) criteria for a narrative. The two temporally ordered, cause-and-effect events are found in the following narrative: "In 2008 Ken Cuccinelli writes a bill to give Virginia among the most extreme divorce laws in America. If Cuccinelli had his way, a mom trying to get out of a bad marriage over her husband's objections could only get divorced if she could prove adultery or physical abuse or her spouse had abandoned her or sentenced to jail" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013b).

The theme of "Interfering" is Ken Cuccinelli is extreme and anti-woman. The significant words are "extreme divorce laws," "mom trying to get out of a bad marriage," "interfering in our private lives, and "focused on his own agenda" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013b). Furthermore, women identify with the piece by the use of the first person pronoun "our": "Why is Ken Cuccinelli interfering in our private lives," and "He is focused on his own agenda, not ours" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013b).

The images shown in the 30-second commercial include an image of Cuccinelli looking foolish over a copy of the divorce reform bill he sponsored. When the second sentence begins “a mom trying to get out of a bad marriage,” the commercial depicts the back of a woman pushing her two small children on a swing set (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013b). Again, typography is used to enhance the message: the image of the mom is blurred out and the audience reads, “Divorce only if she could prove adultery or physical abuse or her spouse had abandoned her or sentenced to jail” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013b). The picture of the bill with his name as sponsor brought fidelity to the piece. The images of the woman and her children and the woman narrator gives the piece coherence.

3. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: As Governor

“As Governor” fits Foss’s (2004) criteria of a narrative told in the future tense. The ad highlights several future events that are temporally ordered with cause and effect: “I’ll work with Democrats and Republicans to create jobs. My jobs plan strengthens community colleges, making career-ready classes more affordable and available. We will join with businesses to train students for jobs that exist, and create opportunities for returning veterans” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c).

In “As Governor,” Virginians tell the story. Arthur Roberts of Heathsville begins the piece, standing in a distribution warehouse saying, “Our economy depends on small business” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c). Teacher Beverly Davis, of Richmond follows: “Small businesses depend on skilled workers” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c). Anthony Jimenez of Tysons Corner, stands in front of mainframe computers and says, “We need a governor who's focused on creating jobs” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c). Rosemarie Pelletier of Leesburg continues the narrative standing in a classroom with students working at

computers: “And educating our kids for the jobs of the future” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c). McAuliffe completes the first person narrative by saying, “My job plans...”, “We will join with businesses...”, and “We can put jobs first” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c).

The commercial creates identity with the viewers by using Virginians to tell the story, as well as McAuliffe’s use of the first person, plural pronoun “we.” The significant words are “skilled workers,” “creating jobs,” “educating our kids,” “jobs of the future,” “create jobs,” and “create opportunities” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013c).

The images support the theme and help tell the story: people working at distribution warehouse, business woman in a conference room, executive in a high tech company, teacher at school, workers in warehouse, and students at a college campus. Images of the first person narratives bring coherence and fidelity to the 30-second piece.

4. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Twisting Facts

McAuliffe uses a third person narrative to respond to Ken Cuccinelli for his alleged false attacks and to label Cuccinelli’s agenda as “extreme.” Fulfilling Foss’s (2004) criteria for a narrative, the events are as follows: Cuccinelli is “twist[ing]” the facts,” McAuliffe had no role in running the company, and instead voters should worry about Cuccinelli’s “extreme agenda” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013d).

The themes are McAuliffe is innocent of charges of mismanaging a company and Cuccinelli is guilty of “waging war” on women. The significant words contribute to the theme: “Cuccinelli’s ad twists the facts,” “McAuliffe had no role in running the company,” “owned just 1/1400 of the company stock,” “extreme agenda,” “interfering in our personal lives,” and “waging war on abortion” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013d).

The commercial features six images of typography quoting the press. The color scheme and the two pictures of Cuccinelli are black and white, which gives an effect like that of a “dark” movie, sinister and threatening. The commercial attempts to turn the public’s attention from Cuccinelli’s allegation of fraudulent business practices to McAuliffe accusing Cuccinelli of something worse, hurting women. Fidelity is won by showing a clip of Cuccinelli’s allegation, followed by an assertion of innocence from the Associated Press. This commercial hangs together with the other McAuliffe commercial as it keeps the theme of Cuccinelli’s “war on women.”

5. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Offended

A first person narrative told by Dr. Holly Puritz, from Norfolk, Virginia, “Offended” follows Foss’s (2004) four criteria. The events are Cuccinelli supported pro-life “Personhood” legislation, which the doctor claims would end all abortions in Virginia. The effect is she gave her endorsement to McAuliffe. The theme is Cuccinelli wants to make abortion illegal.

The significant words include “My job is to protect the health of women, so I’m particularly offended by Ken Cuccinelli,” “wants to make abortion illegal even in cases of rape and incest, even to protect a woman's health,” and “interfere in the lives of women across Virginia” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013e). The image of a doctor in her white coat standing in a clinic and the first person narrative adds to the fidelity and coherence of the ad.

6. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Honored

In “Honored,” Senator Mark Warner gives a first-person narrative of his tenure as governor: “I was honored to serve as governor for Virginia. We brought folks together in Richmond to focus on creating jobs” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013f). In the ad, Warner said he supports McAuliffe because he will continue to “work with Democrats, Republicans, and

Independents to create jobs and move Virginia forward” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013f). This fulfills Foss’s (2004) criteria for two or more events, temporally ordered, with cause and effect, and a unifying theme.

Two main themes dominated the 30-second commercial: bi-partisanship and creating jobs. The significant words include, “brought folks together,” “won’t let ideological battles get in the way,” and “work with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013f). Other repeated words include, “creating jobs,” “getting results,” and “making progress” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013f).

The images do not add coherence and fidelity to the theme of bringing both parties together. Warner in a warehouse adds fidelity and coherence to the jobs message, but Warner and McAuliffe, both Democrats, at a conference table does not support the bipartisanship theme. The commercial could have had more coherence if the producers had used an image of McAuliffe and a Republican, like Obama 2012 campaign ads with Senator Chris Christie. The first person narrative gives the commercial fidelity.

7. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: The Pill

First-person narration from a woman, using temporally ordered events, two of Foss’s (2004) criteria for narrative, “The Pill” maintained “half American women use [the pill] at some point in their lives, but Ken Cuccinelli sponsored a bill that could have made common forms of birth control illegal” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013g). The effect and theme (remaining criteria for a narrative) are women questioning, “Why is Ken Cuccinelli interfering in our private lives?” and concluding, “He’s focused on his own agenda, not us” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013g).

The significant words reinforce the theme: “birth control pills,” “common forms of birth control,” “the pill,” “radical intrusion,” “domestic, family, individual decision-making,” and “private lives” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013g). McAuliffe fails to use an image of the woman speaking to help bring identification to the piece. Instead, his campaign chose images of birth control pills, pro-life “Personhood” bill, and typography. A picture of the woman narrator or shots of women at various ages and various ethnicities would have helped tell the story.

8. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Over the Brink

“Over the Brink” qualifies as a narrative using Foss’s (2004) criteria. The temporally ordered, cause and effect events are government shutdown resulting in furloughed Virginia workers, Senator Ted Cruz, the architect of the shutdown, campaigning for Cuccinelli, and Cuccinelli supporting the shutdown by saying, “I would have taken it right to the brink” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013k).

With a theme revolving around the government shut down, the significant words include the following: “150,000 Virginia's can be furloughed,” 3,600 employees at Norfolk Naval Shipyard received furlough notices,” “He’s supposed to campaign at some point with Ted Cruz and Ted Cruz is seen as an architect,” and “I would have taken it right to the brink” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013k).

The images include two pictures of Ted Cruz, who led the shutdown. Additionally, three television reporters discuss the shutdown and the harmful effect on the Virginia economy. The piece lacks coherence because the viewers don’t know the context of Cuccinelli’s “I would have taken it to the brink” comment (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013k). The third party narrative from the news reporters provides fidelity, but a first person furloughed worker would have added coherence and identification with the commercial’s theme.

9. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: All Supporting

“All Supporting” features a bipartisan group of Virginia mayors from the Hampton Roads area: Democratic Mayors Paul Fraim of Norfolk, Democrat McKinley Price of Newport News, and Republican Mayor Will Sessoms of Virginia Beach. Each tells his story of why he supports Terry McAuliffe. Fitting Foss’s (2004) requirements of two or more, temporally ordered, cause-and-effect events, the governors say, “Whether it be transportation, tourism, or the military, we need a governor who supports us. That's why we're all supporting Terry McAuliffe for governor” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013h).

The theme of “All Supporting” is bipartisanship support and jobs. The most significant word is “support.” Three times in the four sentence advertisement, “support” is referenced, such as, “Whether it be transportation, tourism, or the military, we need a governor who supports us” (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013h).

The images of the 30-second commercial tell a story of vibrant jobs in the Hampton Roads area: seafood packaging plant, parking lot outside a ship yard full of cars, bus moving through downtown, fishermen fishing from pier, cars traveling through tunnel and on a highway, people walking down the boardwalk, and a Navy ship. The piece ends with McAuliffe talking to professionals around a conference table and meeting with blue-collar workers outside a loading dock. The images and narrative of three Hampton Roads mayors, two Democrats and one Republican, each supporting McAuliffe, gives fidelity to the bipartisanship theme.

10. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Bunch

One of the most watched McAuliffe ads, “Bunch” fits Foss’s (2004) criteria for a narrative: the temporally ordered, cause-and-effect events are Ken Cuccinelli’s record as

Lieutenant Governor and the people's resulting reactions. The first person narrative is told by 7 women, 3 men, and a young man standing with a group of other young people.

The theme of the commercial is Ken Cuccinelli is an extremist who is waging a war on women. The significant words include the word "extreme" repeated four times in 30 seconds. Tightening the regulations on divorce is mentioned by two women, climate change by a man and a group of students, and birth control regulations three times.

The 30-second commercial uses images are of these people as they each give his or her personal account of Cuccinelli's so-called "extreme" record. The personal narratives of everyday Virginians bring coherence and fidelity to the piece, starting with the words, "I am troubled with Ken Cuccinelli" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013i).

11. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Callahan

"Callahan" fits Foss's definition of a narrative. The temporal, causal events of the 30-second personal narrative is from a 40-year, Republican Delegate who "worked with 11 governors from both parties" but now cannot support Cuccinelli because "we need someone to oversee our state who is committed to keeping Virginia on the right track...an independent governor who focuses on jobs and works with everyone" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013j).

The major themes are McAuliffe will work in a bipartisan manner to create jobs. The images are of Callahan in a casual but typically Virginian setting, a traditionally furnished living room, with his shirt collar unbuttoned. The dress shirt speaks of Callahan's experience, while the unbuttoned collar identifies him with the common man. Callahan's experience and expert power gives the piece fidelity. The significant words are the following: "I worked with 11 governors from both parties," "I cannot support Ken Cuccinelli," and "governor who focuses on jobs and works with everyone" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013j).

This commercial uses a story given from a former Republican legislator against the Republican candidate for governor, leaving the audience with a sense of warning. On its own, it lacks coherence: one would not expect an elected government official to speak out against someone from his own Party. However, taken with the other campaign commercials of other Virginians speaking out against Cuccinelli, the commercial adds coherence to the McAuliffe campaign theme that Cuccinelli is a candidate who cannot be trusted.. The only negative aspect of the commercial is that the legislator's tone, which comes across a bit emphatic and could be considered too forceful or preachy. When watching this commercial without sound, however, Callahan appears as a grandfather figure who is advising his family.

12. Democrat Candidate Terry McAuliffe Ad: Sensible

McAuliffe's "Sensible," meets Foss's (2004) four criteria for a narrative. It contains five newspaper endorsements and eight settings. With the theme that Terry McAuliffe is committed to keeping Virginia friendly to business, the newspaper endorsements are told as a temporally ordered, cause-and-effect narrative. The significant words are the following: "McAuliffe will make an outstanding governor," because he "is more capable of governing," "open, tolerant, friendly to business," "committed to job growth," and can "bridge party divides" (Terry McAuliffe for Governor, 2013).

The commercial's meaning is conveyed both by the newspaper narrative and the image narrative. Instead of just using typography against a black background, the McAuliffe campaign completed the narrative by putting the typography of newspaper quotes over scenes of Virginia, including the following: the Blue Ridge Mountains, a manufacturing shop, high tech business, another shop, a conference table, public school hallway, a restaurant, McAuliffe's office, and a

loading dock. The newspaper articles produced fidelity and the scenes of Virginia landscape, work places, and schools added to the coherence.

Discussion

This research investigated the type of messaging used in the 2013 gubernatorial election in Virginia—rational or narrative—and the themes, images, and significant words that helped communicate that message.

Rational vs. Narrative

Cuccinelli used rational rhetoric in a third of his commercials. Although a third of the Republican candidate's commercials were identified as a narrative using Foss's criteria, only 17 percent used a personal narrative, which provides identification and realism. Identification with a first person narrator has a powerful persuasive force, even if the receiver has differing attitudes or beliefs than the message (Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2012). McAuliffe influenced voters and won the election by using narratives 100 percent of the time and first person narratives 66 percent of the time. Instead of an anonymous announcer, McAuliffe's first person narrators used emotional language to appeal to the audience. Graaf, et. al (2012) found that when identifying with a narrator, the audience adjusted their attitudes to the first person narrator. Furthermore, identifying with the narrator can reinforce existing attitudes (Graaf, et. al, 2012).

First person narratives have more influence due to perceived realism: identifying with the narrator, emotional involvement in the story, and message evaluation all play a role in persuasion (Cho, Shen, & Wilson, 2014). First person narratives increase plausibility, typicality, factuality, consistency, and perception quality, similar to Fisher's coherence and fidelity (Cho, Shen, & Wilson, 2014). The Republican 2013 Virginia gubernatorial candidate used facts and statistics or told the story with a third party 84 percent of the time. Cuccinelli only appealed to voters through a personal narrative 17 percent of the time. Conversely, McAuliffe used narratives 100 percent of the time and first person narratives 66 percent.

Themes

McAuliffe's themes took advantage of the first personal narratives to portrait Cuccinelli's policies as extreme. Forty percent of McAuliffe commercials focused on Cuccinelli's so-called "war on women." Morning and evening, Virginia women voters watched their neighbors accuse Cuccinelli of "interfering in our private lives" and trying to ban "common forms of birth control." Cuccinelli's commercials never specifically responded to these charges, but countered with "the attacks against [Cuccinelli] are false and misleading." The result was Cuccinelli trailed McAuliffe by 24 points with women voters (Vozzella & Craighill, 2013).

Notably during that campaign, Hermit Gosnell was convicted of first-degree murder in the deaths of infants born alive at his abortion clinic and involuntary manslaughter in the death of a woman who died from injuries suffered during an abortion at his clinic. Cuccinelli was given a rhetorical moment to contrast McAuliffe's support of late-term, taxpayer-funded abortion with his own prolife views. Cuccinelli could have harvested the images of Gosnell's "house of horrors" to explain his own work to require abortion clinics to meet the same safety standards as other medical clinics. Cuccinelli was given context to turn the "war on women" against McAuliffe, but he failed to use the moment. Instead, Cuccinelli ignored Gosnell and the "war on women" attacks, and instead counter attacked McAuliffe on failed business practices. The result is McAuliffe continued the "war on women" attack on Cuccinelli, and on Election Day unmarried women casted their votes for McAuliffe over Cuccinelli 67 to 25 (Benson, 2013).

"Stories don't create our beliefs. Rather their themes are like magnets that find and attach themselves to beliefs that already exist" (Signorelli, 2012, p. 206). While Cuccinelli's top theme was McAuliffe being untrustworthy, the campaign failed to use a first person narrative to "attach

themselves” to the doubts of voters. Stories strengthen existing beliefs by charging them with emotion (Signorelli, 2012). While voters may have had doubts about McAuliffe, without a first person narrative intensifying those doubts, the voters chose him over Cuccinelli.

Images

When the Cuccinelli campaign used narratives, it failed to enhance the story with images. Political commercials have moved away from linguistic discourse rich in propositions and ideas to pictorial commercials rich in emotional appeal: “Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education, have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business” (Postman, 1985, p.3-4). Despite the narrative, these commercials failed to use the television medium to its fullest capacity by eliciting a rich emotional appeal from a first person narrative with compatible images.

Over 40 percent of the images in McAuliffe’s commercials were pictures of the first person narrator and images of Virginia landscape, businesses, and homes, providing an emotional connection to the message. Even when McAuliffe used typography to help communicate the message, the composition was over people and places of Virginia. Conversely, Cuccinelli’s typography was over a black or newspaper print backgrounds. His commercials lacked first person narratives, thus the images of real Virginians telling their story were absent. Without many images of the state or its citizens, the commercials lacked connection and emotional appeal.

Conclusion

The “Great Communicator” President Ronald Reagan said, “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend

our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free" (as cited in Stepman, 2014, para. 2). President Reagan's speeches were rich in stories that linked the President's beliefs to those of the American people.

With rhetoric such as "If it feels good, do it," America's moral compass and resulting exceptionalism is eroding. The feel-good culture of the 60's was sex and drugs. Today, that rebellion has morphed into public policy that allows homosexual marriage, reclassifies pedophilia from a "disorder" to "sexual interest," and legalizes marijuana, to name just a few. With words such as "marriage equality" and "employment non-discrimination," secularists have ushered in an age where sexual rights trump Constitutional rights. Chai Feldman, LGBT activist and commissioner on the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, was prophetic in 2008 when she said that when sexual rights and religious liberties conflict, "I'm having a hard time coming up with any case in which religious liberty should win" (Broyles, 2008, para. 2).

Fisher (1984) suggested that society's problems are the result of rejection of intelligent design, separation of morality, evolution of sense of self, and rise of emotivism. Because ethical statements today are not based on fact but the speaker's feelings: "ethical arguments in public are rendered ineffectual because of conceptual incommensurability" (Fisher, 1984, p.14). Fisher (1984) used protest as a case in point: "Advocates of reform argue from a position of 'rights' and those who oppose them reason from the stance of 'utility'" (p. 14). Such is the case of the current homosexual marriage debate. Liberals see same-sex marriage as a matter of homosexual equality; conservatives see natural marriage as the bedrock of society and the best way to raise children (Gallagher & Baker, 2004). In the decades-long debate, there has been no consensus of understanding.

To Fisher (1984), “arguers appealing to justice and equality contend with adversaries who base their case on success, survival, and liberty, they talk past each other” (p. 14). To bridge the gap, Fisher (1984) suggested telling stories that do not deny a person’s self-conception: “To consider that public-social knowledge is to be found in the stories that we tell one another would enable us to observe not only our differences, but also our commonalities, and in such observation we might be able to reform the notion of the ‘public’” (Fisher, 1984, p. 14).

As evidenced in this study, conservatives are communicating using rational rhetoric, statistics and facts, to communicate, rather than first person narratives. Using only 17 percent personal narratives, Cuccinelli’s ads failed to provide identification and realism, but McAuliffe captured the audience by using narratives 100 percent of the time and first person narratives 66 percent of the time.

A Jewish folk story explains the importance of using narratives to convey truth:

Truth walked naked into a village, and almost immediately the local inhabitants started cursing at him. Spewing epithets, they chased him out of the village... Truth ran out of the town and into the woods crying... He returned to the edge of the woods, when he heard laughter and gaiety, singing and applause... as Story entered the town. They brought out free meats and soups and pies and pastries and offered them all to Story—who smiled and reveled in their love and appreciation.

Come twilight, Truth was sulking and sobbing at the edge of the woods. The townsfolk disdainly ignored him, but Story came out to meet Truth... [who] told Story how the folk mistreated him, how sad and lonely he was, and how much he wanted to be accepted and appreciated.

Story replied, “Of course they all reject you!” Story looked at Truth, eyes a bit lowered to the side. “No one ever wants to look at the naked Truth.”

So Story took pity on Truth and gave him some of her colorful, beautiful clothing to wear. Then they walked into the nearby town together. Truth dressed in the beautiful robes of Story. The townspeople greeted them with warmth and love and appreciation, for Truth wrapped in Story’s clothing can be a beautiful thing, and is almost always easier to behold. Truth as Story allowed listeners to come to their own conclusions.

And ever since that day, Truth has traveled best with Story, and when Truth is wrapped in Story’s robes, he finds much more acceptance than the simple naked Truth would ever find (as told by Signorelli, 2012, pp. 216-217).

By using narratives, conservatives can communicate truths that support our inalienable rights to a postmodern generation which does not accept absolute “naked” truth. Without a Judeo-Christian foundation, America is in a death-spiral: activist judges turning over state constitutional amendments, federal government takeover of 1/6th of the economy through ObamaCare, weakening economy, imperialist Presidency, IRS targeting of conservative groups, Islamic jihad, Russia’s growing imperialism, and al-Qaida's resurgence to name a few. Conservatives must learn to communicate truths effectively.

A 2014 Gallop poll reveals that more Americans still consider themselves “conservative” than “liberal,” 38 percent to 23 percent (Jones, 2014). However, the number of people who self-identify as a conservative is down 15 percentage points since Gallup began measuring it in 1992, while those who identify as liberal is at its highest level (Jones, 2014).

The assault of secular progressive rhetoric may be the greatest war against America. Samuel Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence said, “A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous, they cannot be subdued; but once they lose their virtue, they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. ... [Yet] if virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security” (The Importance of Religion, 2013).

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