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SWIFT BOAT VETERANS FOR TRUTH:
A CASE STUDY FOR FRAME BUILDING

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
GAYLORD COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the issues that faced politicians and the public during the 2004 presidential campaign was the increased involvement of advocacy and interest groups in the electoral process and the battle for public opinion. The 2004 election was the first presidential election after the passage of the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, which banned money provided to political parties that was “previously exempt from federal campaign-contribution limits” (O’Rourke, 2005, p. 36), such as large contributions from unions, corporations and wealthy individuals. The McCain-Feingold Act also banned the large contributions to political parties for “party building activities” (O’Rourke, 2005, p. 36), however, the new law did not ban unlimited donations “to independent groups organized under section 527 of the tax code” (“The 527 Charade”, Aug. 31, 2004, p. A12). As a result, there was a shift in 2004 presidential campaign contributions from the political parties to those organizations established as 527 organizations. According to the September 4, 2004, edition of *The Economist*, “527s are flush with cash this year thanks to a change in the campaign finance rules” (p. 35). Additionally, many critics of the McCain-Fiengold campaign finance reform bill believe that since the bill was signed more organizations will be established under Section 527 than previously to take advantage of the shift in allowable donations.

The campaign finance reform act did not just affect the presidential election. it affected the House and Senate races in 2004 as well. For example, the 2003 House campaigns cost an average of \$1 million for the first time (O’Rourke, 2005). O’Rourke (2005) added that “Outlays for victorious Senate campaigns rose by 47

percent. Total spending on presidential, Senate and House races was almost \$4 billion, versus approximately \$3 billion in 2000 before McCain Feingold” (O’Rourke, 2005, p. 36).

Although political action committees and 527 organizations are not allowed to endorse a specific candidate, many groups are becoming more blatant about the candidate they support. “Groups such as American Coming Together do not even try to disguise the fact that they are working to defeat Mr. Bush” (“The rise and rise of the 527s,” 2004, p. 35). Other organizations such as the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and Moveon.org Voter Fund also ran extensive advertising campaigns speaking out against specific candidates in an attempt to influence public support for their candidate (Swiftboatvets.com, 2004; Moveon.org, 2004).

The focus of this study is the 527 group, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, and the process through which its messages made it to the public agenda. This organization created an extensive communications campaign using news releases, news conferences, a book, and ending their campaign with television advertisements with the purpose of making an issue of Kerry’s military service records during Vietnam. This communications campaign garnered extensive media coverage. Research into agenda setting has shown that the media are able to tell the public what agenda of issues to think about (Cohen, 1963) and possibly, how to think about these issues (McCombs, 1997).

Although much of the agenda setting research has focused on the media and how they influence the public agenda, the media receive their information from outside sources. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), the media are influenced

by several factors, including outside sources such as public relations practitioners and special interest groups. According to Andsager (2000), interest groups play an important role in defining an issue and making it salient to the media, hence the public. Entman (2005) adds that “the more often journalists hear similar thoughts expressed by their sources and by other news outlets, the more likely their own thoughts will run along these lines, with the result that the news they produce will feature words and visuals that confirm the same framing” (p. 9).

Using Andsager (2000) and Huckins (1999) studies, one could view the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s communications campaign as an attempt to develop news frames that would result in media coverage of its views on Kerry. According to Scheufele (2000), there has been research into how the agenda is created but there has been little consideration for how the frames are created to set the media agenda. These frames can be considered a “natural extension of agenda setting” (p. 297) because the frames that are created by outside sources or the media are designed to highlight certain aspects of an event or issue to make it more salient in the public sphere. In previous research on agenda building, Lang and Lang (1981) developed a model that demonstrated the process by which the media used to make an issue a part of the public agenda. Their model is a four-step process used to increase the public focus on a particular issue. According to Lang and Lang, these steps are: 1) the media first choose an event, person, or attributes of the person “to make them stand out” (p 465); 2) the media needs to frame the object, issue or person; 3) the issue is connected to “secondary symbols, so that it becomes a part of the recognized political landscape” (p 465); 4) the spokesperson must speak on the issue. In addition to this

four-step process, Lang and Lang (1981) argued that this model also involves “a number of feedback loops, most important among which are the way political figures see their own image mirrored in the media” (p. 466).

Although Lang and Lang’s (1981) model was designed to explain the way the media create the public agenda, it can be used by researchers as the basis for developing a frame-building model that could be used by public relations practitioners when they develop a communication strategy. Additionally, Huckins (1999) research into how a special interest group influence media coverage and Andsager’s (2000) study on how a special interest group develops text to make an issue more salient to the public are steps in the frame-building model. Using the research on agenda setting, second-level agenda setting, framing and political advertising, one can develop a model to explain how interest groups can influence the media agenda. The four steps in this model are those key concepts that can be taken from previous research and integrated into a functioning model. The four steps are: 1) define the issue, which Lang and Lang (1981) described as an organization selecting the person or event to make highlight; 2) development of text to make the issue salient to the media (thus, the public), which Lang and Lang (1981), Huckins (1999) and Andsager (2000) demonstrate that organizations create the text (frames) to make the issue more salient; 3) repetition of the frame to ensure that the news frame is used by the media which Entman (2005) argued that the frame needs to be repeated throughout the levels of the government to be accepted by the public; 4) a feedback loop between the media and the interest group as described in Lang and Lang’s (1981) study. This model could provide media sources, including special interest

groups and public relations practitioners, basic guidelines for developing frames to influence media content.

Using the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign during the 2004 presidential election as a case study, this thesis will develop and test a model for frame-building with the goal of explaining how special interest groups can set the media agenda. Specifically, this research will conduct a thematic content analysis on the public relations communications products created by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Then, this research will look at two of the major national newspapers, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, to determine if the media used the themes in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications messages. Finally, this thesis will determine if an agenda setting effect was present between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and two of the elite U.S. newspapers.

The purpose of this research is threefold. To begin with, the lack of research into frame-building model has missed an important aspect of framing and this research will add to the current body of framing knowledge. The second purpose of this research is to test the first three steps of a frame-building model proposed in this thesis. Finally, a more practical purpose of this research is to provide a basic framework for public relations practitioners when attempting to make their issues a part of the media's agenda.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter of this thesis will discuss the beginnings of the issue of the 2004 presidential candidates' military service and why it was an important issue in the 2004 presidential campaign. This will lead to a discussion of one of the 527 organizations that used military service as the basis for its opposition to Kerry's candidacy and the organization's basic communication strategy. Additionally, this section of the thesis will explore the relevant research into agenda setting, second-level agenda setting and framing to provide the theoretical framework to discuss external source message framing, specifically, how interest groups frame their messages for the media. This literature review will also include information about section 527 organizations. Additionally, because this thesis focuses on political advertising, the next section will discuss the effects of political advertising on political campaigns on voter turnout and perceptions of the candidates. The final portion of this review of literature will be the discussion of Lang and Lang's (1981) agenda building model and how their agenda-building model can be used as the basis for a frame-building model.

Military Service as a Campaign Issue

One of the campaign issues that came to the forefront of the 2004 presidential campaign was the candidates' military service during the Vietnam-era. In February 2004, John Kerry began using his military service record as the basis for his campaign bid for the Presidency ("Kerry's medals strategy", 2004). This focus on military service became an important issue in the campaign for several reasons. According to the February 9, 2004, *Wall Street Journal* article "Kerry's Medals

Strategy,” the election campaign would include “the most important national-security debate in a generation” (p. A26). *USA Today* added that the focus on the Vietnam-era military service became a campaign issue because of the war on terrorism and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “With 123,000 troops now serving in Iraq and another 11,000 in Afghanistan in an open-ended war against terrorism, controversy over who served in the Vietnam War--and who protested it--again has moved to a prominent position in American politics” (“Focus”, 2004, p. 12A). Each political candidate tried to question each others’ military records and place military service or lack of military service in the “worst possible light” (“Focus”, 2004, p. 12A). Although this debate included the other Democratic candidates, the issue evolved to be about Sen. John Kerry’s and Pres. George Bush’s military service. According to Bumiller and Halbfinger (2004), the issue of Kerry and Bush’s military service “exploded into a campaign issue” (pp. 22).

In an article that appeared in the February 13, 2004 edition of *USA Today*, the debate was focused on two things (“Focus”, 2004). First, the Democratic Party focused on questions about whether or not “President Bush was absent from National Guard duty in the early 1970s” (“Focus”, 2004, p. 12A) and whether or not he completed his time in the National Guard (“Focus”, 2004). Second, the Republican Party did not question Kerry’s military service in Vietnam as a Swift Boat captain or his Bronze Star and three purple hearts. However, the Republican Party focused on Kerry’s actions after the Vietnam War and his active protests against the Vietnam War and his testimonies before Congress regarding the war (“Focus”, 2004; Lawrence, 2004). “Last week [April 21, 2004], on the 33rd anniversary of a Vietnam

War protest in Washington, House Republicans gave a coordinated series of speeches attacking Kerry's opposition to that war" (pp. 6A).

As the campaign progressed and the war in Iraq continued, the candidate's military service increased in importance but the focus shifted to Kerry's actions during Vietnam (Tackett, 2004). "With real-time firefights everyday in Iraq, with nearly 1,000 American soldiers killed in the conflict, the campaigns of Sen. John Kerry and President Bush, or their surrogates, are focused on the did-he-or-didn't-he details of Kerry's record as a combat swift boat commander when he was in his early 20s" (Tackett, 2004, p. 1). Tackett adds that some of those who supported the President began an attempt to destabilize what the Kerry campaign was presenting as his greatest strength and the "strength of his candidacy--that as a battle-tested Navy lieutenant in Vietnam he possesses exemplary, even preferable credentials to be commander-in-chief" (p. 1).

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth

On March 23, 2004, a new Section 527 organization was created by John O'Neill, who took over Sen. John Kerry's swift boat after Kerry left Vietnam ("Republican-funded group attacks Kerry's war record", 2004). The purpose of the organization was to "counter the false 'war crimes' charges John Kerry repeatedly made against Vietnam veterans who served in our units and elsewhere, and to accurately portray Kerry's brief tour in Vietnam as a junior grade Lieutenant" ("Statement", para. 3).

The group of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth consists of more than 250 Vietnam veterans "including Kerry's superior officers and many who served with him

when he was a Swift Boat commander” (“The Media vs. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth”, 2004, para. 2). Part of their campaign was a series of television advertisements using 13 Vietnam veterans who described the events in Vietnam which awarded Kerry with a bronze and silver star, and three purple hearts (“Republican-funded group attacks Kerry’s war record”, 2004). These television advertisements were just a part of the communications campaign. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign consisted of several parts, including 23 news releases and statements sent out by the organization. Chris LaCivita, chief strategist for the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, said that their communication campaign consisted of news releases, radio appearances, direct mail to households where a veteran resided in the battleground states and television advertisements. According to LaCivita, the focus of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s communication campaign was twofold. First, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth wanted to get the message out that Kerry was not “the war hero he portrayed himself to be” (Jamieson, 2006, p. 186). The second was on Kerry’s antiwar actions after he returned from Vietnam.

According to the first news release, distributed in May of 2004, written by John O’Neill, founder of the Swift Boat vets, it was Kerry’s ascension as the frontrunner for the Democratic nominee during the 2004 presidential election which forced the campaign against Kerry’s presidential bid to begin in earnest.

In 1971, I debated John Kerry, then a national spokesman for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, for 90 minutes on “The Dick Cavett Show”. The key issue in that debate was Mr. Kerry’s claim that American troops were

committing war crimes in Vietnam ‘on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command.’ Now, as Sen. Kerry emerges as the presumptive Democratic nominee for the presidency, I’ve chosen to re-enter the fray. (O’Neill, 2004, para. 1)

On the same day the first news release was distributed to the media the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth held their first press conference. During this press conference, the Swift Boat vets announced that they had a letter signed by hundreds of Vietnam Veterans questioning Kerry’s ability to lead the nation as Commander-in-Chief. Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth “charged Kerry had greatly embellished his military records and betrayed his fellow Swift Boat veterans when he went before the Senate to make sweeping charges of American war crimes in Vietnam (“The Media vs. Swift Boat,” 2004, para. 2). This is how the 527 organization’s active campaign against Kerry began.

On August 4, 2004, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth began airing a series of advertisements. This series of nine advertisements, ranging from describing the events in Vietnam to describing Kerry’s anti-war actions after his return from his service in Vietnam, aired in 10 states that were considered swing states in the election (Jamieson, 2006). According to Jamieson (2006) the advertisements aired in Colorado, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Minnesota, Tennessee and Florida.

The Swift Boat Vets began the television advertisement part of the communications campaign with commercials that charged Kerry with lying to win his medals during his time in Vietnam (“The Vets Attack,” 2004, p. 90). These

commercials were aired from August 4, 2004, to September 17, 2004. The next set of advertisements began on September 30, 2004, and ended with the last advertisement aired October 13, 2004. This set of advertisements was “accusing him (Kerry) of betraying his mates by calling them war criminals” (“The Vets Attack,” 2004, p. 90-92). These advertisements ran throughout the rest of the election. The last advertisement was aired October 13, 2004.

According to Bevin and McIntyre (2005), the mainstream media ignored the initial Swift Boat Veterans’ campaign advertisements. As a result of the lack of coverage by the mainstream media, the Kerry campaign chose to ignore the attack ads and the book *Unfit for Command* released by the group. However, the story was widespread throughout the web logs on the Internet, radio talk shows and cable news networks. Bevin and McIntyre argue that “members of the new media, however, dove in and began fact-checking the accusations, leading to yet more questions and contradictions” (Bevin & McIntyre, 2005, p. 11).

Within two weeks after the first ad aired, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth generated enough public interest in the nontraditional media outlets, that the mainstream media could no longer ignore the story. According to Rieder (2004), “The story rapidly became major news, not because of elite media outlets, but thanks to the cable news networks, talk radio and the Internet” (p. 6). Bevin and McIntyre (2005), argue that the Swift Boat ads were placed in the public consciousness through non-traditional media. “The massive growth and reach of the Internet and FOX over the past four years, combined with a thriving network of local and syndicated talk

radio programs, created an alternate channel through which large portions of the country could receive news and information” (p. 10).

In a study conducted by McLaughlin and Associates polling firm during the 2004 election campaign, nearly 60 percent of those surveyed had heard of the Swift Boat ad that aired in August. “Although nearly half of those surveyed said the commercial had not influenced their vote, 19% said it made them “more likely” to vote for Kerry, and 27% said it made them “less likely” to vote for Kerry” (Gizzi, 2004, p. 5). According to the online version of the Sept. 17, 2004, *Wall Street Journal*, Mike Russell, the spokesperson for the Swift Boat group, said, “The amount of free time the group received on traditional media outlets ‘is almost incalculable,’” (Cummings and Flint, 2004, para. 6). As a result, the issue “dominated the presidential race” (Rieder, 2004, p. 6). According to LaCivita, “the ads run by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were either the first or second most memorable ads run during the entire issue debate” (Jamieson, 2006, p. 194).

Agenda setting

Since Walter Lippmann (1922) argued that people use the media to create “a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach” (p. 484), research into the agenda setting function of the media has flourished. Agenda setting theory suggests that the media coverage of events can bring those events or issues into the public consciousness thus making the events or issues part of the public’s agenda in a political campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Long before McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) initial study on agenda setting, Lang and Lang (1959) determined that media coverage of issues forces attention to certain issues (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

According to Severin and Tankard (2001), agenda setting came about “when researchers became dissatisfied with the dominant theoretical position in mass communication research during the 1950s and 1960s--the limited-effects model” (p. 222). Prior to this, many researchers were looking at whether the media could affect attitude change. However, they began to think “maybe the mass media had their effects on people’s perceptions--their views of the world--rather than on their attitudes” (p. 222). One of the most quoted researchers in the agenda setting literature is Bernard Cohen. In his 1963 book *The Press and Foreign Policy*, he argues that the press might not be good at telling us what to think; however, they are successful at telling us what to think about (Iyengar, et al., 1982; McCombs, 1993, McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Severin & Tankard, 2001). Cohen's (1963) statement has become the premise of agenda setting research.

In the first empirical study on agenda setting, McCombs and Shaw (1972) attempted to determine whether or not the media set the public agenda. They hypothesized that the “mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (1972, p. 177). To test this hypothesis, they compared what the Chapel Hill, N.C., voters said were the important issues to those issues mentioned in the mass media. McCombs and Shaw randomly selected registered voters from five Chapel Hill precincts. They asked 100 participants to outline the key issues as he or she saw them. Then, they compared the issues identified by the respondents with the news coverage of the campaign. The results of their study showed that there were strong correlations between the issues that voters believed were important and the extent of media coverage of those issues.

The correlations did not demonstrate the agenda setting function, because their study could not show whether the media was influencing the public agenda or the public was influencing the media agenda (Severin & Tankard, 2001). However, it did show that “the evidence is in line with the conditions that must exist if agenda setting by the media does occur” (p. 184). Adding to the early research on agenda setting, Funkhouser (1973) determined that the amount of time and attention the media provide to certain issues affects public opinion regarding those issues. Funkhouser also found that the media agenda might not necessarily reflect reality.

In the initial agenda setting research there were questions on the direction of agenda setting phenomena. Researchers had not examined whether the public set the media’s agenda or vice versa. Because the question of direction of the agenda setting influence discovered by McCombs and Shaw (1972) was still unanswered, they decided to retest the original hypothesis (Shaw & McCombs, 1977). Additionally, they began to investigate the “contingent conditions that enhance or limit media agenda setting” (McCombs, 1993). In this study they used a time-lag study to determine if the media set the public agenda. They interviewed the same respondents “at several points throughout the campaign” (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This design, with several interviews through time “would allow some investigations of the causal sequence” (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 224). According to Severin and Tankard (2001) the results of Shaw and McCombs (1977) showed there was a causal relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda, however, the correlation was weak. Even though the correlations were weak, “the results of the Charlotte study do provide some evidence for causal direction—that is likely that the

media (or newspapers, at least) do have a causal effect in shaping the public's agenda, rather than vice versa" (p. 225). Iyengar and Behr (2001) agreed with Shaw and McCombs (1977) findings that agenda setting is truly one-way and that the media coverage determines public concern.

Although these studies showed strong correlations between the agenda setting function of the media and public recognition of the importance of an issue, many researchers still believed that there was not enough evidence to support the agenda setting theory. Iyengar et al. (1982) set out to provide the first experimental support for this theory. To test agenda setting theory, Iyengar et al. conducted a two-day experiment with three goals in mind; 1) "To provide authoritative experimental evidence" (p. 849) to determine the degree which news media set the public agenda; 2) to assess whether network news determines what the public sees as important when evaluating a president 3) and finally, to determine the "individual cognitive processes that might underlie agenda setting. They determined that the news media's focus on some issues, while ignoring others, has an affect on the issues the public considers important. Additionally, they showed that "by attending to some problems and ignoring others, media may also alter the standards by which people evaluate government" (Iyengar et al, 1982, p. 849).

Researchers have determined that there are several factors that have had an affect on media agenda setting. According to the Severin and Tankard (2001) text, *Communication Theories*, the factors and researchers associated to these factors are: issues which a person experiences directly and those issues which are not experienced directly (Zucker, 1978); abstract and concrete issues (Yagade and Dozier, 1990); "the

relevance of the information (to the individual) and the degree of uncertainty concerning the subject of the message” (McCombs and Weaver, 1977; Severin and Tankard, 2001, p. 231); and issues with more exposure are more likely to set the public agenda (Wanta and Wu, 1992; Severin and Tankard, 2001).

Second-level agenda setting

Basic agenda setting research has focused on the relationship between media coverage of issues and the public’s recognition of those issue’s and their salience. However, the research soon expanded to examining the attributes of an issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). According to McCombs (1993), “agenda setting entered its third phase during the 1976 election when Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) extended the idea of agendas into two new domains. One was the agenda of candidate characteristics reported by the media” (McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 59). This was later called second-level agenda setting (McCombs, et al., 1997). According to McCombs et al. (1997), agenda setting research used the object as the basic unit of analysis. However, McCombs et al. argued “beyond the agenda of objects there also is another level of analysis to consider, each of these objects has numerous attributes, those characteristics and properties that fill out the picture of each object” (p. 704). For example, a candidate’s experience or military service record would be considered an attribute of a candidate or object. In their study on candidate images, McCombs et al. (1997) hypothesized that the attributes (their political ideology, experience level and qualifications) of candidates as presented in the media influence the public's perceptions of the candidates. Additionally, they hypothesized that how the media presented a candidate’s attributes (i.e., positive,

negative or neutral) influenced the public's relative perception of that candidate's attributes.

McCombs et al. (1997) conducted a survey of voters' opinions of the candidates and a content analysis on two local daily newspapers and a major television news program. Their data were organized into two types. The first was the substantive, which was broken down into three different categories, "the candidates' ideology and position on issues, their qualifications and experience, and their personal characteristics and personality" (p. 707). The second type was the affective, which was broken down into three separate categories, positive, negative, or neutral. The results of their study showed that the media did influence the voters' opinions of "both the substantive and affective dimensions of voters' candidate descriptions" (p. 715).

Additional research into second-level agenda setting attempted to determine the importance of the media's coverage of the candidate's image on the public's agenda. In their study of candidate image attributes, Kioussis, et al., (1999) examined the "role of attribute salience in the agenda setting process" (p. 414). They conducted two experiments designed to test two research questions "Will media attention toward candidate attributes influence the perceived overall salience of the candidate?" (p. 418) and "Will media attention toward candidate attributes influence the perceived affective salience of the candidate?" (p. 418). According to Kioussis et al. in the first experiment they studied two candidate attributes--morality and education. Using a 2x2 factorial design, forty-four undergraduate students were asked to read four articles describing a fictitious political candidate. The first article described the

candidate as a highly educated and moral politician. The second article described the candidate as not as educated as the first but still moral. The third article described the candidate as highly educated but corrupt. And the fourth article the candidate was described as uneducated and corrupt. Each article exposed the subjects to an equal amount of information on each attribute. The students were randomly assigned one of the four articles to read. They were then asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the candidate they just read about. The second half of the questionnaire measured whether or not the participants remembered the two attributes of the candidates, the qualifications of the candidates, “whether or not the candidate was informed, knowledgeable, and intelligent” (p. 419). The students were then asked if the candidate was “honest, sincere, and trustworthy” (p. 419). Their findings indicated that the public’s perception of the attributes of a candidate mirror the media’s representation of those attributes.

The second experiment was designed to test the affective attributes. Another set of students was exposed to the same four conditions. However, they were asked different questions. The first questions in the questionnaire were the same as the first experiment. However, the second part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to determine the “candidate’s overall salience: whether the candidate was prominent, significant, important and well known. The three other questions were used to calibrate the candidate’s affective salience: whether the candidate was boring, appealing, and exciting” (Kiousis et al., 1999, p. 420). The results of this second experiment showed there was no interaction between the substantive and affective attributes. Basically, Kiousis et al. argued “candidate qualifications seem to wield

greater influence on overall judgments of politicians” (p. 425).

Researchers have also focused on the link between candidates and issues or characteristics. Golan and Wanta (2001) examined second-level agenda setting during the New Hampshire primary during the 2000 presidential campaign. They looked at several different aspects of second-level agenda setting. In their study they examined whether or not newspapers had “linked George W. Bush or John McCain with certain issues or personal characteristics” (p. 250), to what level, and whether the public were influenced by the media coverage of the candidate’s personal characteristics. Golan and Wanta (2001) combined data from three newspapers and the results from a Gallup poll about the candidates to determine the results. In the content analysis, they used the paragraph as the unit of analysis. They analyzed 505 paragraphs from articles that were specifically written about either George W. Bush or John McCain or both. Golan and Wanta measured the variables of candidate issue; the nature of the issue frame, positive, negative or neutral; the candidate attribute; the nature of the candidate attribute, positive, negative or neutral. The results of their study showed that newspapers played a major role in influencing “voter perceptions at the cognitive level [more] than at the affective level” (Golan & Wanta, 2001, p. 255). In other words, newspapers influenced the personal characteristics and issues voters linked to the candidates.

Many researchers believe that second-level agenda setting and framing explore the same areas in agenda setting. According to McCombs and Ghanem (2001), attribute agenda setting (second-level agenda setting) is a combination of agenda setting theory and framing research. “The major focal points of framing

research, frames, the process of framing, and framing effects, are, respectively, attribute agendas, the dynamics of the agenda setting process, including its contingent conditions, and agenda setting influence, or effects” (p. 69). McCombs and Ghanem add that framing is the creation of an agenda using a limited number of “thematically related attributes in order to create a coherent picture of a particular object” (p. 70). As demonstrated in the research on second-level agenda setting, there is a focus on the cognitive and affective attributes of an object or event while framing is more of a macro focus using “a mix of cognitive and affective elements” (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001, p. 79).

Framing

Framing, as defined by Entman (1993), is the selection of an aspect of “perceived reality” (p. 52) and to make that aspect “more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). Additionally, Entman (1993) stated that frames can be demonstrated in four locations: “the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture” (p. 52). According to Entman, the communicator makes a conscious or subconscious framing decision on what to say according to his own experiences. The text contains frames shown by what is in the message, the keywords, images, and phrases that reinforce previous facts or judgments. The receiver may or may not be influenced by the communicator and text intentions. The culture is a common set of frames that is reflected in the interaction and thinking of most of the people in the group.

Within the framing research there is a debate on whether or not framing should be based on one theory or should be examined through a multi-disciplinary approach. Entman (1993) argued that framing research should be based on one theory of framing and not based on theories from other disciplines. Although Entman (1993) believed that communication scholars can provide a concrete definition of framing for continued research in the social sciences, D'Angelo (2004) stated that framing research should be based on different theories. "Rather, knowledge about framing has accumulated because the research program encourages researchers to employ and refine many theories about the framing process under the guidance of distinct paradigmatic perspectives on the relationship between frames and framing effects" (p. 871).

Framing is a continually expanding area of multi-disciplinary research. Hallahan (1999) described framing as a "paradigm for understanding and investigating communication and related behavior in a wide range of disciplines" (p. 205). D'Angelo (2002) states that news framing research has three paradigms: a) cognitive, the study of how frames activate schemata; b) constructionist, study that holds that journalists create interpretive packages "of the positions of politically invested sponsors" (p. 877) and c) critical, study which asserts that frames are the "outcome of news gathering routines" (p. 876). Carragee and Roefs (2004) further divided framing research into four distinct approaches—"how frames are sponsored by political actors, how journalists employ frames in the construction of news stories, how these stories articulate frames, and how audience members interpret these frames" (p. 215). Framing is considered an important part of agenda setting research

because it is the process where advocacy groups, political candidates, and government officials use the media in an attempt to provide the public their news frames (Golan & Wanta, 2001). Entman (1993) stated that framing is important to political communication because the frames call attention to certain aspects of issues while downplaying others. These frames “might lead audiences to have different reactions” (p. 55) to the issues.

Researchers have examined how frames can lead to different interpretations of an issue. de Vreese (2004) conducted a study on how news frames can effect issue interpretation and salience. Specifically, his experiment “investigated the effects of television news frames on 1) audience interpretations of a political issue, 2) the salience of news frames versus other information in the story, and 3) support for future policy” (p. 36). He created professional looking newscasts regarding the development of the European Union and showed the newscasts to 145 Dutch adults. de Vreese manipulated the framing of the newscast into two news frames, presentation of the EU in the conflict frame, which focuses on controversy, or the economic consequences frame, describing the “economic implications and considerations” (p. 38) of the development of the EU. The results of his experiment showed that audience members who are more politically knowledgeable were “more likely to make reference to both the core information and the news frame” (de Vreese, 2004, p. 46) than those participants with less political knowledge.

The media use different frames to ensure that a story remains salient to the public over an extended period of time. Chyi and McCombs (2004) examined how the media framed the story of the shootings at Columbine High School. Specifically,

they looked at how the story “gained prominence on the media agenda” (p. 22). Their study determined that the media changed the frame over time from individual frames to a more societal framing of the story to ensure that the story maintained its salience in the public. According to Chyi and McCombs, the *New York Times*, “built the salience of the Columbine case by emphasizing different aspects of this incident over time” (p. 30).

Along with the study of how the media maintain a story’s salience, another study reviewed the criteria media used to determine a story’s newsworthiness. This is important to the research into framing because the way the media determine news value and salience of an event can influence the public “interpretations of a policy debate” or issue (Tewksbury et al., 2000, p. 821). According to Gant and Dimmick (2000), media chose news stories based on eleven points: affiliation, conflict, information subsidy, news format, normality, novelty, proximity, resource constraints; significance; timeliness, and visual potential. However, their research showed that novelty and affiliation proved critical in the selection process. Additionally, their research “re-enforces that crime, disaster/accident, and government/politics are enduring news story topics” (p. 637).

There has been extensive research conducted on the effects of news frames on public perceptions of issues. Tewksbury, et al. (2000) conducted an experiment on “how journalistic news frames can facilitate the communication of advocacy frames” (p. 804). They hypothesized that “frames should influence how people think about an issue” (p. 810), the frame will last through time, and that “people differ in their susceptibility to framing effects” (p. 810). They conducted a two-part study. The

first part of the study used more than 500 participants. The participants were assigned to one of five groups. Each group was assigned an article to read discussing the issues surrounding “proposed regulation of large scale hog farms” (p. 811). Additionally, the participants were required to read an actual article discussing “a state Supreme Court ruling regarding truth-in-sentencing laws” (p. 811). The second experiment was conducted with the same stimuli three weeks later. The results of this study showed that the frames journalists use when writing a story can “influence public interpretations of a policy debate” (p. 821). This was supported in another study on how frames effect individuals’ interpretations of news issues (Shen, 2004).

In their study on the relationship between news frames, an individual’s interpretations of the issues and voter decision making processes, Shah et al. (1996) examined the process by which two groups who differ in their cultural values, evangelical Christians and undergraduate students, interpret issues and make decisions regarding those issues. Their experiment was conducted by providing the two groups simulated articles regarding an election between candidates. The groups were then asked to make a decision regarding a candidate. The articles were the same except for an article on health care. The media frame on the health care issue was altered, using the ethical frame and material frame. One group in each population received the ethical frame and the other group received the material frame. The results of their study showed that media frames and issue interpretations “influence voters decision-making processes” (p. 533) Shah et al. (1996) argued that this occurs because the media frames activate schema and attitudes already present in the individual. For example, if a person sees an issue through an ethical schema, and the

media frame the issue using an ethics frame, then the individual will “make judgments in ethical terms” (p. 534). Rhee agreed with the results of Shah et al.’s (1996) that news frames can influence a particular interpretation of a news event or campaign issue. However, she added that interpretation of a media frame also depends on the knowledge the individual has of the issue or campaign.

Additional framing studies have determined that journalists are important to frame construction (Entman, 1993; Husselbee & Elliot, 2002). According to Entman (1993), journalists who follow the rules of objectivity have the potential to frame stories that could prevent the audience from making a balanced decision regarding an issue. According to Entman, journalists are frequently influenced by “skillful media manipulators” (p. 56) to use the dominant frame instead of two or more interpretations of the issue. This is a common fear held by both scholars and the public (Husselbee & Elliot, 2002). In their study, Husselbee and Elliot (2002) examined the media coverage of two hate crime murders to determine how journalists frame sensational news stories. The first was in Laramie, Wyoming where Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student was killed. The other was the murder of James Byrd Jr., a disabled black man in Jasper, Texas. According to Husselbee and Elliot (2002), there is a public perception that journalists have no respect for the communities they cover and “that they chase ‘sensational’ stories that sell newspapers or grab the attention of viewers” (p. 833). The result of their study determined that the sensationalism feared by the communities in which the crimes were committed did not occur. The journalists “clearly used more positive framing of the worlds they

discovered in Jasper and Laramie than the citizens expected” (Husselbee & Elliot, 2004, p. 848).

Another study on how journalists frame news stories focused on “how distinct frames work in combination to influence information processing” (Shah et al., 2004, p. 102). Using the topic of urban growth, Shah et al. studied the effects that frame combinations have on cognitive complexity. The results of their study determined that frames work in combination “to generate more detailed cognitions about the causes, components, and consequences of urban growth” (p. 114). Additionally, they determined that the journalists’ choice of words in the news frame or combination of news frames can influence the way an individual perceives an issue.

Sources of the Media Agendas and News Frames

Along with studying whether or not the media can influence the public agenda and how the media can influence the public’s perception of specific attributes of a political candidate, there has been some research into who sets the agenda for the media. Westley (1976) argued that studies of agenda setting are not complete “unless we consider the total social matrix within which it occurs” (p. 45). Westley’s proposal was that agenda setting is part of social change. He explained that it is possible for extensive media coverage of issues or events to increase knowledge of the issues that, in turn, can change the attitudes or create a new attitude toward the issue. In addition, he discussed where the media agenda comes from and “how its relationship to personal agendas may be influenced by the social system and the culture in which both the media and their audiences are embedded” (p. 45). This means that agenda setting is a product of several things, including the characteristics

of the journalist, media organization, other media and organizations outside the media (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Westley (1976) argued that special interest groups influence the media agenda. He stated that interest groups "are themselves in part a consequence of events and an influence upon media agendas" (p. 46). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argued that influence on the media agenda can come from several sources, not just special interest groups. They describe five different influences on the media's agenda: 1) individual media representatives, including both professional roles and personal characteristics; 2) media routines, such as space requirements, writing style and deadlines; 3) organizational influences on content, which includes editorial decisions and the goals of the organization; 4) content from outside organizations, such as sources and advertisers; 5) ideology or the values of the day.

Although much of the framing research has focused on how the media frame the attributes of an issue and the effects of those frames on audience members, there has not been one statement of "framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text" (Entman, 1993, p. 51). Scheufele (2000) added that framing research, much like agenda setting research, can be divided into three main areas of research; frame-building, frame-setting and individual-level consequences. Scheufele argued that there has been significant research into the frame-setting and individual-level consequences but "little evidence has yet been systematically collected on how various factors influence the structural qualities of news in terms of framing" (p. 307). In other words, there has been little research into how a news frame is developed.

Carragee and Roefs (2004) suggested that recent research has neglected the role of political actors and social movements in frame construction. They recommended further research into how political and social power influence news frames. “News stories, then, become a forum for framing contests in which political actors compete by sponsoring their preferred definitions of issues” (p. 216). Carragee and Roefs (2004) agreed that there is little research into how frames are created. However, they add that the studies conducted on frames in news stories “frequently fail to trace these frames back to specific sponsors or to consider the economic and cultural resources available to sponsors to promote frames” (p. 219). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argued that general audience media dominates issues in public opinion, “both reflecting it and contributing to its creation” (p. 3). Specifically, journalists use several different forums to create a frame of an issue. “Journalists may draw their ideas and language from any or all of the other forums, frequently paraphrasing or quoting their sources” (p. 3). Additionally, they stated that how the issue changes is largely based on the sponsor of the information, or frame. These package or frame sponsors often attempt to promote a “collective rather than personal agenda” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 6). Hallahan (1999) argued that “issues can be constructed by as few as two individuals but also can emerge at the group, organization, interorganizational, or societal levels” (p. 217). Hallahan also argued that framing is an essential part of how an organization attempts to communicate its messages to members of target groups.

During an election year, the sponsors of the frames are political parties or campaigns. Researchers have found that political parties and campaigns purposively

use framing in an attempt to influence the news. Shen (2004) argued that framing in political campaigns is a deliberate strategy enacted by the campaigns in order to affect how the audience thinks about a candidate or issue depending on the person's political disposition. He discovered that "political ads framed as either character- or issue-oriented had a significant impact on voter cognitions in political evaluations. He also found that individuals with distinct political schemas responded to message frames in significantly different ways" (p. 133). In other words, frame interpretation is based on the person's political predisposition. Shen (2004) stated while news frames could activate frame-related issue interpretations and affect attitudes; such effects were moderated by individuals' "issue schemas" (p. 400). Shen added that the interaction between the message and the individual's predisposition to the issue can determine the effects of the media frames.

Additionally, Durham (1998) examined the importance of the concurrence of frames between sources and the media. He looked at the differences between sources and the reporters regarding the investigation into the July 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800 over Long Island. The crash killed all 230 passengers. "Even as pieces of the Boeing 747, personal effects, and bodies fell into the water, the media began speculating about the cause of the catastrophe" (p. 101). After the initial coverage, the media created three potential frames for an explanation for the explosion: "a bomb on board, a missile, or a mechanical malfunction" (Durham, 1998, p. 101). These frames were considered as possible causes of the crash by both journalists and investigators. During the course of the investigation, the investigators would not officially state the cause of the crash. This led to speculation among the investigating

teams. Durham used a qualitative approach to determine the frames used in the media coverage of the crash. He used Lexis-Nexis to determine the number of articles which discussed TWA Flight 800. He found 668 articles using the search term “Flight 800” (Durham, 1998, p. 106). He then narrowed the population further to include articles that represented “all of the *New York Times*, reports focused on reporters’ interaction with government investigators in the official investigation of the crash, which was devoted to the framing effort” (p 106). Durham (2002) argued, “framing represents the ideological competition to dominate the next fixed meaning within a modernist sense of power and history” (p. 105). With this in mind, Durham’s study identified the competition between reporters and sources when trying to achieve the dominant frame. Durham concluded his study by explaining that there must be unity among sources and reporters for a news frame to become the dominant frame.

Additionally, Tedesco (2001) argued that political campaigns and actors attempt to shape the public agenda. He argued “political campaigns exert great financial and personnel resources on campaign-controlled messages, including advertising and public relations” (p. 2050). Additionally, he found that sources at the center of a campaign “are able to command media attention and influence the media agenda in measurable ways” (p. 2064). Cho and Benoit (2005) stated that “political candidates use media such as TV spots, websites, televised debates, or news coverage to convey their campaign messages to voters” (p. 175). They argued that a candidate’s news releases influence the media agenda. Additionally, they argued that

news releases placed on a candidate's website may have a greater influence than previously thought.

As with political candidates, interest groups also have an influence on the media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Scheufele (1999) argued that special interest groups play a pivotal role in the media's selection of news frames. Scheufele stated that journalists often use the frames provided by these organizations. In fact, Reber and Berger (2005) argued that public relations professionals working for these organizations or groups "play central roles in constructing and using frames in the service of groups and organizations" (p. 187). According to Cameron, Sallot and Curtin (1997) up to and above 50 percent of news content is provided by public relations professionals (Cho & Benoit, 2005). In their study on how the Sierra Club creates salient messages, Reber and Berger (2005) examined newsletters distributed by the 51 U.S. Sierra Club chapters to determine the master frames and sub-frames used by the Sierra Club and then they examined two national newspapers, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, to determine if the frames were present in the media. Reber and Berger (2005) determined that the "Sierra Club, like corporations, constructs and uses frames . . . to attempt to influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of internal and external audiences" (p. 191).

In his study on interest groups, Huckins (1999) examined the Christian Coalition to determine if this organization had influenced the media coverage of certain issues over an extended period of time. According to Huckins, the Republican Party accused the Christian Coalition leaders of costing the Republicans the 1992 presidential election. Huckins (1999) argued that "Republican leaders blamed the

Christian conservatives for leading the party too far to the right” (p. 78). Huckins states that as a result of the belief of the Republic leaders, Christian Coalition leaders sought to mainstream their messages and to incorporate “non-Christian organizations groups in its protests and news conferences” (p. 78). To determine whether or not the Christian Coalition’s agenda influenced the media agenda, he examined the group’s agenda by using the organization’s official newspaper, the *Christian American*. Huckins then examined the coverage of Christian Coalition to see if media used the frames the Christian Coalition had created. The results of Huckins (1999) study showed strong correlations between the changes in the Christian Coalition’s agenda and the news agendas. This “provided evidence an interest group makes a purposeful impact on media coverage” (p. 83). Additionally, Huckins (1999) argued that a special interest group that changes its message can change the subsequent media coverage. Specifically, the Christian Coalition changed their messages and the rhetoric used by the Christian Coalition was reflected in the news coverage.

Adding to the research on interest groups’ influence on the media agenda, Andsager (2000) argued that the terms used by an interest group can determine the type of media coverage of the interest group. In her study on interest groups affects on media agendas, Andsager (2000) studied how interest groups frame their messages in order to receive positive publicity toward their stance on certain social issues. She argued “in the political debate over social issues, interest groups often play a major role in making the issue salient to both policymakers and the media” (p. 577). Her study focused on the frames used by interest groups on both sides of the abortion issue. Her analysis of terms and phrases used by the interest groups coincided with

the use of phrases and terms used by the media. This provided evidence that interest groups have “a strong influence on the ways in which journalists frame abortion issues” (p. 589).

527s as Sources of the Media Agenda

These studies into framing provide a basic understanding of how frames used by interest groups and the media can affect an audience during the course of a political campaign. The interest groups which were the most influential during the 2004 presidential campaign were the Section 527 organizations. This section will describe the Section 527 organizations and the use of issue advocacy advertisements during a political campaign.

Section 527 organizations are not new phenomena and have been active in political campaigns since 1975. A 527 organization is a nonprofit organizations designed to participate in “election related activities such as ads, voter drives and political research (“Public Service”, 2004, p. 57). Before 1975, interest groups were organized under Section 501(c) of the Federal Tax Code. Section 501 limits these organizations from being active participants in political activities. After Section 527 was enacted in 1975, many organizations started to organize under this section of the tax code because it allowed organizations to be active participants in political activities (Kornylak, 2001). In fact, in order for an organization to maintain its tax exempt status under Section 527, the organization must engage in “influencing or attempting to influence the selection, nomination, election or appointment of an individual to a federal, state, or local public office or office in a political organization” (Exemption Requirements - Political Organizations, 2005, para. 1).

However, they have to independent from a specific candidate or campaign (Jamieson, 2006; O'Rourke, 2005). According to la Ganga et al. (2004) 527 organizations can not coordinate "its strategy or advertising with a presidential campaign" (para. 10).

According to Kornylak (2001), the creation of Section 527 of the tax code was not designed to reduce the limitations on those organizations established under Section 501(c). However, it was designed to take the "campaign-type activities" (p. 243) out of the Section 501(c) organization. Additionally, this change in the tax code allowed "corporations and labor organizations that are otherwise prohibited from making contributions and expenditures in connection with federal elections to establish segregated funds through which the entities could carry on election related-activities on a limited basis" (p. 243). Also, these organizations are not limited in the amount of contributions they can accept and they have to report the sources of their funds and what they spend to the IRS ("What is a 527 Organization," 2005).

Although these organizations may not directly support a candidate for political office, part of the organization's political activities may be issue advocacy. According to Stephen Moore, president of the Club for Growth, the 527 group ads are "not meant to elect or de-elect any politicians. They're meant to inject issues into campaigns" (Jamieson, 2006, p. 195). Moore adds that none of the 527 group ads which appeared during the 2004 election advocated voting for a particular candidate (Jamieson, 2006). Even though these organizations limited their advertising to issue advocacy, Dreyfuss (1998) argued that groups such as these use issue-advocacy campaigns "with the clear and unambiguous intention of affecting the outcome of an election" (Dreyfuss, 1998, p. 32). Attempts by organizations to affect an election are

not new phenomena. According to Pfau et al. (2001), political action committees or special interest groups have used issue advocacy advertisements since the 1930s, but the use of these ads has “grown exponentially during the past four years” (p. 2380). Pfau et al. added that “more recent research indicates that issue advertising may have replaced candidate advertising as the principle source of campaign attack advocacy” (p. 2380).

Political Advertising Research

Since this research will examine the advertisements created by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, it is important to provide a basic overview of the relevant political advertising research. The next section will discuss how political advertisements are used by the electorate; effect of political advertisements on the electorate’s decision-making process; the general effectiveness of negative advertisements created by third party organizations; and how news coverage of negative ads increases the effectiveness of those advertisements.

Televised political advertising has been around for more than 50 years, since the first political ad was aired in 1954. According to Valentino et al (2004), political advertisements have grown “from a tool used exclusively by presidential candidates to an essential element of campaign communication at all levels of government” (p. 337). As a consequence of this shift, campaigns and interest groups’ spending on advertisements has increased exponentially and “citizens are now exposed to huge amounts of political advertising every election cycle” (Valentino et al, 2004, p. 338).

According to Kaid et al. (1993), political advertising and television news have become entangled in the past 15 years. “Television news and television ads have

grown more closely intertwined in recent campaigns, as television advertising has become the content of television news” (p. 274-75). In fact, much of the exposure to advertisements has shown up in the media coverage of the advertisements. In their study on television news and political advertising, Kaid et al. examined the news coverage of political advertising during the 1972 -1988 presidential campaigns. Using the news story as the unit of analysis, Kaid et al. coded 131 television newscasts related to presidential campaigns on ABC, NBC and CBS during the last eight weeks of the election campaigns. They coded for “the focus of the story (if television advertising was the dominant focus of the story or just part of another broader story)” (p. 277). The results of their study showed that there was as “startling increase in the coverage of television advertising in the 1988 election” (p. 277). They also determined that the increase “in political spots may lie in the fact that television spots, particularly negative ones, have become an accepted form of political argument and debate” (p. 281). Additionally Kaid, et al. (1993) determined that the effects of negative advertisements increase if they are covered in news broadcasts (Kaid et al., 1993). In another study on political advertisements in the news, McKinnon and Kaid (1999) examined the news practice of political adwatch, which is a media analysis of a political candidate’s advertisements with the purpose of informing the public regarding misleading and untruthful ads, and its effects on voters’ evaluations of political candidates and their advertisements. McKinnon and Kaid (1999) used a pretest/posttest test design to “measure voters’ perceptions after exposure to a negative, televised political advertisements, a disconfirming adapt (print or broadcast), or a combination of the two” (p. 223). The results of their experiment

showed that the media coverage of negative political advertising, “may be a crucial variable in adwatch effects” (p. 231). According to McKinnon and Kaid (1999) the adwatch coverage actually increased the ads effectiveness.

This increased coverage of and exposure to political advertisements has led to concerns that political advertisements could be a problem for democracy. Political advertisements, especially negative, are not new on the political scene. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, when political actions committees began to sponsor attack advertisements “negative campaigning entered the current high-intensity phase . . .” (Lau et al., 1999, p. 851). In their meta-analysis of studies on the effects of negative political advertisements, Lau et al. (1999) determine that these advertisements began targeting congressional leaders in the late 1970s/early 1980s then bled into Presidential election campaigns. “The attack strategy quickly carried over into presidential campaigns, which induced a rise in the ‘negativism’ trend line” (p. 851). In their analysis, Lau et al. (1999) discovered two major areas of research of the effects of negative political advertisements--political campaign consultants believe that negative advertisements work and negative political advertisements are seen as a “corrosive influence on participatory democracy” (p. 852). Lau et al. also discovered three types of political advertisements--positive, comparative and negative or attack ads.

Research into political advertising has shown that potential voters use political advertisements as a source of information regarding political candidates and issues important in the campaign. In their study on the informational value of political advertising, Valentino et al. (2004) argued that political advertising “is generally

informative and may even reduce information gaps between the most and least aware in society” (p. 337). After surveying more than 300 participants on their opinions about political advertisements, Internet use, media consumption and interest in politics, they exposed the participants to a series of three advertisements; one a political advertisement for either Bush or Gore, the other two advertisements for commercial products. Their study showed that the most politically aware gain the most benefits from political advertising. Finally, the results showed that exposure to these ads decreases information seeking, especially among those who are more politically aware; exposure increases support for the sponsor of the ad from those who are least politically aware.

In another study on voters’ use of political advertisements as a source of information, Zhao and Chaffee (1995) examined the use of advertisements versus television news as a source of information on political issues. They conducted six surveys during the 1984, 1988 and 1992 presidential elections. Additionally they examined the election campaign for one prominent U.S. Senate seat. According to Zhao and Chaffee (1995) the results of these surveys showed that “usually the effects of advertisements are less than those of news, and sometimes they are nonsignificant; but in one hotly contested ideological race the informative effect attributable to advertisements exceeds that of TV news” (p. 41).

While these studies looked at how voters use political advertisements, Lau et al. (1999) argued that because more and more money is spent on political advertisements each election cycle, political campaigns want to ensure they are getting the most for their money. Lau et al. (1999) stated that this apparently

“translates into more and more negativism” (p. 851). Why was this the case? Lau et al. (1999) argued that many political campaign consultants believe that these ads are effective. However, their research was not able to provide evidence on the effectiveness of negative advertisements. On the other hand, Kaid and Boydston (1987) and Winneg et al. (2005) discovered that negative advertisements do have an effect on voters.

Kaid and Boydston (1987) found evidence negative advertisements sponsored by third party organizations have an impact on the electorate. They conducted an experiment on 428 members of civic organizations in Oklahoma City. In this pretest/posttest design, the participants were surveyed to determine their evaluation of certain politicians. Then, the participants were exposed five advertisements created by the “National Conservative Political Action Committee to discredit an Oklahoma politician” (p. 195). Finally, the participants were asked to fill out a survey evaluating the politician. The results of this study showed that the negative advertisements were able to create a more negative opinion of the politician. The study also showed that the advertisements affected those in the opposite party. Kaid and Boydston (1987) also found that the advertisements affected those in the same party by causing the experiment participants to have a more negative opinion of the politician, although less than those in the opposition party. Kaid and Boydston argued that the implications of their study were that “attacks by a ‘third-party’ source can be effective” (p. 200).

Winneg et al. (2005) found evidence during the 2004 presidential election that supported Kaid and Boydston’s (1987) results that negative advertisements affect

those in the opposite party of the candidate. He examined six misleading advertisements, three from each party. Using data from the Taylor Nelson Sofres Media Intelligence/Campaign Media Analysis Group, Winneg et al. was able to determine how many the times each ad was aired and then using the data from the National Annenberg Election Survey, they were able to determine whether or not citizens believed the misleading claims. The results of Winneg et al.'s. (2005) study showed that political party affiliation was a good predictor of the believability of the negative advertisements.

The second area of study, identified by Lau et al. (1999), was that there is a concern from researchers that negative advertisements damage democracy by creating cynicism in the electorate, causing voters not to go to the polls. Lau et al. (1999) argue that evidence does not show this to be true. Pinkleton et al. (2002) agree with the Lau et al.'s (1999) assessment. In an experiment on 236 students, Pinkleton et al. (2002) tested "the effects of positive, negative and negative comparative political advertising on key variables in the political decision-making process" (p. 13). They examined the effects of the negative advertisements on cynicism, efficacy and apathy. The results of their experiment showed that negative advertisements were less useful to voters than other advertisements. Additionally, they found that negative advertisements do not directly affect cynicism in voters. "Campaign-related negativism and cynicism, though related, have different causes and different outcomes" (p. 23). Basically, Pinkleton et al. discovered that even though negative advertising contributes to voter's disgust with a political campaign, negative advertising does not "automatically increase citizens' cynicism or apathy" (p. 13)

toward voting in an election.

Lang and Lang's (1981) Agenda Building Model

According to Lang and Lang (1981), political campaigns attempt to sway voters by “focusing on issues that work in his or her favor while deliberately playing down those that might work for the opponent” (p. 449). Additionally, these issues are viewed as important because they are the preferred “talking point of one’s candidate or party” (p. 449). Lang and Lang (1981) argue that the initial research into agenda setting does not touch on what they consider a crucial part of the agenda setting puzzle--that is how the agenda is built by the media. “The whole question of how issues originate is side stepped, nor is there any recognition of the process through which agendas are built” (p. 448).

In their study, Lang and Lang (1981) examined how the Watergate scandal became an issue in the public. By reviewing the press coverage of the Watergate break-in and the public opinion polls during the 1972 presidential campaign, Lang and Lang were able to determine that the break-in did not have an effect on the election. However, six months after the election, the issue became a controversy. According to Lang and Lang (1981), Watergate became an issue through certain events that caused extensive coverage of the break-in, including the trial of the first defendants. Although the media covered the issue and the events surrounding Watergate, they had to do more to make Watergate an issue. The media “had to stir up enough controversy to make it politically relevant, not only on the elite level but also to give the bystander public a reason for taking sides” (p. 464). According to Lang and Lang (1981), this process is called agenda building. The results of their

initial study showed that there are four-steps by which the media builds an agenda in the public: 1) the media highlight events, groups, activities “to make them stand out”; 2) the media then frames the object to make it salient to the public; 3) the media then link “the object or event to secondary symbols”; 4) a spokesman then makes statements in order to keep the issue salient in the public (p 465). According to Lang and Lang, this process is continuous a feedback loop to the outside organization or person, the media and the public. Additionally, Scheufele (2000) states that Lang and Lang’s (1981) agenda building model attributes a key role to both the media and political actors “for keeping an issue prominent in the media agenda or even increasing its prominence” (Scheufele, 2000, p. 303). Severin and Tankard (2001) state that Lang and Lang’s (1981) model shows that creating an issue in the public sphere is a several step process. “It suggests that the way the media frame an issue and the code words they use to describe it can have an impact and that the role of the well-known individuals commenting on the issue can be an important one” (p. 231). The implications of Lang and Lang’s (1981) agenda building model provide the initial framework for the development of a frame-building model.

Toward a Frame-building Model

As stated previously, there has been extensive research about framing (how journalists employ frames in their stories) and the individual-level consequences of frames (how frames affect the audience). However, there has been little research into frame-building (Scheufele, 2000). Lang and Lang’s (1981) model is a step in creating this frame-building model. One of the key steps in Lang and Lang’s (1981) agenda building model that is important to this thesis is the role of the Swift Boat

Veterans for Truth as the source of frames in the agenda building process. News sources contribute to defining frames and keeping the frames salient in the media. Additionally, research into framing has provided the additional guidance for the development of a frame-building model. Using the previous research on agenda setting, second-level agenda setting and framing, four distinct steps on how special interest groups frame issues become apparent: 1) interest groups defining the issue; 2) the development of terms and phrases to make an issue salient to the media; 3) repetition of the frame to the media to ensure that the news frame is accepted by the media; 4) feedback loop between the media and the interest group (See Fig. 1).

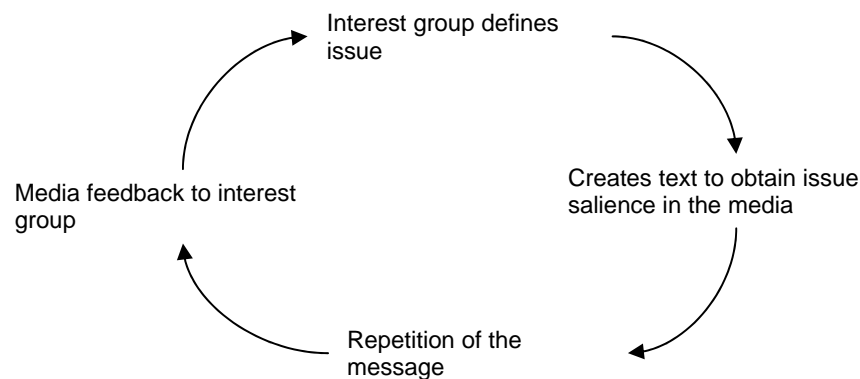


Fig 1.1. Frame building model adapted from Lang and Lang's (1981) agenda building model.

Although these steps are similar to those developed by Lang and Lang (1981), they are strictly focused on how special interest groups or advocacy groups act as sources and attempt to provide frames for media and the public's consumption.

During a political campaign, candidates attempt to define what they think are important issues during the campaign. In fact, Carragee and Roefs (2004) argue that political campaigns are basically contests between candidates' definitions of campaign issues. Additionally, Andrews and Edwards (2004) argue that special

interest groups or advocacy groups attempt to gain media attention for their issues. This is an important part in defining the issue and creating consensus of the issue. Entman (1993) argued that one of the main goals of a special interest group is to define an issue in their own terms. “Frames, then define problems--determine what causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values (p. 52). Additionally, Stone (1989) argued that the problem definition “is the process of image making, where the images have to do fundamentally with attributing cause, blame and responsibility” (p. 282).

This leads to the second step, which is closely related to the first step. Taken from the research into framing, the second step in the frame-building model is the development of terms and phrases to make an issue salient to the media. As discussed by Andsager (2000), interest groups choose rhetoric and text in their public products and news releases in an attempt to influence the media and to make the issue more salient to the media and to gain the publicity for the issue. Andsager (2000) argues that rhetoric has the power to influence news frames by highlighting aspects of an issue to make it more salient to the public. “Over time, policy actors can create a terminology that not only clearly conveys their stance on an issue but serves as well to define and categorize them” (p. 577).

The third step is the repetition of the news frame to the media to ensure the media use the frame. According to Tewksbury et al. (2000) the more a specific news frame is repeated the more likely the media and the public will accept the frame and make judgments in accordance with that frame. Entman (2005) added that the message acceptance depends on whether or not the message is repeated and accepted

through the levels of power (i.e., president, political elites, media and public). In political campaigns and advertisements, McKinnon and Kaid (1999) argued that extensive negative advertising and the extensive coverage of those ads cause the advertising content to be repeated, which contributed to the effectiveness of the advertisement.

The final step is derived from Lang and Lang's (1981) four-step process for agenda building, Huckins' (1999) study on the Christian Coalition and Chyi and McCombs' (2004) study on frame changing. Lang and Lang (1981) argued that agenda building is a process that involves a continuous feedback loop. "This process is a continuous one, involving a number of feedback loops, most important among which are the way political figures see their own image mirrored in the media, the pooling of information within the press corps, and the various indicators of the public response" (Lang and Lang, 1981, p. 466). According to Huckins (1999), the Christian Coalition took the feedback they received from the Republican Party and the media and changed its messages. The change in the message changed the media coverage. Additionally, Chyi and McCombs' (2004) argued that in order for a story to maintain salience in the public, the media must change the news frames.

Summary

Agenda setting and framing research provide the theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between the media sources and journalists, as well as the relationship between the media and the audience. This study focuses on the relationship between media sources and journalists. The literature shows that the media play an important role in how the audience perceives specific attributes of an

issue or particular candidate, as well as which issues the public links to specific candidates. Additionally, the literature demonstrates that although journalists are important to the framing process, sources of news frames, such as special interest groups, play an equally important role in this process. Research has shown that a special interest group's selection of text for news frames has an impact on how the media portray the organization which effects the public perception of the organization. However, there is a void in the current research on special interest groups' influence on the media agenda, specifically the process by which special interest groups develop a news frame. Within the literature on agenda setting, second-level agenda setting, framing and political advertising there is evidence that special interest groups follow several steps to develop news frames that are salient to the media, thus the public, and these groups take additional steps to ensure that their respective frames become part of the public's perception of an event or issue.

Research Questions

Using the proposed frame-building model as a guide, this research will test the first three steps in the frame-building and will attempt to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What thematic frames did the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth use in its communication campaign to define the issues related to Kerry's military service during the 2004 presidential campaign?

RQ2. Are the thematic frames of the issues related to Kerry's military service used by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth evident in the media content during

the 2004 presidential campaign and how prominently are those thematic frames in news articles?

RQ3. How prominently do references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization appear in the content of the news articles and newspapers?

RQ4. How frequently are Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members used as sources and how prominently are the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's sources in the news articles?

RQ5. How closely does the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication campaign meet the process described in the frame-building model?

RQ6. Is there an agenda setting effect between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications and the media coverage of military-related campaign issues?

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter will discuss the methods and research design that can best answer the research questions stated in Chapter 2. Because this research focuses on the source of media frames and the media agenda, Huckins' (1999) and Andsager's (2000) studies on special interest groups' influence on the media agenda served as the methodological basis for the design of this research.

Research Design

This research was divided into two parts. The first was a qualitative thematic content analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign which included the organization's home page introduction; Swift Boat Veterans for Truth fact sheet; 11 news releases; 7 public statements, identified as those products with the words "public statement" or "response to" in the headline; three cover letters introducing their television advertisements and nine television advertisements in order to determine their agenda. An attempt was made to analyze the materials available to the public, except the book *Unfit for Command*, written by John O'Neill who was one of the founding members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Public appearances by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members through other media, e.g. talk shows on radio and television, were not included because complete lists of these appearances could not be obtained.

The second part was a quantitative content analysis of two national newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, to determine to what extent the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's themes were used in these prominent, respected news media. Riffe et al. (2005) argued that content is an "end product, the

assumed consequence or evidence of antecedent individual, organization, social and other contexts” (p. 11). Additionally, Riffe et al. (2005) stated the purpose of content analysis is to “describe the communication and to draw inferences about its meaning or infer from the communication its context of production or consumption” (p. 33).

According to Berger (2000) there are several advantages to conducting a content analysis to answer research questions. One advantage is that content analyses “can deal with current events, topics of present-day interest” (p. 181). Berger adds that a content analysis can provide useful data. “Sometimes, however, just obtaining data on some topic of current interest is useful--such as political advertisements or political commercials in a campaign” (p. 181).

Content Analysis of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Communications Products

This portion of the study was a qualitative thematic analysis of the communications campaign the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth conducted against Democratic candidate John Kerry during the 2004 presidential campaign. According to Riffe et al. (2005) a theme is a single idea of some event or issue. Riffe et al.’s (2005) definition of a theme relates to Entman’s (1993) definition of a frame in that Entman argued that the frame is the single assertion is the communicator’s selection of “perceived reality” (p. 52) regarding an event that makes the event more salient to the public. Schuefele (2000) added that a media frame is the central idea of a story. Trochim (2001) argued that a thematic analysis is “the identification of themes or major ideas in a document or set of documents. These documents can be any kind of text including field notes, newspaper articles, technical papers, or organizational memos” (p. 165). According to Huckins (1999), newsletters, news releases and public

statements produced by special interest groups generally contain the group's agenda. Additionally, Andrews and Edwards (2004) argued that special interest groups or advocacy groups create publicity products for "gaining media attention to a movement's issues and goals" and "defining issues and creating a consensus" (p. 495). Andsager (2000) added that news releases provide the "primary means for interest groups to elucidate their issue stances" (p. 581).

The communications campaign consisted of nine television commercials aired during time period of August 4, 2004 to October 13, 2004 and 23 news releases and public statements released from May 5 to November 3, 2004 and posted on their website. In order to answer the first research question, a content analysis was conducted on the advertisements, news releases and public statements produced by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and posted on their website, www.swiftvets.com, in order to determine the themes or frames used by this special interest group to define the issue of John Kerry's military service. The initial step in this part of the study was a review of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's public statement of their goals, as listed on their website. After reviewing the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's homepage, the following goals were determined as the major themes of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth has been formed to counter the false "war crimes" charges John Kerry repeatedly made against Vietnam veterans who served in our units and elsewhere, and to accurately portray Kerry's brief tour in Vietnam" ("Swift Vets and POWs for Truth", para. 3). Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's home page stated that Kerry "exhibits serious flaws in character and lacks the potential to lead" and that "the time has come to set the record straight"

("Swift Boat Vets and POWS for Truth, para. 4-6). These goals and statements were used as a starting point for the analysis of the rest of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products. The products were examined to determine the presence of these themes and to see if any other themes became apparent in their communications products. The analysis looked at the text of the communications products. In the case of the television advertisements, the scripts of the advertisements were downloaded and analyzed. The analysis was on the text of the advertisements and did not consider visual images or the people in the ads. All the text in the ads was considered as representative of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's agenda as an organization.

In this study, themes in the content were determined by the words and phrases used to describe John Kerry's actions during and after Vietnam in the advertisements, news releases and public statements. Additionally, these themes that were apparent in the products were used to determine the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's definition of the issue of Kerry's military service. The words and phrases were categorized using the constant comparative technique, as described in Wimmer and Dominick (2003), to determine the common themes used by the Swift Boat Veterans. This procedure is divided into four steps; a) "comparative assignment of incidents to categories; b) elaboration and refinement of categories; c) searching for relationships and themes among categories; d) simplifying and integrating data into a coherent theoretical structure" (p. 112). This approach began by using categories based on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's stated goals. However, the constant comparative technique allows for categories to emerge from the data in a manner that is consistent

with qualitative analysis.

After the themes became apparent, the researcher then looked for the thematic frames the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to define those major themes. This was completed by looking for common phrases or words that could be categorized. For example, phrases like “Kerry lied about his Bronze Star” categorized as a thematic frame for the theme “Kerry lied about his military service”. Phrases like “Kerry lied before the Senate in 1971, were categorized under the theme “Kerry’s false war crimes accusations”.

Content Analysis on Media Coverage of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth

To answer the second through sixth research questions, a content analysis of the national newspaper coverage of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was conducted. Specifically, the content analysis looked for the frequency and prevalence of the thematic frames that were identified in the first part of the study as well as other variables that appeared in the news articles during the presidential election campaign.

Population

A LexisNexis search was conducted to determine the population size of the news articles discussing military service as a presidential campaign issue and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth appearing in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* newspapers from May 5, 2004, the day after the first news release was distributed by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to November 3, 2004, the day after the presidential election. The search was conducted using the terms: Kerry’s military records, Kerry’s military service, Kerry’s Vietnam records, Kerry’s Vietnam service, military records, military records and presidential campaign, military records

presidential campaign issue, military service, military service and presidential campaign, military service presidential campaign issue, Swift Boat vets, Swift Boat Veterans, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and presidential campaign, Vietnam and presidential campaign, Vietnam presidential campaign issue Vietnam records, and Vietnam service. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were chosen due to the national level debate regarding the 527 organizations and these newspapers' role as elite media. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have been identified in previous research as members of the media elite (Danielian & Reese, 1989; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Additionally, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argued that as part of the media elite, *The New York Times* often sets the agenda for other news media outlets and that elite journalists have a wide influence on other journalists. Additionally, Hester and Gibson (2003) argued that previous research has determined that news coverage in the *New York Times* "may drive the agendas of other newspapers" (p. 79). Repeat articles, book reviews, letters to the editor and articles about the presidential campaign that do not mention military service or Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were not included in the population. For example an article on acceptance speeches for the candidates was not included in the population. Using the search terms and the exclusion, the final population of news articles was 201 articles. The study was conducted on the entire population.

Units of Analysis

The content unit studied in the newspaper analysis was the entire article. According to Riffe and Lacy (1998), content units "are elements specifically related

to the meaning and production of content. Content units represent elements defined independently of the study and often by the creator of the content” (p. 58).

Additional units of analysis were referential units. Riffe et al. (1998) describe referential units as units that “involve some physical or temporal unit (e.g. event, people, objects, etc) referred or alluded to within the context” (p. 66). This study’s research questions focused on how apparent the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign was in the media coverage of the campaign issue of military service. Additionally, the research questions sought to determine whether the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth set the media’s agenda and how the organization framed the issue of military service in the campaign. Accordingly, these articles were coded for references to: 1) Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s communication themes; 2) Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources in the articles; and 3) Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign tools (i.e., ads, news releases, website, book, public statements etc. . .) used by the media to gather the information.

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications themes. The articles were coded for the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications themes that were apparent in the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products. The articles were coded for the presence of the theme and not which theme was the most prominent. According to Andsager (2000), media coverage of an interest groups communications themes, “legitimize the interest groups” and that “the news media may transmit the symbols that communicate the interest groups’ perceptions of the issue’s significance” (p. 577).

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources. The articles were coded

for the presence of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources within the article. According to Andsager (2000) members of an organization used as sources provide the media with thematic frames consistent with the organization's agenda.

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign tools. The articles were coded for the first reference of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communication campaign tools. The identified tools were the organization's website; news releases; television advertisements; the book *Unfit for Command*; internal communications (e-mails); radio/T.V. appearances by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members separate from the television commercials, others not mentioned in these categories and finally, no references to the communications campaign. According to Huckins (1999) and Andsager (2000) the communications products are an important tool in providing the news media the organization's agenda.

Additional Variables

Additional variables were coded to further examine how the newspapers framed the issue of military service during the presidential campaign and the significance the newspapers allotted to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's in terms of sources, references to the organization, placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes in the articles. These variables were the date of the article, the newspaper which the article appeared, the type of story, the placement of the story within the newspaper, the placement of the first reference to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, all sources used in the article, the placement of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources, and the placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications themes.

Date. The newspaper articles were coded for the date of the article, which would account for the proximity to the election. Also, coding the date the article appeared can determine the various frames used during “a news event’s life span” (Chyi and McCombs, 2004, p. 26). The dates were numbered from 1-183 which covered articles from May 5 to November 3, 2004.

Newspaper. The articles were coded for the newspaper in which the article appeared. The articles were coded for either the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Both of these newspapers demonstrate the national level of this issue. According to Hester and Gibson (2003) the *New York Times* has been shown to set the agenda for other papers. Using this rationale, it would seem that if the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth appeared in these newspapers, other U.S. media would refer to this organization.

Story type. The articles were coded for story type. There were two distinct types of articles which appeared in the Lexis-Nexis search, the editorial and the news article. This was identified by looking at the top of the article and determining the section of the newspaper in which it appeared. For example, an article which was a news article was located in the “National Desk” section. The editorials were identified at the top of the article as an editorial.

Placement of the article within the newspaper. The articles were coded for the placement of the article within the newspaper. Placement was used as a variable because Hester and Gibson (2003) argued that the front page of the *New York Times* is more likely to drive the media agenda than articles appearing inside the newspaper. They were coded by the section in which the article appeared. However, if the article

appeared on the front page the article was coded “front page.” For example, if the article appeared in Section A other than the front page, the article was coded as a 2 and so on.

Placement of references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Using the example from Andsager’s (2000) study, the articles were coded for the location of the organization of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth within the text of the article. The location was coded for the headline or the lead paragraph, the first six paragraphs, the last six paragraphs, then if the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization is not present in the article. This determined whether the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was the main topic of the article or the organization was just part of a larger story.

Sources. The sources were defined as all human sources interviewed for the article either directly quoted or paraphrased. Andsager (2000) argues that direct quotes from sources within the organization or special interest group frequently use frames that are derived from the organization’s communications products.

Placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources. The newspaper articles were coded for the placement of the first use of a Swift Boat Veterans for Truth member as a source within the article. The prominence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources could show an agenda setting effect of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members. For example, if the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members were used as sources in the lead this could show that their quotes could be considered the dominant thematic frame. Placement was coded using the headline or lead paragraph; the first six paragraphs (not including the lead paragraph); after the first six paragraphs and then Swift Boat Veterans for Truth

members were not used as sources.

Placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications themes. The articles were coded for the placement the first use of a Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication themes in the article. The placement of the thematic frames demonstrates whether or not the thematic frame is the dominant frame within the article. The articles were coded for the placement of the first thematic frame mentioned in the article. The locations were the same as the placement of the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth organization.

Testing the Model

To test the first three steps of the frame building model, the researcher used the data gathered from the content analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products and the news coverage of the presidential campaign issue of military service during Vietnam. The first step in the model, the definition of the issue, was tested using the thematic frames that appeared during the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth products. According to Entman (1993), an organization attempts to define an issue to suit its goals. Andsager adds that how a special interest group defines an issue is present in its internal and external communications products and therefore part of the organization's public agenda. The second step, selection of the text (thematic frames) to obtain issue salience in the media, was tested using the data collected from the content analyses of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and of the news coverage of the campaign issue of military service. The data regarding the frequency of the thematic frames in the media coverage determined if the thematic frames gained salience in the media. According

to Andsager (2000) and Huckins (1999) the text an organization selects can determine the news coverage of their definition of the issue. Additionally, the placement of the thematic frames can determine the salience of the media messages. The third step, the repetition of the message, was tested using the data from the frequency of the thematic frames, the references to the organization and references to the communications campaign. This data was used to show the repetition of the thematic frames within the article population. Additionally, the use of this data was used to determine whether the communications campaign was successful in getting the organization's thematic frames into the media.

Intercoder Reliability

The population of 201 articles consisted of those articles which covered the military serviced issue during the 2004 presidential campaign from May 5, to November 3, 2004. The author of this study was the primary coder for the population of articles. In order to test intercoder reliability, an additional coder was requested. The additional coder was another graduate student from the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communications. The researcher provided the additional coder the code book a week prior to the training sessions, in order to provide the additional coder ample time to review and become familiar with the codebook. The following week the research and the additional coder met to begin the training process.

The researcher conducted three one-hour training sessions with the additional coder. During the training sessions, the researcher reviewed the codebook with the additional coder to determine if there were any questions about how to code for the variables listed and then went through the articles coded to explain how to make

coding decisions. After the second training session, the additional coder was provided a sub-sample of the population to code. The sub-sample was chosen by an online random number generator at randomizer.org. The sub-sample consisted of 40 articles of varying lengths and story types from both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

After the second training session, intercoder reliability was tested using SPSS and it was determined that there was not enough agreement between the coders. A third training session was conducted using the same procedures as previously mentioned and the articles were recoded. The intercoder reliability coefficients were relatively high in several of the variables. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), inter coder reliability coefficients above .75 are considered acceptable. Additionally, they stated that the intercoder reliability coefficients are expected to be high for variables where there is no real leeway given to the coders. For example variables such as date should have high intercoder reliability.

The inter coder reliability coefficients per variable are as follows: date .948; newspaper, .949; story type, .857; placement of the article in the newspaper, .96; references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, .827; references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources, 1.00; first references to the communications campaign, .917; “Kerry lied about his military service”, .881; “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges”, .838; “Kerry serious character flaws and leadership abilities”, .875; “Setting the Record Straight”, .925; “Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election, .844” and the placement of the thematic frames, .791 (See Table 3.1.).

Table 3.1. Intercoder reliability results

Variable	Cohen's Kappa
Date	0.948
Newspaper	0.949
Story Type	0.857
Placement of the Article in the Newspaper	0.96
References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth	0.82
Sources	.563-.647
References to SBVT Members as Sources	1
References to SBVT Communications Campaign	0.892
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	0.881
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	0.838
Credibility of the SBVT Members and Organization	0.643
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws/Leadership Abilities	0.875
Setting the Record Straight	0.925
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	0.844
Placement of the Thematic Frames in the Article	0.791

There were only two variables which tested below the .75 acceptable Cohen's Kappa. The first was the sources variable. The inter coder reliability coefficient for the variable sources ranged from .563 to .647. Low reliability in the source variable was a result of coding all sources in the stories. Some stories had more than a half-dozen sources, and one story had 13 sources. As a result, if one coder missed coding a source then all other coding for sources for that story differed between coders. This hurt the reliability coefficient for this variable. The other area which had low Kappa coefficient of was .643 for the theme "Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and Organization". This was as a result of the additional coder coding for this theme when the researcher did not code for the theme.

Summary

This study was divided into two parts, a qualitative content analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products, including television advertisements aired during the 2004 presidential campaign and a quantitative content analysis of the news coverage of the presidential campaign issue of the candidates' military service during Vietnam.

The news articles were coded for several variables, date of the article, the newspaper in which the article appeared, type of story, the placement of the story in the newspaper, the placement of the first reference to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, all human sources, the placement of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources, references to the organization's communication campaign, the presence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames and the placement of those thematic frames within the article.

The data from the articles were used to test the first three steps of the proposed frame building model, the organization defines an issue, the organization creates text to obtain salience with the media, and repetition of the thematic frames in the media.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will discuss the results of the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign products and the content analysis of the media coverage of the military service as an issue during the 2004 presidential campaign in order to answer the study's research questions.

This study examined the text of 22 written Swift Boat Veterans for Truth products, the organization's home page and nine television advertisements and content analyzed 201 articles which appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* from May 5 to November 4, 2004. *The New York Times* ran 121 articles (60.2% of the total population) which dealt with military service as a presidential campaign issue and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, of which 100 (83% of the *New York Times* articles) were news articles and 21 (17% of the *New York Times* articles) were editorials. The *Washington Post* ran 80 articles (39.8% of the total population), of which 55 (69% of the *Washington Post* articles) were news articles and 25 (31% of the *Washington Post* articles) were editorials. Out of the total population of articles 155 (77.1%) were news articles and 46 (22.9%) were editorials.

Research Question 1

Previous research has shown that an organization's themes and frames exist in their internal and external communications products (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Andsager, 2000; Huckins, 1999). According to Andsager (2000), an organization's news releases are some of the tools the organization has to get its themes into the public sphere. The first research question specifically looked to identify those thematic frames that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to define Sen. Kerry's

military service during the Vietnam War and his actions after returning from Vietnam as well as how the organization defined military service as a presidential campaign issue. A qualitative analysis of the major Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products; website home page; 22 press releases and public statements, released from May 4 to November 4, 2004; and nine television commercials, aired from August 4 to October 13, 2004, was conducted to determine the main thematic frames the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to define the campaign issue of military service. Six themes emerged during the content analysis. The themes were “Kerry lied about his military service”; “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges”; “Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization”; “Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities”; “Setting the record straight”; and “Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election” The following are the thematic frames that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to as part of their communications campaign:

Kerry Lied About His Military Service

One of the four goals listed on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was that the organization believed that John Kerry lied about his military service and his actions during Vietnam War. Specifically, the theme focused on his actions which led to John Kerry’s Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts. In the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products, the organization argued that they believed Kerry misrepresented his records. Additionally, this theme emerged from the text by references that included: Kerry lied about his military records; he falsified his report of his actions on the Bay Hap River; he lied about being in Cambodia; and he

changed his accounts of being in Cambodia. Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth stated that Kerry has not been honest about what happened in Vietnam and that he has not been forthright. These statements taken as a whole provide the basis for the thematic frame “Kerry lied about his military service”. Additionally, the data show this thematic frame in the following statements:

“John Kerry misrepresented his record and ours in Vietnam”

(www.swiftvets.com).

“Captain Elliot says that Kerry was not honest about his service in Vietnam”

(Letter to TV station managers regarding Captain Elliot).

“I know John Kerry lied to get his Bronze Star” (Any Questions advertisement released August 4, 2004).

Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges

This theme was also mentioned on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth website. Much of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign focused on Kerry's 1971 Senate testimony where he testified that the Vietnam War was immoral, unjust and that U.S. soldiers had been committing atrocities against Vietnamese civilians. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products stated that he wrongly accused all soldiers and Vietnam War veterans of committing war crimes. Additionally, the communications products stated that Kerry was one of the people who created the image of Vietnam Veterans of being “baby killers”, drug addicts and misfits. Although many of the products focused on the actual testimony, other products focused on the feelings of the veterans when he testified. In several of the communications products, the veterans spoke out against Kerry saying that his

comments aided the enemy, he betrayed his fellow soldiers and sailors, veterans felt the pain and disgrace that John Kerry inflicted on them by making those statements, his testimony increased the length of the war and the torture the U.S. prisoners of war endured. Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members stated that Kerry's testimony undermined the war effort and dishonored his country. Along with his 1971 testimony, some of the communications products focused on his meeting with North Vietnamese officials in Paris. According the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members, this secret meeting gave credibility to the communist regime. The following are examples of the thematic frame "Kerry's anti-war stance and war crimes charges":

"When John Kerry returned to this country after his highly abbreviated tour of duty in Vietnam, he disgraced his uniform, he insulted his shipmates and fellow veterans and he greatly aided the enemy's ability to torture and humiliate American prisoners of war" ("Swift Vets launch second phase of advertising campaign" released August 20, 2004).

"He also returned home to denounce his shipmates and all veterans by accusing fellow veterans of war crimes and outrageous atrocities" ("New Swift Vets TV ad", September 22, 2004).

"When he secretly met with the enemy in 1970, he did so at great detriment to his fellow sailors, to our POWs and to our nation" ("New Swift Vets TV ad, September 22, 2004).

"He dishonored his country and, uh, more, more importantly the people he served with. He just sold them out." ("Sell Out" August 20, 2004)

Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Members and Organization

This theme is an attempt by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to establish the credibility of the organization and members to provide evidence that the members were in a better position to speak about Kerry's military service than his proponents. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign attempted several times to establish the credibility of its members and the organization. In many of the products, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth identified its members as direct eyewitnesses to Kerry's accounts of events; those members who served with Kerry during Vietnam or were Kerry's direct commanders. One of the statements mentioned in several of the news releases was that the organization was independent and not related to the Bush campaign in an attempt to prove that the organization was non-partisan and legal. The following are statements that relate to this thematic frame:

"They served their country with courage and distinction. They're the men who served with John Kerry in Vietnam" ("They Served", released October 13, 2004)

"I was there. I saw what happened" ("Statement by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth member Van Odell", August 19, 2004).

"A large majority of those who served with John Kerry in Swift boats in Vietnam have joined the organization" ("Sell Out cover letter for TV station managers, August 23, 2004).

Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities

This theme was one of the four mentioned in the introduction on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth website. Part of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth

communications campaign was to show that Kerry was unfit to be Commander in Chief of the Armed forces. In the television advertisements, the veterans made statements that Kerry's military records and anti-war stance were important because "character and honesty matter." Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members argued that Kerry's misrepresentation of his records pointed to Kerry's serious character flaws and therefore showed he lacked the capacity to lead the nation. In the products which discussed Kerry's actions in Vietnam, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members stated that he fled the scene when another boat hit a mine on the Bay Hap River and this action showed that Kerry could not be counted on during a time of crisis. The following statements are examples of this thematic frame.

John Kerry "exhibits serious flaws in character and lacks the potential to lead" (www.swiftvets.com)

"I do not believe John Kerry is fit to be the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States" ("Swift Boat Veterans for Truth forms organization, May 4, 2004).

"Because to them (the veterans) honesty and character still matters" ("They Served" released October 13, 2004).

Setting the Record Straight

This theme is also addressed in the introduction on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth website. According to Chris LaCivita, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's chief strategist, the main goal was to show that Kerry was not a war hero (Jamieson, 2006) and that the organization would "set the record straight" (www.swiftvets.com).

The communications products demonstrate this thematic frame with statements such as: the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth will accurately portray Kerry's records or military service, set the record straight, bring the truth about Kerry to the American people. Additionally, the communications products stated that Kerry's stories are falling apart, that his medals were based on fiction and that he did not earn his decorations. The following are samples of how this thematic frame appeared in some of the communications products:

“The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth will accurately portray Kerry's records or military service” (www.swiftvets.com).

“Swift Boat Veterans for Truth today called again on Democratic presidential candidate Senator John Kerry to set the record straight on whether he was or was not in Cambodia” (“Kerry in Cambodia...debunked by Kerry crewmate, August 18, 2004).

“The organization has been formed in order to bring the truth about Kerry to the American people” (www.swiftvets.com)

Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election

This theme was not mentioned on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth website as part of the introduction. However, it became evident during the analysis that the veterans were stating that they had earned the right to speak out during this election because they served the country during a time of war. Additionally, they felt that being a Vietnam Veteran earned them the right to participate in this political debate and that they had the right to express their opinions about Kerry and his military service. In the communications campaign, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth stated

several times that they would not be censored or silenced by any politician or candidate. The following are examples of this thematic frame as it appeared in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communication campaign.

“We purchased with our blood and service the right to be heard” (“Response to Senator John McCain, August 6, 2004).

“The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth have earned our right to be heard” (“Swift Vets Fact Sheet”, September 13, 2004).

“We will not be silenced or censored by any politician” (“Swift Vets Fact Sheet”, September 13, 2004).

The thematic frames which appeared in the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products were “Kerry lied about his military service”; “Kerry's anti-war stance and war crimes charges”; “Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization”; “Kerry's serious character flaws and leadership abilities”; “Setting the record straight”; “Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election”. These six themes are the primary approach the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to attempt to define the military service issue in the 2004 presidential campaign. Kerry believed that his military service was his greatest strength over Bush, thus chose to use his military service as a campaign issue. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth clearly sought to redefine the issue. By defining and assigning traits to Kerry that would be shown to have serious political consequences, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth asserted that Kerry lied, disgraced his peers and was unfit to be Commander in Chief.

Research Question 2

The second research question focused on whether the elite national news media used the thematic frames from the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products in the media coverage of Kerry's military service and how prominently the themes appeared in the article. Of the 201 stories in the population, 111 (55.2%) stories had one or more thematic frames present within the text. Overall, the six themes appear 194 times in the 201 stories coded, or on average each story contained nearly one of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes (.96 themes per story). To answer this first part of the research question, each article was coded for the presence of the six thematic frames, listed above, within the article. The theme was coded from any source, including the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign products and human sources mentioned in the article. In order to determine the prominence of the themes, the thematic frames were coded for their location within the article.

Table 4.1. Frequency of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames

Theme	Frequency	Percentage of population	Percent of all themes present
Kerry lied	48	23.9	24.7
Kerry's war crimes charges	66	32.8	34
Credibility of SBVT	8	4	4
Kerry's serious character flaws	24	11.9	12.3
Setting the record straight	41	20.4	21
Role of SBVT vets in presidential election	7	3.5	4
Totals	194	96.5	100

The articles were only coded for the prominence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames not for which thematic frame was the most prominent in

the article. To further answer this research question, the frequencies of each theme was calculated (See Table 4.1). The articles were only coded for the prominence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames not for which thematic frame was the most prominent in the article. To further answer this research question, the frequencies of each theme was calculated (See Table 4.1).

Presence of Thematic Frames in News Content

Kerry lied about his military service. The content analysis of the 201 news articles showed that 23.9% (n=48) of the articles had the thematic frame “Kerry lied about his military service” and in 76.1% (n=153) of the articles the theme did not appear within the text of the article (See Table 4.1). This thematic frame was the second most used thematic frame throughout the population of news coverage of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and military service as a presidential campaign issue.

Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charge. The most used thematic frame was the frame of “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges.” The results of the content analysis showed that the theme “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” appeared in 32.8% (n=66) of the articles and did not appear in the articles 67.2% (n=135) of the time (See Table 4.1).

Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization. Although the theme “credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization” appeared in the qualitative analysis, the results of the content analysis demonstrated that this thematic frame was seldom used in the news articles. The thematic frame appeared in only 4% (n=8) of the articles and did not appear in 96% (n=193) of the articles (See Table 4.1).

Kerry's serious character flaws and leadership abilities. The theme “Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities” was the fourth most common thematic frame that the media used in the news articles. The content analysis showed that this thematic frame appeared in 11.9% (n=24) of the news article population. However this thematic frame did not appear in 88.1% (n=177) of the articles (See Table 4.1).

Setting the record straight. The thematic frame of “setting the record straight” was the third most common thematic frame that the media used when discussing the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and military service of the candidates. The thematic frame appeared in 20.4% (n=41) of the articles and did not appear in 79.6% (n=160) of the articles (See Table 4.1).

Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election. The least used thematic frame was the frame of the “role of veterans in politics and the presidential election”. This thematic frame appeared in only 3.5% (n=7) of the articles and did not appear in 96.5% of the articles (See Table 4.1).

The results of this data showed the two thematic frames the news media focused were “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” at 32.8% (n=66) and “Kerry lied about his military service” at 23.9% (n=48). These two thematic frames were part of the initial Swift Boat Veterans for Truth statements against Kerry during the election. The third most used thematic frame was “Setting the record straight” at 20.4% (n=41) followed by “Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities” at 11.9% (n=24). These two thematic frames were also part of the initial statements created by the organization. The most seldom used thematic frames were “Credibility

of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization” at 4% (n=8) and “Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election” at 3.5% (n=7). Although the six thematic frames were not present in all the population, the news media used the four thematic frames chosen by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to define the issue of military service during the 2004 presidential campaign. The thematic frame “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” was the most frequently used thematic frame. The controversial nature of this thematic frame possibly led to its increased usage by the media (de Vreese, 2004). This thematic frame contained text that was emotional in nature and, as a result, Andsager (2000) argued the emotional text in the thematic frame increased its coverage in the national media.

Prominence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames

Coding for the location of the first appearances Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes demonstrated the prominence the thematic frames played throughout the population of articles.

Table 4.2 Placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames in News Stories

Placement	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Headline or lead paragraph	27	13.4	13.4
First six paragraphs	56	27.9	41.3
After the first six paragraphs	28	13.9	55.2
Not present	90	44.8	100
Totals	201	100	

The results of the content analysis showed that 13.4% (n=27) of the articles had the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames within the headline and the lead paragraph; 27.9% (n=56) of the articles had the thematic frames within the first six paragraphs but not the lead paragraph or headline; 13.9% (n=28) of the articles

had the thematic frames after the first six paragraphs within the text of the article (See Table 4.2). The results of the content analysis showed that 13.4% (n=27) of the articles had the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames within the headline and the lead paragraph; 27.9% (n=56) of the articles had the thematic frames within the first six paragraphs but not the lead paragraph or headline; 13.9% (n=28) of the articles had the thematic frames after the first six paragraphs within the text of the article (See Table 4.2). This demonstrates that the thematic frames were generally prominently placed in the articles or the main topic of the article. When the themes were present, about one-seventh of the stories had them in the headline or lead paragraph. Most often the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames were located in the first six paragraphs, which suggests that they are not the dominant frame but considered a newsworthy element of the story.

Prominence was also measured by the location of the story in the newspaper. The results showed that of the 194 thematic frames present 22.2% (n=43) were present on the front page of the newspapers; 57.7% (n=112) were present in the first section of the newspapers; 20.1% (n=39) were in the other sections of the newspapers. The most prominent thematic frame on the front page of the newspapers during the presidential campaign was “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges,” which accounted for 37.2% (n=16) of the thematic frames which appeared on the front page of the national media. The thematic frame “Kerry lied about his military service” was in 28% of the articles which had themes on the front page. Finally, the content analysis showed that these two frames were in Section A (not the

front page) 31.2% (n=35) for “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” and 24.1% (n=27) for “Kerry lied about his military service.

Table 4.3. Placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames in the Newspaper

Theme	Front Page	Section A	Other Sections	Totals
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	12 (6.2%)	27 (13.9%)	9 (4.6%)	48 (24.7%)
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	16 (8.3%)	35 (18%)	15 (7.7%)	66 (34%)
Credibility of SBVT Members and Organization	1 (.5%)	5 (2.6%)	2 (1%)	8 (4.2%)
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities	5 (2.6%)	16 (8.2%)	3 (1.6%)	24 (12.4%)
Setting the Record Straight	9 (4.6%)	24 (12.4%)	8 (4.2%)	41 (21.1%)
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	0 (0%)	5 (2.6%)	2 (1%)	7 (3.6%)
Totals	43 (22.2%)	112 (57.7%)	39 (20.1%)	194 (100%)

The data showed that the themes most prominent in all content (Table 4.1) were those that were prominently place in the newspaper. The majority of the thematic frames appeared 79.9% of the time in the front section of the newspaper this provides evidence that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames were prominently placed in the newspapers. According to Hester and Gibson (2003), the placement of an organization’s themes on the front page of the national newspapers will likely drive the agenda of other media. As such, this data provides evidence that the thematic frames chosen by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to define the issue of military service were important part of the news coverage of the issue of military service across the country, and that these thematic frames commanded the media’s attention, and as a result, the public’s attention. Tedesco (2001) stated that political actors can “command media attention and influence the media agenda in measurable ways” (p. 2064).

In summary, the placement of the thematic frames in the articles and in the newspapers showed that the media frequently used the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames in the news content. Although the thematic frames were not always prominently placed in the articles, the thematic frames were generally prominently placed in the newspapers. Additionally, it showed that the journalists used the thematic frames provided by special interest groups to create news frames which appear in the media (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

Research Question 3

The third research question examined the references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization in the news articles. The purpose of this research question was to determine whether or not the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was the main topic of the story. It was thought that references to the organization would be an important indicator of the extent to which the organization had “framed” the issue of military service during the presidential campaign, accordingly these references are a measure of the organization’s success at setting the media’s agenda. This was coded by analyzing the location of the first reference of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization or a clear reference to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The placement was coded in the same way as appearance of the thematic frames (headline or lead paragraph, first six paragraphs and after the first six paragraphs). Of the 201 articles coded for this study, 66% (n=132) of the articles included references to the organization Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was mentioned 82.5% (n=109) of the time in the first six paragraphs, including the lead paragraph and headline. The content analysis showed that the Swift Boat

Veterans for Truth was mentioned in the headline or lead paragraph in 24.9% (n=50) articles; the first six paragraphs in 29.4% (n=59) the articles; mentioned after the first six paragraphs in 11.4% (n=23) of the articles (See Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Placement of the References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Organization

Placement	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Headline or lead paragraph	50	24.9	24.9
First six paragraphs	59	29.4	54.2
After the first six paragraphs	23	11.4	65.7
Not present	69	34.3	100.0
Totals	201	100.0	

The results of this data provided support that in the public discussion of the campaign issue of military service, the 527 organization played a prominent role in defining the issue. Not only was the organization identified by name in two-thirds of the presidential campaign stories about Kerry's military service, the references to the organization were also prominently placed in the stories. The media coverage of the organization contributed to what Andsager (2000) argued is the legitimization of "the interest group" (p. 577) and the organization's definition of the issue. The placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth legitimized the organization and the organizations thematic frames.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question looked at the use of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources and if those sources held a prominent place within the text of the article. The articles were coded for the first reference of all human, non-organizational, sources within the article. A source was defined as all people used

within the headline or article, either through direct or indirect quotes (paraphrases). The sources could be named or anonymous but identified by their affiliation. Additionally, coders coded only sources that were sought out by the journalist specifically for the article. Recycled sources or those that were identified as having been interviewed for stories that previously appeared in the media, were not included. The sources were divided into eight specific categories (See Table 4.5.).

Additionally, each human source was coded only once. For example if Sen. John McCain was a source quoted multiple times in the same article, the researcher coded McCain as a source only once. The content analysis determined that 702 sources were used throughout the entire study population. Out of the 702 sources, only 40 were Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members, which equates to 5% of the number of sources used in the population (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Sources in the News Articles

Sources	Frequency	Percent of all sources
Swift Boat Veterans	40	5.6
Kerry camp	132	18.9
Bush camp	87	12.4
Non SBV vets	104	15
Politicians	57	8
Citizens	66	9.4
Organizations	73	10.4
Other	143	20.3
Totals	702	100

This shows that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were not used as the primary sources for the thematic frames or for information regarding the issue of Kerry's military service or military service as a campaign issue. It showed the

national newspapers used the frames created by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as a basis for reporting, but the media generally sought out other sources to comment on the frames. As a result, the data showed the reporters asked Kerry and his advisors and other veterans, not Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members, to comment on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's allegations.

The category of "other" included journalists, Democratic and Republican strategists and those not identified in the first seven categories. During the coding of the population, this category was discovered to be too broadly defined. As a result, this category was the most frequently coded category. This explains the higher number of sources in the "other" category.

To answer the second part of this research question, the researcher coded for the location of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources. The results of the content analysis showed that Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members were not used often. Of the 702 sources used in the population, only 14.4% (n=29) articles used Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources. Additionally, 1% (n=2) of the articles had Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources in the lead paragraph or headline; 4% (n=8) articles had Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources in the first six paragraphs; 9.5% (n=19) articles had Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources; 85.6% articles did not use Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Placement of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Members as Sources

Placement	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Headline or lead paragraph	2	1.0	1.0
First six paragraphs	8	4.0	5.0
After first six paragraphs	19	9.5	14.4
Not present	172	85.6	100.0
Totals	201	100.0	

Although very few articles used Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources, when the members appeared in articles it was usually after the headline and the lead paragraph. This showed that, as sources, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were not the main focus of the article but subsequent to the primary focus of the article. Additionally, the data showed the communications campaign was successful at focusing media coverage on the aspects of the issue the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth desired. The campaign themes set the media's agenda to the point the media seldom was compelled to seek out the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (14.4% of the population) for comment or further explanation. Instead, the media used the communications campaign for information regarding the campaign issue of military service and the candidates. According to Valentino et al. (2004), political advertisements and candidates' communications campaign provide the public information regarding the candidate. The data regarding the placement of the thematic frames (55.2% of the population) and the references to the organization (65.7% of the population) provided support for Valentino et al.'s argument.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question set out to determine if the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign followed the first three steps in the frame-building model proposed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. To answer this research question, the data from the first two research questions was used, specifically, the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products; the frequency and placement of the thematic frames in the article. Additionally, the appearance of the communications products, the thematic frames and the references to the organization by month were determined to provide support for the frame building model.

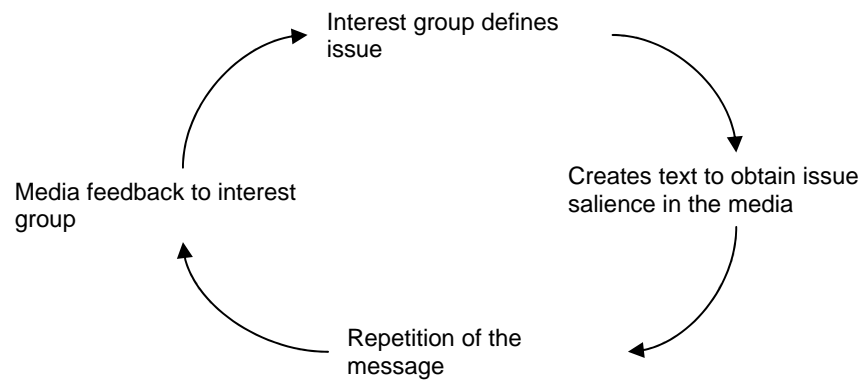


Fig 4.1. Frame building model adapted from Lang and Lang's (1981) agenda building model.

The first step in the model is that an organization defines an issue or portion of an issue that it wants to highlight. The data from the qualitative analysis shows that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth defined the issue of the Kerry's military service through the six themes that became apparent in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign. The qualitative analysis showed that there were four major themes of Kerry's military service that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth wished to highlight—1) Kerry's military records; 2) Kerry's anti-war stance and activities; 3) his character flaws and leadership abilities and 4) that the organization

of veterans will set the record straight regarding Kerry's military service. These themes reflect the organization's attempt to define the issue of military service.

The second step of the model is that an organization creates the text for the thematic frames to make the issue salient to the media. The creation of the terms and phrases in the thematic frames is an important aspect when an organization frames an issue (Andsager, 2000). The qualitative analysis identified the thematic frames the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth chose in its attempt to obtain issue salience with the media. According to Andsager (2000), the thematic frames chosen by an interest group can become the pervasive frame for an issue. Andsager argued that the more emotional the thematic frame the more of a chance that the media will use the thematic frame in the subsequent coverage. de Vreese (2004) added that framing an issue in terms of conflict is "consistently listed as an essential criterion for a news story to make it into the news" (p. 38). The text selected by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth highlight the controversy or conflict between Kerry and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Kerry claimed that his military service was his greatest strength (Tackett, 2004), the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth claimed something very different, and they did so through a series of frames that the organization thought were not only relevant to the issue, but rooted in the news values relevant to the news media. For example, the qualitative analysis showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used phrases such as "Kerry lied about his military records"; "Kerry turned his back on his shipmates"; "Kerry is unfit for command" and they would "set the record straight" to communicate their views on Kerry's military service.

The data from the frequency and placement of the thematic frames were used to determine if the frames chosen by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth obtained salience with the media. According to the results of the content analysis of the news coverage of the issue of military service, the thematic frames became important and frequent frames in the news stories appearing 194 times. This was an average of one theme (.96) per article. Additionally, in the articles which contained the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames, the thematic frames were placed in within the first six paragraphs, including the headline and lead paragraph, 41.3% of the time and in the last six paragraph 13.9% of the time. The data showed that the thematic frames were salient to the media. For example, the thematic frame of “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” appeared in 32.8% (n=66) of the articles in the population. Additionally, the placement of the thematic frames demonstrated that the thematic frames were considered newsworthy elements of the articles (13.4% in the headline or lead; 27.9% in the first six paragraphs; 13.9% after the first six paragraphs).

The third step in the frame-building model is that there is repetition of the thematic frames. To test this step in the model, the data was examined by the appearance of the communications products by month; the themes by month, and the references to the organization by month to determine the repetition of the thematic frames (See Appendix B for combined table).

The data showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth understood the nature of the news in relation to the presidential campaign cycle. The conventions were in June and August with the formal campaign beginning after Labor Day. They targeted

their messages to define and frame the issue before the campaign formally began and in the early stages of the campaign. They were proactive (not reactive) and in doing so, were able to make Kerry react. The organization released two news releases in May. The organization increased its communications campaign in August releasing 13 new releases and public statements and it began its television advertising campaign by releasing four advertisements during August. The organization continued its campaign in September by releasing three news releases and three television advertisements. The communications campaign tapered off during October with three news releases and two television advertisements. The final news release was released in November ending the communications campaign (See Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Communications Campaign by Month

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
News Releases/statements (number released)	May 4 May 17			Aug. 6 (3) Aug. 16 Aug 18 Aug 19 (4) Aug. 20 Aug 21 Aug 23 Aug 24	Sept. 13 Sept. 22 Sept. 29	Oct. 15 Oct. 28 (2)	Nov. 3
Television advertisements				Aug. 4 Aug. 20 Aug. 26 Aug 31	Sept. 17 Sept. 21 Sept. 30	Oct. 13 (2)	

The repetition of the organizations thematic frames is important because the repetition within the organizations' communications products can help ensure that the media will use the thematic frames created by the organization (Entman, 2004). Additionally, Durham (1998) argued that the sources of the information must agree for the thematic frames to be accepted by the media and thus the public. In this study, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign was used as the

primary source of information for the media. Thus, it was necessary for the communications campaign to have consistent thematic frames.

The second set of data used to test this step in the model was the thematic frames by month. The thematic frames appeared 194 times in the total population which is an average of one thematic frame per story. The data showed that the majority of the thematic frames appeared in the news during the month of August with 57.2% (n=111). Additionally, in September the thematic frames appeared 22% (n=43) of the time out of the 194 thematic frames present in the population. The three thematic frames which appeared during August were “Kerry lied about his military service”; “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges” and “Setting the record straight” were the most frequent thematic frames (See Table 4.8). Overall tis showed that as the repetition of the thematic frames in the communications campaign increased in August and September, those thematic frames appeared more often in the news stories.

Table 4.8. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Themes by Month

Theme	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	0	0	0	34	8	5	1
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	1	0	2	31	17	13	2
Credibility of the SBVT Members and Organization	0	0	0	6	2	0	0
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities	1	0	2	10	9	2	0
Setting the Record Straight	2	0	0	30	6	3	0
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	0	0	0	5	1	1	0

The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used emotional thematic frames to ensure the media coverage of the thematic frames. According to Andsager (2000) these type

of thematic frames are more likely to be repeated by the media. Additionally, de Vreese (2004) argued that thematic frames using conflict or controversy would also be repeated by the media. Therefore, the thematic frames chosen by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were repeated in the media content.

The third set of data used was the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by month. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were mentioned in 65.7% of the population. The placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth within the article demonstrates the importance the media put on the organization. Although only 24.9% of the references were in the lead and headline, the majority of the references were in the headline, lead or first six paragraphs in the article (54.3%).

In August, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were referred to 51.5% (n=68) of the total referrals to the organization. The referrals occurred 21% (n=28) of the referrals occurring in the headline or lead paragraph. In September, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were referred to 37% (n=49) of the total referrals to the organization and 12% (n=16) time in the headline or lead paragraph (See Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by Month

References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	Totals
Headline or Lead Paragraph	1	0	0	28	16	5	0	50
The First Six Paragraphs (not lead paragraph)	0	0	0	36	17	5	1	59
After the First Six Paragraphs	1	0	1	4	16	0	1	23
Totals	2	0	1	68	49	10	2	132

This data showed that the media felt the organization was newsworthy and, therefore, contributed to the repetition of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's thematic frames. Additionally, the repetition step in the frame building model is demonstrated by the communications campaign's repetition of the thematic frames and by the increased communications campaign activity in August which is reflected in the increase in coverage of the military service issue, appearance of the thematic frames and the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth organization.

In summary, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign and the media coverage followed the proposed frame building model. The organization followed the first step, to define the issue, by using the six themes that became apparent in the analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products. Of these six themes, four were directly related to the issue of military service. These four themes were the organization's attempt to define the issue of military service during the presidential election. The second step, the selection of the thematic frame to obtain issue salience in the media is demonstrated by the organization's use of emotional or conflict frames to gain issue salience. According to Andsager (2000) and de Vreese (2004), these types of thematic frames are considered newsworthy and would most likely be used by the media. Finally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth timed their communications campaign to coincide with the presidential campaign producing the bulk of their messages and repeating them frequently in August, just as the presidential campaign was gaining public attention. By doing so, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were able to define and frame the

military issue in the news media, the organizations repetition of its themes became frequent and prominent themes in news stories.

Research Question 6

The final research question asked if there was an agenda setting effect between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign and the media coverage of military service as a presidential campaign issue. Using the data gathered from research questions 1-4, specifically, the frequency of the thematic frames, the placement of those themes, references to the organization, references to the communication campaign and the correlation between the communications campaign per month and the stories per month, one can determine that there is there is a strong agenda setting effect between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign and the national elite news media coverage of military service related campaign issues.

The agenda setting effect is apparent in the media's use of Swift Boat for Truth's thematic frames. The data show that 55% of the population contained the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's thematic frames. The themes appeared within the text of the article population 194 times, which was approximately one theme per story. The average number of themes per article shows that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were successful in getting its thematic frames into the media's coverage of the issue of Kerry's military service. Additionally, the placement of the thematic frames demonstrated that the thematic frames were considered newsworthy elements of the articles. The thematic frames appeared 41.3% of the time within the first six paragraphs (including the headline or lead paragraph). This breaks down to 13.4% in

the headline or lead; 27.9% in the first six paragraphs; 13.9% after the first six paragraphs.

The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign agenda setting effect is demonstrated through the references to the organization. For example, the data shows that 65.7% of all the articles mention the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth throughout the text. This demonstrates success in garnering media coverage of the organization. Additionally, the content analysis showed that references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign appeared in more than half of the articles in the population (See Table 4.10). The articles referenced the television advertisements more than any other communications product at 45.3% (n=91). This demonstrates what Kaid et al. (1993) argued that much of the success of political campaign advertising, specifically television advertising, lies in the subsequent media coverage of those advertisements and that this coverage results in the ad content to be repeated in the news, thus setting the media's agenda (McKinnon and Kaid, 1999).

Table 4.10. References to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Communications Campaign

Communication Campaign tool	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
SBVT website	1	.5	.5
SBVT television ads	91	45.3	45.8
SBVT book "Unfit for Command"	15	7.5	53.2
Radio TV appearances by SBVT members	2	1.0	54.2
No reference to SBVT comm campaign	91	45.3	99.5
Other	1	.5	100.0
Totals	201	100.0	

Finally, the agenda setting effect is apparent in the significant, positive correlation between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign per month and the stories per month ($r=.850$). As the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign increased per month, so did the number of stories regarding military service during the presidential campaign (See Table 4.11). This data provides support that special interest groups' communications campaigns can influence the media agenda (Andsager, 2000; Huckins, 1999). According to Huckins (1999), this correlation provides "evidence an interest group can make a purposeful impact on media coverage" (p. 83)

Table 4.11. Correlation of Communications Campaign by Month with News Stories by Month

Month	Communications Campaign	News Stories
May	2	4
June	0	1
July	0	5
August	17	84
September	6	81
October	5	24
November	1	2
$r=.850^*$, $p=.015$		

The frequency of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth the thematic frames, and placement of those thematic frames, the references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign, the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and the correlation between the communications campaign and the stories regarding the military service issue provided an abundance of support that the Swift Boat Veterans

for Truth was successful at setting the media's agenda during the 2004 presidential election.

Additional Results

Additional results of this study provide greater depth in analyzing the success of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign during the 2004 presidential election. These additional results also assist in the analysis of the importance each newspaper placed on the issue of military service during the presidential campaign. The additional results that will be discussed are the amount of sources in the population, the placement of the sources within the article, the differences by newspaper and differences by story type (news or editorial). The first is the amount of sources used in the total population. There were 702 sources used throughout the population. This averages out to be approximately 3 sources per story.

As stated previously, the newspapers did not use the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources very often. However, the most common source categories identified were Kerry and his advisors and the other categories. The source category of Kerry and his advisors appeared 18.9% of the time out of the 702 sources used in the population. The other category was 20% (See Table 4.5). Additionally, the results of the content analysis also showed that the sources differed in their placement. Not only Kerry and his advisors the most frequent sources, they were also the most prominent. Identifying the first source mentioned allows the researcher to show that some sources are more dominant than others. In this study, the data showed that Kerry and his advisors were provided a place of prominence within the text of the article. Twenty-one percent of the sources used in the first reference were

Kerry and his advisors, with Bush and his advisors used only 13% of the time (See Table 4.12). Additionally, the data showed that Kerry and his advisors were the most frequently used source in the first three sources mentioned in the article.

Table 4.12. Placement of the Sources in the Article

Sources	First Source	Second Source	Third Source	Fourth Source	Fifth Source	Totals
Swift Boat Veterans	16 (10.1%)	4 (2.9%)	3 (2.7%)	4 (4.3%)	3 (4.5%)	30 (5.3%)
Kerry Camp	34 (21.4%)	25 (18.5%)	24 (21.4%)	13 (13.9%)	13 (19.7%)	109 (19.3%)
Bush Camp	21 (13.2%)	22 (16.3%)	15 (13.4)	14 (15.1%)	6 (9.1%)	78 (13.8%)
Non Swift Boat Vets	19 (11.9%)	14 (10.4%)	13 (11.6%)	11 (11.8%)	11 (16.7%)	68 (12%)
Politicians	18 (11.3%)	13 (9.6%)	8 (7.1%)	6 (3.8%)	5 (7.6%)	50 (8.8%)
Citizens	6 (3.8%)	11 (8.1%)	12 (10.7%)	13 (6.5%)	11 (16.7%)	53 (9.4%)
Organization spokesperson	21 (13.2%)	19 (14.1%)	12 (10.7%)	7 (7.5%)	2 (3%)	61 (10.8%)
Other	24 (15.1%)	27 (20%)	25 (22.3%)	25 (26.9%)	15 (22.7%)	116 (20.5%)
Totals	159	135	112	93	66	565

This data supports the conjecture that Kerry felt compelled to defend his record against the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign (Nagourney, 2004, p. A10).

Comparisons by Newspaper

The comparisons by newspaper showed differences in the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and the thematic frames used. Additionally, the comparison by newspaper showed consistency between the two newspapers in the placement of the thematic frames within the newspaper and the sources used in the articles. Finally, additional differences in the newspapers were apparent in the type of story in the population.

The main difference in the coverage was the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth organization. The *New York Times* referred to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization 18% the headline or lead, 25% in the first six paragraphs and 13% in the last six paragraphs. On the other hand, the *Washington Post* referred to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth 35% in the headline or lead, 24% within the first six paragraphs, and 9% in the last six paragraphs. A chi square test showed the *Washington Post* ran fewer stories than the *New York Times* that includes references to the organization, but references in the *Washington Post* were significantly more prominent than those in the *New York Times* (See Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by Newspaper

Newspaper	Headline or lead	first six paragraphs	Last six paragraphs	Not present	
New York Times	22 (18.2%)	30 (24.8%)	16 (13.2%)	53 (43.8%)	121
Washington Post	28	29	7	16	80
Totals	50	59	23	69	201

Chi Square=16.41, df=3, p < .05

Additionally, the references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames were different by newspaper. Out of the 194 thematic frames that were apparent in the population, the thematic frames appeared 58% of the time in the *New York Times* and 42% of the time in *The Washington Post*. The most prominent thematic frame in both newspapers was “Kerry’s antiwar stance and war crimes charges”. This thematic frame appeared in 36% of the *New York Times* articles and appeared in 31% of the *Washington Post* articles. The thematic frames “Kerry lied about his military service” appeared in 23% of the *New York Times* articles and 27% of the *Washington Post* articles; the thematic frame “establishing the credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members” appeared in 5% of the *New York Times* articles and

2.5% of the *Washington Post* articles; the thematic frame “Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities” appeared in 12.3% of the *New York Times* articles and 12.3% of the *Washington Post* articles; the thematic frame “setting the record straight” appeared in 18% of the *New York Times* articles and 25% of the *Washington Post* articles; and appeared “Role of Veterans in Politics and the presidential election” in 4% of the *New York Times* articles and 2.5% of the *Washington Post* articles (See Table 4.14).

Table 4.14. Thematic Frames by Newspaper

Theme	New York Times	Washington Post	Totals
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	26 (23%)	22 (27.1%)	48 (24.7%)
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	41 (36.3%)	25 (30.9%)	66 (34.1%)
Credibility of SBVT Members and Organization	6 (5.3%)	2 (2.5%)	8 (4.1%)
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities	14 (12.3%)	10 (12.3%)	24 (12.4%)
Setting the Record Straight	21 (18.5%)	20 (24.7%)	41 (21.1%)
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	5 (4.4%)	2 (2.5%)	7 (3.6%)
Totals	113	81	194

Chi Square=2.98, df=5, p<.05

A chi square test showed that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were consistent in their usage of the thematic frames. Even though the number of stories differ and the references to the organization were significantly different, the appearance of the thematic frames was relatively consistent in the two papers. This consistency is reinforced by the placement of the thematic frames. Both newspapers placed the thematic frames within the first six paragraphs (not the lead or headline) of the articles the majority of the time. The *New York Times* placed the themes in the first six paragraphs 49% of the time and the *Washington Post* placed the themes in the

first six paragraphs 52.3% of the time. The newspapers were consistent with the placement of the rest of the themes. For example, the *New York Times* placed the themes in the headline or lead 22.4% of the time and the *Washington Post* place the themes in the headline or lead 27.3% of the time (See Table 4.15).

Table 4.15. Placement of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames by Newspaper

Placement	New York Times	Washington Post	Totals
Headline or lead paragraph	15 (22.4%)	12 (27.3%)	27 (24.3%)
First six paragraphs	33 (49.3%)	23 (52.3%)	56 (50.5%)
After the first six paragraphs	19 (28.3)	9 (20.4%)	28 (25.3%)
Totals	67	44	111

Chi Square=.96, df=2, p<.05

A chi square test demonstrated that both newspapers were consistent in the sources they used in their stories. For example, each newspaper did not use the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as sources often, with the *New York Times* using the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members 5% of the time and the *Washington Post* using the members 6% of the time (See Table 4.16).

4.16. Sources by Newspaper

Sources	New York Times	Percent of NYT	Washington Post	Percent of WP	Total	Percent of Total
SBVT members	25	5.5	15	6.1	40	5.7
Kerry and advisors	86	18.8	46	18.9	132	18.8
Bush and advisors	62	13.5	25	10.2	87	12.4
NonSBVT vets	67	14.6	37	15.2	104	14.8
Politicians	30	6.6	27	11.1	57	8.1
Citizens	44	9.6	22	9	66	9.4
Organizations	51	11.1	22	9	73	10.4
Other	93	20.3	50	20.5	143	20.4
Total	458	100	244	100	702	100

Chi square=6.3, df=7, p<.05

A chi square test showed that the newspapers were significantly different in the types of stories in the population. Of the *New York Times* articles 82.6% (n=100) were news articles and 17.4% (n=21) were editorials. Of the *Washington Post* articles 68.8% (n=55) were news articles and 31.2% (n=25) were editorials. The *New York Times* ran 64.5% of the news articles in the population while the *Washington Post* ran 35.5% of the news articles. The *New York Times* ran 45.7% of the editorials in the population and the *Washington Post* ran 54.3% of the time (See Table 4.17).

Table 4.17. Differences in Story Type by Newspaper

Newspaper	Story Type		Total
	News article	Editorial	
New York Times	100	21	121
Washington Post	55	25	80
Total	155	46	201

Chi Square=5.28, df=1, $p<.05$

Comparisons by Story Type

Additional comparisons show some differences by the type of story in the population. As stated previously, there were 155 news articles and 46 editorials in the population. Of the 155 news articles 98 contained references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, 63.2% of the news articles. Of the 46 editorials, 34 contained references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, 73.9% of the editorials in the population (See Table 4.18). A chi square test showed that there was not a significant difference in the placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by story type.

Table 4.18. Placement of References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by Story Type

Story Type	Headline or lead paragraph	First Six paragraphs	After the First Six Paragraphs	Not Present	Totals
News Articles	36 (23.2%)	44 (28.4%)	18 (11.6%)	57 (36.8%)	155 (100%)
Editorials	14 (30.4%)	15 (32.6%)	5 (10.9%)	12 (26.1%)	46 (100%)
Totals	50	59	23	69	201

Chi square=2.16, df=3, p<.05

Additionally, the entire population of articles contained 194 references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's thematic frames. The thematic frames appeared 157 times in news articles, which represents 81% of the total thematic frames used and 37 times in the editorials, which represents 19% of the total thematic frames used (See Table 4.19).

Table 4.18. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Thematic Frames by Story Type

Theme	Editorial	News article	Totals
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	11 (22.9%)	37 (77.1%)	48
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	9 (13.6%)	57 (86.4%)	66
Credibility of the SBVT Members and Organization	3 (37.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities	3 (12.5%)	21 (87.5%)	24
Setting the Record Straight	9 (22%)	32 (78%)	41
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)	7
Total	37 (19%)	157 (81%)	194

Chi Square=4.77, df=5, p<.05

A chi square test showed that there was no significant difference between the types of stories and the thematic frames which appeared in the stories. However, the content analysis showed that the most common thematic frame used in the news articles was the "Kerry's anti-war stance and war crimes charges" at 57 times. The most common thematic frame used in editorials was "Kerry lied about his military records" at 11 times (See Table 4.19).

Summary

By examining the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products, the researcher was able to determine the major themes and thematic frames the organization used to define Kerry's military records and actions after returning from Vietnam. These thematic frames were the basis for the content analysis of the news coverage of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and military service as a presidential campaign issue. Six themes emerged from a qualitative analysis of the communications campaign. The themes were largely present in the 201 stories coded from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The thematic frames were present 55% percent of the time. The thematic frames were prominently placed in the articles with 41.3% of the thematic frames in the headline, lead paragraph and the first six paragraphs. The main thematic frames that were most frequently present were that "Kerry lied about his military records"; "Kerry's antiwar stance and war crimes charges"; "Kerry's character flaws and leadership abilities"; and that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were "setting the record straight". The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization was mentioned in 65.7% of the articles, and referred to 54.3% of the time in the headline, lead paragraph and the first six paragraphs in the story. Additionally, the data showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were seldom used as sources (5.6%) of the total sources used in the population. The results also showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications products were referred to in more than half of the articles present in the population. The most referred to communications product were the television advertisements. The data showed that there was a strong correlation between the release date of the

communications products and publication date of the stories which appeared in the study population.

The data also offered support for the proposed frame-building model. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth defined the issue of Kerry's military service through its communications products. Within the communications products the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth provided the news media the organization's thematic frames to support its definition. Additionally, the placement of the thematic frames showed that the news media believed the issue to be a newsworthy issue. The thematic frames chosen gained salience in the media. Finally, the increase in the communications campaign and repetition of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's thematic frames in August and September 2004 also resulted in increased the references to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames and the references to the organization in the news media coverage. Clearly, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth had success setting the news media's agenda regarding the coverage of their thematic frames which ensured that those frames were repeated in the media coverage of the issue.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to propose and test a model for frame-building that could explain an efficient process for special interest groups to follow in an attempt to get their communications themes in the media, thus the public sphere. This has been one of the areas that has been lacking in the research on framing. According to Scheufele (2000), framing research has not examined, thoroughly, how frames are created to set the media agenda. This thesis proposed that there are steps that an organization can follow in order to get its thematic frames into the media. The steps proposed in this model are 1) the organization must define an issue or event; 2) the organization must develop the thematic frames that will be salient to the media; 3) the thematic frame must be repeated, by both the organization and the media; 4) there is a feedback loop through which the organization changes its thematic frame if necessary to maintain salience with the media.

In order to test this model, this study used Huckins' (1999) and Andsager's (2000) case studies as exemplars. They chose to analyze special interest groups to determine whether special interest groups set the media's agenda or could have an effect on the media coverage of organizations or groups. These studies were used as the framework for this research. According to Huckins (1999), special interest groups have the ability to influence the media coverage of their issues. Andsager (2000) added that the types of text and the thematic frames chosen by an organization can determine the publicity an organization receives as well as the type of publicity an organization obtains.

This thesis examined the communications campaign of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, a 527 organization, against John Kerry during the 2004 presidential election, to determine the extent to which the organization was successful at framing the issue for the news media and whether its communications campaign fit the model. This case study was important because the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign has been perceived as effective and perhaps influencing the presidential election.

Thematic Frames

This first part of this study sought to identify what Carragee and Roeffs (2004) argued is one of the distinct approaches to framing research—“how frames are sponsored by political actors”(p. 215). Specifically, this study examined the thematic frames created by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to define John Kerry’s military service and military service as a presidential campaign issue. Additionally, this study set out to determine whether or not those thematic frames were used by the media.

The analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s communications products indicated that there were six major themes that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used to define the issue of military service during the 2004 presidential campaign. The themes identified were 1) Kerry lied about his military records; 2) Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges; 3) Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization; 4) Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities; 5) Setting the record straight; 6) Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election. These themes were important to the campaign in that they called attention to certain aspects of Kerry’s military service. According to Entman (1993) the main

purpose of framing during a political campaign is to call attention to certain aspects of an issue while downplaying other aspects.

Although there were six themes identified in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth products, four appeared most frequently in the media content. The four that were most frequent were “Kerry lied about his military service,” (23.9%) “Kerry’s anti-war stance and war crimes charges,” (32.8%) “Kerry’s serious character flaws and leadership abilities,” (11.9%) and “Setting the record straight” (20.4%).

An explanation for news media’s usage of the four most frequent thematic frames is that the media use specific criterion to judge what constitutes a newsworthy story. According to Gant and Dimmick (2000) the newsworthiness of an event or issue is based on several criteria including: affiliation, conflict, information subsidy, news format, normality, novelty, proximity, resource constraints, significance, timeliness, and visual potential. It seems that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s themes were considered newsworthy because of the potential for conflict, timeliness and significance to the election. de Vreese (2004) would argue the conflict between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and Kerry caused the media to use the themes in the news coverage of the military service issue. Additionally, Andsager’s (2000) argued that emotional text can increase coverage in the news media. Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s use of thematic frames that could evoke emotions, such as “Kerry lied” and “Kerry betrayed his shipmates” added to the likelihood that the media would use those thematic frames in the text of the article. This study provided evidence that the media deemed the thematic frames newsworthy and important during the presidential campaign.

The two least used thematic frames were the “Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization” (4%) and the “Role of the veterans in politics and the presidential election” (3.5%). This could be explained by the fact that neither of these themes fit the news criteria discussed earlier. Additionally, the lack of the theme “Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization,” could be because the media felt that the themes used by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were credible and were used as a basis for their reporting. In fact, the data showed that reporters asked Kerry and his advisors, and other veterans not associated with the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to comment in the organization’s allegations. The theme “Role of the veterans in politics and the presidential election” was really never an issue during the election. On the contrary, the media never questioned the role of veterans or the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members as having a right to participate in the public discussion of John Kerry’s military record.

The results of this thesis showed that framing is an important part of how a special interest group or organization communicates with the audience (Hallahan, 1999). Golan and Wanta (2001) argued that framing is a process by which advocacy groups and political candidates attempt to use the media to provide the public their thematic frames. Tewksbury et al. (2000) stated that the media can facilitate in the communication of an advocacy group’s thematic frames. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) stated that these thematic frames represent a collective agenda, not personal agenda. The data in this study reflect the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s ability to define, or perhaps redefine, Kerry’s military service as a presidential campaign issue in alignment with the organization’s goals.

Role of Special Interest Groups in Politics

The 2004 presidential election was the first campaign after the passage of the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, which banned large contributions to political parties. Because of this, donations shifted to Section 527 organizations, which are designed to be issue advocates. During the 2004 election cycle, Section 527 organizations used the increased donations to actively attempt to influence the outcome of the election (“The rise and rise of the 527s”, 2004). These organizations developed news frames in order to influence the media agenda. These attempts by interest groups to influence the media, and possibly elections, increase the importance of understanding their role in the political process. The results of this thesis showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization had the ability to influence the media’s agenda, therefore playing a prominent role in the political process. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth was successful in framing the media coverage of the issue of military service and attracting media coverage of the organization. The results showed that a clear majority of the population of news stories (55%, $n=111$) contained at least one theme. Additionally, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as an organization was referred to in 65.7% ($n=132$) of the study population. The data showed that there was a strong correlation without a time lag between the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign and the news coverage of the issue of military service by month ($r=.850$, $p=.015$). As the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s communications campaign increased in August, so did the news media’s coverage of the military service of the candidates. In August, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth introduced television advertisements into its communications

campaign, which increased the communications campaign effectiveness. This data showed that the role of special interest groups in an election process can be important because these groups create frames that influence the news, therefore the public (Shen, 2004). Scheufele (2000) added that special interest groups play an important role in the thematic frames the media uses in its coverage. In fact, a special interest group's thematic frames can become the predominant frames in the coverage of the issue (Andsager, 2000). Jamieson (2006) added that the role of a special interest group during an election is to "inject issues into campaigns" (p. 195). The data in this study showed support for previous research regarding the effectiveness of special interest groups setting the media's agenda.

Frame Building Model

Additionally, the data provides evidence that supports the idea that there is a process by which special interest groups can get their issues into the media and thus, the public sphere. These steps are: the organization defines the issue; it creates the text to obtain salience in the media; it repeats the thematic frames; and it uses a feedback loop to change its thematic frames, if necessary.

In the first step of the model, the organization defines its issue. According to Tedesco (2001), one of the roles of political campaigns is to attempt to define issues to fit their agenda. In the case of the 2004 presidential election, Kerry selected the attribute he wished to highlight, his military service. Kerry felt that his military experience and his records set himself above Bush, especially with the war in Iraq losing popular support and questions surrounding Bush's National Guard service. Kerry defined his service in Vietnam as his greatest strength (Tackett, 2004). He

argued that he was a battle-tested leader and had the credentials to be the next president (Tackett, 2004). He believed that his record was beyond reproach. However, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth redefined Kerry's military service in August before the presidential campaign started in full swing. They used the themes that directly contradicted Kerry's definition of his Vietnam service. The organization's communications products argued that Kerry lied about his military records and that his 1971 testimony betrayed his fellow shipmates. The data supported the belief that the media coverage of an issue can become a "framing contest in which political actors compete by sponsoring their preferred definitions of issues" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 216).

The second step of the model was the creation of the thematic frames that the media would find salient. The development of the thematic frames is considered an important aspect of the communications campaign. During the 2004 presidential election, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth selected text that would make certain aspects of Kerry's military records more salient to the media. In fact, the thematic frames chosen followed the news values of the news media. de Vreese (2004) stated that framing an issue in terms of conflict also assists in making the issue salient to the media. The thematic frames highlighted the conflict between the Kerry and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Andsager (2000) added that the more emotive the text the more likely the frame would be used by the media. Additionally, the thematic frames used emotive phrases; such as "Kerry lied"; "He betrayed his shipmates"; "Kerry disgraced his uniform." The data showed that the thematic frames gained salience in the media. Of the 201 stories analyzed in this study, 55% (n=111) had at least one of

the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames in the content. Furthermore, many stories contained multiple Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames and the articles averaged nearly one Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frame ($m=.96$), per article. Additionally, 4 out of 5 articles (79.9%) containing thematic frames appeared on the front page and in Section A of the newspaper. This data showed that the thematic frames had gained salience with the media during the news media coverage of military service as a campaign issue, which showed support for the second step in the model that a special interest group selects frames to ensure salience in the media.

The third step is the repetition of the thematic frames. Repetition of the thematic frames was measured by the appearance of the communications products by month, the thematic frames by month and the references to the organization by month. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth provided the media products and interviews that repeated the four major messages that discussed their stance on Kerry's military record. Although the organization began its communications campaign in May, the bulk of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign occurred in August 2004, after the Democratic Party convention but before the Republican convention. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign began in earnest a month before the presidential campaign with the release of 13 written products and four television advertisements in August. Basically, they released something every two to three days. This data showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth repeated its thematic frames on a regular basis during August. Research has shown that the thematic frame has to be repeated for the media and the

public to accept that thematic frame (Andsager, 2000; Durham, 1998; Tewksbury et al., 2000). Additionally, Durham (1998) argued that the thematic frames must be repeated within the organization for the media to accept the thematic frames. This was the case with the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The organization's communications products consistently repeated the thematic frames during the formative stages of the presidential campaign, which the data in this study suggests increased the use of these thematic frames in the coverage by two of the U.S. most elite, prestigious newspapers. Therefore, the third step in this model was supported.

The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign closely followed the frame building model. The campaign defined the issue Kerry's military service; created the text in order to gain issue salience with the media and repeated the thematic frames. Overall, the data showed strong support for the proposed frame building model.

Lessons for Public Relations Practitioners

Communications campaigns are an essential tool for special interest groups to communicate their issues to the media, thus the public. This study provided lessons public relations practitioners can apply to their communications practices. First of all, public relations practitioners play an important role in the development of the thematic frames which define an issue. The data showed that the public relations practitioners for the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth used news values which were relevant to the news media to develop the thematic frames to define the issue of military service. The thematic frames focused on more emotive texts in order to highlight the controversy between Kerry and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

Thematic frames such as “Kerry lied”; “Kerry lacks the potential to lead”; and “He aided the enemy” can conjure strong emotions from the public. Additionally, these thematic frames fit into what the media consider newsworthy. The newsworthiness of the thematic frames is reflected in that they were prominently placed in the news stories. Of the 111 articles which contained the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s thematic frames, 41.3% of the thematic frames appeared in the headline, lead or first six paragraphs.

Second, the public relations practitioner should create a campaign that provides the media with consistent thematic frames. The data in this study supported that repetition of specific thematic frames can affect subsequent media coverage of issues. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth repeated its thematic frames throughout its communications campaign, especially in August 2004. The organization released one communications product every two to three days. Each product contained the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth thematic frames. This showed that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth consistently repeated its thematic frames in all communications products. This repetition of the thematic frames resulted in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s thematic frames appearing in 194 times in the population of 201 articles, which is an average of .96 themes per article. Many articles contained more than one thematic frame. The results also showed that there was a clear majority of the articles, 55%, which contained the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s thematic frames. Additionally, the correlation that existed between the communications campaign and the news stories provided evidence that communications campaign affected the news coverage of the issue. This is important for public relations practitioners because it showed

that a consistent communications campaign can influence news content and coverage on issues or events (Andsager, 2000; Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Gamson & Modibliani, 1989; Huckins, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Westley, 1976).

Most Effective Communications Campaign Tool

The agenda setting effects on the news media by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign were enhanced by the organization's use of television advertisements. In August, the organization released four television advertisements regarding military service as part of its communications campaign and three advertisements in September. During August, September and October, the organization released nine television advertisements regarding military service as part of its communications campaign. The results of this thesis showed that 45.3% (n=91) of the total study population (n=201) referred to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth television advertisements, which is more than any of the other communications product. The data provided evidence that supported Kaid et al.'s (1993) belief that television advertising is effective due to the media's coverage of the advertisements. Kaid et al. discovered that the media's coverage of negative advertisements increased the television advertisements effect. Even media coverage intended to discredit the organization or advertisements can increase the advertisement's effectiveness (McKinnon & Kaid, 1999). This is what occurred in August when the first television advertisements were released. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth television advertisements were referred to by the media more often than any other communications product.

Limitations

This study is limited to news coverage in two newspapers and is not reflective of the entire spectrum of media coverage of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth or Kerry's military record. However, because the newspapers sampled are elite U.S. media and these papers have been shown to set the agenda for other media (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) , one can expect that these thematic frames become thematic frames for news media reporting on this issue across the country.

Another limitation of this study is in the coding of the sources. The source category "Other" was too broadly defined. During the creation of the code book, it was not apparent that political party strategists and journalists would be widely used as sources. Therefore, no category was created to measure them as sources. As a result, these sources were identified as part of the "other" category. After the coding was completed, it became apparent that the "other" category was larger than it should have been. By this time, it was too late to redefine the category and add additional categories such journalists or political party strategists. One of the steps that could correct for this limitation is to add these categories to the codebook and recode the stories.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this research show that there is a model by which a special interest group builds its news frames. This research is important for agenda setting research because it adds to the existing research on frame building which Scheufele (2000) argued is an area of research that has been neglected. Additionally, the case of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth provides fertile ground for research into frame

building. Future research should look at the differences between how Kerry originally defined the issue of military service and how the issue was defined after the introduction of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Understanding how this shift took place would benefit special interest organizations, public relations professionals and politicians. Additionally, future research should further develop the frame building model, specifically testing the fourth step, the feedback loop. This would provide researchers a more complete understanding the relationship between the news media and special interest groups. Finally, future research could examine special interest groups' influence on the political process. This could provide both special interest groups and candidates further information on the role special interest groups play in an election.

Conclusion

Because of the lack of research into frame-building, the influence of social and political actors and how they develop news frames has been neglected (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). This thesis sought to determine how a special interest group develops its thematic frames in an attempt to set the media's agenda. Agenda setting and framing research provided the basis for determining whether there was a specific process by which these organizations influence the media coverage of their issues. Within the agenda setting research, Lang and Lang (1981) established a four-step model for agenda building. The steps identified by Lang and Lang were 1) the media highlight an event; 2) the media frames the issue to make it salient to the public 3) the media then link the issue to other objects and 4) a spokesperson makes statements to keep the issue salient. These components provide the framework for the four-step

process of frame-building suggested in this thesis. The four steps are the special interest group: 1) defines the issue; 2) develops the terms and phrases to make an issue salient to the media; 3) repeats of the frame to the media to ensure that the news frame is accepted by the media; 4) provides a feedback loop between the media and the interest group.

This thesis tested the first three steps in the proposed frame-building model, using the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as a case study. The design of this study uses Andsager's (2000) and Huckins' (1999) studies as examples in design and method. The study was divided into two parts. The first part was a qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's news releases, public statements and television commercials to determine their major themes and how they developed themes that would capture the attention of the media regarding the issue of military service. The second part of this study was a quantitative content analysis of two top daily newspapers based on circulation size, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. This content analysis examined the news coverage of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to determine whether the media used the themes and messages identified in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications products that attempted to influence media coverage of the campaign, and ultimately the 2004 presidential election.

The data in this study showed that the special interest group, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, used the steps in the frame building model to influence news coverage of Kerry's military service during the 2004 presidential election. Additionally, this thesis showed that the organization was successful at redefining the issue of military service in a way that Kerry had not desired. The themes that became

the essence of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign became the basis for the news media's reporting. They constructed thematic frames that used the news values of the news media to make the issue of Kerry's military service salient to the media. The organization used thematic frames that evoked emotion from the public and added to the controversy between Kerry and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The thematic frames the organization chose appealed to the media so much that the thematic frames were used by the media as a basis for their reporting. The media went to sources outside of the organization to get comments on the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's allegations. This placed Kerry in a position where he had to defend against the allegations of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

As a result of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's communications campaign, Kerry's military service, which he thought would be an asset in the campaign, became a source of irritation to him and a source of doubt about his ability to lead the nation to the public.

The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth were consistent in its communications campaign with the repetition of its thematic frames in the communications products. This consistency increased the media coverage of the organization's version of Kerry's military service. This is shown by the use of the thematic frames in the majority of the study population (55%). Finally, the data showed a strong correlation between the communications products release dates and the news articles publication dates. This supported the belief that a communications strategy can influence the media coverage (Huckins, 1999).

The results of this study provided strong evidence that the Swift Boat

Veterans for Truth were successful in setting the media's agenda with their definition of the issue of military service; the selection of thematic frames that made the issue more salient to the media and the repetition of those thematic frames within their communications products and the media. Overall, this thesis provides a conceptual starting point to examine the process by which special interest groups attempt to influence the media's agenda during political campaigns or as issue advocates.

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Appendix A

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Codebook

Coders will code the entire article.

Variables

1) Story Number. Each story will be assigned a number. The number of the article will be placed in the top right-hand corner of the article.

2) Date of the Story. The date of the story will be coded numerically as follows: May 5- May 31 will be coded 1-27; June 1- June 30 will be coded as 28-57; July 1- July 31 will be coded as 58-88; August 1- August 31 will be coded as 89 – 119; September 1-September 30 will be coded as 120-149; Oct 1-November 3 will be coded as 150-183. (See Table 1 for codes).

3. Newspaper in which the article appeared

1. New York Times
2. Washington Post

4. Type of story. The type of story can be determined by looking at the section the article appeared in the newspaper.

1. News article
2. Editorial

5. Placement of the article within the newspaper. Coded as:

1. Front page or A1
2. Section A or Section 1 (not A1)
3. Section B or Section 2
4. Section C or Section 3
5. Section D or Section 4
6. Section E or Section 5
7. Section F or Section 6
8. Section G or Section 7
9. Section H or Section 8
10. After Section H or Section 8

6. References to the organization, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, within the story. Coders will determine if the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth is the main focus of the article or subsequent to the article. The coder will look for the location of the name of the organization or variations of the name of the organization, i.e. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, Swift Boat Veterans, Swifties, and Swift Boat Veterans and

POWs for Truth in the article (including the headline). The coder will code for references clearly tied to the organization. If there is not a clear reference to the organization, it reference will not be coded. For example, if the article mentions Swift Boat veterans, then later refers to “the group” then the coder will code for the organization. The coder will code for the first time the name of the organization appears in the article. This will be coded as:

1. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth or variations listed above is in the headline or lead paragraph.
2. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth or variations listed above is in the first six paragraphs of the article (not the lead sentence)
3. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth or variations listed above is in the article after the first six paragraphs
4. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth is not listed in the article.

7. Sources. The coder will code for all human, non-organizational, sources within the article. A source is defined as all people used within the headline or article, either through direct or indirect quotes. The sources could be named or anonymous but identified by their affiliation. Additionally, coders will code only sources that were sought out by the journalist specifically for the article.

The coder will not code for sources from previous stories or the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication campaign, i.e. has said, said previously, or according to a veteran who appeared in an ad. For example, if that article states “For days now, the Bush campaign has been accusing them.” This would not be coded as a source. However, if the human source is not referenced as a part of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication campaign the coder will code the source.

Additionally, the source quotes or indirect quotes should be preceded or followed by the following words says, said, according to, told, informed, announced, denounced, declared or any words attributing the statement to the source. . . then the source would be coded.

The sources will be coded for the order they appear in the article i.e. the first source will be coded in the Source 1 block of the code sheet etc. If the coder reaches the end of the source blocks on the code sheet then the coder will code additional sources by separating the source types with a comma in the last block to record the additional sources. The coder will code each source type only once. If the coder is unable to determine if the sources were interviewed specifically for the article then the source will not be coded.

1. SBV member. This includes those sources who are identified as members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth within the text of the article.
2. SBV member, affiliation not apparent in the text. This includes those sources who are not identified as members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth within the text of the article but are among the 250 members listed on the attached list. (See List 1 of SBVT members)
3. Kerry or an identified Kerry campaign spokesman, including advisors to Kerry, Kerry confidant, etc...

4. Bush or an identified Bush campaign spokesman, including advisors to Bush, White House officials, administration officials etc...
5. non-SBV veteran. This includes those veterans who are not members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth but have a speaking part within the text of the article.
6. Politicians, government spokespersons and political appointees not directly related to the presidential campaign. This includes members of U.S. Congress, Cabinet members, Regulatory agencies (i.e. FCC) and their spokespersons
7. Non-official citizen, a person not related to the SBVT or presidential campaign. This includes members of John Q. Public who have a speaking part within the text of the article.
8. Spokespersons from other special interest groups or organizations. This includes presidents or CEOs of corporations, other 527 organizations, and other special interest groups, or their representatives.
9. Other (i.e. Democratic/Republic pollster, Democratic/Republican strategist, etc. . .This includes sources not mentioned in the first 8 categories.
10. Sources are not present in the article

8. Placement of the first Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source within the article:

The coder will code the location of the first human Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source within the article. The coder will not code Swift Boat Veterans for Truth if the source is part of the communication campaign. This will be coded as:

1. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source is mentioned in the headling or lead paragraph
2. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source is apparent within the first six paragraphs (not the lead paragraph)
3. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source is apparent after the first six paragraphs
4. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth source is not present

9. References to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication campaign in text.

The coders will code for the reference to the communication tool used by the media to gather the information in the entire article. For example, if the article states “according to the ad; in an ad; then the coder will code that as the television advertisement, if the article states in a press release sent out by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth; in a statement released by . . . then the coder will code the statement as press releases etc.

The references to the communication campaign will be coded in the order they appear in the entire article. For example, the first reference identified will be reference 1, the second theme identified will be reference 2 etc. If the coder should use all blocks on the code sheet, then the coder will use the last block on the code sheet to code the references until completion. Each reference in the last block will be separated by a comma. If the same reference to the communication campaign appears twice or more within the article, the coder will code the reference once.

1. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth website
2. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth press releases
3. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Television Advertisements
4. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth book, *Unfit for Command*
5. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth internal communications
5. Radio/TV appearances by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members, separate from the television commercials
6. No references to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication campaign
7. Other/Cannot Tell

10. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication themes. Riffe et al. (2005) define a theme as a single idea of some event or issue. The communications themes were determined through the qualitative analysis of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communication products.

The coder will code the themes to determine if the themes are present within the article. The theme can come from any source, including the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications campaign; identified and unidentified SBV members; Kerry or an identified Kerry campaign spokesman, including advisors to Kerry; Bush or an identified Bush campaign spokesman, including advisors to Bush, White House officials, administration officials etc...; non-Swift Boat Veterans for Truth veterans; Politicians, government spokespersons and political appointees not directly related to the presidential campaign. This includes members of U.S. Congress, Cabinet members, Regulatory agencies (i.e. FCC) and their spokespersons; Non-official citizen, a person not related to the SBVT or presidential campaign; Spokespersons from other special interest groups or organizations; Other sources (i.e. Democratic/Republic pollster, Democratic/Republican strategist, etc. . .For example, if a non-Swift Boat Veterans for Truth member uses an identified theme (i.e. John Public, Vietnam Veteran, said that Kerry lied to get his medals), then the coder would code that theme as being present within the article.

The themes are listed on the code sheet numbered by theme listed below. The coder will code only for the presence of the themes not for the frequency. For example, if the article states that “Kerry lied about his military records” then the coder will code that the theme is present in the first theme block on the code sheet. If the theme appears later in the article, the theme will still be coded only once.

The coder will move on to the next theme to determine if theme 2 is present, and etc... Portions of the themes will also be coded as present. For example, “Kerry lied about Vietnam” would also be coded as present for Theme 1. The themes will be coded only once per article. The themes will be coded as such:

0. The theme is not present.
1. The theme is present

1. Kerry lied about his military service. This includes the following statements or portions of these statements that describe the Swift Boat

Veterans for Truth's views of Kerry's actions during Vietnam before he returned to the United States.

This theme does not include statements of fact surrounding Kerry's actions during Vietnam. For example, statements such as "his four month plus tour in Vietnam" or "Kerry is using his Vietnam experience as the centerpiece of his campaign". These statements would not be coded for Theme 1. However, statements such as "Kerry lied about his military service in Vietnam" would be coded for Theme 1.

- claims that Kerry misrepresented his records
- exaggerated account of his service
- Kerry lied about his records
- Kerry falsified his report
- inconsistencies between accounts
- totally false statements
- ever changing accounts
- his accounts are the difference between night and day
- Kerry backtracks
- he has not been honest
- he has been deceitful.
- he has not been forthright

2. Kerry's anti-war stance and war crimes charges. This includes these statements or portions of these statements that describe the Swift Boat Veterans views on Kerry's actions after returning from Vietnam.

This theme does not include statements of facts surrounding Kerry's actions after returning to the United States. For example, statements such as "Kerry's 1971 testimony before Congress" or "Kerry was an antiwar spokesman" would not be coded for theme 2. However, if the statement is followed by "he accused Vietnam veterans for war crimes and atrocities" then this portion of the statement would be coded for Theme 2 and Theme 2 would be considered present.

- false war crimes charges
- phony war crimes charges
- creator of the image of baby killers
- accusations of being drug addicts and misfits
- accusations of war crimes
- Kerry's treatment of his fellow veterans after returning from Vietnam
- Kerry's verbal attacks on veterans
- disgraced his uniform
- insulted his shipmates
- aided the enemy
- veterans felt betrayed

- veterans feel the pain and disgrace that John Kerry inflicted on them by making those statements
- secretly met with the enemy in Paris
- undermined the war effort
- gave credibility to the communist regime
- denounced his shipmates
- encouraged the North Vietnamese to keep us in captivity longer
- dishonored his country
- sold them out
- turned their backs on their brothers.
- lied before the Senate
- creator of that poisonous image

3. Credibility of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth members and organization. This includes statements:

- identifying members (see attached list) of the organization as direct eyewitnesses to Kerry's accounts of events.
- those members (see attached list) who state they served with Kerry during Vietnam or were Kerry's direct commanders
- those members (see attached list) who were POWs during Kerry's anti-war activities and testimony before the Senate
- claims that the organization is independent, non-partisan and legal.

4. Kerry's serious character flaws and leadership abilities. This includes these statements which describe the Swift Boat Veterans views on Kerry's leadership abilities and character flaws.

- Kerry exhibits serious character flaws
- lacks the ability to lead
- placing his personal ambitions about the interests of the nation
- asking us to trust him
- lacks the capacity to lead
- character and honesty matter
- Kerry cannot be counted on
- Kerry is not fit to be the Command in Chief.

5. Setting the record straight. This includes statements which are the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's actions and reason for forming the organization.

- attempting to correct Kerry's present actions
- the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth will accurately portray Kerry's records or military service

- time to set the record straight
- to bring the truth about Kerry
- fraudulently using the veterans to support his campaign
- SBVT responding to actions taken by Kerry or the Kerry campaign.
- discredit Kerry's version of his war records
- his medals are based on fiction
- Kerry's stories are falling apart
- Did not earn his decorations

6. Role of veterans in politics and the presidential election. This includes statements discussing the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's view on veterans participation in politics and the presidential election:

- the veterans right to be heard
- that the veterans sacrificed their blood for this country and deserve to enter into the public debate about Kerry
- the veterans and POWs will not be silenced
- veterans right to express an opinion about Kerry
- the veterans will not be censored
- every right to participate in the public discussion about Kerry.

11. Placement of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth communications themes.

The coder will code the location of the first Swift Boat Veteran for Truth communication theme within the article. This will be coded as:

1. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes are mentioned in the lead paragraph and headline
2. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes are apparent within the first six paragraphs (not the lead paragraph)
3. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes are apparent after the first six paragraphs
4. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth themes are not present in the article

Table 1

1. May 5	31. June 4	61. July 4	91. Aug 3	121. Sept 2	151. Oct 2	181. Nov 1
2. May 6	32. June 5	62. July 5	92. Aug 4	122. Sept 3	152. Oct 3	182. Nov 3
3. May 7	33. June 6	63. July 6	93. Aug 5	123. Sept 4	153. Oct 4	183. Nov 4
4. May 8	34. June 7	64. July 7	94. Aug 6	124. Sept 5	154. Oct 5	
5. May 9	35. June 8	65. July 8	95. Aug 7	125. Sept 6	155. Oct 6	
6. May 10	36. June 9	66. July 9	96. Aug 8	126. Sept 7	156. Oct 7	
7. May 11	37. June 10	67. July 10	97. Aug 9	127. Sept 8	157. Oct 8	
8. May 12	38. June 11	68. July 11	98. Aug 10	128. Sept 9	158. Oct 9	
9. May 13	39. June 12	69. July 12	99. Aug 11	129. Sept 10	159. Oct 10	
10. May 14	40. June 13	70. July 13	100. Aug 12	130. Sept 11	160. Oct 11	
11. May 15	41. June 14	71. July 14	101. Aug 13	131. Sept 12	161. Oct 12	
12. May 16	42. June 15	72. July 15	102. Aug 14	132. Sept 13	162. Oct 13	
13. May 17	43. June 16	73. July 16	103. Aug 15	133. Sept 14	163. Oct 14	
14. May 18	44. June 17	74. July 17	104. Aug 16	134. Sept 15	164. Oct 15	
15. May 19	45. June 18	75. July 18	105. Aug 17	135. Sept 16	165. Oct 16	
16. May 20	46. June 19	76. July 19	106. Aug 18	136. Sept 17	166. Oct 17	
17. May 21	47. June 20	77. July 20	107. Aug 19	137. Sept 18	167. Oct 18	
18. May 22	48. June 21	78. July 21	108. Aug 20	138. Sept 19	168. Oct 19	
19. May 23	49. June 22	79. July 22	109. Aug 21	139. Sept 20	169. Oct 20	
20. May 24	50. June 23	80. July 23	110. Aug 22	140. Sept 21	170. Oct 21	
21. May 25	51. June 24	81. July 24	111. Aug 23	141. Sept 22	171. Oct 22	
22. May 26	52. June 25	82. July 25	112. Aug 24	142. Sept 23	172. Oct 23	
23. May 27	53. June 26	83. July 26	113. Aug 25	143. Sept 24	173. Oct 24	
24. May 28	54. June 27	84. July 27	114. Aug 26	144. Sept 25	174. Oct 25	
25. May 29	55. June 28	85. July 28	115. Aug 27	145. Sept 26	175. Oct 26	
26. May 30	56. June 29	86. July 29	116. Aug 28	146. Sept 27	176. Oct 27	
27. May 31	57. June 30	87. July 30	117. Aug 29	147. Sept 28	177. Oct 28	
28. June 1	58. July 1	88. July 31	118. Aug 30	148. Sept 29	178. Oct 29	
29. June 2	59. July 2	89. Aug 1	119. Aug 31	149. Sept 30	179. Oct 30	
30. June 3	60. July 3	90. Aug 2	120. Sept 1	150. Oct 1	180. Oct 31	

List 1.

Signatures of an open letter to Sen. John Kerry. These signatures are members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

Daniel Aguilar, OSC, USNR-R

Pat Alexander

Roy Alexander*

Kenneth J. Andrews, Lt. *

Arturo Arias, QM2, USN (Ret.)

Daniel V. Armstrong, BM2*

Douglas Armstrong, Capt., USN (Ret.)

Harry Ball, Cdr., USN (Ret.)

Ray Lewis Ballew*

Sonny Barber, USN (Ret.)

John Bare

Alexander Bass*

George "M." Bates*

Richard Beers*

Paul L. Bennett, Cdr., USN*

Edward J. "Lord Mort" Bergin, Capt., USNR (Ret.)*

Henry "Buddy" Berman, QM2*

Herb Blume, Lt.
 Barry Bogart, EN2*
 Bob Bolger Cdr., USN* (Ret.)
 M.T. Boone*
 Benny Booth
 David Borden*
 Carl Bowman
 Vern Boyd*
 David M. Bradley, LCdr.*
 Robert Bradley, Lt. USNR - inactive
 Robert "Friar Tuck" Brant, Cdr. USN (Ret.)*
 Kenneth Briggs*
 Carlyle J. Brown, EN2*
 Donald Brown, RD3
 Kenneth "Buck" Buchholz, GMM3*
 Michael C. Burton
 Tom Burton
 Joe Cahill, Jr., Lt.*
 Jack L. Carlson, Lt., USNR*
 James Carter
 Billy Carwile, EN3*
 Virgil Chambers, RD3
 Jack Chenoweth, Capt., USNR, (Ret.)*
 William Colgan, RD3*
 Bill Collins*
 Daniel K. Corbett, Lt., USNR*
 James M. Corrigan, QM3*
 Terry Cosstellio, Capt., USN (Ret.)*
 Tom Costarino
 Toi Dang, GM3
 John H. Davis, Lt.*
 William K. Daybert, Cdr.*
 James Deal*
 Richard Dodson, Capt., USN (Ret.)
 John Dooley, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*
 Dale Duffield, CWO USN (Ret.)*
 Robert G. Elder, Lt.*
 George M. Elliott, Capt. USNR (Ret.)*
 Bill Eshelman
 Claude Farmer, Cdr., USNR (Ret.)
 Michael Fasold
 William Ferris, Capt., USNR (Ret.)
 Wallace Benjamin Foreman, QM1, USN (Ret.)*
 William T. Ferris, Capt. USNR (Ret.)*
 James Foster, GMG1, USN (Ret.)
 William E. Franke, Lt.jg*
 Robert L. Franson, BMCS (SW)*
 Alfred J. French, III, Capt., JAGC, USNR (Ret.)*
 Paul F. Fulcomer, RD3*
 Ray Fuller, GMG3*
 Steve Fulton, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*
 Mike Gann, Capt., USNR (Ret.)*
 Steve Gardner*

Bill Garlow*
 Les Garrett*
 Tony Gisclair, BOSN2*
 Robert Gnau, QM2*
 Donald Goldberg*
 Morton Golde, Cdr. USN (Ret.)*
 Kenneth Golden*
 Gerald L. Good, Lt. USN*
 Roy Graham
 John C. Graves*
 Charles E. Green, ENCM, USN (Ret.)*
 Dennis L. Green, GMG*
 H.C. Griffin, Jr., Lt. USNR*
 I.B.S. (Boyd) Groves, Jr.*
 Charles R. Grutzius, Capt. USNR (Ret.)*
 F.L. Skip "Mustang Sally" Gunther, Lt. USN*
 Louis Hahn ETCM (SW) USN (Ret.)
 Bill Halpin, Lt. USNR (Ret.)*
 Don C. Hammer, Lt.*
 Rock Harmon*
 Keith C. Harris, RD2*
 Stewart M. Harris, Lt., USN*
 Stirlin Harris, BM2*
 Gene Hart, RD3*
 Bob Hastings*
 Curt Hatler*
 John Hecker, RD3*
 Chuck Herman, RD3*
 Raul Herrera*
 Tom Herritage*
 Grant "Skip" Hibbard*
 Bill Hickey
 Rocky Hildreth*
 Gary Hite
 Jim Hoffmann, RD3
 Roy Hoffmann, Adm., USN (Ret.)*
 William P. Holden, Capt., USN (Ret.)*
 Wayland Holloway, Lt. USNR*
 Duane Holman, QM2
 Robert Hooke, Lt.*
 Bill Hoole
 Andy Horne*
 John Howell*
 Warren Hudson*
 Charles W. Hunt, EN3*
 Robert Hunt*
 Gail E. "Ike" Ikerd, Cdr. (Ret.)*
 Bert Jeffries, QM3
 Richard Jenkins
 John Paul Jones, QM3*
 Tom Jones*
 Eddie Kajioka ENCS, USN (Ret.)*
 John L. Kipp, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*

Thomas H. Klemash*
 Kenneth Knipple, EN1*
 Robert Koger, QM2*
 Mike Kovanen, RD3*
 Bob Kreyer, GMG2*
 Jack K. Lane, GMG3*
 William T. Langham*
 William Lannom*
 Alan Lapat
 Joseph R. Lavoie, II CWO2 (BOSN), USN (Ret.)*
 Louis Letson, LCdr., USN (Ret.)*
 Jim Madden, RD3*
 William S. Mann, Jr., Lt.jg*
 Jim Marohn, GMG3*
 Douglas Martin, Lt. USNR*
 Tom Mason, Lt.*
 Donald Matras, EN2 (Ret.)*
 Thomas Mason, Lt.*
 Louis Masterson*
 Donald Matras, EN3
 Richard McFarland, Lt. USNR*
 Kenneth B. McGhee*
 James McNeal, ENC*
 Errol Meleander, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*
 Jack Merkley, Lt.*
 James M. Miller*
 John Miller, ENC (Ret.)
 Martin Miller, ENC (Ret.)*
 Marc Milligan, GMG2*
 Benjamin A. Montoya, QM3*
 Edward Morgan, Capt. USN*
 Edgar (Ed) M. Morrill, Jr.*
 Tom Morrill, EN3*
 Wayne H. Moser*
 Kurt Moss, Lt. J.G.*
 Frank Mueller*
 Marc Milligan, GMG2*
 Ed Mundy*
 Van Odell, GMG1
 Richard Olsen, Lt.*
 Richard O'Mara, RD2, USN
 John O'Neill, Lt., USN, (Ret.)*
 Albert Owens*
 Tedd Peck, Capt. USNR (Ret.)*
 Richard Pees, Lt., USNR
 James Penkert, ENC
 Thomas Petersik
 Robert Phalen, GMG2*
 Charles Plumley*
 Joseph L. Ponder, GMG-2, USN (Ret.)*
 Chuck Rabel*
 Bob Reller
 Steve Renfro, RD3, USN (Ret.)

Don Renshaw, EN2, USN PCF 93
 Frank Rockwell
 Bill Rogers, Lt.*
 Patrick Sage GMG3*
 Gary W. Sallee, BM2*
 Burke Salsi, RD2
 Joe Sandoval, GMG3*
 Jimmy W. Sanford, RD3*
 Robert Scattergood*
 Jim Schneider, EN2*
 Clair J. (Pete) Schrodtt, Capt. USN (Ret.)*
 Jack Shamley*
 Patrick Sheedy, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*
 Paul Shepherd, QM2*
 Robert B. Shirley, Lt.jg*
 William Shumadine*
 Stanley G. Simonson, GMG2*
 John Singleton, ENC
 Darryl Skuce, GMG2*
 John J. Skura*
 Gerald H. Smith*
 Bob Smith, GMG2
 Gerald Smith
 Roy Smith*
 B. Tony Snesko BM2*
 Mike Solhaug*
 Jack Spratt, LCDR*
 David R. Stefferud, Capt., USN (Ret.)*
 James Steffes*
 Fred E. Stith, USN (Ret.)*
 Lawrence Stoneberg, Lt. USN (Ret.)*
 Weymouth Symmes, RDM*
 Tony Taylor
 W.P. "Sonny" Taylor*
 Dewey Thedford
 James P. Thomas*
 Eldon Thompson, Lt.jg*
 Larry Thurlow, Lt.jg
 Joseph Timmons, RD3, USN
 Charles R. Tinstman, ENC*
 Gary E. Townsend*
 William F. Trainer*
 Mark Tuft, Capt., USN (Ret.)
 Michael Turley, BM2*
 Chris J. Vedborg, RD3*
 Jeffrey M. Wainscott, Lt.jg*
 David Wallace*
 Greg Ward, EN2*
 Larry J. "Waz" Wasikowski, Cdr. U.S. Naval Reserve*
 Pete Webster*
 Steven Weekley, GMG, QM3*
 George Wendell, En1, USN (Ret.)
 Bruce Wentworth, Lt., USNR

George H. White, II*
R. Shelton White, Lt.*
Gary K. Whittington, EN3*
James D. Wiggins*
Tom Wilkins
Thomas A. Withey, Lt.*
Bernard Wolff*
Thomas W. Wright, Cdr., USN (Ret.)*
John Wyatt, GMG*
John Yeoman, Lt.*

Ex Officio (other military):

Ross Barker, Capt. USN (Ret.)
Joe Cantrell, Lt.jg, USNR
Allan Clapp, ETR3, USN
George Clatterbuck, CMSgt. USAF, Ret.
Tony DeLuna
David Desiderio, Cdr., USCG (Ret.)
Verne DeWitt, MR1
Jim Fitzgerald
Monte Gluck
Don Higgins
Larry Hobson
Robert Johnson
Walter Jones, USMC
Adrian Lonsdale, Capt., USCG (Ret.)
David P. Marion, CPT Infantry, US Army*
Larry Meyer*
Benjamin A. Montoya, QM3*
Denny O'Brien
Cordelia Ogrinz, in memory of her brother Alexander J. Ogrinz, III, Lt.*
Rex Rectanus, VADM, USN (Ret.)*
Skip Ridley*
Jennings Rogerson II, Capt. USMC* (Ret.)
John Slagle, Special agent, USBP (Ret.)
Patrick Stevenson, Army Special Forces (Ret.)
Emmett Tidd, Vice Admiral, USN, (Ret.)*
Leslie "Butch" Vorphal, RD3, USN PCF 3
Steve Watts, Army
Dennis D. Willess, EN3, Army Infantry*
Raymond Wroten, SSgt., USMC (Ret.)
James M. Zumwalt in memory of Elmo Zumwalt, Sr. and Elmo Zumwalt, Jr, his father and brother*

* = signed original letter, presented May 4, 2004

Appendix B

Combined Table of Communications Products, Thematic Frames and References to
the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth by Month

Communications Campaign	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Communications Products Total	2	0	0	17	6	5	1
News Releases/statements	2	0	0	13	3	3	1
Television advertisements	0	0	0	4	3	2	0
Themes in News Articles Total	4	0	4	116	43	24	3
Kerry Lied about His Military Service	0	0	0	34	8	5	1
Kerry's Anti-War Stance and War Crimes Charges	1	0	2	31	17	13	2
Credibility of the SBVT Members and Organization	0	0	0	6	2	0	0
Kerry's Serious Character Flaws and Leadership Abilities	1	0	2	10	9	2	0
Setting the Record Straight	2	0	0	30	6	3	0
Role of Veterans in Politics and the Presidential Election	0	0	0	5	1	1	0
References to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth	2	0	1	68	49	10	2
Headline or Lead Paragraph	1	0	0	28	16	5	0
The First Six Paragraphs (not lead paragraph)	0	0	0	36	17	5	1
After the First Six Paragraphs	1	0	1	4	16	0	1