

Persuasion in Practice

What do you think makes an effective role model for America's children? So often, the future of America, children, are emphasized. In Hillary Clinton's campaign advertisement "Role Models," Donald Trump's ability to be a role model is questioned. To better understand, pathos, the penetration stage of the advertising process, and idea-oriented advertising will be explored within the advertisement.

The 2016 presidential election was nothing short of brutal. In Hillary Clinton's 2017 campaign advertisement entitled "Role Models," we see the brutality of the election. A candidate that many thought would never gain the Republican nomination, Donald Trump, is in the advertisement voicing appalling rhetoric. This advertisement shows children watching him say these things. With 19 seconds left in the advertisement, Hillary Clinton, the opposing candidate, begins talking about how we need to make sure that "...our children and grandchildren..." (Hillary for America, "Role Models n.d.), when they reflect on the current time, are "...proud of us" (Hillary for America, "Role Models" n.d.). Something that is important to know is that Clinton's 19 seconds of speaking time within the advertisement is from a speech that she made the night that she gained the democratic nomination ([washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), 2016). This advertisement was released less than a week before the Republican National Convention.

Many people appreciated this advertisement. However, those who oppose this advertisement, present a variety of arguments. The Federalist stated that the children in the advertisement "...just stare silently, without any response, at the glowing screen as Trump talks. They don't understand the statements or their context enough to be even remotely harmed by them" (3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton's New Anti-Trump Ad, 2016). The Federalist continues to argue that the advertisement does not communicate the idea that Trump is not a

good role model "...visually or emotionally" (3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton's New Anti-Trump Ad, 2016). Also, The Federalist suggests that Hillary Clinton is a "Horrible Role Model" (3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton's New Anti-Trump Ad, 2016). Indeed, there are additional arguments, however, these are arguably the most noticeable and widespread.

The artistic proof known as pathos is used throughout the entirety of "Role Models". Wahl (2016) stated that pathos are "...passions, or things people connect with emotional responses" (p. 39). One thing that a vast variety of people are passionate about are children. Therefore, throughout this advertisement where the idea of Donald Trump becoming president and by default the children of America's role model is confronted, it is easy for someone to be influenced by the advertisement, because it specifically appeals to their emotions and passions. Specifically, this is done visually by showing the children watching Trump say horrendous things. There is an argument from The Federalist that the children seem uninfluenced by Trump's rhetoric (3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton's New Anti Trump Ad, 2016). However, in my opinion, the point of the advertisement is to show that children may not have been exposed to this level of intense language or subject matter before, and as a result, they do not know how to react. With Trump saying it, children have the potential to think it is okay to talk and act in that way. This is the great danger present in Trump's rhetoric: children, who have not had to confront certain things such as shooting people, violence, and racial discrimination are hearing such things from an individual that is about to receive the republican nomination. Pathos is used throughout the duration of the advertisement in an extremely effective manor.

When this advertisement first aired, in July 2016, the election was soon coming. Because of this, the penetration stage of the advertising process was confronted. Wahl (2016) stated that the penetration stage occurs when "... a campaign becomes noticed and unavoidable" (p. 150). It

is inferable that the majority of America, in July of 2016, knew that both Clinton and Trump were running presidential campaigns. “Role Models” works to gain support for Clinton by including events within the advertisement that had occurred within the past: some of Trump’s past dialogue and an excerpt from a previous Clinton speech. The advertisement included events that many were familiar with all together. In my opinion, this was done to make it clear that it is not just one inappropriate thing that Trump has said; it is many. Clinton is present within 19 seconds of the advertisement because the campaign is in the penetration stage; she does not have to have her face on the advertisement throughout the majority of it because her and her campaign are already well known. “Role Models” used being in the penetration stage of the advertising process to its advantage.

“Role Models” is an idea-oriented advertisement. Wahl (2016) stated that idea-oriented advertising campaigns are “...those focused on gathering support for a particular message or cause” (p. 154). While it is arguable that the advertisement is person-oriented advertising, “Role Models” has an additional purpose: to advocate the importance of children having role models to look up to. This is evidenced when Clinton stated,

Our children and grandchildren will look back at this time, at the choices we are about to make, the goals we will strive for, the principles we will live by. And we need to make sure that they can be proud of us (Hillary for America, “Role Models” n.d.).

In this simple, yet declarative statement, Clinton makes clear that America’s children are a priority and we need to act in a way to which they will “...be proud of us” (Hillary for America, “Role models” n.d.). This advertisement does not ask for us to vote for Clinton. This advertisement does not even mention Clinton’s experience dedicating her time for the good of

children. This advertisement specifically focuses on the idea of doing what is best for the good of America's children.

This advertisement makes clear that the presidency should be held by a role model. Through the various examples of what would come to be the Republican nominee using disgusting rhetoric, the advertisement makes clear that Trump is not a role model. Through the advertisement showing Clinton discussing the importance of making decisions that make "...our children and grandchildren..." (Hillary for America, "Role Models" n.d.) "...proud of us" (Hillary for America, "Role Models" n.d.), the advertisement is showing, though arguably not as the main point of the advertisement, that there is a role model that they can support for president. However, The Federalist argues that Clinton is not a role model (3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton's New Anti-Trump Ad 2016). This is arguably the biggest argument regarding this advertisement; however, despite one's opinion of Clinton, if they know of her history with helping children, then they will realize that she is a role model in that perspective. This advertisement made it a priority to make clear the importance of having someone that can be considered a role model take office.

Another message that this advertisement communicates is that children are America's future. By the emphasis that the advertisement puts on children throughout the advertisement, it is evident that, from the perspective of the advertisement, children will play a large part in America's future. This is specifically made clear by the additional emphasis that is put on children hearing Trump's rhetoric. Additionally, this is evidenced with the emphasis that Clinton puts on children at the end of the advertisement. Many believe that children are America's future and this advertisement agrees with this belief.

Through watching “Role Models,” one can see that the Clinton campaign decided to approach a political advertisement in a somewhat untraditional way, focusing more on the opposing candidate. Through utilizing pathos, the penetration stage of the advertising process, and idea-oriented advertising, this advertisement worked to get its message communicated. The advertisement made clear that it is important for the office of the presidency to be held by someone who is a role model and that children are America’s future. These qualities worked for the good of communicating the message of the advertisement, because it was successful in the eyes of many.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Do you think that the use of pathos was effective within this advertisement? Why or why not? Would it have been more effective if it showed the children having a sad expression after hearing President Trump's rhetoric? Why or why not?
- 2) By a raise of hands, who knew that Hillary Clinton has a history of helping children? Do you think the advertisement should have mentioned her history helping children? Why or why not?
- 3) Since this advertisement is not the typical person-oriented advertisement that we see from most campaigns and instead an idea-oriented advertisement, does it make you view the advertisement differently? Why or why not? Why do you think that Clinton used this type of advertisement style to her advantage?

Secondary Discussion Questions (If time permits)

- 1) In what ways did this advertisement utilize the penetration stage of the advertising process? Was it done in a persuasive way? Why or why not?
- 2) If you had children, would you be okay with them watching President Trump say the things that he does in this video? Why or why not?
- 3) Do you believe that the things that President Trump says in this advertisement make him less persuasive as a leader? Why or why not?

Resources

Political Advertising Resource Center. (n.d.). Hillary for America, “Role Models”. Retrieved from <https://parc.umd.edu/2016-ad-analyses/hillary-for-america-role-models/>

The Federalist. (2016). 3 Massive Problems With Hillary Clinton’s New Anti-Trump Ad. Retrieved from <http://thefederalist.com/2016/07/14/3-massive-problems-with-hillary-clintons-new-anti-trump-ad/>

The Washington Post. (July 14, 2016). Hillary Clinton’s new attack ad paints Trump as a bad role model. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/07/14/hillary-clintons-new-attack-ad-paints-trump-as-a-bad-role-model/?utm_term=.5450b391ff6f

Wahl, S. T. (2016). *Persuasion In Your Life*. New York: Routledge.