

Limitations of Public Health Communication Campaigns in Reducing Islamophobia-Related Bias: A Behavioral Science and Population Mental Health Perspective

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Abstract

Increasing crimes against Muslims are evidence that Muslim Americans are being targeted, while political and media rhetoric has aided the rise of Islamophobia. In response, the Council on American-Islamic Relations initiated an advertising campaign to reframe the discourse. Relying on terror management theory as a foundation, this research leverages a sequential mixed-method approach to evaluate and analyze the ads, bringing together concepts of rhetorical articulation of politics, discourse analysis of media-based rhetoric, and complicity theory related to racism to understand contemporary political framing of Islam. A quantitative study determined one's religious fundamentalism had an effect on the viewer's attitude toward the ads. This was followed by a qualitative analysis of the ads based on Stern's (1989) approach to advertisement critique. Triangulated results show that the ads reinforce cultural worldviews that frame Muslims as "other" that could entrench existing attitudes toward Muslim Americans. Suggestions are made for future advertising efforts to reframe the discussion.

Keywords: Islamophobia; PSA; terror management theory; religiosity; CAIR

To Americans who practice Islam, their faith is under attack. In a 2017 survey by the Pew Research Center, half of American-Muslims say it is becoming more difficult to be Muslim in the United States, and 48% say they've experienced an incident of discrimination in the last year (Pew 2017a). The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization in North America, tracks cases of anti-Muslim hate crimes, as well as vandalism and arson committed against mosques. The numbers are increasing. According to its reports, CAIR recorded 1,379 cases of anti-Muslim acts in 2014. Two years later, amid a hotly contested U.S. presidential election, that number was 2,473 – a 79.3% increase. In its most recent annual civil rights report, the nonprofit organization recorded 2,899 anti-Muslim acts in 2017, including 2,599 incidents of anti-Muslim bias and 300 anti-Muslim hate crimes nationwide, increases of 17% and 15%, respectively (CAIR 2017). This increase in religious-based hate crime is confirmed by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (2018), which recorded a high of 1,749 in 2017 before a reduction to 1,419 in 2018, akin to 2014 levels. Of these, 273 were anti-Islamic in 2017, and 188 were in 2018. Likewise, the FBI reports that overall hate crimes have increased from 7,173 in 2015 to 8,828 in 2017 before falling to 7,120 in 2018.

At the same time, political rhetoric has heated up on several fronts. The most notable has been from President Donald J. Trump, who at the start of his presidential campaign in 2015 discussed the possibility of creating a national database of Muslims, closing mosques, and banning entry into the United States by Muslims. CAIR has recorded incidents where people are invoking the name of the U.S. president as a symbol of hatred and prejudice to inspire fear in racial and religious minorities. This type of rhetoric isn't new. Epicenters of debate regarding the American-Muslim community have included

the bombing of a Muslim mosque and community center, the burning of the Qur'an by a Christian religious leader, and U.S. Congressional hearings on the radicalization of American Muslims.

With a tide of anti-Islamic sentiment seemingly on the rise, CAIR decided to increase its marketing communications presence by producing and airing public service announcements (PSAs) titled "9/11 Happened to Us All" designed to position Muslim Americans as principally Americans. As the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terrorists attacks approached, two television commercials featured first-responders reflecting on the attacks, and then revealed the first-responders were Muslim American. This was an effort to remind those who may join in on the rising Islamophobia that it was not Islam that attacked the United States, but extremists who Aslan (2009) argues have a radical interpretation of Islam via a "cosmic worldview," with which the vast majority of Muslims do not agree. CAIR's legislative director told NPR that, "We felt it was really important to do something that would humanize Muslims to our fellow Americans and then also remind everybody that on 9/11 Al-Qaeda attacked the United States, not Islam." These advertisements are being leveraged again by the nonprofit organization in its "CAIR Snapshots" video released in October 2019 on its Facebook page (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: CAIR Snapshot "9/11 Happened to Us All"



<https://www.facebook.com/CAIRNational/videos/945839689085811/>

Whether the marketing communications effort by CAIR had the desired effect is difficult to assess. While no empirical evidence exists that tests attitudes toward Muslims pre- and post-campaign, hate crimes and religious-motivated hate crimes did decrease from 2011 to 2014. However, since 2015 the numbers of each have been trending upward, and the number of annual assaults against Muslims has topped post-September 11 levels (Pew 2017a). Still, these decreases and increases cannot be attributed to the CAIR ad campaign. Therefore, questions this research attempts to answer include: (1) are the ads effectively persuasive? (2) does one's worldview have an effect on the campaign's persuasiveness? (3) are the ads structured in the best way to make them effective? and (4) what role does religion play in acceptance of the advertisements' message? Attempts to answer these questions were made by testing the persuasiveness of the CAIR ads through examining attitudes toward the advertisements based on tenants of terror management theory (TMT) and one's proclivity toward religious fundamentalism. Initial results conclude the ad campaign does not change the perception of Islam. While noble in the

concept of reframing the discourse to position American-Muslims as Muslims *and* Americans instead of Muslims and *not* Americans, this paper illustrates how the CAIR ads instead remind viewers of their emotional responses to the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York that day, and in doing so entrench the worldview, for those who already believe it, that Muslims are inherently evil.

This research brings together concepts of rhetorical articulation of politics, discourse analysis of media-based rhetoric, and complicity theory related to racism, to understand contemporary political framing of Islam. In conducting this research, a quantitative study using terror management theory as a framework was initiated and analyzed to determine if one's attitude toward religious fundamentalism has an effect on the viewer's attitude toward the CAIR ads. Then, to enhance the quantitative analysis, a qualitative critique of the CAIR ads was conducted leveraging content analysis, image analysis, and consumer behavior following Stern's (1989) illustrative analysis model for using literary criticism in advertising.

According to the American Marketing Association, cause marketing encompasses three applied disciplinary areas within the field of marketing – nonprofit marketing, social marketing, and political marketing (Dann et al. 2007). The research adds to the body of work in cause marketing in four ways. First, by supplementing the quantitative research with qualitative analysis, the resulting sequential mixed method approach – where both types of analysis are conducted and compared in the interpretation stage of the research – delivers a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the research area by improving the quality of evidence (Hendren, Luo, and Pandey 2018; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Mitchell 2018) and answers the call for more mixed-method research (Carins, Rundle-Thiele, and Fidock 2016; Martin 2018; Zachariadis, Scott, and Barrett 2013). Second, it responds to the call from Belk (2017) and Avant, Kim, and Hayes (2017) for more qualitative research in advertising to help evaluate ads before, during, and after they appear. Third, the qualitative analysis conducted provides

insight into *why* consumers might behave the way they do, rather than simply analyzing what consumers did, which is the outcome of most quantitative studies. This also helps us understand the ads as part of a larger media context (Jamieson 1989) through analysis of cultural imagery that shapes political rhetoric today (Griffin and Kagan 1996). This leads to the final contribution, the extension of research in cause marketing overall because the ad campaign under scrutiny features PSAs from a nonprofit organization (CAIR) designed to affect society's attitudes and behaviors toward Muslims, within the auspices of political overtones created through the framing of Islam.

The Framing of Islam

In his first words to the American people on the evening of September 11, 2001, then President George W. Bush opened his speech with the following statement: "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts." This marked the effort to frame the day's events, and all future violence of a similar nature as a struggle between good and evil. Not long after that initial speech, Bush reiterated that the United States was in a protracted conflict between good and evil, before squarely placing himself on the side of good (Ivie 2007). Bush could afford to frame the discourse in that manner because, according to Murphy (2003), he had already established his authority to shape public interpretation of the 9/11 events, and the American military response, by relying on amplification of the heroic visuals of that day and repetition of themes that looked to the future rather than the past. In doing so, Bush crafted the affective response Americans were to have (Murphy 2003). The foundation of the president's rhetoric was one of theology filled with biblical heroes and villains in which Americans were simply carrying out God's will (Murphy 2003).

Bush's rhetoric shaped the American response of war framed in a religious dogma (Ivie 2007). Kumar (2010) argues the Bush rhetoric underpins five assumptions about Islam – monolithic, sexist,

irrational, violent, terroristic – that are not accurate, but have continued to propagate post-Bush. According to Brydon (2004), the Bush rhetoric contrasts two prophetic visions of God: Those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. In doing so, Bush claimed the moral high ground for the God of the United States while framing those who attacked the U.S. as “hijacking” their religion. The dominant discourse of the war on terror in the 2000s and the policies accompanying it confirmed a binary framework of good versus evil, and Americans versus Muslims (Alsultany 2007). The following decade, while running for president, Trump leveraged Islamophobia as a cornerstone of his campaign (Beydoun 2018), proposed barring Muslims from certain countries from entering the United States, and said “I think Islam hates us” when asked if he believed the West was at war with Islam (DelReal 2016). The rhetoric of both presidents and ensuing national security policies carried out by all presidents since – the “war on terror” continued by former president Barack Obama and Trump’s executive orders to reduce the number of refugees from specific Muslim-majority countries – “tethers Muslim identity to the presumption of terrorism” (Beydoun 2018, p. 5-6).

The framing fits into McPhail’s (1991) definition of complicity as a theory of negative difference in which a belief in separateness has led to a rhetoric that perpetuates the “other” in terms of race, gender, culture, nationality, and religion. This language of negative difference affects social realities by dividing and ranking human beings, a predisposition in Western cultures to create categories and classifications of people (McPhail 1994). However, complicity theory also challenges the idea that racism is tied to social dominance created by the haves and the have-nots. That is not to say that people are not marginalized based on gender, class, age, religion and sexual orientation – they are. But the politics of complicity has abandoned the transformative discourse that took place during the civil rights era and replaced it with a rhetoric of our times that discredits and disregards the words of anyone who does not fit within one’s cultural worldview (McPhail 2002). The result is Islamophobia that creates

stereotypes that frame Muslim Americans as foreigners and terrorists (Alsultany 2007), creating a divide between “Muslim” and “American” that cannot be reconciled by those who subscribe to the stereotypes (Beydoun 2018).

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the news media increased its coverage of terrorism-related events. However, some critics (e.g. Alsultany 2007; Beydoun 2018; Vultee 2009) argue the characterization of Islam has reinforced the idea of “other” within the worldview of Americans. For example, Vultee (2006) says the term “fatwa” has become a synonym for “Islamic death sentence” in the West even though it was created primarily by U.S. media. And in his review of Fox News Channel’s discourse on Islam, he argues the cable network and its website act as an ideological clearinghouse that sets a foundation for polarized commentary in an effort to legitimize continued military action against countries who citizens don’t fit the Western worldview (Vultee 2009). In a 2007 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 32% of Americans said the media had the most significant influence on their views of Muslims, and 48% said the media had contributed to negatives views of Islam (Pew 2007). Three years earlier, a different survey among Muslims in the United States showed only 25% felt the media portrayed Muslims fairly, with African-American Muslims – the largest group of Muslims in the United States – the least supportive of the media (Rozell 2010).

Aly and Green (2008) performed a meta-analysis of studies of U.S. media coverage of the attacks on 9/11 and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed, finding common media constructions around good versus evil. In the media coverage, they found the repeated idea that good must necessarily triumph over the evil “other” that is Islamic terrorism, personified by Osama bin Laden. According to Merskin (2009), the framing of Middle Eastern Americans as “other” is made complete by visuals from the mass media that highlight images focusing on the violent and sensational. This combination helps develop an image of Middle Easterners, no matter the country of origin, as the enemy (Love 2009).

Theoretical Foundation and Hypothesis Development

With the framing of Islam and Muslims as “other” conceptualized in the United States by its presidents, and continued confirmation of that framing communicated by the news media, the CAIR ads fall into a rhetorical discourse that positions their sponsors as the outgroup in relation to the worldview of “patriotic Americans” that see the culture class of West versus East in terms of good versus evil. Terror management theory (TMT), as developed by Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon (1986), provides a theoretical framework for initiating analysis of the CAIR campaign. According to TMT, as individuals are reminded of their own mortality, they exhibit increased death thought accessibility, or DTA (Hayes et al. 2010). To assuage the existential anxiety aroused by higher levels of DTA, individuals resort to either immediate suppression of the death threat, or cling to anxiety buffering worldviews which typically results in an increase in negative evaluations of those who do not share their cultural worldview. Negative reactions to moral transgressors, a frame in which Islam has been placed, occur because the transgressors threaten the validity of the individual’s beliefs and values (Rosenblatt et al. 1989). When moral principals are not followed, Rosenblatt et al. (1989) state that either the principals are not valid or the transgressor is evil. When given the choice between discrediting their own worldview, or disparaging someone or some group that threatens the values of that worldview, most individuals choose to dehumanize the outgroup.

Because reminders of an individual’s vulnerability increase negative reactions toward the transgressor, the CAIR advertisements describing the events of 9/11 from eye-witnesses play into the effects of TMT on Americans who adopted the worldview prescribed by Bush and promulgated by Trump and the news media. As first responders describe in the ads what they saw that day, and viewers are reminded of threats to their security, safety, values and life, their worldview of Islam as “bad” should

be solidified based on TMT principles. Whereas even mere exposure to death-related stimuli can increase DTA, Landau et al. (2004) have found that 9/11 references in particular can increase DTA and worldview defense among American audiences. Thus, it is likely that reminders of 9/11 can induce mortality salience, and promote worldview defense that can cast Muslims as the other and lead to disparagement of any worldview being advanced by a Muslim.

If ads are a social contextualization that displays the social characteristics in settings that are culturally determined, there are likely personal and psychological contexts also at work that reflect the mind of the viewer participating in the advertisement (Stern 1989). Advertising provides a degree of constraint on the individual interpretation by the viewer because of the common body of linguistic, literary, and cultural conventions that acts as a guide for the audience receiving the ad's message. An ad's meaning depends on a shared agreement in social communications where individual interpretation is governed by the social context of familiar patterns and themes combined with allusions to social and historical contexts (Stern 1989).

The events of the 9/11 attacks in the United States may be the first social construct with a shared global context because of the ubiquitous presence of mass communications on an international scale. The combination of satellite and cable television, along with the Internet, has made it possible for the same images to be repeated globally. This is not to say the worldview that shapes the narrative does not affect the context. It is merely a fact that the images of that event have been replayed often enough in global communications that the social and historical contexts are communal in nature. This aspect is vital to understanding the cultural context to which Americans' view the events, and the previously mentioned discourse that established the framework for the narrative – good versus evil, Christianity versus Islam, West versus East – that followed. Viewers of the CAIR ads are recipients of a cultural ideology embedded in the messages. As the text of the ads situates the viewer in a communal cultural

ideology, the advertisement's content recalls the context of the events that have been seared into a shared memory. The effect evokes established meaning in the viewer's social, personal, and psychological contexts that, according to TMT, reinforce a cultural worldview.

Individuals who have hardened opinions, such as those who are at the extremes of political partisanship or religiosity, the most likely to express them regardless of existing public opinion (Matthes, Morrison, and Schemer 2010). Survey research immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, showed that more than 90% of respondents reported turning to God for help in managing attack-related feelings of fear and stress (Schuster et al. 2001). In addition, previous research found a significant relationship between fear appeals in advertising and one's level of God salience (Wu and Cutright 2018). Therefore, based on the death thought accessibility tenants of TMT, socially shared beliefs and culturally shared experiences related to 9/11, and the framing of Muslims as a religious "other" by politicians and the media, the following hypotheses are offered:

H1: Significant differences exist in attitude toward the CAIR ad for those high in religious fundamentalism versus those low in religious fundamentalism.

H2: Religious fundamentalism moderates the relationship between the advertisement and one's attitude toward the CAIR ad.

Quantitative Analysis – Religiosity and Attitudes

Quantitative analysis was initiated via a 46-item survey taken online by a convenience sample of university students who completed the survey for course extra credit within a year of the advertisements being aired. One hundred eighty-five individuals initiated the survey. After removing participants who failed to complete the survey or failed to follow directions, a total of 174 respondents (94.1%) comprised the final dataset. Of the respondents, 103 were male (58.2%) with average age of 22.9 (range

19-52). In addition, 59% were Caucasian, with 16.1% African American and 14.1% Hispanic. In terms of religion, 21.5% identified as Catholic, 16.9% as Protestant, and 26.6% as other – meaning they did not identify as any of the options provided which included Buddhist, Jewish, Orthodox, Mormon, Hindu, Muslim, Unitarian, and New Age (e.g. Wiccan, Pagan), as well as Catholic and Protestant. In addition, 27.7% identified as unaffiliated, indicating that more than one out of every four respondents may not have been religious at all.

The instrument featured a 20-item Likert-style scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to measure attitudes toward religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992) as the independent variable. Examples of the items include “The long-established traditions in religion show the best way to honor and serve God, and should never be compromised,” “When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not,” and the reverse-coded “ALL of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings.” In addition, a 15-item Likert-style scale (1 = not at all well, 5 = extremely well) was used to measure a general evaluative dimension of one’s attitude toward advertisement (Burke and Edell 1986) as a dependent variable. Respondents were presented with instructions that read “Thinking of the ad you just saw, please rate how well you think each of the words listed below describe the ad” with items including “believable,” “informative,” “meaningful to me,” “worth remembering” and reverse-coded items such as “irritating,” “phony” and “bad.”

Finally, a five-item Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) was leveraged to measure attitude toward charitable organizations (Webb, Green, and Brashear 2000) as a potential covariate. Examples of items include “The money given to charities goes for good causes,” “Charity organizations perform a useful function for society,” and the reverse-coded “Much of the money donated to charity is wasted.” After completing the scales for religious fundamentalism and attitude

toward charities, respondents were shown either the CAIR ad featuring the firefighter or the ad featuring the clinical pharmacist, after which they were asked their attitude toward the advertisement (see Appendix for individual scale items and factor loadings). In addition, demographic data were collected including gender, ethnicity, and religion.

When analyzing each scale for validity and reliability, factor analysis using varimax rotation on the religious fundamentalism scale showed cross-loading of five items. Removal of these items that each loaded at .500 or more on multiple dimensions from the construct resulted in a reliable 15-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .918$) used in the final analysis that explained 66.54% of the variance. Similar factor analysis was conducted on the other scales, which demonstrated equal reliability measures. One item was removed from the attitude toward the ad ($\alpha = .876$) scale that was cross-loading, resulting in a 14-item construct for final analysis. The five-item attitude toward charities scale proved reliable ($\alpha = .792$).

In order to examine the effects of one's religiosity on effectiveness of the ads, the data for the religious fundamentalism independent variable were ordered and segmented into three equal parts. The resulting three groups represented those who were low ($n = 59, M = 2.02$), medium ($n = 57, M = 3.66$) and high ($n = 61, M = 4.88$) in attitudes toward religious fundamentalism. This use of polar extremes as a data segmentation approach is an established practice to maximize variance for a specific variable, or to mitigate potential structural problems within a variable (George and Prybutok 2015). Following segmenting, the medium group was removed from the center of the data on religious fundamentalism to place greater emphasis on the tail values of the variable. This methodology parses a dataset while maintaining a level of impartiality due to the arbitrary designation of the parsing value (George and Prybutok 2015).

Figure 2: CAIR “9/11 Happened to Us All” PSA, Firefighter



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahVaxoN20E8>

When analyzing the data from respondents who viewed the advertisement featuring the firefighter (see Figure 2), and using an independent sample t-test, attitude toward the ad was significantly different ($F(1,63) = 4.411$, $t\text{-value} = -2.32$, $p\text{-value} = .023$) for those who were the least religious ($M = 2.57$) and those who were the most religious ($M = 2.80$), with attitude toward charities acting as a covariate ($p = .016$). A correlation analysis between attitude toward the ad and religious fundamentalism also showed marginal significance ($p = .067$). Similar tests conducted to analyze differences between individuals low in attitude toward religious fundamentalism and those medium in that variable showed no significance, nor were there significant differences between those high in religious fundamentalism and individuals in the middle (all $ps > .10$), thus underscoring the attitudinal differences between those at the extremes of religiosity and supporting H1.

Figure 3: CAIR “9/11 Happened to Us All” PSA, Medical Responder



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVtup1bB7aM>

However, unlike the firefighter ad, there was no significant differences between high and low religious individuals in attitude toward the ad when analyzing data from respondents who viewed the ad featuring the clinical pharmacist (see Figure 3). This may be a function of the fact that the firefighter was male and the pharmacist was female, or that the firefighter was dark-skinned and the pharmacist was light-skinned (Brambaugh 2009; Schlinger and Plummer 1972). Therefore, H1 is only partially supported. Further research will be required to ascertain cause for the differences between ads.

Because there were significant differences for those viewing the firefighter ad, to test H2 a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run with attitude toward the ad as the dependent variable, and attitude toward religious fundamentalism and each ad viewed as independent variables. Results showed a significant interaction ($F(2,170) = 3.174, p = .044$) between one's attitude toward religious fundamentalism and the advertisement they saw. This was confirmed by leveraging the PROCESS tool (Hayes 2012) and evaluating whether religious fundamentalism functioned as a moderator in the relationship between the advertisement viewed and one's attitude toward the ad when results showed a

significant interaction ($p = .033$, $F(1,172) = 4.597$, CI: $-.2039$, $-.0084$). Thus H2 is supported for one of the two ads. This underscores three aspects of religious views toward the CAIR advertisements: (1) individuals high and low in their attitudes toward religious fundamentalism had significantly different attitudes toward the advertisement featuring the firefighter; (2) the choice of narrator in an advertisement to affect persuasion is affected by one's attitude toward religious fundamentalism; and (3) religious fundamentalism moderated the relationship between ad and attitude. This seems to support recent research (Wu and Cutright 2018) that shows that when the concept of God is salient, consumer compliance and persuasion in response to fear appeals is dampened.

Qualitative Analysis – An Approach to Advertising Critique

To understand why the CAIR ads may have been ineffective in reframing Muslims, qualitative analysis may provide some answers. The present research relies on the text-interpretive approach (e.g. Hackley and Hackley 2018; Stern 1996; Toncar and Fetscherin 2012) which leverages literary theory as well as semiotic and rhetorical analysis to “provide a systematic and nuanced analysis of the individual elements that make up the ad” (McQuarrie and Mick 1999, 38). Specifically, this research conducts an analysis of the content, images, and consumer behavior using Stern's (1989) illustrative analysis model for literary criticism in advertising, which posits that ads simultaneously reflect and influence behavior. In doing so, it applies a four-step approach to advertising critique: (1) analytical accounting of the text; (2) analysis of the context through sociocultural and historical perspectives; (3) structural and semiotic analysis; and (4) consideration of who the audience is and what the desired outcome is of the message originator. This method follows both semiotic and textual analysis to form a qualitative methodology based on literary theory (Brown 2015). In addition to the spoken word used by the participants in the communications, a critique of advertising must include critique of the use of sound, video and sound

editing, pacing, nonverbal cues, and unspoken words or symbols that reach the intended audience. Empirical research has demonstrated each of these elements can affect audience behavior (e.g. Bolls, Muehling, and Yoon 2003; Englis 1994; Stewart 1998). If this is true, then TMT again provides the framework to reinforce a worldview that Muslims are inherently un-American and a threat to Americanism. A literary critique of the two advertisements using Stern's framework follows that demonstrates this point.

Step 1 – Analysis of the text

The first step in Stern's (1989) methodological approach to advertising critique is an analytical accounting of the text to reframe the question "what does it mean?" to the question "what does it say?" (Toncar and Fetscherin 2012). To accomplish this, the text of the CAIR ads was examined line by line to identify attributes such as language, character and plot, construction of meaning including genre and rhetorical tactic, and deconstruction of meanings such as oppositional binaries, gaps, and voices (Stern 1996). Results find a halting narrative approach that attempts to place the viewer in the personal context of the character who is telling a first-person story, and a plot that relies on an exposition narrative that leverages prior events to gradually bring the viewer into the world being described. The first advertisement features a New York City firefighter recalling his experiences as a first responder to the events unfolding at the World Trade Centers.

When my friend came up and told me that Sean Powell was on the list, I took out my phone and called him. That's when it hit me, and I was like 'OK, this is real.'

At this point, the audience does not know exactly to what the firefighter is referring, though it is possible to see the character is distraught. The second ad featuring a clinical pharmacist initiates a similar opening leaving the viewer in doubt to what the technician is describing.

When we arrived, we realized ... it was chaos. There was a lot to be done.

The intent, like the opening act of a three-act play, is to establish the framework that draws an audience into the perspective of the central characters – the firefighter and the pharmacist. Further, while the audience does not know exactly what the narrative is describing, the text offers cues to the ominous nature of the events being described. Textually, the advertisements attempt to draw in the viewer with foreshadowing that plays on the affective response to the ad, a method that is common among marketing practitioners today because consumers pay attention to their affective responses first as a source of information for attitudinal judgments that follow (Stewart and Koh 2018). This is important as recent research in advertising finds emotions mediate the relationship between beliefs and attitudes (Arnaud, Curtis, and Waguespack 2018). As explained by TMT, and as demonstrated earlier in quantitative section of this research, the link between religious beliefs and attitude toward the ad are crucial in understanding the effectiveness of the campaign.

Meaning is constructed by both characters being first responders that creates a relationship with the viewer (Stern 1988). First responders function as a symbol with which the viewer can relate because they are an idealized individual in an epic situation (Stern and Gallagher 1991). A survey conducted by Pew Research Center found Americans cited the country's response to 9/11 as the event that made them most proud, with the bravery of the first responders specifically mentioned (Pew 2017b). The ads leverage this to communicate meanings of heroism and self-sacrifice. The speakers' serious and halting

communicative style also establishes tone for the ad. However, deconstructing the ads shows they dismantle this meaning by challenging what the viewer believes about what a first responder is and what it means to be a Muslim. The intent of the ad is for the viewer to equate Muslims with heroes. But given the framing of Muslims by politicians and the media, the result may be cognitive dissonance as the viewer is left to reconcile “heroes” and “terrorists.”

Step 2 – Context analysis through sociocultural and historical perspectives

As the ads move past their introductions, they slowly provide contextual evidence to their narrators’ connections with the events of September 11. Here, Stern’s (1989) approach to the symbolic codes of the advertisement demonstrate the effort to link the ad content to 9/11 and all the meaning that it entails for the American public. This allows for analysis of the context of the advertisement through sociocultural and historical perspectives, the second step in the methodology. For example, at this point in the ad featuring the pharmacist, she states

There were many firefighters, NYPD, and first responders that needed help.

Because of the communal context of the 9/11 events, there is little question to what event she is referring at this point. The lines that follow confirm the context, particularly when she says

I wanted to help my fellow Americans, my fellow New Yorkers ... that’s why I did it.

To remove any doubt, each ad displays the following typed text “9/11 happened to us all.” The viewer is situated within the events of September 11, 2001, replete with all its cultural meaning and political

ideology established by elected officials and the news media from the preceding years. Reminders of the viewer's worldview are solidified when the narrators are portrayed as the familiar "hero" narrative associated with emergency personnel who worked while events were unfolding. Both narrators then look directly into the camera.

I'm a New York City firefighter, and I responded to 9/11.

My name is Rudy, I'm a clinical pharmacist, a first responder in 9/11.

The narrative is set as the events of 9/11 held deep within a cultural ideology are brought to the surface of the viewer's memory. In fact, in response to an open-ended question, 76% of Americans mentioned the September 11 attacks as one of the 10 events in their lifetimes that had the greatest impact on the United States, more so than the assassination of President John F. Kennedy or landing on the moon (Pew 2017b).

According to TMT, thoughts of our mortality, threats to our safety, or moments of fear can have the effect of entrenching our cultural worldviews. Empirical studies have shown the significant relationship between mortality salience and reformation of individual established perspectives (e.g. Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1986; McGregor et al. 1998; Pyszczynski et al. 2006; Pyszczynski et al. 2010; Rosenblatt et al. 1989). As descriptions of 9/11 provide recall of the viewer's memory of not only those events but their feelings of diminished safety, increased fear, and human mortality, closely held beliefs about Islam and Muslims rise to the surface as the narrative of "hero" is confirmed on the narrator. But then the ads hit their potential flaw. The person on the screen, moments ago a possible hero in the eyes of the viewer, makes a startling announcement.

My name is Rudy, I'm a clinical pharmacist, a first responder in 9/11 ... and a Muslim.

This act of establishing the faith of the narrator reminds the viewer of the dichotomous framework established in culture of Muslim and Christian. Suddenly, the person before them has become the “other” and the cultural worldview of good and evil is stimulated. The male character provides similar contrasts when he says

I'm a New York City firefighter, and I responded to 9/11. And I am a Muslim.

Based on TMT, the viewer will recall the events of that day, the rhetoric that has taken place since that day, and be reminded of the “Muslim as other” frame. This conclusion is validated by Landau et al. (2004) who found that reminding people of their own mortality increased support for former President Bush and his counterterrorism policies which directly involved punishing the Muslim majority countries which were deemed to be involved in the attacks.

Step 3 – Structural and semiotic analysis

Semiotics is the science of signs, where a sign is something that represents or stands for something else in an individual’s mind. This can be words, sounds, or symbols that combine with the content of the message to help complete the intended meaning of what is being expressed (Hjelmslev 1961). However, what is understood depends on the perspective of the observer (Manning and Callum-Swan 1994). Semiotic analysis is a tool leveraged in advertising analysis (e.g. McQuarrie and Mick 2002) for deciphering the message originator’s intent using a set of assumptions and concepts that permit analysis of symbolic systems. Any element of an ad, including a character’s appearance, the ad’s color palate, the lighting used, and any objects used in the ad can function as a signifier (Toncar and

Fetscherin 2012). Therefore, semiotic analysis must consider each aspect of the ad as assisting in forming meaning derived by the viewer.

To accomplish communications through the use of signs, the advertisements leveraged the nonverbal aspects of the narrators, and chose specific musical structural elements (i.e. sounds) in an effort to affect attitudes. The use of music has been shown to be an effective means of emotional communication (Gabrielsson and Juslin 2003; Juslin and Laukka 2003) including communicating sadness or evoking fear. In the CAIR ads, the slow cadence of the music should contribute to the affective response of the viewer (Stewart and Koh 2018). The producers of the ads also chose to film them in black and white, which has been found to be effective in transmitting information and increasing cognitive activity rather than affective response (Dooley and Hawkins 1970; Pantin-Sohier and Brée 2004). The argument could be that changing one's worldview of "Muslim as other" to "Muslim as us" requires cognitive effort.

The ad attempts to increase affect through a scene in which the firefighter takes a deep breath and a tear path is visible on the side of his left cheek. The audience, aware of the events that took place on 9/11, knows that his friend has been killed in the attack. No words are necessary because nonverbal aspects of speech are also effective in evoking emotional communication (Scherer 1986). The advertisement at this point fades to black. Later, a close-up of the character is used for his announcement of his religion followed by all musical sounds growing louder. The intent is to evoke emotional response from the viewer. The corresponding ad with the female first responder has a similar motif. The resulting summation of the audio and visual elements of the ads that places viewers into the context of 9/11 provides a gestalt for the advertisement experience. This depicts the relationship between the ad's content, form, and values (Stern and Gallagher 1991) by creating a meaning that conveys values not only by what the message is, but how it is communicated. By using an allegorical approach, the ads

place the viewer into a cultural worldview shaped over time, which research has shown can define what that culture believes is correct behavior (Stern and Gallagher 1991).

Semiotic analysis of the ads also uncovered the following binary elements: (1) black/white – each ad is filmed in black and white, with even words showing up as white on a black background, which may increase cognition (Pantin-Sohier and Brée 2004); (2) close/far – views of the characters show the characters from three vantage points, close up, waist up, and full body, which can effect viewer response (Artz, Tybout, and Kehret-Ward 1993; Kim, Lee, and Choi 2019) in both affective and cognitive modes; (3) loud/soft – music and other sounds increase and decrease in volume, as well as sustain at times as previously discussed to create an affective response; (4) sound/no sound – while music can communicate emotion, the lack of sound is also effective in storytelling (Stern 1994) and shifts the burden of portraying emotion to the characters (Campbell and Pearson 2019). The ads do this, for example, by showing the individuals in an emotive state, including a tear on the face of the firefighter. Another part of semiotic analysis involves looking at contrasts and implied contradictions (Toncar and Fetscherin 2012). Unfortunately for CAIR, the ultimate contradiction is the idea of “Muslim as good” that the campaign is trying to communicate against a worldview created by political rhetoric and media narratives that “Muslim is other” or even “Muslim as bad.”

Step 4 – Consideration of the audience and desired outcome

The final step in Stern’s (1989) advertising critique methodology is to consider who the audience is and what the desired outcome is of the message originator. The ads leverage the “epic” motif where the objective is to communicate moral or educational lessons through storytelling in a rich, complex language (Stern and Gallagher 1991). CAIR’s legislative director said the goal was to “humanize Muslims to our fellow Americans and then also remind everybody that on 9/11 Al-Qaeda attacked the

United States, not Islam.” Therefore, the wider audience for these ads is the entire U.S. population. However, while research found feelings of warmth by Americans increasing for all religions, these views differed by age, religion, and political alliances (Pew 2017a). For example, those in the age ranges 30-49 and 50-64 listed Muslims as the religion they feel the coldest about, and those 65 and older ranked Muslims the coldest. Meanwhile, White Evangelicals had an even more negative view of Muslims while Black Protestants had the highest. In terms of politics, Republicans had the most negative feeling toward Muslims than any other religion, while Democrats rated their feelings for that group higher than their feelings toward both Evangelical Christians and Mormons.

Goals of the epic approach to storytelling include communicating appropriate codes of behavior, morality, and what’s best for a group or nation (Stern and Gallagher 1991). First-person narrative is leveraged by the ads because it assumes an audience will be accepting and sympathetic (Stern 1991). As a result, this approach is often used to communicate emotional messages in hope that they “inspire audiences to feel the same way as the presenter” (Stern 1991, p. 12). First-person narratives also help increase credibility of the character, which the source credibility model (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953) says has an impact on the effectiveness of the message as well as attitudes and behaviors. The desired outcome of the ad campaign, then, is to reframe Muslim as “bad” and “other” to Muslim as “good” and “same.” According to a CAIR news release, the organization distributed the ads to television stations nationwide and posted them on social media sites, with the goal of “reaching millions of Americans.” However, there are inherent risks with this approach as well, as audience members can form different “interpretative communities” that respond in unique ways to the ads (Belk 2017). Therefore, based on the results of the quantitative analysis conducted and the literary critique of the campaign’s content, it seems unlikely the goal was achieved.

Discussion

CAIR's hope with the "9/11 Happened to Us All" campaign analyzed in this research was to affect the discussion of Islam in the United States and possibly stem the tide of an Islamic backlash. Because previous rhetoric from CAIR focused on denouncing Islamic radicals like Al-Qaeda, the organization's leadership decided it was time to change tactics. However, the recalling of September 11, 2001 in the minds of the viewer has the effect of establishing mortality salience and emotions of fear and lack of security. From this point, the element of the ads designed to connect American and Muslim has the opposite effect and, instead, confirmed Muslim as "other." Cultural worldviews are entrenched, good versus evil is restored, and Islamophobia is perpetuated.

Based on TMT, a critique of the CAIR advertisements demonstrated that while the intent of the ads is noble, the execution entrenches political ideologues in a predetermined worldview that causes them to not only reject claims that could correct their misperceptions, but increase their negative attitudes toward the "other." They do this by reminding the viewers of their own mortality or fears by recalling the events of 9/11 as told by first responders who were on the ground that day. Unfortunately, invoking memories of the attacks comes with the risk of hardening one's worldview (Landau et al. 2004; McPhail 2002; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). CAIR's intent was to show that Muslims were also first responders, and therefore just as heroic as any of the firefighters, police officers, and medical personnel who arrived to assist. Instead, the concept of Muslims as outside the group is reinforced. For CAIR, it may not be a matter of changing the beliefs of all Americans, but rather, targeting those with the most negative feelings toward Muslims.

Death thought accessibility has been brought to the fore in advancing terror management theory (Hayes et al. 2010). Even when targeted through a seemingly innocuous mass-media message in the comfort of one's home, images, sounds, and characters that are associated with the events of 9/11 have

the potential of increasing DTA. The CAIR ads appear to fall into the category of communications that can lead to increased DTA, and subsequent worldview defense. While the message sponsor's intent is to invoke a deep-seated American value of tolerance and patriotism, the context of the ad has the potential to prime associations of 9/11 with destruction blamed on fundamentalist Muslims. The resulting negative halo may be hard to ignore for audiences who in the face of mortality salience are trying to buttress an anxiety buffer which is more readily strengthened by disparaging the outgroup rather than upholding American values of tolerance and freedom of religion.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Islamophobia has maintained its presence in the public discourse with every anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The CAIR ads in preparation for the 10th anniversary of 9/11 were not the first attempt to resist the binary configuration of good/American versus bad/Muslim. With hate crimes on the rise after 9/11, the Ad Council developed the "I Am an American" campaign that started airing just 10 days after the attacks. The aim was to dissuade crimes against Muslims by showing American diversity. However, there were no visible or auditory signifiers of Muslim Americans in the ads, with *hijabs* and turbans conspicuously absent. Thus, the results do not solve the framing of Muslim as "other" (Alsultany 2007). Also in the aftermath of 9/11 CAIR launched a campaign titled "I'm an American Muslim" in an effort to show Muslims as patriotic and interwoven into the fabric of being American. Other ads in the campaign attempt to address stereotypes of Islam, and feature signifiers of the religion. Alsultany (2007) argues that these ads also perpetuate exclusionary beliefs.

Ten years later, the producers at CAIR should have adopted a different framework in an effort to reframe the discussion of Muslim Americans because human behaviorists and political scientists have found providing factual information to combat a cultural worldview also entrenches that worldview

(Nyhan and Reifler 2010). However, Nyhan and Reifler (2010) also found that staking a contradictory position – the “I am not a terrorist” trope – rarely worked in correcting misperceptions. And affirming the opposite – the “I am a Muslim” trope – did not work much better, often making the subject resist changes to the ideologies that existed prior to the correction. CAIR’s ads that position first respondents as Muslims is akin to ads in which Obama stated he is a Christian. Both are unwelcomed information to viewers with established worldviews, making them more resistant to ideas that challenge their position. This provides an opportunity for future research to test various frames of Islam and Muslim to determine what effects they have on individuals based on their religiosity and political worldview. Research could be based on Beydoun’s (2018) proposed typology of “Acting Muslim” – a method American Muslims have adopted to communicate or conceal their Muslim identity. The idea behind Acting Muslim is based on identity negotiation (Carbado and Gulati 2000) in which individuals determine how much they want their public conduct to define the self. That is, efforts to find one’s place in society may be based on levels of displaying or removing conspicuous symbols of one’s beliefs. The four-part Acting Muslim typology includes: (1) Confirming Islam, where individuals fully express their Muslim identity; (2) Conforming Islam, where the individual tries to assimilate their conduct to social norms; (3) Covering Islam, where an individual tones down or hides religious traits; and (4) Concealing Islam, in which the individual portrays themselves as non-Muslim (Beydoun 2018). Acting Muslim goes beyond expressions of religious activity by also including cultural and ethnic expression, and political views and activity. This is crucial, Beydoun argues, because counterterror policy and enforcement interprets Muslim identity in social, cultural, and political terms as well. Future research could test ads using the various forms of Acting Muslim to determine what effects they have on attitudes and beliefs toward Islam.

Political scientists and pollsters (e.g. Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Pew 2009) have often asked if public opinion, when based on incorrect information, can be corrected. Third-party narrative is one advertising strategy that CAIR could have attempted to combat this challenge by adopting the Acting Muslim typology. Imagine an endorsement from a narrator who occupies a cultural worldview similar to that of the average American. Instead of a Muslim telling viewers how they responded to the 9/11 attacks, a Christian spokesperson could provide narratives of Islamic friends whom he or she has learned to trust and respect. This may be effective because this research showed that individuals high and low in their attitudes toward religious fundamentalism had significantly different attitudes toward the advertisement, and religious fundamentalism moderated the relationship between ad and attitude. However, these results are limited by use of the student sample, even though previous research has found student samples can produce results as relevant as the same research conducted on different groups (Falk and Heckman 2009).

CAIR may be advised to develop different, specific religious-based ads featuring credible sources with religious ties who can communicate key messages regarding a new frame for Islam. For years marketers have parlayed celebrity fame into company and product endorsements in an effort to support brands, influence audiences, and increase purchase intentions, which research has shown to positively affect attitude toward a brand and purchase intention (e.g. Amos, Holmes, and Strutton 2008; Erdogan 1999; Spears, Royne, and Van Steenburg 2013). In particular, use of celebrities in advertising is popular among practitioners because advertisers believe that messages delivered by well-known personalities increase attention and recall among consumers (Ohanian 1991). The meaning transfer model argues “the effectiveness of the endorser depends upon the meanings he or she brings to the endorsement process” (McCracken 1989, p. 312). In the model, meaning starts within a culture and moves to products before becoming associated with the consumer of those products. When celebrity

endorsers are involved in meaning transfer, they bring “meanings of extra subtlety, depth, and power” because they offer “particular configurations of meanings that cannot be found elsewhere” (McCracken 1989, p. 315).

Potential sources who could be leveraged for future CAIR ads include Muslim athletes like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Shaquille O’Neal, and Muhammad Ali (using his 1977 London interview discussing religion), singers such as Janet Jackson, Ice Cube, Mos Def, and Zayn Malik, and actors like Dave Chappelle, Aasif Mandvi, Dr. (Mehmet) Oz, and Ellen Burstyn. However, even this approach is fraught with challenges as early research (Van Steenburg 2017) has found meaning transfer flows from the object (in this case, Islam) to the source (the spokesperson) when viewers consider their political values. Perhaps, then, these prominent Muslim sources should be featured alongside celebrities who have discussed their Christian faith in public, such as actors Chuck Norris, Dwayne Johnson, Angela Bassett and Denzel Washington, singers Carrie Underwood and Justin Bieber, athletes Steph Curry, Tim Tebow, and Dion Sanders, and personalities such as Steve Harvey, Tyler Perry, and Kathie Lee Gifford, the latter who has appeared in the Christian “I Am Second” ad campaign. Jewish celebrities such as Natalie Portman and Mayim Bialik should also be considered. Such an approach could be targeted toward specific audiences based on demographics that align with the various sources. This would help to ensure proper fit between the source and the audience, which research shows is crucial to source effectiveness (Maciak and Shanklin 1994).

In early research on the Evangelical Christian market segment, McDaniel and Burnett (1991) suggested that marketing through secular media is the most effective way to reach evangelicals, and recommended that conservative attitudes and lifestyles be stressed. But they caution that “extreme care should be taken in the type of message conveyed in the advertising” (McDaniel and Burnett 1991, p. 32) because advertising that implies nontraditional moral codes or breaks with conservative lifestyles will

not be effective with this market segment. With a nationwide survey (Pew 2017a) finding White Evangelicals had a negative view of Muslims (though better than their view of Atheists), it might be worth CAIR's effort to target this group. Advertising messages based on traditional Christian values, such as "love thy neighbor," or reminders of Jesus' teachings such as "blessed are the peacemakers" and used in a respectful way should appeal to those with high levels of faith (Gibbs and Ilkan 2008).

Finally, Stern (1989) argues that if the consumer is to be considered an active participant in the experience of the ad, research on feedback is required to understand the responses to the advertising message. This is because the effects of advertisements are not always what the developers intended, and therefore may not be what the qualitative analysis found (Belk 2017). Therefore, further empirical research must be conducted to gather recipient feedback and determine the advertising campaign's effectiveness.

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Appendix

<p>Attitude toward religious fundamentalism ($\alpha = .918$)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God has given humanity a complete, unyielding guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed. 2. ALL of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings. (r) 3. The long-established traditions in religion show the best way to honor and serve God, and should never be compromised. 4. Religion must admit all its past failings and adapt to modern life if it is to benefit humanity. (r) 5. When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not. 6. Different religions and philosophies have different versions of the truth, and may be equally right in their own way. (r) 7. The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting against God. 8. No one religion is especially close to God, nor does God favor any particular group of believers. (r) 9. God will punish most severely those who abandon his true religion. 10. God's true followers must remember that he requires them to constantly fight Satan and Satan's allies on this earth. 11. Parents should encourage children to study all religions without bias, then make up their own minds about what to believe. (r) 12. There IS a religion on this earth that teaches, without God's error, the truth. 13. "Satan" is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is NO SUCH THING as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us. (r) 14. Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, science must be wrong. 15. To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, true religion. 	<p>Loadings</p> <p>.856</p> <p>.758</p> <p>.729</p> <p>.854</p> <p>.806</p> <p>.807</p> <p>.855</p> <p>.799</p> <p>.700</p> <p>.831</p> <p>.495</p> <p>.658</p> <p>.768</p> <p>.730</p> <p>.732</p>
<p>Attitude toward advertisement ($\alpha = .876$)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Believable 2. For me 3. Informative 4. Interesting 5. Irritating (r) 6. Phony (r) 7. Ridiculous (r) 8. Terrible (r) 9. Valuable 10. Worth remembering 11. Convincing 12. Important to me 13. Stupid (r) 14. Bad (r) 	<p>Loadings</p> <p>.874</p> <p>.916</p> <p>.933</p> <p>.915</p> <p>.819</p> <p>.692</p> <p>.842</p> <p>.916</p> <p>.915</p> <p>.914</p> <p>.911</p> <p>.850</p> <p>.822</p> <p>.618</p>
<p>Attitude toward charitable organizations ($\alpha = .792$)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The money given to charities goes for good causes. 2. Much of the money donated to charity is wasted. (r) 3. My image of charitable organizations is positive. 4. Charitable organizations have been quite successful in helping the needy. 5. Charity organizations perform a useful function for society. 	<p>Loadings</p> <p>.745</p> <p>.572</p> <p>.836</p> <p>.825</p> <p>.810</p>

