

TEACHER GUIDE

2004 DOC. #7: Targeting Latinos TV Commercials

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In early 2003 the Census Bureau reported that Latinos had surpassed African Americans as the largest “minority” population in the country. Campaign managers for both parties knew that more Latinos would vote than ever before in the presidential elections of 2004. They also knew that before long Latinos would represent the majority of the voting population in certain southwestern states.

George W. Bush made a point of reaching out to traditionally Democratic groups, especially Latino voters. As recently as the 1980s the Democrats could count on receiving 85-90% of Latino votes in presidential elections. Bush challenged that assumption in the 1998 Texas governor’s race and received 48% of the Hispanic vote (Jam 156). Bush’s share of the Latino vote rose from 35% in 2000 to 44% in 2004 (Ceaser 140).

> **Distribute** the handout with English translations of these commercials. Have students read the translations before and after viewing each commercial.

> **Play** the video clip, 2004 Doc. #7a.

QUESTION	What is the primary message of this commercial?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	Kerry will provide an opportunity for more Latino youth to graduate from college.
QUESTION	What words do the producers of the Kerry commercial use to communicate this message?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	“Only half of Hispanic youth graduate from high school.” “John Kerry and the Democrats aspire for more than a million students to enroll in college.” “They also want to open the doors to a university education to all our children and improve public education.”
QUESTION	What images do they use to convey the message?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	The young woman preparing for graduation. The mother embracing her daughter. The license plate with the words “Unidos con Kerry” (“United with Kerry”).

2004 DOC. #7a



Kerry “Graduation” TV Commercial

Video Clip (30 sec.)

> Play the video clip, 2004 Doc. #7b.

QUESTION **What is the primary message of this commercial?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Latino families are patriotic and have progressed through hard work. Latino voters support Bush because he knows and respects the strength of the Latino families and cultural traditions.

QUESTION **What words do the producers of the Bush commercial use to communicate this message?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER "I have faith in this land that has seen me progress working every day." "I'm with Bush because he knows my family."
"[Bush] understands my problems, my culture, my rights [and] gives me respect."

QUESTION **What images do they use to convey the message?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Hard work and progress—graduation photo, businessman on phone, kids doing homework, mother working at table.
Family strength—Father and son together, family on porch, at dinner table, in group photo, mother and father standing over crib, looking at one another.
Bush understands—Bush smiling, waving, holding thumbs up sign, holding Latina child.

QUESTION **How do the music and vocals contribute to the message?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The melody is uplifting and people sing together in chorus, suggesting hope and unity. Vocals include both men's and women's voices, suggesting an appeal to the whole family.

2004 DOC. #7b



**2004 doc. #7b
Bush "Mi Familia"
TV Commercial**

Video Clip (1 min.)

QUESTION Which commercial do you think might be more effective and why?

SUGGESTED ANSWER Answers to this can vary though the Bush commercial is more sophisticated. The Bush commercial is longer and much more complex than the Kerry commercial, telling multiple stories with quick cuts and rich colors and imagery while the Kerry commercial uses a simple construction to focus on a single message and story line. Bush himself is repeatedly present in his commercial where Kerry seems more distant, only appearing in a photo at the end.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Discuss why these commercials might focus on imagery and emotion rather than on policy issues affecting the Latino population such as immigration and the war in Iraq.

Based on these commercials why do you think George Bush might have increased his appeal among Latino voters in 2004?

Consider the nature of the changing electorate over the years and discuss why so few documents in this kit are focused on candidate appeals to the Latino population.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Race

Target Audience (Latinos)

Compare theme and imagery in Bush’s “Mi Familia” commercial with Reagan’s “Morning in America” commercial (1984 Doc. #2).

ADDITIONAL INFO

Both parties made major efforts to court the Latino vote in 2004. The Republicans posted a Spanish-language website titled “Abriendo Caminos” (Forging New Paths) while the Democrats hosted Hispanic Leadership Summits. Pollster Sergio Bendixen noted that the biggest issues for Latinos in 2004 were education, jobs, health care, the war in Iraq, and immigration (Green <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2004/Feb/18-514070.html>).

Latino voting trends have changed significantly over the last 40 years. In 1964 Republican Barry Goldwater won only 10% of Mexican-American votes and 14% of Puerto Rican votes (De la Isla 23). By 1996 Republican candidate Bob Dole had increased the Republican share to 21% (Green). George W. Bush gained 35% of the Latino vote in 2000 and 44% in 2004. Whereas 40 years ago Latinos voted consistently Democratic, today the Latino electorate divide their votes more evenly between both parties, as is the pattern in the general electorate (Ceaser 140).