

## To Flag or not to Flag: Patriotic Symbolism

### In Candidates' Logos Correlate with Voters Expectations

Use of patriotic symbols as visual elements in candidates' logos has the power to differentiate the candidates and to portray their values. The logo of the candidate may be viewed as a visual ideograph which communicates directly to the chosen demographic of the candidate. In the absence of speeches, a candidate will use patriotic symbols as a case for belonging to a certain group. In the early days of presidential primary campaigning of 2008, the traditional, or more conservative, candidates are expected to use more patriotic symbolism while the iconoclast, or more liberal candidates, especially those who are against the war in Iraq, are expected to use fewer.

This paper (written at the start of the primary campaign in June 2007) looks at the visual elements of the top three candidates for president in the Democratic and Republican primaries beginning in 2007. The top candidates for the Democrats are: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards. The top candidates in the Republican field are: Mitt Romney, John McCain and Rudy Giuliani. After exploring the visual ideograph-including the inherent metaphor, group belonging, logo decisions of candidates and historic use of patriotic symbolism, we will analyze the logos of and using Social Judgment Theory of Sharif & Sharif. We will also examine how the messages of the candidates seek to fall into the latitude of acceptance for their demographic. We expect to find more use of patriotic symbols in the traditional candidates and fewer in the candidates who want to be viewed as iconoclastic. If his/her values line up with the voters, the candidate will be rewarded with the nomination for President.

*Ideographs*

Ideographs are representations of an idea. In its simplest form, the number “1” is viewed as a representation of one unit of whatever is being measured. Written English language has fewer of these pictograms than Chinese or other Asian languages. The use of symbology to represent ideas is prevalent in American Politics. Michael McGee contends that certain verbal terms like “liberty” and “patriotism” serve to create an ideological community which is culturally grounded (McGee 15). The community will then be guided by certain expressions of the group to the point of exclusion. Group members “who do not respond appropriately to claims on their behavior through ideograph will experience societal penalties” (McGee 16). J.M. Murphy claims that political speech uses history to give a symbolic lift which permeates through all political rhetoric (Murphy 295). Images must go beyond the concrete Messaris contends (Messaris 145). This abstraction allows for wider application. When a familiar figure is positioned in a new context, a metaphor is assumed to be the rhetorical operation. Visual patriotic metaphor requires the tenor, in this case the candidate and the vehicle, and the patriotism they profess or reject. Symbolism in the form of stars, red and white stripes and eagles are synecdoche assuming that the star represents the flag which represents the abstract concept of liberty.

In the information age, political rhetoric must extend to visual elements, especially the candidates’ logos. Edwards and Winkler (Edwards & Winkler 289) expanded the concept of ideographs from verbal expression to visual expression. Since rhetorical analysis involves a search for recurrent patterns, looking at the visuals of the campaign classifies as what Edwards and Winkler term “multi-strategic inquiry into rhetorical artifacts” (Edwards and Winkler 306). The flag is often used to represent the United States. Pineda and Stacey (Pineda and Stacey 164) claim that the flag is a visual argument about citizenship when analyzing the immigration

demonstrations of 2006. In the absence of speeches, a candidate will use patriotic symbols as a case for belonging to a certain group.

### *Group belonging*

Patriotic symbols are expected to elicit a certain response. Symbols inspire involvement in the country for identity acquisition and expression (Schatz & Lavine 328). Campaign managers are keenly aware of their target demographic. The voters expect to see the values of the candidates reflected in the logo of the candidate. Interest and comprehension of a logo is critical in the mind of the designers. Patriotic symbols are considered graphic elements which increase reader interest and comprehension (Renita & Wasike 24). The graphic must communicate to the viewer instantly, without creating confusion. Candidates hope a clear, patriotic logo will result in votes, but research published in *Political Psychology* in June 2007 by Schatz and Lavine (Schatz and Lavine 28), conclude that “symbolic involvement utterly failed to instigate any form of concrete political engagement” (Schatz & Lavine 351). It is inconclusive if the symbolism will motivate voters to vote for a particular candidate, but it is clear that not using these symbols will be a detriment to the candidate.

There is a strong, patriotic reaction to national symbols, because they are firm reminders of identification as national members. Schatz and Lavine explore in-group identification with symbols in four key ways. They signify the group; serve as a tangible representation of the group; provide in-group identification (as distinguished from the out-group); and they represent the group as a whole (Schatz & Lavine 353).

Identification with a group and exclusion of out-group members creates strong bonds of patriotism among citizens of the United States. It is no accident that the patriotic symbols are used in political campaigns. In the absence of a monarchy, the flag and the pledge are all we

have (Walzer 880). A quick visual representation of a national symbol in a logo gives the visual cue to the members of the group. In this case, Americans are the in-group. The flag signifies the group since it represents all the states, as opposed to an individual state flag. The majority of citizens in Utah would not want to be under the flag of New York or California as it is clear that these states have different political ideologies and voting patterns. All citizens are represented by the U. S. flag in international athletic events. Flags fly at the United Nations and above embassies across the world. The Great National Seal of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum*, from many-one, is the goal of the use of flag. Being a member of this political group is symbolic. “There is no country called America. We live in the United States of America and we have appropriated the adjective ‘American’ even though we claim no exclusive title to it.” (Walzer 592). A visual representation of a political abstraction is not easy to convey in typical campaign materials and the mind goes through a complex process to interpret those images.

The long history of symbolism in politics suggests the goal of symbolism is, to depict not the thing (the flag or stars) but the effect it produces. Richard Sennett in *A Nations Narrative* (Sennett 32), posits that patriotism has the power to have masses of ignorant sheep follow anybody who waves a flag, speaks of blood and soil. Logos for candidates are graphical shorthand to have the public eye know the candidate and for what he or she stands. Uses of patriotic symbols in logo design for presidential candidates give a background for analyzing the current candidates.

The ubiquitous use of patriotic symbolism tells the voters the values of the candidate with an image. In the book *Marketing of an American President*, Hockett states that the logo, or symbol for the campaign, will target an emotional rather than a rational reaction to the candidate (Hockett 73). Candidates use image managers to design images that will lodge in the minds of

voters (Postman 127). There are only a few iconic American images, other than the founding fathers on our currency, and a dozen historical statues and buildings. Thus, the U.S. uses the flag as a symbol of unity. Loyalty to the flag is an American principle (Zelinsky & Wilbur 84). The common knowledge has been that “attachment to such symbols supersedes ties to the groups that the symbols represent” (Schatz & Lavine 330). Symbols are used as a shortcut or a cue in political advertising as they “capture us not with words but with images, not with information but with entertainment, not with ideas but with emotions, not with facts, but with cue.” (Steinhorn 114). A presidential candidate must choose the visual aspects of the campaign to correlate to the intended demographic.

### *Logo decisions*

How a candidate chooses what symbolism to use in a logo speaks directly to what the voters expect a candidate to portray. In Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media*, he works on the premise that the creation of ads that are in the image of the audiences motives and desires (McLuhan 241). The ad becomes an icon which elicits a predictable response. The symbolism in a candidate’s logo will ultimately represent the candidate and that repetition will “push the principle of noise to the plateau of persuasion” (McLuhan 227). Thus the logo of the candidate becomes an instrument of persuasion which must be consistent with the values and message of the candidate.

The candidates’ logo is the visual cornerstone of the campaign (Flemming & Hunt 28). The three issues of the signature (how the name is rendered), the format (how the name is displayed), and the color should be considered in development of the logo. The design should strive to stand out in the crowded field of view of the voters. It should also be readable at a distance, which makes it better for yard signs and bumper stickers. In *Winning Graphics*,

Flemming and Hunt also advise that candidates stay away from curvy cursive. They also suggest that putting the name in white against a colored background makes it look larger and more readable at night. They also mention the interesting advertising strategy to place the name at an angle from the bottom left to the upper right which makes the viewers tilt their heads to read the name (Flemming and Hunt 111). Thus involvement by the viewer also increases. The logo is a strong, visual public relations tool.

Campaign managers, in order to have a consistent message, spend a lot of money on logo design. As with any design, “the human brain sifts images and bits of type, it innately simplifies and groups similar elements.” (White 5). If no connection is formed, the viewer perceives confusion. Designers search for similarities and each candidate must define himself/herself and not allow the opponent to run away with the campaign issues. Logo and other graphics are critical to this process (Halpern 302). In addition to the use of red, white and blue, this process has distilled patriotic, and therefore favorable, images to the target demographic, into a few overused signs, the star and the flag.

Semiotics defines signs and their use. The use of the flag is an emblem. “An emblem combines the functions of sign and symbol: it is a label for specific objects, but it can contain emotive values” (Zelinsky 277). The use of the flag and the colors red, white, and blue are ubiquitous for patriotism in political campaigns. In 2000, both Gore and Bush used symbolic props in their campaign materials and photos, such as flags and government seals to portray themselves as patriotic and therefore, favorable (Verser & Wicks 180). Most of the published photos during the campaign showed patriotic backgrounds.

To savvy Americans, aware of the power of advertising, these props may be seen as an attempt to manipulate. Serious intellectuals and thinkers are concerned that Madison Avenue’s

flash over substance in political advertising is superficial (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 684). Voters still expect, however, to see the emblems of patriotism. It is often the candidate who fails to use these symbols who loses (Shenkman 18). Who would want to vote for an American president who wore the colors of, or displayed the emblems of, another country? Michael Dukakis learned this lesson, in 1988, when he stressed his Greek roots. He “set himself up for a collision with a competing sentiment we rarely tend to acknowledge: we are a nation that still worships the WASP ideal” (McDonald 7). At election time, Americans want not only an American, but one who is not afraid or ashamed to admit that they are American.

Candidates have been viewed in advertising terms as a product. The groundbreaking book, *Selling of the American President* (McGinniss) about the branding of Richard Nixon detailed this change from stressing the candidate as a person and moving to a brand. According to smallbusinessbible.com, which is a resource for start-up business in the United States, logo design is critical in distilling the product message into an eye-catching, innovative form. It should show the company motive and be strong and appealing while suitable for the business. Candidates are a business in themselves. They are the brand.

The branding of a candidate is important because voters don't study the policy stances of each candidate; they are “shorthand for traits that speak to psychic or emotional needs” (Schneiders 9). There is a continuum of patriotic symbology across the spectrum of candidates from high patriotic symbolism to low which will resonate with the target demographic.

The image is made up of several aspects and the logo attempts to communicate the total image of the candidate graphically. We see the reduction of political discourse distilled down to an image. This image has the power to convey complex political meaning (Hockett 74). Assuming that patriotic symbolism will result in a more favorable image, candidates choose an

image which is an easily readable graphic to elicit the desired reaction. Verser & Wicks examine the Impression Management Theory saying it “relies upon expectancy-value principles in which positive impressions will lead to positive outcomes” (Verser & Wicks 180). The positive outcome is the nomination from their respective political party derived from the use of symbols.

Interpretation of an image follows a complex path. Verser and Wicks call it the Abduction Theory (Verser and Wicks 183). After viewing the image, and filtering it through an existing knowledge base, people then check the relationship of the images and thoughts and work out how the various details relate. The ideas come together to form meaning in the minds of the viewer, the symbol is interpreted as either positive or negative (Verser & Wicks 178). The meaning of the images must be apparent to the viewers at first glance. A lot of importance is placed on visual materials during a campaign.

Most of the materials in this early campaigning are visual. Extensive research from Kaid to Kosterman examines the role of television ads in political campaign ads, but there is a very small body of research on logo design and its persuasive impact. The limited experiments use hypothetical candidates and college students which rarely translate into real voters’ behavior (Ansolabehar & Iyengar 683). Even though there are no concrete psychological experiments proving that voters use the visual elements to make a choice, the candidate can take no chances with his or her image.

Candidates use symbols in both logos and photos. The images of candidates and the control of the environment of the photograph are unnatural. We do not pose in front of monuments and historic buildings, or have gigantic flags and stars just behind our shoulder in photographs. The use of stars in logos and websites is seen as a “stand-in” for the entire flag. Berger cites Donis A. Dondis from *A Primer of Visual Literacy* claiming there are three basic

shapes: triangle, square and circle (Berger 74). In deciding which shape to use, think about the symbolism of the shapes. Nobody wants to go around in circles or be called a square. The triangle is the most visually stimulating of those choices. It is the triangle which forms the star. Stars are used in both political campaigns and as a reward in military campaigns.

The term “campaign” comes from military terminology and a political campaign requires similar tactics. Controlling image is a tactic in the war. The use of the War Room was highly publicized in Clinton’s election strategy. This campaign battle of ideas hinges on images. “The pictures of the campaign will speak the loudest” (Bryant 287). The ability of the candidates to frame themselves in patriotic symbols will strike the responsive chord to the target demographic.

The responsive chord theory, explored in Tony Schwartz’s book, *The Responsive Chord*, claims that everything “new” that we see or hear is immediately catalogued in our brain with something else that is just like it. He contends that “image makers follow a classic pattern of using an older medium,” and further that “Print was filled with talk, movies were based on books, plays and scripts, records were filled with performances and radios filled with records” (Schwartz 80). Since everything builds on everything else, then the moment children in the United States pledge allegiance to the flag in first grade, we link the flag with patriotism. This is a powerful icon in presidential campaigns.

Wrapping themselves in the flag is a good reminder to the audience of the candidates’ perceived patriotism. Visuals are used to enhance the stature of candidates (Verser & Wicks 183). By linking the candidate to the flag, patriotic Americans will view them as favorable. Recent ads just show the American Flag and the candidate name, such as the latest from Tom Tancredo, Republican presidential candidate. Rudy Giuliani is using a block of blue with his

name in white and a red line around the box of blue. The rectangular shape and colors are reminiscent of the flag. Shape and color are not the only techniques.

Campaign ads use color, music, and textual choices to elicit enthusiasm for a candidate. Ted Brader at the University of Michigan explored this further in “Striking a Responsive Chord”, concluding, “Emotionally evocative ads do not simply sway voters directly, but change the manner in which voters make choices” (Brader 388). Appealing to the traditional voters with love of country and flag will not appeal to the demographic who believe that patriotic symbols are a “stand-in” for support of the war or the policies of the current Republican administration. It would be disingenuous to see a candidate who is advocating a troop pull out from Iraq draped in symbolism of war. This would be inconsistent with the image the public expects.

#### *Historic Use of Patriotic Symbolism*

This use of patriotic symbolism- red, white and blue color schemes and use of stars and stripes has resulted in electoral victories of all candidates who have used them. An examination of the logos of presidential candidates from 1960 to 2004 on 4president.org and comparing the results of the elections on the uselectionatlas.org verified this trend. A significant shift from a simple logo with just the candidates’ name, or the use of a drawing of candidates face has transitioned to the use of patriotic symbolism. The last appearance of a face on campaign literature was in 1968. Prior to 1960, there was very little use of patriotic symbolism. After 1960, the trend was away from the drawings or photographs of the candidates and more use of symbols was seen in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Historical use of patriotic symbolism was limited to the use of color. The candidates almost always used the colors of the flag for their nomination advertising.

The biggest losers used a color scheme that did not include the traditional red, white and blue. In 1960, the Nixon/Lodge team attempted to use yellow in the logo. According to the Pantone Guide to Communicating with Color, yellow in every culture, is associated with the sun. It is also associated with imagination and enlightenment. It certainly has never captured the imagination of the voting American public, because every time it has been used, the bids are not successful. In 1964, traditional red, white and blue appeared in every logo with the exception of the use of yellow in the name Goldwater. On the Barry Goldwater yellow, it was the only deviation from flag colors. McCarthy in 1968 used a combination of black with white writing. The white writing against a dark background as a trend has continued, making the name more visible, especially at night, but the stark contrast was rejected by the voters.

In 1976, the Carter/Mondale campaign attempted the first use of green. Green was used again in 1980 with white writing. Although the Pantone Guide claims that green always elicits pleasant responses, it apparently does not translate into election to higher office. Bob Cranston attempted a different color scheme, without success, by using brown and white. Every time Cranston ran, he used the brown and white or brown and cream combination to no avail. Brown is considered a neutral color in the Pantone Guide, which is identified with durability and antiquity. Perhaps the voters rejected the historical association and wanted to move forward. In 1988, Bob Dole strayed from common wisdom and chose a yellow against blue for his logo, and was unsuccessful.

Jesse Jackson had been a candidate for many years, and in his 1998 bid, we will never know if his failures were the result of using a dark red and white. It is interesting to note that red and white are common political colors, but the value of the color was so dark as to resemble the color of blood. The same year, Dick Gephardt used the stark contrast of black and white.

White and green were back for the for the failed candidacy of Paul Tsongas in 1992. Another try for the color yellow in the logos of two unsuccessful bids of Alan Keyes and Richard Lugar in 1996 once again proved that moving too far from the traditional red, white and blue is a gamble. Lamar Alexander experimented with red and white in 1996. Ralph Nadar has used green in almost all of his logos with the resulting defeats. Following in the Jackson footsteps, Al Sharpton used a mostly red logo with white lettering in 2004.

The newly evolved marketing of the candidates into brands has also moved from the reliance on color alone and began the use of patriotic symbols of our nation. The Dole/Kemp campaign of 1996 foreshadowed the symbols to come. They used a clean red star to separate the names. Pat Buchanan also used stars that year. In 2000, the Gore/Lieberman campaign brought in the “swoosh” which Nike has iconized as a symbol of the Nike phrase “Just do it”. Howard Dean in 2004 resurrected yellow for some text on his logo. All of the candidates in the last four presidential cycles have used some form of patriotic symbolism in their logos, rather than rely on color alone.

### *Social Judgment theory*

In Communication Theory, Social Judgment Theory (SJT) is both an explanation of how individuals catalogue new information and a tool for persuasion. Sherif, Sherif and Hovland developed three zones, or latitudes, into which individuals will either reject, accept or be non-committed to new ideas. The rejection zone is an idea which is unacceptable, the latitude of acceptance is an idea which is seen favorably and the non-commitment zone is for ideas which have not been fully explored and the individual has no strong feelings either way.

We hold certain ideas, called anchor point, where our ideas fall in the latitudes. When new information is interpreted, we will place the new information into an existing category. Our

“ego-involvement” on an issue may be high, medium or low. It is harder to persuade an individual with a high level of ego-involvement to move latitudes. New information is also distorted to be placed into a latitude.

In a two-step persuasive context, the message is evaluated and placed into one of the latitudes, then the person will adjust their attitude toward or away from the message. According to Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, small changes from the anchor point are made, large changes are not (Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall 212). As a rhetorical analysis tool of the patriotic symbols of the candidates, examining which latitude the image, and subsequently the candidate will be placed is critical to persuasion. In SJT it is almost impossible to travel from rejection to acceptance in one exposure, so working in the latitude of acceptance would have the highest success.

#### *Evaluation of candidate logos for patriotic symbolism*

Analysis of the logos begins by searching for the patriotic symbols of color, flag shapes, stars, eagles, and other historic symbols. Using nine years of experience in graphic design and published interviews of industry professions, it was expected that the more traditional candidates, or those who support the war, and the iconoclast candidates who are claiming the mantle of change, will show differing levels of patriotic symbolism. We will also look at which latitude according to SJT the imagery will fall. A candidate, who sells himself/herself to the American people as an agent of change, will be less likely to rely on the flag as a visual symbol. The logos are divided into Traditional and Iconoclastic. The assumption is that the Republicans will use stronger patriotic symbolism than the Democrats. After careful analysis, there were two candidates who crossed the party lines: John McCain and Hillary Clinton.

#### *Traditional patriotic symbolic logos*

Mitt Romney: Republican (figure 1)



Figure 1: logo for Mitt Romney, (2008)  
www.mittromney.com.

Although his logo has changed, the first logo on the website showed Romney with eight stars. This level of “flag wrapping” is unparalleled. A very strong supporter of the war in Iraq, his stance is for strength: in the military, in the family, fiscal strength, and homeland security. His pro America and pro-war stance have been unwavering. His use of this patriotic symbol appeals directly to his demographic. The new logo is in the shape of a flag and is blue with white writing, there is a stylistic eagle with a white head and a body made from red and white stripes. The strength of the eagle and the symbolic flag are what is expected of a candidate whose central message is strength. This use of the eagle is refreshing as it is not the same symbol of the flag used in other logos. Lauren Bans in Newsweek interviewed Michael Bierut of the design firm, Pentagram, and claimed that the use of his first name is a distraction, because it is associated with an object and that the framing boxes are careless. These design factors do not contradict his claim as a patriot. Individuals seeking a strong candidate will view the logo in the latitude of acceptance of SJT.

Rudy Giuliani: Republican (figure 2)



Figure 2: logo for Rudy Giuliani, (2007)  
www.gorudy.com.

As we have discussed, his logo is the same shape and colors of the national flag. The nature of the logo states that he is a patriotic leader. The opening photo on his website shows a strong, confident, business man in a blue suit with a red tie, glasses and a smile. Throughout the website, on all the issue listings and bio information, the bullet points are separated by a line bisected with a star. This has a strong military feel, even though Rudy is unable to boast any military service. In Social Judgment Theory, this would place him in the latitude of rejection for anyone opposing the war in Iraq. Rudy would fall into the latitude of acceptance for a military supporter.

Use of his first name, Rudy, even as the name of the site which is [joinrudy.com](http://joinrudy.com), gives a sense that we know him. His last name is probably seen as a distraction since few people can spell it correctly. He is selling himself as a traditional conservative even though his stand on abortion and his marital difficulties are widely known. Beirut of Pentagram in the Newsweek article suggests that the logo is like a brick wall symbolizing strength against external dangers. He also comments that the Rudy campaign is a product of the sophisticated Manhattan media environment and the design is clearly the best of all the candidates (Bans 8). This may be true, but it is not the best use of patriotic symbolism.

Hillary Clinton: Democrat (figure 3)



Figure 3: logo for Hillary Clinton, (2007), [www.hillary.com](http://www.hillary.com).

Her traditional use of red, white and blue in the shape of the flag shows that she is the one candidate who is truly a Washington insider and has the experience to lead the nation.

Immediately she falls into the SJT latitude of acceptance for anybody with strong patriotic

sentiments. She is an esteemed Senator from one of the most populated and influential states, she has more than 16 years of name recognition and is the only candidate who has lived in the White House. She is attempting to pass herself off as a traditional candidate.

Her logo shows three stars. This implies that she is a patriot who loves her country. Her recent switch from support of the war to opposition is masked behind her claim to patriotism through her marriage to a President with high approval ratings. The use of her first name is striking because the name Clinton has the highest recognition. Bierut of Pentagram in the Newsweek article claims that she is trying to appear approachable and friendly. His comments on the swoosh element signifies a suppleness and willingness to listen. She is attempting to stand on her own and separate herself from the scandals of her husband's administration. It is interesting to see how she depicts a Washington insider with experience, yet also as a catalyst for change. Nothing in her logo suggests change except the use of her feminine first name.

*Iconoclast, non traditional use of patriotic symbols*

Barack Obama: Democrat (figure 4)



Figure 4: logo for Barack Obama, (2007), [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com).

Barack Obama has a logo which uses patriotic colors of red, white and blue, but has no representation of the flag. The logo is of a stylized horizon. Upon examination, it is not clear if it is a sunrise or a sunset. He uses a circle with a white sun coming up in a blue sky with red and white lines for the horizon. The symbolic sun could also be a stylized letter "O". It is keeping with his *Audacity of Hope* message, reminiscent of a sunrise/sunset: either the end of an era, or the beginning of a new one.

In Social Judgment Theory, his logo would fall into the latitude of acceptance for an opponent of the war and the latitude of acceptance for a new approach to politics. It is completely new. This is expected since it would be very hard to an anti-war, anti-establishment candidate to wrap himself in the flag. Schneiders claims that Obama's brand is always strong in commercial and political markets: 'new' or 'fresh.' But this freshness can wear out quickly, he suggests, "Obama's brand managers should be checking his 'pull date' and preparing for some rebranding" (Schneiders 9).

There is no explanation of the logo anywhere on the website or in campaign material. Recently released yard signs are using the sunrise/sunset symbol and the word HOPE. This may confuse voters into thinking that there is a candidate with the name Hope, rather than associate the symbol with Obama's campaign message.

John Edwards: Democrat (figure 5)



Figure 5: logo for John Edwards, (2007), [www.johnedwards.com](http://www.johnedwards.com).

Only one small star and a swoop under his name indicate that Edwards is looking for a new America. He is an anti-war candidate still using the patriotic symbol expected from a war supporter. The swoop is under his name with a star. The swoop is green. This could be an attempt to project that he is the only candidate with environmental concern. An environmental activist would place this logo in the latitude of acceptance.

As we have seen in past candidacy failures, the green has never been a winning color, however, in the age of climate change and the recent Nobel Prize to Al Gore for his *Inconvenient Truth* movie, the time may have finally come for the color. The swoop is also rising indicating a bright future. The star is not prominent in the logo since it is below the name and appears more

as a period at the end of a sentence rather than a patriotic symbol as it is not associated with any red or white stripes.

John McCain: Republican (Figure 6)

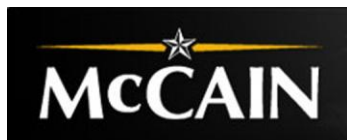


Figure 6: logo for John McCain (2007), [www.joinmccain.com](http://www.joinmccain.com).

A war veteran, he has the most “right” to use the flag. He fought under it and defended it in Vietnam, and his war record and suffering as a prisoner of war are widely known. His use of the star does not resemble the star of the flag, but the military star used as a war decoration. This star appears throughout his website, even as the media player icon. For supporters of the military and the war in Iraq, this logo fall strongly into the latitude of acceptance. For an anti-war activist, this will be in the latitude of rejection.

Most of the photos on his website show McCain in his cultivated “maverick” and “fighter” status by using patriotic symbols that resemble military victory stars. According to Schneiders in PR Week, John McCain is the 'straight-talker' - the un-politician. His brand is the maverick, but he has taken too many chances with it (Schneiders 8). His use of yellow is unusual in that it is neither a military color nor traditional red, white and blue. As we have seen, historically yellow is not a very electable color.

The most striking feature of the logo is the shocking use of black for the background. It gives a stark and unexpected military dictator feel to the entire logo. Bierut in the Newsweek article states that is the worst of all the logos because of the font, Optima. He claims that it is a hybrid font that designers hate since it is neither contemporary nor traditional.

*Conclusion*

The uses of patriotic symbolism, however widespread, may motivate the target demographic to elect the candidate who displays such icons. Recent studies claim that this is not necessarily a given. Researchers found that patriotic symbols and rituals helped in-group members identify themselves but only as a psychological abstraction, which did not indicate any change in behavior (Schatz & Lavine 344). Campaign managers will be wondering how to proceed in this new environment.

The election of 2008 is heating up. Advertising Age claims that it is “shaping up to be one for the ages” (Ad Age 22) since the election cycle is so long and there is no incumbent. In the early days of the primary campaign, the candidates must appeal to the expected voters in their party. The war tactics may shift in the general election as their approach will need broader appeal. Expect to see candidates use patriotic symbols as visual elements in their logos in order to differentiate themselves. The traditional candidates are expected to use more patriotic symbolism while the iconoclasts are expected to use fewer. This holds for the primary campaign and it remains to be seen who will earn the nomination.

How the voters make choices for candidates is a complicated process. Margaret Scammell believes that use of patriotic symbolism reduces the ability of Americans to make an informed policy driven decision. She claims in *Citizen Consumers: toward a new marketing of politics* that the disproportionate influence on symbolism as political communication threatens the democratic process (Scammell 118). This is oversimplifying the candidates’ marketing strategy. The democratic process is in no way threatened by the use of patriotic symbolism; it is enhanced. By evaluating the candidates’ logos and dissecting what the symbolism means to both the candidate and the voter, a clearer image of the candidate will emerge. Using Social Judgment Theory to determine the anchor points and the latitude of rejection or acceptance, we are able to see the

strategy of the candidates. The candidate will reveal, through his or her use of symbolism, where he or she stands on certain issues.

Further study of the logos of the two nominated candidates may reveal a change in the use of patriotic symbols. If the country chooses the candidates who preach “change” to their parties, Obama and McCain are likely to be the nominees. If the more traditional candidates and those using traditional patriotic symbolism are nominated, the presidential match in November of 2008 will be between Mitt Romney and Hillary Clinton whose high use of patriotic symbols will portray them as favorable and reward them with the nomination.

#### Works Cited

- Bans, L. (2007, July 23). The Stumper Stickers. *Newsweek*, p. 8.
- Berger, A.A. (2008). *Seeing Is Believing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Companies.
- Birnbaum, J. (2000). Running for President is and unnatural act. *Fortune Magazine*, 149(9), 222-240.
- Brader, T. (2005). Striking a responsive chord: How political ads motivate and persuade voters by appealing to emotions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 388-405.

- Bryant, J. (2004). Paid media advertising: Political campaigning from the stone age to the present. *Campaigns and Elections American Style*. Cambridge MA: Westview Press.
- Dover, C. (2000). Hail to the logo designer. *Print*, 54(5), 20.
- Fleming, J. & Hunt, S. (1998). Winning graphics. *Campaigns and Elections*, 19(6), 321.
- Franz, M. & Ridout, T. (2007). Does political advertising persuade? *Political Behavior*, 29(4), 465-491.
- Jaspersen, A. E. & Hyun J. Y. (2007). Voter cynicism after exposure to ads. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(9), 1112-1123.
- Halpern, M., Harris, F.J. (2006). *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008*. New York: Random House Publishing.
- Hockett, J. (2005). Logos as logos. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2(2), 72-96.
- McDonald, M. (1988, November 7). An uneasy patriotism. *Maclean Hunter Limited*.
- One for the ages. (2007, April 30) *Advertising Age*, 22.
- Renita, C., Wasike, B. (2003). Conference Papers—*International Communication Association*, 2003 Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 1-28.
- Schatz, R.T., Lavine, H. (2007). Waving the flag: National symbolism, social identity and political engagement. *Political Psychology*, 28(3), 320-355.
- Schneiders, G. (2007, May 21). Candidates' brand attributes factor into voters decisions. *PR Week*, 9.
- Schwartz, T. (1973). *The Responsive Chord*. New York: Doubleday Press.
- Shenkman, R. (2005). *I Love Paul Revere Whether He Rode or Not*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Steinhorn, L. (2000). Ads are us: Political advertising in a mass media culture.

*Campaigns and Elections America Style*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.

Verser, R. & Wicks, R. (2007). Managing voter impressions: The use of images on presidential candidate websites during the 2000 campaign. *Journal of Communication*, 56, 178-197.

Walzer, M. (1990). What does it mean to be an American? *Journal of Social Research*, 57(3), 880.

White, A. (2002). *The Elements of Graphic Design*. New York: Allworth Press.

Zelinsky, W. (1984). O'say can you see? Nationalistic emblems in the landscape. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 0084-0416/84.