DECODING THE CANDIDATES: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS AND LITERACY GUIDE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN BRANDING

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By

Jilanne K. Doom, B.A.

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“Politics will eventually be replaced by imagery. The politician will be only too happy to abdicate in favor of his image, because the image will be much more powerful than he could ever be.”

-Marshall McLuhan
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Jilanne K. Doom, B.A.

Thesis Advisor: Diana M. Owen, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Research and discussion of modern political communication has glossed over the messaging strategies afforded to political campaigns by graphic design. Further, the digital age has provided a new environment for political entities to create professionalized brand images. This interdisciplinary study combines the research behind political branding and visual communication of graphic design through the lens of semiotic theory. Using 2016 presidential campaign logos and slogans as branding case studies, this research identifies content and embedded messages of individual campaigns through quantitative and qualitative methods, guided by the following research questions: What specific messages are conveyed through presidential candidates’ graphic design decisions? Do these messages align with the constituencies they appeal to and the stances they uphold? How can voters become critical consumers of these messages? The thesis concludes with a resource for voters to critically view a political entity’s visual messaging strategies to formulate informed opinions.
The research and writing of this thesis is in gratitude to my dear friends in the CCT program who pushed me and provided me with the interdisciplinary discussions to explore this topic that so wholly combines my passions. You are all inspiring.

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Many thanks,
Jilanne K. Doom
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CHAPTER I: AN INTRODUCTION

From the earliest campaign posters and buttons to television ads and Twitter accounts, American political culture has become increasingly visual and multimodal. Due to increases of technological reach and the rise of visual culture, today more than any other point in history, image matters. Every message a candidate wishes to impose on voters is carefully constructed. Political messaging manifests in more ways than many voters often realize. Not only are candidates constructing brands explicitly through their stump speeches, but also implicitly through their visual, graphically designed presence such as logos and slogans. Many long-established principles of graphic design are employed strategically when creating these branding images, such as typeface and color scheme. These decisions are made depending on the audience a candidate attempts to reach and the message their campaign wishes to share. However, these messages conveyed through design are less obviously discernable to the public than a candidate’s professed policy position.

Research across many disciplines including political science, psychology, and marketing underscores the growing importance of strong visual identity in creating memorable and effective messages. A successful visual campaign appeals to voters’ political ideologies, as well as their emotions, but voters are often unaware of the exact messages that are being constructed (Dingfelder, 2012). In the realm of politics, understanding the impact of visuals on potential voters is paramount in curating campaign strategies and specific messages (Hoegg and Lewis, 2011; Smith and French, 2009). Digital technologies perpetuating visual campaign messages, specifically television ads, have been found to greatly impact not only a voter’s perception of a candidate and his or opponent, but also their final voting decision (Noggle and Kaid, 2000). In a
review of a specific election cycle, Kellner (2006) sheds light on how visual messaging techniques impacted voters’ opinions of the 2004 candidates, finding that there was a disconnect between voters’ visual literacy and the amount of information sources available during the election. Furthermore, political campaign brand building strategies are increasingly mirroring those of the private sector, meaning their nuanced messaging power is enhanced through professional marketing techniques (Newman, 2006).

From a graphic design perspective, elements of design like color palette, type, spacing, and hierarchy of elements are used purposefully to convey a certain message or emotional feeling (Krause, 2004; Holston, 2015). However, scholarship has been remiss in formulating a concrete theoretical framework for analyzing this ubiquitous form of message creation (Frascara, 1988). Noble and Bestley (2001) introduce ways researchers from many fields can approach visual design, one of which being semiotic theory. This theory states that all expressions, textual, visual, or verbal, carry signified means that differ across cultural contexts. Semiotics can be useful in the analysis of minute graphic decisions all the way up to entire brands (Manning, 2010).

Studies in marketing and advertising, which coincide with semiotic techniques more commonly than political branding, show the effectiveness of advertising exposure on election outcomes is significant; well-crafted messaging can impact elections (Gordon and Hartmann, 2012). As far as studying actual intended meaning, however, marketing research is fragmented (Mick et al, 2004). Furthermore, Henneberg and O’Shaughnessy (2007) describe “political marketing,” a similar but not interchangeable practice to political branding, as an incommensurate field because of its contributors’ inability to develop a truly interdisciplinary
theory. Political branding, then, is the process of creating associations in the minds of consumers or voters about a certain person or organization, which will combine to create a network of positive associations that gains the voter’s support (Smith and French, 2009).

Semiotic theory provides a vital lens through which to view branding messages, but the literature often maintains a broad, non-field specific focus. Thus, a gap exists in the close analysis of political messaging through a semiotic lens. This research will create a bridge between the study of professionalized political campaign branding and semiotic approaches to marketing and brand building, providing a knowledge building tool for voters.

Paying closer attention to crafted brand messages can help voters build a more complete conception of each candidate before making a ballot box decision. Focusing on imagery, textual signifiers, as well as the modes of message transmission, scholars of semiotics delve into the cultural influence of how meaning is created in the visual and textual world (Chandler, 2007; Kress, 2009). For example, the use of the color red over blue in an American political campaign logo likely carries different meaning than in a campaign in Canada. Similarly, the use of these same hues can carry different meanings across political cultures within the same country. With these concepts in mind, one can begin to see the myriad design decisions made for a specific purpose within one aspect of branding strategy. Semiotics provides viewers with another critical lens through which to view their potential leaders and make informed decisions.

A common misconception in the increasingly complex environment of cultivating brands and attracting consumers is the difference between branding and marketing. Together, these two practices create images and conjure feelings about a product, organization, or, in the case of this paper, individuals. However, they are complements of one another, not interchangeable.
activities. Whereas branding is strategic and is concerned with an overall vision, marketing is
tactical and sets out to achieve specific goals concerning specified targets (Counsell, 2014).

Another way to conceptualize these two activities is branding as a pull tactic and marketing as a
push tactic. For as long as modern political elections have existed in the United States, so have
strategic plans for reaching voters. Persuading voters to support you because of your stance on a
specific issue requires a push tactic; the voter is urged to do something. Creating a sense in the
voter’s mind that you are trustworthy because of your many years in political office is a pull
tactic; the voter is made to feel something. This paper, then, focuses on the concept and strategic
decision making process of political branding, the practice of creating a candidate’s image.

More specifically, the analytical approach of this paper will focus on one aspect of the branding
process, a campaign’s logo and accompanying slogan, as this piece maintains its basic structure
and follows the candidate throughout the campaign cycle.

This thesis makes the argument that the use of constructed images in the political context
are important meaning shapers for a campaign’s broader image or brand by addressing the
following research questions: What specific messages are conveyed through presidential
candidates’ graphic design decisions? Do these messages align with the constituencies they
appeal to and the stances they uphold? How can voters become critical consumers of these
messages?

The goal of this project is two-fold: 1) To make the case that semiotics is a viable
approach to analyzing messages created through graphic design techniques, specifically in
political brands; and 2) to provide voters with a tool for viewing candidate branding messages
with a critical lens.
I will approach these goals through a multidimensional qualitative methodology, focusing primarily on the application of semiotic theory. To begin, I conduct a political branding analysis to emphasize the parallels between the signs and signifiers in political brands to traditional brand creation. Using a semantic approach to modern marketing techniques, I highlight commonly used instances of meaning creation through graphic design among political branding materials. Then, with the same semiotic approach, I analyze 14 political branding case studies, consisting of 13 candidate logos and accompanying slogans in the 2016 presidential campaign cycle. Candidate logos are analyzed by commonly recognized signifiers in semiotic research and categorized by their inclusion, exclusion, or variation of this content. These categories are then revisited in a semiotic analysis to evaluate their broader messaging systems. Employing both content and semiotic analyses and guided by visual communication theory, this thesis asserts that candidates with similar constituencies and campaign messages will employ similar design principles, supporting the notion that design choices are strategic to crafting brands in political campaigns.

Though the practice of strategic branding design for corporate and private entities is well-established and used similarly in branding today’s political candidates, these practices often go unnoticed by the voter whose responsibility it is to evaluate candidates and make informed decisions on election day. Therefore, this research also produces a “consumer’s guide” to evaluating the imagery and brands of political candidates, adding to the increasing need for media literacy tools in the political sphere.

To be clear, this paper does not wish to devalue the importance of a politician’s rhetoric or actions while building one’s brand or marketing their positions during the campaign cycle. Words, policy proposals, and other actions are vital pieces in creating a candidate’s image.
Instead, this paper argues that there are other less visible pieces to this complex puzzle, and they manifest in the visual branding messages constructed by the campaign. Further, this project does not aim to provide a critique of design-worthiness. Instead, it discusses the elements of design that create meaning for viewers and establish a recognizable brand.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II provides a more expanded view of the literature in political branding, semiotic approaches to branding, graphic design principles and their message creation potential, visual communication theories, and finally media literacy in the context of visual media. Chapter III introduces the semiotic framework, an explanation of the methodology and data collection procedures, and the measures by which the logos are analyzed and categorized. It then turns to highlighting common design decisions in political branding. Chapter IV presents both the content analysis and 14 individual semiotic analyses of the branding images, as well as discussion of the messages born out of these design decisions.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This project performs a truly interdisciplinary task of examining political image and many facets of visual communication, specifically branding techniques, graphic design, and semiotic theory. Further, it bridges these fields with the larger public by addressing the need for media literacy skills in interpreting political brands. The following review of existing literature purposefully incorporates scholarly work, popular work, such as journalistic and editorial pieces, and corporate communications by design and political firms. Commentary on campaign brands and the design perspective of these materials is common in popular news during election cycles, but there is a large gap in the scholarly literature discussing these themes. This project addresses that gap with a systematic and theoretical approach to deciphering campaigns’ visual messages.

The topics involved in this study converge around the central notion of image - image as a communication device, image as embedded meaning, and image as brand. Images in this sense are strategic. They are tools that employ just one of the senses, sight, to create cognitive and emotional connections with others. To create these powerful images, which can then develop strong brands, strategic design must come into play. Therefore, I organize the literature around marketing and branding in politics, the power and process of graphic design, and finally on voters’ visual media literacy.

The academic discussion about the impact of visual design on the consumer remains fractured across disciplines. Psychology literature tends to discuss the impact of visual images from a cognitive lens and less so on the social aspects that formulate what an image means for a viewer (Higbee and Millard, 1986; Dahl et al., 1999). Research on politics and campaigns takes an ideological approach that focuses on how campaign messages can speak to a certain political
ideology or campaign horse race mentality (Scammell, 2014; Dingfelder, 2012). Design literature tends to combine the two previous disciplines for a hybrid approach that discusses how an image or product design makes cognitive connections by speaking to a set of values or an ideology (Social Values of Design Project, 2014; Kress, 2009; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Frascara, 1988; Krause, 2004). Marketing research, both political and commercial, tends to take either an economic or consumer relationships approach (Hoegg and Lewis, 2011; Lees-Marchment and Conley, 2014; Butler and Collins, 1994). By focusing on how product designers research and design to the specifications of consumers, marketing research discusses the relationship between the cognitive process and social environment of the consumer to a product or brand.

The impact of a positive or negative image on a politician or political issue is no new phenomenon in the American context. However, the explicit reference to image curation in politics as “branding” is relatively recent. Presidential candidates early in the country’s history portrayed themselves in a certain light to pick up voter support. Abraham Lincoln was a self-made, hard-working Midwesterner from humble beginnings (Nikpour, 2012). Andrew Jackson was a man of the people who battled the aristocracy and corruption (Miller Center of Public Affairs). Though these were vitally important aspects of their successful campaigns, they hardly had the organization of brand managers surrounding them like the candidates of today. Arguably the first American presidential candidate to cultivate and manage his brand similar to the level we see today was Ronald Reagan. His experience in the entertainment industry before his political career prepared him and his administration to curate a visual image and positive brand like none before (Baker, 2009).
Marketing and branding of politicians, political organizations, and issues has reached the level of high-powered corporate entities (Butler and Collins, 1994; Scammell, 2014; Newman, 1999; Agho, 2015; Nikpour, 2012). To understand how we got to the highly specialized and professional political campaigns we have today, one must revisit the branding process, its impact on audiences, and its transition into politics. Some steps in the thought process may be different but the end goal of a successful product marketing campaign is quite the same as the end goal of a presidential campaign: the consumers or voters choosing your product or person. Though “politicians would not conceptualize what they do in transactional terms, most research suggests that transactional marketing applies to the political sphere” (Lees-Marshment and Conley, 2014: 167). Similarly in branding, the campaign strives for a positive image in the minds of voters to, once again, result in a win on election night. As mentioned in Chapter I, marketing and branding are different but linked practices that aim for the same end result (Counsell, 2014).

For brands to be successful, they must communicate to the consumer’s needs or values, adapt to remain relevant, be memorable, and stand out among competitors. Further, the most effective brands in the political sphere are specific and identifiable (Skuba, 2002; Nikpour, 2012; Scammell, 2014). All of these same criteria are essential for a political brand. There are many strategies for achieving these benchmarks that involve expertise in marketing and branding, political theory, mass communication, visual and graphic design, speechwriting, psychology, and, as campaigns continue to evolve, data analytics. Because of the scope of this research, I focus on political marketing and visual design.

Historically, there has been a reluctance of political scientists to accept “political marketing” as a distinct discipline, often regarding these practices as irrelevant in the scheme of
politics and government research (Henneberg and O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Even more rare, then, is critical discussion of “political branding” as a robust and multi-faceted field. I argue this reluctance is a mistake by political theorists and researchers of political activity. Branding, like politics, is intrinsically tied to emotions (Newman, 1999; Adolphsen, 2008; Nikpour, 2012). Quite often, voters make their ballot box decisions based on their guts rather than their logical brains. A brand, the mental image a voter has of a candidate, can very well be the deciding factor for an individual on election day.

Political branding has some of its origins in the realm of social movements utilizing aesthetic strategies to connect with the minds and hearts of vulnerable or non-elite populations (Tucker, 2010). To gain traction and even succeed in certain ways, social movements must communicate a brand message that provides an authentic and meaningful connection to an individual’s identity. The civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, and even the rise of Nazism used visual cues to communicate a message. Civil rights protesters wore their Sunday best when protesting to gain respect as fellow men and women. Gay rights proponents fly rainbow flags in support of harmony between people with different opinions and lifestyles. Nazis purposefully assembled in large rallies, flying the red, white, and black flag with a swastika to build an image of strength and perseverance. Most importantly, these images meant something culturally to the people whom the movement targeted, which created meaningful emotional connections and support. It is in social movements we see how political issues and even individuals can utilize similar strategies to build support.

However, the term “branding” has not until recently been embraced by political campaigns (Skuba, 2002). What was once considered a form of propaganda is today’s image
curation, or branding. Branding as a political strategy came under fire in the early 2000s when the US Department of State decided to begin a large branding initiative of the United States itself to the international community. Because many saw branding as a technique of deceptive and dishonorable origins in commercial marketing, the idea that similar practices should be used by public servants and government institutions was unnerving (Skuba, 2002). In reality, however, the question was not if America should cultivate its brand, it was how is the best way to do it effectively.

Recent research shows that many campaigns have figured out strategies to market themselves and develop memorable brands with the visual tactics afforded by new media. Kellner (2006) looked specifically at the 2004 presidential election and others in the past and found that voters were in fact affected by brand-altering images on broadcast television, such as the Howard Dean primary victory speech and Michael Dukakis riding the military tank. In researching the effects of political advertising in the 2000 and 2004 elections, Gordon and Hartmann (2012) postulate that because marketing messages had such significant effects on voter behavior, different tactics by the campaigns could have resulted in a different election outcome. However, Adolphsen (2008) finds, in studying the “social media election,” the 2008 Democratic nominating campaign between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton that branding as a specific activity is difficult to detect, though identifying how a more or less effective brand operates is more obvious.

Researching, conceptualizing the strategy, and building the brand components are not the full puzzle, however, when creating an effective brand (Lilleker and Negrine, 2003). That brand must then be communicated to the public, especially to those most ideologically aligned, those
most likely to receive the brand positively, and those who will receive a sense of gratification from the brand (Smith and French, 2009). For example, a Republican candidate is more likely to spend time communicating her brand in a religious conservative community because that audience is more likely to support her and her competition will likely be vying for the same voters. Similarly, a Democratic candidate may put more energy toward communicating his brand in a moderate state than a hard-right conservative audience because moderates are more likely to sway in support of him. This communication strategy also supports the notion of specific brands over broad, unidentifiable brands. Campaigns trying to reach too many audiences are in jeopardy of reaching none.

Like other aspects of today’s shifting political environment, branding of politicians and their issues is changing as the electorate engages in new ways. The rise of consumer politics, the practice of individuals purchasing goods based on their political views, adds a new facet to how campaigns must manage their brands (Shah et al., 2007). Lilleker and Negrine (2003) say an important component of communicating brands to today’s electorate is the person-to-person interaction. Communication through large-scale channels like advertising and television no longer creates bonds with voters who demand more intimate contact. This forces campaigns to exist physically in many locations around the country and hope they can create enough momentum for grassroots, community-based campaigns to originate around their brand. Finally, as American society becomes even more media-saturated, campaign brands must compete for attention and coverage (Nikpour, 2012). Brands that appear outdated or uninteresting are less likely to be covered by the mainstream media or shared via social channels. This lack of a voice in the media means less name recognition on election day.
Dahl et al. (1999) experimented with the cognitive process by which visual images resonated with and were retained in the minds of consumers or viewers. Visual mental imagery, the “process by which visual information is represented in working memory” (Dahl et al., 1999: 19) formulates in a viewer’s mind when an image is both original and useful to that individual. By creating robust, visual branding images, candidates are more likely to remain in the minds of voters. A level of originality, though, can come at a cost in political images like logos.

While logos aren’t new in political campaign branding, coherent and consistent communication systems are. Simple, bold wordmarks were the cornerstone for candidates’ brand messaging for decades, and they all looked the same: American. Color palettes of deep navy and bright red, icons of stars and stripes and bolded, all-caps, sans serif typography shouting the last name of the political hopeful were ubiquitous. I think Armin Vit, owner of UnderConsideration.com, put it best in 2008: ‘If a candidate wants to be American, they must look American’ (Post, 2015).

These are the design decisions that have become expected and often trusted in the history of campaign logos. Then-candidate Barack Obama broke the rules in 2008 with a modern, simple ‘O’ logo often without accompanying text that represented America but spoke change and forward-thinking (Arnon, 2015). When not careful, however, these decisions can also go wrong if not used mindfully.

The typeface, textual styles and sizes, color palette, inclusion of imagery, structure, and organization of the logo’s elements can all impact the meanings the logo conveys, the entities it
represents, and how the audience receives it (Krause, 2004; Hall, 2012). For example, serif typefaces are considered older, traditional, and sometimes more professional and trustworthy because of their mental associations with literature, academia, and foundational documents. Sans serif typefaces, on the other hand, convey modernity, freshness, and technological development. Color palettes have the ability to direction audiences to certain mental associations, such as yellow for happiness, pastels for springtime, or red and green for Christmas. Every design decision, combined with others around it, represents an idea and conveys a message. The goals of a designer and a campaign is to be sure the majority of people who view the image receive the intended messages, create an emotional connection to that message, and embed that visual image and the messages associated in their memory.

Logos are some of the few images that remain with a candidate throughout the majority of a campaign and, if designed and shared successfully, immediately bring a positive image to targeted viewers upon sight. On very few occasions do candidates redesign and release new logos in the middle of the campaign cycle and, likewise, candidates rarely speak at events or issue campaign materials without their logo hanging or printed in plain sight. That is why this research focuses on logos as a data set for political branding.

What the scholarly literature and even popular press tends to ignore, however, is the perspective of the viewer, or in the case of political messaging, the voter. On election day, the hours spent researching, focus grouping, crafting messages and images, and the enormous sums of money spent only matter if the voter selects that campaign’s candidate. Because the individual’s decision can also have a substantial impact on their own life and the future of their
community, it becomes the voter’s responsibility to be aware of the messaging tactics used to gain their vote.

Media literacy is a concept gaining traction in the US in recent years because of the exponential increase and advancement in communication technologies, platforms, and media outlets. It is a competency defined as “an informed and critical understanding of the nature of mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1997). Though media literacy often focuses on the critical evaluation of the press and advertising, it also encompasses other entities that communicate through media channels. Political campaigns, though not media outlets, reach audiences through the press, social media, the Internet, and more traditional methods like physical signage and mailers. All of these techniques are examples of media, and they require a level of literacy to understand the messages they communicate.

In today’s highly professionalized campaigns, media consultants and campaign officials ensure that voters receive both explicit and implicit messages to influence opinions and gain support. Whether those implicit messages are the color of the candidate’s tie or the backdrop of a television interview, visual techniques are meant to influence voters under the radar (Baker, 2009). Though any one technique might not change hundreds of voters’ minds, it lives on in their memory and creates the candidate’s image. Without a knowledge of this taking place, viewers become unequipped with the right questions to ask and lack a developed understanding. This unawareness creates a less informed voter who is less likely to critically evaluate a campaign’s strategic messages (Mihailidis, 2014; Baker, 2009; Noggle and Kaid, 2000).
Recent studies of different types of visual messaging have found that voters often misinterpret facts in media messages or find it difficult to interpret campaigns’ visual communications (Bowyer et al., 2015; Noggle and Kaid, 2000). But when viewers do receive some level of media literacy training or primer to think critically about a message, they show significantly deeper understanding, greater political knowledge, and, in some cases, a desire to participate further in the democratic process (Prior, 2013; Vrage et al., 2012; Kahne et al., 2012; Hobbs, 2010; Mihailidis, 2014). Other studies also show that greater media literacy reduces partisan bias in gathering information and negativity toward opposing viewpoints (Vraga et al., 2009; Vraga and Tully, 2015).

Especially during an election cycle when political messaging and visual brand building is at its highest saturation in media, these skills are critical for voters to make informed decisions and build accurate perceptions (Baker, 2009). Educational institutions face the responsibility to teach “visual and multiple media literacies” so the public can “sustain critical resistance to media manipulation and make it possible for individuals to function as rational and informed citizens” (Kellner, 2006: 7). Therefore, more efforts need to be made by media scholars to create valuable media literacy materials, making them accessible, and by the voting public to seek these resources and think critically about campaign messaging.

This research asks, what tools do academia and the voting public have to understand the implicit messaging that campaigns and politicians use in creating visual brands? Thinking critically about these images, including the process by which they were constructed and the groups to whom they attempt to communicate, empowers voters and scholars to understand the visual communication strategies that seek to influence viewers.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND SEMIOTIC FRAMEWORK

Semiotics is a theory of human linguistic systems concerned with points of signification as modes of meaning-making within a cultural context (Chandler, 2007). Put simply, every person understands messages like words, images, colors, and shapes differently, but we are more closely aligned on these understandings when we exist in similar cultures. Semiotics argues that the choice of words, behaviors, and objects carry a certain meaning for every culture in which they originate or are used. These things are found in innumerable forms, which are generally referred to as cultural texts. Semioticians examine these texts using a process for identifying signification. Though semiotic analysis can take several forms, this process almost always includes the identification of a signifier and what is signified, within the cultural context and sometimes a more specific ideology. Within the purview of this study, an example of this is the color red (the signifier) representing the Republican Party or conservative principles (the signified), which is understood to be true in the political ideology of the American cultural context.

Saussure, a founder of the discipline, defined traditional semiology as the “science which would study the life of signs within society” (Culler, 1986: 105). However, semioticians take many approaches to the method depending on their focus and the text they analyze. This project approaches political branding and its interpretation as a socially constructed and mediated practice, thereby specifying its approach to the branch field social semiotics (Kress, 2009; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). The interplay between society and its political figures continuously transform the messages found in political imagery and rhetoric, making this social approach to message decoding a logical one. One of the core principles in semiotics, especially as it relates
to a political meaning-making discussion, is the concept of power dynamics in creating and transforming meaning. Power structures determine who constructs our social understanding of messages. Individuals and entities in these positions of power also utilize these messages to create images of their own, employing strategies found in professionalized product marketing (Kotler, 1987). Political parties, influential voices like mass media and politicians, and even the large commercial firms within the graphic design community can be considered examples of power structures within political branding broadly.

One criticism of semiotics as a standard method for examining meaning and language is its broad and fragmented application (Mick et al., 2004). Because the method can result in such highly interpretable findings and existing research is spread far across languages and disciplines, some question the value of semiotics to identify signified meaning. However, I argue this criticism also supports the decision to apply semiotics to the decoding of political brands. Because brands are socially constructed, semiotics allows for the analysis of their meanings by recognizing the where, who, why, and how of their construction (Manning, 2010). The semiotic analysis hones its lens to that cultural context from which the data derives, making it adaptable to multiple contexts, broad and specific (Child, 2008; Hall, 2012; Scott, 1995). Because of its broad application to many variations of texts and across disciplines, such as art, marketing, politics, business, psychology, communication, and literature, semiotics provides a versatile method for interdisciplinary studies (Mick et al., 2004; Manning, 2010; Oswald, 2015; Child, 2008; Hall, 2012; Chandler, 2007; Floch, 2001).

*Encoding* and *decoding* are found commonly in semiotic practice as the processes of embedding culturally referential messages in a text and the audience’s task of interpreting those
messages (Chandler, 2007). I will discuss further in my methodology the process by which I analyze the encoding/decoding process, using Jakobson’s six functions of language (Jakobson, 1960). Encoding and decoding can also be conceptualized as a communication strategy, whereby the encoder of a message is communicating a certain meaning to the decoder who will interpret it using their cultural understanding of the subject. For this reason, semiotics, especially in the realms of photography and imagery, is considered a theory of visual communication (Bennett, 2006; Moriarty, 1995).

Understanding semiotic modes provides message interpreters with a clearer understanding of where and how meaning can be constructed and distributed. Modes include, but are not limited to, imagery, written word, oral presentation, music, sound, gestures, and often a combination of these, known as multimodal messages (Kress, 2009; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). In this study, I take a multimodal approach in examining candidate logos. Logos contain both imagery and written text to communicate ideologies, associations, and emotions.

Finally, I perform a common technique in semiotics called semiotic clustering, which asks the researcher to identify patterns in the analyzed texts and create clusters where similar messaging devices exist (Feldman, 1995; Horner, 2007). Clustering allows relationships to emerge where individual analyses often overlook. This technique is further bolstered by the content analysis I perform of the selected logos, explained in the following section. Identifying content elements in individual logos allows me to recognize patterns between the campaigns that use those same strategies. Applying semiotic decoding methods to these patterns unveils potential messaging behind entire strategies rather than individual choices within one branding scheme.
Methods

The purpose of this project is to examine how political campaigns use visual communication strategies to create a memorable and recognizable brand and ultimately attract voters. In order to create strong, emotional connections with potential voters, these brands must strive for originality and relevance. Many tools exist in the visual branding toolkit, from a candidate’s website and direct mailers to even their clothing choices. Because of the vastly diverse and massive number of strategic brand images and choices by a campaign, I focus this project’s analysis on campaign logos. Logos are one of the few branding choices that remain visually consistent throughout the length of an election cycle and they are often the most pervasive imagery used in association with a candidate. Therefore, candidate logos are used as the unit of analysis in finding support for strategic brand messages by political campaigns. This research operates under the assumption that *presidential candidate logos are used strategically in the political branding process as visual communication devices* and tests the following hypotheses:

H₁: Candidates within the same broader cultural context will similarly apply basic design principles to their logo brand images, but not necessarily construct them similarly;

H₂: Candidates within the same broader cultural context but different political context (i.e. Democrat versus Republican party, establishment versus anti-establishment candidate) will diverge along similar lines in terms of their logo analyses.

This project employs a multi-dimensional methodology, including a content analysis followed by a semiotic analysis to assess the meaning making qualities of each selected logo. The quantitative nature of the content analysis allows for comparison to be made between logos.
by detecting similarities and differences in design. Candidates vying for similar voter demographics, for instance, may use similar design strategies in their logos, communicating a similar brand. These comparisons are made systematic and concrete by analyzing their content quantitatively. The semiotic analysis that follows applies a qualitative dimension, evaluating logos by their culturally significant design decisions. A semiotic clustering technique allows me to marry my analyses seamlessly from individual messaging content to relationships found in meaning-making devices.

Candidate logos were selected on the following criteria: the candidate remains in the presidential race as of January 15, 2016; the candidate formally declares running for one of the two major party nominations in the United States; and the candidate carries 1% or more support in national polling data from one of the two following widely recognized presidential polls - Monmouth University and CNN/ORC. After meeting the selection criteria, candidates’ official logos were identified on their official campaign websites and collected directly from that location. In some instances, the logo files found on campaign websites were considered too small of file size for proper analysis (less than 200x200 megapixels) and the logo file was collected from other reputable news outlet websites, such as New York Times and The Washington Post. Official campaign slogans that were not found incorporated into logos were also located on the candidates’ official websites and recorded. These logos and slogans were then compiled into one document and analyzed using the following graphic design principle criteria: 1. visual elements (a. imagery, b. color, c. organization), 2. textual elements (a. typeface, b. style, c. text), and 3. slogan (a. inclusion, b. length, c. direction), which is considered a separate but complementary element. I then create a 15-question bank that incorporated each of
these components to formally code each logo for said content. Using this set of questions based on graphic design principles [Appendix B], I coded the full set of logos individually. (After the 15 coder questions, I include 4 survey-based questions asking the coders about their general impressions of the logo. Though not a primary aspect of my analysis, these questions provide helpful alternate interpretations of the selected logos.)

To ensure intercoder reliability, I conducted a coding session with 10 coders at Georgetown University, which I divided into 2 groups of 3 participants and 1 group of 4 participants. This division resulted in at least 4 coders per logo (3 participants plus myself). This session consisted of a training module that defined the graphic design terminology and concepts the participants would be using to code the logos. The group then convened to code one of the 14 logos as a large group to better address questions during the coding process. After the group coded one logo together, they split into their groups where they coded each logo assigned to them independently and then review their coding responses within their small groups. Coders were instructed to reconcile any disagreements with content responses before submitting results by consulting with myself and/or the definitions communicated during the training session. However, coders could maintain disagreement in the event that they communicated their disagreements but were not swayed by other group members’ understanding of content. This process resulted in reliability greater than .87 among the entirety of logos, with the majority above .95 [Figure 1.1].

Following the content analysis, I performed a semiotic analysis guided by the content elements identified in the previous analysis. Using Jakobson’s six factors (Jakobson, 1960; Chandler, 2007), this analysis sought to identify the significant codes (metalingual factor) and
messages (poetic factor), recognizing the following as preliminary factors to the analysis: 1. the context (referential factor) of the logos is the 2016 United States presidential election or, more broadly, the US political context; 2. the addresser (expressive factor) is the candidate and their campaign that the logo represents; 3. the addressee (conative factor) is the voter base that the campaign seeks to reach; and 4. the contact (phatic factor) is the logo itself, which serves as the communication channel between candidate and voter.

In the process of the semiotic analysis, I combine the elements identified in the content analysis with historical research of cultural meanings of those elements. Using a graphic design perspective, I also examine the intersections between elements to identify their uses as visual cues. The semiotic clustering technique allows me to then create relationships among certain candidates, or brands, along such lines as party, worldview, personality, etc.
CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF 2016 CAMPAIGN BRANDS

With a hybrid method of quantitative content analysis and qualitative cultural analysis in social semiotics, this chapter presents the data in two parts, combining the methods with a technique called semiotic clustering. Part I presents the results of my content analysis in which I evaluated 14 2016 presidential campaign logos using a set of categories derived from graphic design principles. In Part II, I begin the qualitative portion of my study by using the content to categorize the logos by certain ideological umbrellas. I then approach each of the logos individually to decode for signified messages.

Part I: Content Analysis and Semiotic Clusters

A content analysis provides three important elements to this research. First, highly reliable identification of the imagery and textual elements provides a foundation for supported statements to be made about the data set of selected logos. Second, consistently codified content provides a base for semiotic clusters. Finally, a rigid identification of content elements across the logos and the categories derived from graphic design principles allows future researchers to build off of the research in a consistent way.

Figure 1.1 presents intercoder reliability of the 14 selected logos and slogans. The coding of all of the logos resulted in intercoder reliabilities greater than 85 percent, with 7 of the 14 at 100 percent reliability. This high level of intercoder reliability must be underscored in this research because the perception of design varies greatly from person to person (Social Values of Design Project, 2014). Intercoder reliability was calculated with Fleiss’ Kappa, which is regularly used when there are more than two coders on a data set. Interestingly, the logo with the
lowest reliability - at .876 - is that of Hillary Clinton’s campaign, which has received the greatest amount of scrutiny of any candidate from the press, popular design critics, and the general public for its vagueness, interpretability, exclusion of her name, and general design execution. This finding supports the notion of the popular press that has both criticized and praised Clinton for her unique logo decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Logo</th>
<th>Reliability (Fleiss’ Kappa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Christie</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly Fiorina</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kasich</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Santorum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin O’Malley</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.1: Reliability
A selection of the results of the analysis by category is below. The six selected categories provide the greatest support for my first hypothesis, that political campaigns within the same broader cultural context will construct brand images with similar general principles. The findings support that there are common design choices made across the majority of the 2016 campaign to communicate messages of political strength and American-ness, as well as to create memorable brands. The remaining nine category results can be found in Appendix C.

In order to stand out to an American public accustomed to the constant presence of advertising, political campaigns must utilize a number of design strategies to make apparent the political nature of their branding materials. Whether or not these strategies draw viewers in or steer them away is less of the point when it comes to differentiating political imagery from other entities like corporations. These strategies are used to indicate to the viewer that their message is political in nature. One such strategy is the color palette of the image. Using the traditional shades of red, white, and blue (RWB) found on the American flag indicates immediately in the mind of a viewer that this image is associated with some political entity, which during an election year, often means a candidate, party, or PAC group. Figure 1.2 shows that all 14 of the 2016 campaigns selected used RWB in their logo imagery, with 64.3 percent using the traditional three shades. Only one campaign, Mike Huckabee, used a fourth distinct color to accompany RWB. The semiotic cluster technique to follow will discuss the different ways in which a campaign utilizes RWB and how it can alter the brand characteristic they wish to communicate.
Is the color palette of the logo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the traditional American shades of Red, White, and Blue (RWB)</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a variation of RWB</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWB with the inclusion of a fourth distinct color</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.2 Color Palette**

Image elements, defined in this study as any shape within the logo that is not a text character, provide viewers with additional visual interest to hold attention and another component in which to communicate a message beyond the written words. Early in a campaign cycle when the fields are more crowded with candidates, it is important to attract eyeballs and differentiate from opponents. Image elements can aid in this process. Figure 1.3 indicates that the percentage of candidates who included some form of imagery in their logo is 78.6 percent. It should also be noted that the three campaigns that chose not to include imagery use other textual methods to differentiate to their logos, such as a unique color palette and punctuation. That decision could mean the slogan or the candidate’s name bore more of the campaign’s image than an additional element could provide. Imagery, therefore, is considered an important element in logo design to add interest and set themselves apart.

Does the logo use any type of imagery in addition to the candidate’s name?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.3 Imagery**
Following the previous results, the nature of the imagery included also carries great importance for a candidate’s brand. If an image appears too generic or cliché, it may bore viewers. However, if the image suggests a highly evocative concept, it may turn away viewers entirely. According to Figure 1.4, the majority of candidates chose relatively safe imagery in their logos, which often resulted in images like stars, stripes, and other American symbolism. Just 14.3 percent of the campaigns included evocative images, and both of which were related to fire. This result supports the notion that campaigns, in order to be successful, must resonate with a larger number of people, so including too evocative or specific of an image may be exclusionary to too many voters. Therefore, campaigns will choose safe, generic images that communicate general messages of America or prosperity.

Does the image element:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>evoke any specific feelings, thoughts, or related imagery</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appear generic</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not apply/no imagery</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.4 Evocative Imagery

Different type styles can communicate a number of messages depending on the execution and their relation to the written text. Type styles can include the families of type, including serif and sans serif, and the attributes added to them like boldness or italics. In American politics, it is common for candidates to pen themselves as strong, brave, and capable. In graphic design, strength with type is often conveyed with bold and pronounced lettering. Accordingly, campaign
logos will often feature the name of the candidate in that type style. In Figure 1.5, we see that 92.9 percent of candidates - all but one - used bold font styles.

Are the type elements generally:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thick, bold, or heavy</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thin or light</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arguably the one most important detail a campaign wants voters to remember about their candidate on election day is the candidate’s name. After all, the name and party affiliation are the only information about a candidate included on the ballot. Because of this, strategically designing the logo around name remembrance is key. As mentioned above, this can be done with type styles and focal point organization, but it can also be done with the name components themselves. Figure 1.6 shows that the majority of candidates preferred the inclusion of their last names, either by using their full name or last name only. Only one candidate - likely the one with the highest political name recognition of the entire field, Hillary Clinton - did not include her name at all.
Does the candidate include his or her:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>full name</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first name only</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last name only</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.6 Names

Finally, many brands are represented by multiple images, but in order to be effective at maintaining a message, there is often a high level of consistency between them. In political campaigns, where there is a relatively short lifespan of branding images - many are abandoned once the election ends - candidates want all of their visual communication to relate well to one another. This allows for the greatest possibility of brand remembrance among viewers and is also a show of consistency. Figure 1.7 shows that 64.3 percent of campaigns used alternative logos or political logos in past elections that closely mirror their 2016 official logo. For those that did not, the alternative logo used by the campaign was crowdsourced or it was a failed earlier attempt.
If the candidate has an alternative logo or past logo, is it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>substantially different in appearance or message from the primary logo</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very similar in appearance or message</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have alternative or past logo</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.7 Alternative Logo**

Following the identification of content elements in the selected 2016 logos, I introduce the semiotic clustering technique that will combine the identified elements by the embedded messages they carry for an American presidential candidate’s brand. The clusters take the shape of binary categorization, a common interpretive practice in semiotics explained in the following paragraph.

Semiotic codes within a culture tend to revolve around binary interpretive relationships; when something *is* one thing, it *is not* the other (Cook, 1992). Some examples that exist across many cultural contexts are anger versus happiness, up versus down, and masculine versus feminine. This concept is known in semiotics as “paired signifiers” (Chandler, 2007). These “key oppositions,” according to structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, give the human mind a classification system in which to organize the information it is presented to process. As it relates to political branding images, important paired signifiers arise out of oppositions found in the process of identifying and classifying content elements. For example, large or bold font weights versus small or thin text [Figure 1.5 in Appendix C] are key opposites that, within the political context, signify ideas of strength versus weakness. Boldness represents strength whereas thin text implies delicacy or subtlety, which can be interpreted as weakness in politics.
The following clusters represent the paired signifiers that arose out of the content identified in the logos. These clusters are not prescriptive; if a campaign chooses to use a particular style, it does not mean they automatically communicate one of the two paired messages. On a case by case basis, these design decisions are made in conjunction with others to either communicate a current characteristic of a candidate or how they want to be viewed by public. Therefore, the following clusters provide a segue for the aforementioned design categories into the individual semiotic analyses of campaign logos.

Strength is a common characteristic presidential candidates seek to communicate through their logo images and slogans [Cluster A]. This effect is accomplished in a few ways, which many of the 2016 logos employ, including bold font styles, organization around one focal point, and a strongly worded slogans (see Rand Paul, p. 39). These decisions convey an image of boldness and the nerve to speak freely and unapologetically for a cause of importance to the candidate. On the opposite side, thin fonts can appear delicate and weak while competing images may feel misguided or uncertain to the eye of the viewer (see Carly Fiorina, p. 64). Likewise, generic words in a slogan communicate very little to a voter and also risk being unmemorable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strength</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weakness</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bold or prominent typefaces</td>
<td>Thin or light typefaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One focal point</td>
<td>Competing elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific, evocative slogan text</td>
<td>Generic slogan text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.8 Cluster A: Strength versus Weakness*
Campaigns looking to appeal to a party establishment voter base or a state with traditional party values may choose a design option such as a serif font because of the style’s older, established appeal [Cluster B] (see Jeb Bush, p. 61). Similarly, sticking to a strict RWB color palette and choosing common American symbolism speaks to voters who are more apprehensive of change (see Rick Santorum, p. 64). Candidates choosing to showcase their youth and freshness to politics may take a modern approach with sans serif fonts and minimalist design (see Marco Rubio, p. 59).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serif, formal typefaces</td>
<td>Sans serif typefaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWB color palette</td>
<td>Color palette variations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic American symbols</td>
<td>Variations of imagery, not necessarily American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of several image and textual elements</td>
<td>Minimalist design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.9 Cluster B: Traditional versus Modern

Candidates with a long history in politics may also seek to communicate to voters their consistency within a party or on a certain set of issues [Cluster C]. If a candidate has a logo he or she has used in the past, that design is often mimicked and updated for the current election to signify their longtime commitment to values, issues, or the party (see Jeb Bush, p. 61; Rick Santorum, p. 64; Mike Huckabee, p. 50). In essence, they wish to communicate that they will remain steadfast on the issues and the people they represent. On the opposite side, a campaign may seek to communicate its adaptability over time or even within the election cycle. Completely restructuring one’s logo does not necessarily mean they are inconsistent; if done
well, it can represent an ability to change with time and remain committed to a certain set of values (see Hillary Clinton, p. 45).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consistent</th>
<th>Adaptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logo image mimics past political brand images</td>
<td>Completely unrelated but updated brand images from past logos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative logo images designed to be close variations of original logo</td>
<td>Alternative logos appear different in design but speak to a similar brand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.10 Cluster C: Consistent versus Inconsistent

Similar in practice to the traditional versus modern dichotomy, approachability may be an important message to communicate to voters for a campaign with an unlikely voter base than one would assume. Candidates then need to appeal to voters who may at first feel alienated by the campaign. For a candidate to seem more friendly and approachable or shed misperception, using informal typefaces, colors, and communicating to voters “on a first name basis” is key (see Bernie Sanders, p. 42). For a more formal approach, campaigns may use similar tactics as they would to appeal to traditional voters, like serif typefaces, RWB colors, and a full or last name, giving the logo a more professional image (see Ted Cruz, p. 36).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approachable</th>
<th>Formal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal typefaces</td>
<td>Rigid, often serif typefaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright or light accent colors</td>
<td>RWB color palette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses first name only</td>
<td>Uses full name or last name only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.11 Cluster D: Approachable versus Formal
Building a candidate’s brand involves both communicating the campaign’s plans for the future of the country and sharing more on the candidate as a person. The logo, however, should communicate which of these aspects is most important in driving the candidate’s message. If the candidate’s brand is built around his or her personal skills or traits that make them the most qualified or talented leader, then the slogan should be pointed in the direction of the candidate (see Chris Christie, p. 48). On the contrary, if the primary message is how prosperous and/or important the nation will be because the candidate holds the presidency, the slogan should speak in the direction of the country or the people (see Donald Trump, p. 52).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality-driven</th>
<th>Issue-driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slogan speaks in direction of the candidate’s skills or character</td>
<td>Slogan speaks in direction of the nation or the American voter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name as focal point</td>
<td>Imagery as focal point or no distinct focal point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.12 Cluster E: Personality-driven versus Issue-driven

**Part II: Semiotic Analyses**

The qualitative portion of this project now addresses the selected candidates as individual brands. Operating under the assumption that each campaign uniquely represents subtly different brand messages, the semiotic analysis identifies these messages communicated through visual and textual cues. I introduce the individual analyses in a carefully selected order, beginning with the brands that most explicitly communicate their brand messages, not necessarily those that are the most effective or design-worthy.
Ted Cruz: Uncompromising Conservatism

Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) may have worked in public service for nearly 17 years, but he hardly held household name recognition until his bid for the presidency began in March 2015. This may in part explain his choice of an evocative and memorable logo image to represent him throughout his presidential run. The public comes to expect the inclusion of generic American symbolism like stars and bald eagles in the imagery leading up to the presidential election. Therefore, Cruz’s logo, which incorporates a variation of the American flag into what many understand as a flame, challenges the viewer to interpret this image using their current knowledge of the candidate and the state of conservatism more broadly in the U.S.

Cruz, an affiliate of the hyper-conservative Republican offshoot group the Tea Party, labels himself as a staunch defender of the Constitution, a proponent of limited government, and general unwillingness to compromise conservative values in the lawmaking process. However, even without this knowledge, a viewer could likely decode pieces of that message through his logo and slogan, which is the mark of an effective brand image.
In examining marker 1 in Figure 2.1 (above), I call attention to the entire graphic image that this logo uses as its focal point, excluding the text. Though many can agree that the image appears to be a flame, there may be disagreement as to how that flame is being utilized. For example, for Cruz opponents or those in the opposing political party, a flame colored as an American flag could signify a burning flag, which is understood as a sign of disrespect for American values and identity. However, as the image is used to represent his brand, I argue that the flame is used for a transformative and possibly Biblical connotation. The use and presence of fire in Biblical terms has many interpretations, but two commons ones are the physical
presence of God and the transformation of sinfulness to holy life. Because Cruz’s explicit stance on defending religious liberty and his appeal to Evangelical voters as one of his largest voter bases, fire may symbolize either of these interpretations. Cruz does rely on a wider base than only religious communities, though. I surmise the idea of transformation – transforming the liberal-leaning state of U.S. government to one of conservatism – is his goal.

With marker 2, I recognize the strategic use of the color scheme within the flag-flame image. Candidates do not always make their political party affiliation obvious with their use of color, instead often choosing to use some variation of red, white, and blue and relying on design performance to dictate color distribution. Here, however, Cruz explicitly colors the “stripes” of his flag-flame red, which represents the Republican Party, because they appear this way on the American flag, but also because the shape allows them to nearly engulf the blue portion. The shape of this image was likely done strategically to allow for an overpowering red presence, signifying the resurgence of conservatism he believes he would bring in the presidency.

Marker 3 calls attention to the typeface and font color choice Cruz employs in his logo. As discussed in Chapter II, typefaces can communicate many different messages depending on their composition, weight, and style. Here, Cruz uses a serif font, which commonly communicates traditionalism. His campaign likely made this choice after determining his voter base would probably be older, more homogenous, and hold traditional or religious values. A serif font would feel more trustworthy to this base. The font color choice, though does not clearly communicate any obvious message, appears strategic in the design sense, allowing the flame to remain focal and initially attract eyeballs.
Finally, though Cruz does not always use his official slogan in his logo image, he often displays shorter variations or the full text across his various branding platforms such as his website and speaking podiums. His original official slogan reads: “Courageous Conservatives - Reigniting the Promise of America.” Two important textual signifiers emerge from this slogan. First, the word “courageous” implies the existence of an entity that requires one to stand in the face of with courage. It not only requires strength, but boldness and unwavering bravery. This word choice is likely purposeful to show Cruz’s intent to stand up to liberal politicians and progressive values that he and his potential voters believe are changing America in negative ways. Second, the term “reigniting” clearly refers to the flamed focal image of his logo, making an obvious connection between the two elements, giving a secondary nod to consistency. To reignite something does not mean to replace it with something new. Instead, this word choice implies that Cruz plans to revisit plans and policies that in the past produced American prosperity. His opponents, however, could argue that this kind of mindset is outdated and dangerous in a changing world.

Rand Paul: Liberty is Central

Another Tea Party candidate, Senator Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) communicates his message of re-emergent conservatism in a similar way as Cruz with the use of fire, likely because of their similar target voter bases. However, Paul offers a somewhat alternative Republican voice as a representative of the Libertarian party movement. This conservative party values laissez-faire economics, small government, and individual liberties. Therefore, his logo
represents this group’s ideology by embedding their most culturally significant and self-selected image: Lady Liberty’s torch.

Figure 2.2: Rand Paul. (RandPaul.org, 2015)

From a design perspective, the Paul campaign’s integration of the torch image (marker 1) into his name accomplishes a difficult task by marrying the imagery and textual elements. However, the effectiveness of this integration is questionable. Because of the focal nature of the flame, the handle of the torch is potentially lost to some eyes, which could misconstrue the Libertarian message Paul is looking to communicate. Despite the overtness of the torch, using this shape as the sole image element and placing it directly in the center solidifies Paul’s stance that liberty for the people is the central principle of his campaign. In marker 2, I call attention to the flame independently of the torch, because of its color and clear positioning as the logo’s focal
point. Though Paul represents the Republican Party, he uses a dark shade of blue disproportionately to red. However, in positioning the flame as the focal point and coloring it a vibrant red, he accomplishes a sense of intensity and urgency.

Marker 3 indicates Paul’s bold font choice and use of his first name only. Having a short, four-letter name allows his campaign to showcase either his full name without feeling too wordy, or using a bolder, single-name option. First, boldness indicates strength while the sans serif but italicized font indicates a modern take on traditional principles. Second, the campaign’s choice to use only his first name could be strategic in separating himself from his father, Ron Paul, who ran three presidential campaigns in the past. This choice was likely less of an effort at distancing himself, than just differentiating, because they represent similar views and policies. The name “Paul” could cause some voters to mistake him as his father as he works to build his own unique brand image.

Paul’s slogan, which he rarely uses in full, reads: “Defeat the Washington Machine - Unleash the American Dream.” While the slogan reads relatively long compared to other campaign slogans, it includes more specific language than many of his campaign’s opposition. The most powerful phrase within the slogan is the depiction of Washington, D.C., the hub of the federal government, as a “machine.” This asserts that the current government operates as a mechanical, all-powerful, uncompromising system that will continue in its establish path unless a strong intervention takes place. This “defeat” of the machine will allow for a new path to be forged, giving way for individual liberties to flourish and therefore harness the past notion of an “American dream.” This colorful language very effectively encompasses Paul’s campaign
message, though does not fit cleanly into the simple bold logo image with which he brands himself.

Bernie Sanders: “Young” and Approachable

As a candidate with explicitly Socialist policy proposals and opinions, Senator Bernie Sanders (D-Vermont) found himself with several hurdles to overcome in forming his brand image. First, the word “Socialism” still conjures a very negative image of communism and the Cold War era to a large portion of the country, while remaining a relatively unfamiliar term to another younger group of voters. Second, at 75-years-old, Sanders would replace Ronald Reagan as the oldest president ever sworn into office should he win. Finally, like many in the large group of candidates originally declared in the 2016 election, he previously lacked large-scale name recognition. The context surrounding these challenges likely led the Sanders campaign to brand him as approachable, accessible, and potentially young and vibrant, despite his age and lesser-known policy ideas. This, I argue, is the exact image his logo attempts to construct.
Marker 1 draws attention to the three most important aspects of his logo that portray a relatable candidate: the typeface, the font color, and the use of only his first name. The typeface, though it is a serif font, is styled in an informal way, which is appropriate for a candidate who is older but trying to speak to a younger audience. This font choice encodes a message of youthful vibrancy and an air of informality that may speak to younger voters with less interest in formal politics and its traditional forms of communication. The color then adds to this image as the lighter blue hue signifies the Democratic Party, which he is running for though not a member of, as well as informality. Light blue is also often understood as a representation of freshness and clarity. These tenets correspond with his campaign’s message of unveiling corruption and dismantling deep-rooted economic disparity. Thirdly, using only one’s first name as a relatively unknown candidate from the outset is bold but deliberate. The name “Bernie,” which is a nickname derived from Bernard, communicates similar informality, especially to his younger
audience unfamiliar with him. Regardless, though, Sanders has been using his nickname for much of his political career, making that choice an unsurprising one.

The star dotting the ‘i’ in his name, identified by marker 2, may seem like a somewhat meaningless decision and just an attempt to add in a generic American symbol. However, for a candidate accused of wanting to completely alter the economic system and greatly expand the role of government, he needed to reinforce an “unmistakably American” image, not one that represents any semblance of revolution or dismantlement. His slogan, however, which I will discuss next, accomplishes that campaign goal. Marker 3 also contributes to the American imagery by accenting the logo with a red stripe and completing the connection that this logo represents an American political figure. This element, I presume, serves more of a design purpose though, which adds interest using an accent color. Some designers have also suggested that the red and blue stripes beneath Sanders’ name recall the image of the Obama “O” logo with the red and blue horizon stripes (Elkin, 2015). Whether or not this replication was intentional, it calls out to those voters who felt a strong emotional response to President Obama’s image and message of change.

Sanders’ slogan presents a unique case from other logo and slogan combinations in this election cycle. The slogan, which reads, “A Political Revolution is Coming,” communicates many meanings, but none of which correspond with his logo’s embedded meanings. First and most obviously, he references revolution, which is explicitly avoided anywhere in his logo image that uses just his name, the year, and traditional American imagery as accents. It is important then to note here that very rarely does Sanders use his official slogan in branding materials. Instead, he uses shorter phrases like “Believe” and supporter-created slogans like “Feel the
Bern,” which communicates that he is receptive and amenable to his audience and their wishes. The second message within his slogan that recalls an almost ominous feeling is the phrase, “is coming.” This directly contradicts with the friendly and approachable message in his logo. The verb “is” does not direct the audience to the where or from whom the revolution is coming. However, this intended vagueness could also communicate that political revolution is not necessarily a product of Sanders as a candidate, but also a result of the people rising against an unfavorable government system. This may have been the intention of the campaign in order to make Sanders “one of the people” rather than a career politician.

Hillary Clinton: Interpretable but Unmistakably Progressive

As possibly the most recognizable name politically in a large field of candidates, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton enjoyed the benefits and battled the challenges of a long political career when crafting her brand for the 2016 election. For candidates with much longer careers, crafting a brand image proves much more difficult in a new campaign cycle because the public already holds an image in their mind from past cycles or events. Clinton, as a former First Lady of both Arkansas and the U.S., a senator of New York, a 2008 presidential candidate, and Secretary of State, faced a challenge in creating a new, more favorable image that could still include her past achievements. Her biggest challenge to overcome, arguably, would be her staid, party establishment image in an election cycle where the public seeks fresh candidates and new perspectives.
I should first note the massive criticism and praise Clinton has received since releasing her official logo. Speculation about its meaning, what it suggest about her candidacy, and simply if it is effective have circulated the airwaves and the web, probably ten-fold beyond what has been discussed about other candidates’ logos. With this image’s general standalone structure that includes no verbal indicators of a name or slogan, as well as no indicator of her party affiliation, many have speculated its subtle imitation of the Obama campaign’s ‘O’ logo symbol (Arnon, 2015). This would speak both to the logo’s ability to brand more fluidly as a standalone image like many modern corporate brand images, but also to the former Obama voter base, to whom Clinton is likely reaching toward. Just the structure of the image calls to mind a fresh, modern candidacy, though some have argued how the color scheme and shape cause it to fall short.
Marker 1 calls attention to the most obvious element of the entire image: the big, red arrow. This one element carries the brunt of what many critics have called too vague, but those who praise it have claimed it to be highly interpretable. My analysis falls to the side of interpretable, but possibly to its detriment. However, the arrow indicates unmistakable progressivism. In Western society, directionality from left to right indicates movement forward, while other cultures could interpret this in the opposite sense. Because the arrow points right, her campaign is communicating a forward-thinking, progressive message, both in the leftist, Democratic sense but also the generic sense of positive change and movement.

However, this arrow faces its challenges because of its color scheme, which I indicate at marker 3. The arrow is likely red while the remainder of the ‘H’ is blue for purely design purposes. Red is a more vivid, eye-catching hue that stands out amidst a navy blue. The Clinton campaign, which appeals to older and more traditional Democratic voters, probably chose a strict RWB color palette for both simplicity’s sake and to remain traditionally American and patriotic. The arrow needs to be red to stand out as the logo’s focal point. But this decision causes pause for ideological voters who might interpret a red, forward arrow as progress for conservatism or the Republican Party. Clinton, after all, has been criticized in the past as being more conservative and interventionist than much of the Democratic base. The general equality of the color palette, meaning a nearly equal ratio of red to blue, also suggests her candidacy plans to foster more cooperation between the currently divided parties. This sense of cooperation also feeds into the arrow’s message; more cooperation means more positive change and forward movement for all.
Finally, marker 2 indicates the base of the logo, which is the sans serif, single ‘H’. As previously mentioned, with such a recognizable name, Clinton chose wisely to simplify the logo by removing her name and replacing it with a single letter that signifies to voters her new, updated image. With the ‘H’ sitting below the arrow as the logo’s bedrock and colored in blue, this could signify her commitment to liberal principles as a bedrock for a Clinton presidency. However, the font choice produces a very rigid, block-like image that does little to advance her personal brand as fresh and palatable for those voters sick of establishment politics.

Despite the logo’s vagueness, it operates extremely well as a branding image for its simplicity and versatility. These attributes make it a dream for social media managers and visual identity managers to manipulate and share across many platforms. This sharing capability also then extends to the image’s ability to retain in the minds of voters, which is a vital component in communicating a brand.

Chris Christie: When a Slogan Says it All

The outspoken and unabashed Republican governor of New Jersey Chris Christie entered the 2016 race with several years serving in different areas of government from a state executive to a federal attorney. Though these positions would likely place him in the establishment wing of the Republican Party, his harsh words and controversial past gave his campaign a slight differentiation from other candidacies. Because of his well-known personality for brutal honesty, his campaign chose to use this trait as a selling point, branding him as a bold, outspoken, take-no-flack Republican.
Two main elements of Christie’s logo work together to signify his brand image, found at markers 1 and 2. First, using a bold, block, sans serif typeface for his name only, creates a solid focal point that directs the eye to one element, Christie the candidate. By not including any imagery elements, it accentuates that the most important piece of his brand is his character and leadership style. Any other elements would be distractions, and are, therefore, left out entirely. Next, the campaign’s slogan may be the most telling piece in the logo that communicates his brand. The slogan “Telling It Like It Is” is more commonly a social phrase for honesty or lack of subtlety than it is a political phrase. This slogan accomplishes two tasks. First, it tells voters he will be an unapologetic political leader that communicates honestly to both the public and to fellow leaders and lawmakers. By pointing the direction of meaning toward himself, he highlights the campaign’s brand message of his leadership style. Second, he speaks to voters on their level, not on a high pedestal like other political leaders. His very slogan is a common, everyday man’s phrase because he represents the common, everyday man.

Finally, marker 3 indicates the inclusion of the election year to remind voters of his political past and to provide viewers who may know of him from past political cycles, that this
represents his most current political brand. It is more common among politicians who have run for offices in the past or newcomers to the process to include the election year to indicate to voters that they are a presidential candidate. He uses a thin font style for this element to give the majority of attention, however, to his name in bold.

Mike Huckabee: A Pulpit Approach

Though his past attempts at the presidency have been unsuccessful, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee has received additional notoriety as a vocal pastor and Fox News television host. Where Huckabee’s message of governing with explicitly Christian guidance would have stood out in some past elections, his brand as the highly conservative religious candidate was matched in 2016 by opponents Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, and Marco Rubio. This caused some brand competition for the former pastor.

Figure 2.6: Mike Huckabee. (MikeHuckabee.com, 2016)
Huckabee’s logo appears to be a somewhat modernized take on his presidential logo from 2008, calling for support from the many voters he gained in that primary election. This decision to update his old logo, including the color scheme and the stars imagery, speaks to a consistency of values. By not deviating from his former image, he appeals to those who value a consistent conservative voice. The first marker calls attention to the gold stars in the image that appear to be floating upward from the stripes or perceived landscape beneath. The appearance of upward mobility symbolizes both rising up from a current situation and, for a religious candidate, an ascent of ideals, values, and policies toward heaven or closer to God. The use of gold as a fourth distinct color could be interpreted as a Christian symbol as well because of the color signification of great riches in the Bible, but is likely communicating a consistency of brand message from 2008.

At the second marker, a pair of red and white stripes intersect to appear like a horizon or calm rolling hills in rural America. A horizon carries messages of new beginnings and fresh starts, whereas rolling hills likely calls back to rural conservative America where many of his supporters come from. Either interpretation brings to mind a candidate of peaceful demeanor. However, some designers question the effectiveness of these stripes to accomplish those messages because of their execution.

The third marker identifies Huckabee’s slogan, “From Hope to Higher Ground,” which can be interpreted as an explicitly religious message. The phrase “higher ground” literally comes from wartime terminology in the sense that viewing a situation from a higher vantage point is advantageous to the enemy. Religious communities might apply this same concept to that of a higher being, which governs from a higher moral perspective than a secular authority. This
slogan claims that the American people are currently only hoping for change and prosperity, and 
a Huckabee presidency would raise our government structure to a Christian values based 
administration.

Donald Trump: Bold and Unabashed

Unapologetic, anti-establishment, and populist are just a few of the terms used to describe 
the American business tycoon who has commanded the airwaves in the 2016 election cycle. 
Donald Trump’s logo, however, speaks very little of his overall message, which I argue is 
exactly its purpose. Trump’s self-aggrandizing rhetoric and vague policy proposals have 
garnered much of his praise from supporters and his criticism from establishment politics and 
news media. As a multi-billion dollar businessman in real estate and other ventures, Trump’s 
appeal derives from many corners of the electorate for his economic success, blunt and brash 
tone, and his distance from the political arena. His vague policy stances likely stem from the 
latter characteristic because he lacks some of the campaign experience and policymaking 
experience of many of his opponents. Though his logo does reflect this notion, I argue it also 
acts less as a messaging device for Trump than other candidates because so much of his brand 
and appeal come directly from his words.
Marker 1 brings attention to the font style and symmetrical shape of Trump’s last name. This text is clearly the focal point of the image, mirroring Trump as an individual being the center point of his campaign. This effect is created by the large, bolded, and contrasting color choice of the text, commanding attention to his name first and foremost. Symmetry is a technique that creates simplicity, which in this case could connect to the candidate’s blunt and direct style of speaking and leading.

The second marker identifies Trump’s most distinct message, which is also his official slogan, “Make American Great Again.” This message appears in almost every branding material by the candidate and also frequently recited in speeches and by supporters. This slogan in itself is Trump’s political brand. Three pieces of this slogan illustrate his campaign message, with the first being the assumption that America is currently not great. This makes Trump a change candidate. The second is his vagueness of language, giving no indication of why American is not great and how he defines the concept. This opens his appeal to a wider base because greatness has a different definition for many types of people. His slogan says that he is the candidate who
will simply transform the country’s outlook for everyone, not any one specific group. The third aspect is the word “again” that indicates a time in the past when American was, in his opinion, great. But attempting to return to this time of greatness risks voters viewing him as a candidate who will move the country backwards. He also includes an exclamation mark in this slogan, which is a very uncommon decision for logos in general. In the case of Trump, because of his energetic and entertaining appeal, including the punctuation likely reflects his campaign style.

Trump’s very muted use of imagery is identified by the third marker. The small red stars were probably only included to give the logo a bit more visual interest because of the red accent color – an interesting choice given his affiliation with the Republican Party. The stars and line outline further add to the symmetrical shape, while also providing a visual cue that this is his political logo and not one associated with one of his business ventures. Finally, though it is not shown here, Trump’s often-used alternative logo is very similar to that above but using purple text on white background. This could be both a tactic that demonstrates bipartisanship or anti-establishment leanings by deviating from RWB.

Martin O’Malley: A Topic of Conversation

For former governor of Maryland Martin O’Malley, the biggest hurdle of his campaign was finding a place to carve out his position in the race against a very well known opponent with a long résumé in establishment politics, Hillary Clinton. As a governor and former mayor of Baltimore, he could potentially find support with minority communities or look to his connections in establishment politics, but both of those were early established voting bases for
Clinton. His policy plans also closely resemble Clinton’s, but with a slightly more conservative bend, which restricts his reach within a Democratic party moving progressively left. Therefore, O’Malley needed to gather support and national name-recognition elsewhere.

In examining his logo and other branding materials, it appears he chose to seek the youth vote and those with a distaste for “politics as usual.” Marker 1 indicates this effort. The only imagery element in the logo, which surrounds his name and supplementary text, appears to serve as a modern, angular take on a quotation or thought bubble. By placing his name and his short message of “New Leadership” within the speech or thought bubble, he asserts himself visually “into the conversation” where he was not previously because of low national name recognition. This design decision asks the viewer to think of O’Malley as a topic of conversation or possibly a new way to think about the shape of government of leadership in the country. The speech bubble also connects his campaign to the youth vote by harkening an image of social or new
media messaging platforms. This mental connection creates a sense of familiarity and modernity that his campaign may feel his opponents lack.

The second marker calls attention to the font style and color O’Malley uses for his name and supplement text. Similar to Bernie Sanders, he chooses a lighter blue and an informal sans serif font, which give his campaign a youth friendly and approachable appearance while simultaneously indicating his party affiliation. Because of his unique last name compared to others in the field, he exercises more freedom to exclude his first name and thereby simplifying his overall image. Marker 3 indicates a similar notion in his use of red as an accent color, completing the American image, and indicating to voters that he is unmistakably a candidate for the presidency in the 2016 election. These two indicators, “for president” and the election year, are often not used together in successful modern campaign logos. In O’Malley’s case, however, he has run for many types of offices across a period longer than 20 years, making these indicators sometimes necessary to clarify for familiar voters. Including the additional leadership verbiage in his primary logo is an interesting choice but likely unnecessary in a campaign that, no matter the outcome, voters understandably expect some type of new leadership to take office. This choice clearly shows an effort to differentiate from his Democratic opponents and the current administration, but simply stating “new leadership” does little to accomplish that. It also does not reference his official slogan, making the words vague and awkwardly placed within his current context.

The O’Malley campaign’s official slogan reads: “Restore the American Dream.” First, the American dream reference is so commonly used, especially post-financial crisis, it runs the risk of becoming meaningless to much of the American public. With an already somewhat
vague and unrecognizable brand, a slogan that invokes a generic American cliché only muddles the campaign’s core message. Second, strengthening the verb choice could give the slogan a bit more direction. Restoration implies a repair and resurrection of something that once existed - in this case, the American dream. This idea of change, however, is not unique to any candidate or election cycle. If the O’Malley campaign has a clear list of key objectives, neither this slogan nor his logo communicates those as a brand.

Ben Carson: A Healer and an Outsider

Dr. Ben Carson’s emergence onto the national campaign stage added a unique brand to the expanded field of 2016 Republican candidates, making him one of a small group of candidates with no formal past political experience. Though Carson developed recognition nationally as a neurosurgeon and a conservative, his stances on issues and policy ideas were mostly unknown to the public. Therefore, his campaign faced a unique challenge in that it already held an established brand image as a political outsider and a respected physician, but no background on many of America’s concerning issues.

In the Carson campaign’s first attempt at a logo, a number of design flaws caused a complete re-launch early in the campaign. The original logo featured Carson’s name with a gilded gradient followed by “America” with an American flag wrapping the first letter. The image, though it included Carson’s current slogan, was completely replaced in order to more clearly identify the candidate and his intent in a political race, which was a presidential run.
Featuring no imagistic elements and combining a variety of hues, the Carson campaign logo accomplishes little in providing voters with a visual cue as to his political ideology or issue stances. Like Governor Christie, however, his brand becomes more evident in his slogan. Marker 1 brings attention to the color and typeface choices made throughout the logo image. Using a standard sans serif font with varying levels of character weights, he indicates the more important aspects of the logo with bolder letters. The different shades of red and blue are likely used to add interest and attract eyeballs, but coloring his name red was an indicator party affiliation.

Marker 2 indicates the unique slogan Carson primarily uses to build his brand. The terminology in “Heal + Inspire + Revive” reminds the viewer of Carson’s long history and success in the medical field, signifying his intelligence, commitment to people, and his place in the field as a political outsider. The three words also deliver viewers a positive message of hope and resurgence. The words “heal” and “revive” especially call to a support base that feels victimized by the current political system. However, instead of other candidates who use words
that indicate a system that must be rebuilt or completely dismantled, Carson’s word choice implies that the system is only broken or ill. He as leader would bring the system back to health, however, he does not give any indication in what ways or under what guiding principles he would accomplish this. For example, during his time in the campaign, he often spoke of his religious beliefs and using them as in his leadership. That lack of message within his branding image could have potentially given his campaign more cohesion.

Finally, the third marker indicates his inclusion of supplementary text that reminds viewers of the position he seeks. Because he entered the campaign as an outsider without much political exposure, this is smart to include to give an idle viewer the information they need to understand that a man named Ben Carson is running for president in 2016. Unlike a candidate like Clinton, he needs that added information to circulate for voters to make that connection with his name in the future. However, the prominence with which he included this text detracts from the logo from a design perspective. It is very close in size to his name and slogan, which are the two most important aspects of the logo for his brand development. This homogeneity of text sizes does not force a viewer’s eyes to the most important parts of the logo, giving it a lack of interest that could detract a viewer’s attention quickly.

Marco Rubio: The Fresh and Modern Conservative

Senator Marco Rubio (R-Florida) entered the 2016 presidential race as the youngest candidate and as one of the first Latino American to run at this level. These attributes won him an early following and respect from the press and fellow candidates as a possible contender for
the Republican nomination. Because of his youth and political freshness he brings to the Republican Party, which has been historically pegged as the older, less diverse of the two major parties, he chose to represent that in his logo design.

![Marco Rubio Logo](https://example.com/marco-rubio-logo.png)

**Figure 2.10: Marco Rubio.** (MarcoRubio.com, 2016)

Marker 1 calls attention to both the use of an US outline and the flat design across the entirety of the logo. Placing the entirety of the logo on a white background with no gradient, coupled with the font styles, gives the logo a modern, minimalist appeal. These choices communicate that Rubio is representative of a new era of young American Republicans who hold conservative values but offer newer, more updated approaches than his older competitors. The US outline, filled in with red, serves not only as an accent image, but is purposefully colored, signifying Rubio’s commitment to “color America red” so to speak, reintroducing conservatism to the White House. However, the image from a distance has been criticized for appearing out of place or misshapen, making it a detriment to the minimalist design the campaign was aiming toward. The second marker relates to the modern approach in that the lowercase font style and the sans serif typeface together appeal to a younger or more new age conservative audience.
Marker 3, which indicates the slogan, contributes to a modern, non-symmetrical design. The language, however, falls flat in trying to appeal to a younger audience looking to feel inspired by a fresh candidate. Though the phrase “A New American Century” communicates hope, rejuvenation, and even a specific timeframe, it does not spark a more evocative and memorable image. Instead, it speaks vagueness and potentially America-centrism in a globalized, changing world, which voters might expect coming from an older, more traditional politician. Therefore, the slogan does not fit the overall theme of the logo, causing the brand to fall short.

Jeb Bush: Consistency with an Exclamation Point

Former Florida governor Jeb Bush faced a unique branding dilemma in the 2016 campaign. Being one of the most highly qualified politicians among Republican candidates was in direct opposition with an electorate searching for a political outsider. Furthermore, he unmistakably carries the last name Bush, which recalls a long political legacy for many voters both young and old. However, painting himself as a non-establishment candidate – a tactic many of his opponents attempted – would be highly unbelievable for his currently recognized political brand. As mentioned earlier, fundamentally altering one’s brand is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, Bush’s strength would lie in his long political experience, consistent conservative record, and his message as a simple man of public service from a family of American leadership.
Marker 1 identifies a central message communicated by Bush’s 2016 campaign, as well as his past gubernatorial races. Not only is his one of the few campaigns to continue using a more traditional styled serif font, but his typeface choice here, Baskerville, is the very same font style he has used for past races. Further, this font has been found to be the most trustworthy typeface of commonly used choices (Morris, 2012). The type decision here is both communicating an unwavering consistency from him as a conservative in the 1990s and attempts to gain the trust of viewers of his ability as a leader. This message of consistency and an unwillingness to adapt his logo for a modern presidential race signifies a firm commitment to traditional values in a changing society, which communicates most effectively to an older base of voters to whom he most appeals. The traditional color palette and overemphasis of red to blue bolsters this appeal.
This marker also acknowledges the use of only his first name. Media and public critiques of this choice theorize this is an attempt to distance himself from his well-known last name and, therefore, the same controversial policies of his father and brother and the Bush political dynasty. This argument loses steam, however, when one takes into account that his political logo has only used his first name for the past 20 years.

The second marker recognizes the inclusion of a punctuation mark in the textual elements of his name. While this decision also mimics Bush’s past political logos, it also attempts to combat an image of seriousness and a boring personality. One of Bush’s strengths is his experience, making him well-versed in policy and governing procedure. In the 2016 campaign, however, this attribute has been more of detriment. An exclamation mark adds excitement and youthful energy to a brand that continued to battle nostalgia and lack of energy.

Finally, the third marker indicates both an element the Bush campaign chooses to include and purposefully excludes. First, marking the election year is uniquely important for his logo because it so closely resembles his past logos. He makes the conscious decision to change the font to a sans serif option, giving it a slightly updated appeal for the modern campaign environment. Second, the election year is the only additive element in the logo, not including any imagery or slogan. This decision forces his first name as the logo’s focal point, reinforcing his audience to refer to him as ‘Jeb’ instead of ‘Bush.’ The lack of slogan is likely due to his campaign not declaring an official slogan at the time it issued the logo. His official slogan, which reads, “Jeb Can Fix It,” has not received good reviews, however. Branding professionals criticize it for unoriginality and lack of vision, and it serves as bait for millions of Twitter users who have compared it to a slogan for everything from a plumber to children’s cartoons.
Carly Fiorina, Rick Santorum, and John Kasich

The final three logos of introduced below provide little material for a rich semiotic analysis. The logos and slogans of Carly Fiorina, Rick Santorum, and John Kasich communicate either very vague or generic brand messages from which viewers can learn very little about their campaigns. An element that contributes to this is generic imagery such as Fiorina’s single star, Santorum’s bald eagle, and Kasich’s red stripes. All three choose a safe, traditional RWB color palette and block sans serif fonts. Further, none of the three includes a slogan that could differentiate their image at least in terms of a textual message.

However, two aspects of interest can be highlighted in these logos. First, in an attempt to soften her image as a high-powered former CEO, the Fiorina campaign chooses a thin, light font, which is very uncommon for presidential logos. This gives the image a clean, modern appeal, but risks appearing delicate or weak. She also identifies herself by only her first name, which accentuates that she is the only female candidate in a large, male-dominated Republican field. Second, the Santorum campaign very clearly chooses this adaptation of his logo as an update to his 2012 presidential logo. Though he did not end up securing the Republican nomination that year, he ran a successful campaign that gained him recognition for this election cycle. Keeping a similar design helps him remind voters of that success, while also maintaining an image of consistency.
Figure 2.12: Carly Fiorina. (CarlyforPresident.com, 2015)

Figure 2.13: Rick Santorum. (RickSantorum.com, 2015)

Figure 2.14: John Kasich. (JohnKasich.com, 2016)
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The research questions guiding this thesis addressed two major themes: political branding messages and digital literacy. Through the content analysis and semiotic analyses, I can conclude that there are specific and strategic messages embedded in political campaign logos. There are general themes most campaigns adhere to in constructing these images and slogans, supporting my first hypothesis that general uniformity exists among candidates appealing to the broader American political context. However, clear lines cannot be drawn between candidates appealing to more localized contexts such as certain parties, ideologies, or experience levels because campaigns are often appealing to many different contexts among American voters at once. Therefore, I find my second hypothesis unsupported.

The semiotic analyses in Chapter IV illustrate how a vast number of complex messages can be conveyed through graphic design strategies, addressing my second question asking what are these specific messages. Branding images communicate both about a candidate or campaign and to that campaign’s audience. However, the analyses also demonstrate the vast interpretations of these same messages.

Social semiotics provides a suitable framework for thinking about these communication strategies because the theory addresses the power struggle between the message creators and the audience. In the early stages of developing a campaign brand, strategists spend hours researching and focus grouping their audience and drafting the image of their candidate down to most minute details. Before the brand and any images associated with it are released to the public, the campaign maintains total control of the messages they create and hope to
communicate. The moment that release takes place, however, the power shifts to the public as
the interpreters of a campaign’s central messages.

When executed well, a campaign’s audience will gather the messages the campaign
intended. Oftentimes, though, this power shift results in unintended interpretations. On the
Democratic side of the 2016 election cycle for example, Hillary Clinton’s ‘H’ symbol carries a
large number of interpretive baggage. The most cited critique of the Clinton logo is its use of red
as its “hero color” as well as pointing the red arrow to the right (Killough, 2015; Elkin, 2015).
As a Democratic candidate represented by blue and labeled with leftist directional terminology,
the right-facing, red arrow appears misleading or mistaken. Especially in a highly partisan
campaign, appealing to a Democratic voter is not best accomplished with conservative imagery.

This logo also receives criticism for its general angular structure. Clinton faces her own
personality image issues as being cold and corporate. The boxy logo appears to resemble the
image of a financial company like Chase Bank than a presidential logo. In reaction to the logo’s
shape and his interpretation, designer David Carson says, “It feels distant, cold, non-inviting, and
possibly too much like the perception of the candidate herself” (POLITICO, 2015).

Though the intention was likely to resemble the Obama ‘O’ logo in its standalone, text-
less structure, this decision faces an interpretive drawback. Not all Democratic voters are
satisfied with the Obama presidency, making this mimicked attempt seem like Clinton’s
presidency would only continue politics as usual.

On the Republican side, the Ted Cruz logo receives frequent pushback for its focal
feature, the red and blue flame. Though it was likely meant to portray evocative and religious
messages, this image appears to be a flag within flame, which from a literal perspective could
signify the burning of the American flag. Instead of voters viewing the image as a signifier of transformation, it instead could portray Cruz as anti-American.

The flame also faces interpretive issues for its religious intentions. The U.S. hosts a large variety of religious beliefs, not solely evangelical or even Christian, which is the community of voters to whom Cruz most appeals. Using an explicitly Christian flame shape in his branding images, the “Tongue of Fire” from Acts 2, communicates that a Cruz presidency would govern with religious values that are not necessarily representative of the country as a whole. This interpretation could also turn away those who may be religious but believe in a clear separation between church and state.

Furthermore, logos and entire brands can face real challenges when the image appears to resemble another brand, especially one in contention with the campaign’s message. Jeb Bush’s exclamation point at the end of his name has been compared by some to the former red Yahoo! logo, a technology company that carries an early 2000s stigma. This association in the minds of voters could make Bush appear outdated, which is a label he frequently confronts. Other examples include Bernie Sanders’ logo resembling the toothpaste company Aquafresh and Mike Huckabee’s rolling hills mimicking the landscape scene of Obama’s ‘O’.

My third and final research question addresses how voters can become critical consumers of campaign messages. If the much of what we need to know about a candidate’s stance on issues and their past experience is verbally expressed by the campaign or discussed in the media, why is it important that viewers take time to evaluate visual communication as well? These types of messages, because they are often complex, implicit, and highly interpretable, can influence a voter’s perception and go unnoticed. To make fully informed decisions, voters
deserve the tools and awareness to recognize every message communicated to them during an election cycle. The research provides both the rationale and a resource for this process [Appendix A], urging for more research and resources made available in the future.

Limitations and Further Research

This research faced two notable limitations. In using semiotic theory as a framework and method, there exists the understanding that cultures increasingly differ as the context scales larger. Within the United States’ political environment, the cultural context in which this study resides, there exist thousands of different cultural settings and countless variations of interpretation. Though semiotic analysis provides a frame for identifying multiple interpretations of visual communication, one researcher performed this study. Further research in this realm should gather numerous interpretations through survey research to identify how different communities, ideologies, and geographic locations interpret political logos and other branding materials.

The second limitation involves a viewer’s political bias, which one is often applying when viewing a political branding material such as a logo or slogan. Political biases are difficult to ignore, especially when faced with an explicitly political image. As the primary researcher on this study, I consciously withheld any personal political biases to my best ability, as well as instructed my coders to do the same. When members of the general public are viewing political branding images, however, political biases are inherently present.

In conclusion, further research on this topic, as mentioned above, would benefit from surveying the general public about their interpretations of visual communication materials.
Gathering this information with demographic information could help provide understanding of how different cultural contexts interpret the same messages differently. Further, conducting this study on lower-level political races, such as congressional or gubernatorial races, could result in interesting findings reapplying my second hypothesis, which states that candidates appealing to specific communities or factions employ similar strategies. Finally, applying this same study to logos and slogans of past political campaigns could both track the graphic design changes in the political context and situate the 2016 candidates within American political history.
DECODING THE CANDIDATES

A political consumer handbook for branding design

by jilanne k doom
politicians and political organizations

SPEAK WITH MORE THAN WORDS

Visual communication in politics has existed far longer than today’s age of digital media. American politicians have managed their “image” since the earliest elections. However, these strategic practices have become far more complex and professionalized since the days of campaign buttons and flyer ads. Political candidates attempt to communicate implicitly and gather support in their visual branding strategies as well as the words they say in their stump speeches.

This booklet empowers you, the voter, with a simple tool for interpreting the visual messages of campaigns using graphic design principles.

Campaigns brand themselves with many products, such as websites, TV ads, official logos and slogans, signage, old school mailers, and much more.

Keep the following four political and graphic design principles in mind when viewing the branding materials of political candidates:

- type
- color
- imagery
- slogan

because words matter too
Most Americans know, in our politics, red means Republican and blue means Democrat. But there are more distinctions that can be made when interpreting the color palette of a branding image. Colors don’t just help us make mental connections; they also conjure certain emotional reactions. For example, red often identifies conservatism; more broadly, even signifying conservative factions like Tea Party values. Blue identifies similar progressive principles. Very rarely do political brands venture outside of red, white, and blue palettes, but a candidate using a fourth distinct color could be attempting to differentiate or to communicate an anti-establishment message. Entire palettes can also signify a certain ideology or set of values, such as candidates with a strong military background using their branch’s colors to communicate patriotism, selflessness and strength.
Whether it's the strategic placement of minority voters in the background of a photograph, an unattractive portrayal of an opponent in a TV ad, or Lady Liberty's torch in a logo, images dominate the political campaign process. For voters, it can be difficult to navigate the vast amount of images used to brand candidates.

When viewing images in branding or advertising materials, notice the themes. Is a candidate using evocative imagery indicating fundamental change (like the logo to the left)? Does the candidate tend to only distribute photographs with certain types of voters to gain the support of those people? Noticing these themes can help voters identify certain motivations of the candidate and the campaign as a whole.
Different typefaces, type styles, sizes, and other type variations are primary tools in a designer’s toolkit. In the business of creating a political brand, identifying that candidate by their name, as it will eventually appear on a voting ballot, is essential for you to remember them on election day. Type, then, becomes vital for even the most well-known candidates.

Certain type styles carry different meanings for different voters’ preferences. Sans serif appear more traditional while serif fonts have a modern appeal. Informal styles appear friendly and approachable while formal styles portray professionalism. In terms of font weights, bold styles convey strength and thin styles appear delicate.

Also be aware of what text is the largest, as it is often the focal point of the branding image. Most often this text is the candidate’s name, which is the most important for brand recognition.
Political slogans add another element to a candidate’s brand. However, sometimes these messages miss the mark at being both memorable and meaningful for spreading the campaign’s message. Some will choose to completely ignore their slogans in branding materials. Two important aspects to focus on in slogans are 1) the direction of the slogan and 2) the key words. A slogan pointed in the direction of the candidate, calling attention to their personality, indicates a campaign surrounding that candidate’s personal strength to govern. One pointed toward the voter or nation as a whole indicates a candidate’s ability to address larger issues, often with their public service experience. Key words, like “revolution” or “relying,” are indicative of the candidate’s approach as a leader.

In Chris Christie’s slogan from the 2016 presidential campaign (above), he chose to identify his most memorable characteristic, his bluntness. “Telling it like it is,” he boasted, would also be his governing strategy, branding him as a no “BS” kind of candidate.
a research project by

for the fulfillment of a master's thesis
digital media design
at georgetown university
Appendix B: Content Analysis Measures and Reliability Survey

Core Logo

Visual Elements

1. Is the color palette of the logo:
   a. the traditional American shades of Red, White, and Blue (RWB);
   b. a variation of RWB; OR
   c. RWB with the inclusion of a fourth distinct color?

2. Does the logo use any type of imagery in addition to the candidate’s name?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. If yes, is the image element:
   a. the focal point of the logo; OR
   b. used as minor additive elements to the logo as a whole?
   c. Does not apply/no imagery

4. If yes, is the image element:
   a. a traditional American shape or style (i.e. stars or stripes);
   b. a variation of an American shape or style;
   c. Both of the above; OR
   d. Neither?
   e. Does not apply/no imagery

5. If yes, does the image element:
   a. evoke any specific feelings, thoughts, or related imagery; OR
   b. appear generic?
   c. Does not apply/no imagery

6. Is the logo organized in a way that directs your eye to:
   a. one focal point; OR
   b. two or more competing elements?

7. Is the logo shape generally symmetrical?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Textual Elements

8. In regards to typeface(s), does the logo primarily use:
   a. a serif font; OR
   b. a sans serif font?

9. Are the type elements generally:
   a. thick, bold, or heavy; OR
   b. thin or light?
10. Does the candidate include his or her:
   a. full name;
   b. first name only;
   c. last name only; OR
   d. no name?

11. Does the logo include:
   a. the election year (2016);
   b. the indicator “For President”;
   c. Both of the above; OR
   d. Neither of the above?

12. If the candidate has an alternative logo or past logo, is it:
   a. substantially different in appearance or message from the primary logo; OR
   b. very similar in appearance or message?
   c. Does not have alternative or past logo

Slogan

13. Does the logo:
   a. include a slogan in both his or her primary AND alternative logos;
   b. OR include a slogan in only one or the other?
   c. Slogan is not included in either logo

14. Is the slogan:
   a. five words or shorter; OR
   b. six words or longer?

15. In terms of direction of meaning, is the slogan focused:
   a. away from the candidate (toward the voters or America); OR
   b. toward the candidate (their skills or personality)?
   c. Too generic to tell

General Impressions (used as survey questions; not calculated into content analysis)

16. Does this slogan address or recall any specific themes (economy, religion, etc.)?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. If yes, what theme? [Open ended]

17. Eliminating your partisan views and current knowledge of the candidates, in your interpretation, does the logo and slogan combination incite thoughts of (select all that apply or none):
   a. general positivity ("The country is in good shape and this candidate will continue to move us forward")
   b. general negativity ("The country is currently in a bad place and this candidate will correct that")
   c. hope ("This candidate has a bright outlook for the future of this country")
d. cooperation ("This candidate will be able to work with those on the opposite side of the aisle")

e. fear ("I should support this candidate or the future of the country is in trouble")

f. revolution ("This candidate will completely change America and politics for the better")

g. Other (please specify) [Open ended]

18. In comparison to other political candidate/party/organization logos you've encountered, how original do you find this logo?
   a. Very original
   b. Somewhat original
   c. Somewhat standard
   d. Very standard

19. How effective do you find this logo in creating a recognizable brand for this candidate?
   a. Very effective
   b. Somewhat effective
   c. Not effective at all
Appendix C: Supplementary Content Analysis Findings

Is the image element:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the focal point of the logo</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used as minor additive elements to the logo as a whole</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not apply/no imagery</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.i Image as Focal Point*

Is the image element:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a traditional American shape or style (i.e. stars or stripes)</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a variation of an American shape or style</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not apply/no imagery</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.ii Image Shape*

Is the logo organized in a way that directs your eye to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one focal point</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two or more competing elements</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.iii Organization*
Is the logo shape generally symmetrical?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.iv Symmetry

In regards to typeface(s), does the logo primarily use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a serif font</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a sans serif font</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.v Typeface

Does the logo include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the election year (2016)</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the indicator “For President”</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither of the above</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.vi Supplementary Text
Does the logo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>include a slogan in both his or her primary AND alternative logos</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>include a slogan in only one or the other</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slogan is not included in either logo</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.vii Slogan

Is the slogan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>five words or shorter</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six words or longer</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.viii Slogan Length

In terms of direction of meaning, is the slogan focused:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Option</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>away from the candidate (toward the voters or America)</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toward the candidate (their skills or personality)</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too generic to tell</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.ix Slogan Direction
### Appendix D: Individual Logo Coding Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Q1 Color Palette</th>
<th>Q2 Imagery</th>
<th>Q3 Image Focal Point</th>
<th>Q4 Image Shape</th>
<th>Q5 Image Evocative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
<td>e. DNA</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
<td>e. DNA</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Christie</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
<td>e. DNA</td>
<td>c. DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. focal point</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>a. evocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly Fiorina</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>c. fourth</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kasich</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. focal point</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. evocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. focal point</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin O’Malley</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>b. variation</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. additive</td>
<td>a. traditional</td>
<td>b. generic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Q7 Symmetry</th>
<th>Q8 Typeface</th>
<th>Q9 Type Weight</th>
<th>Q10 Names</th>
<th>Q11 Supplementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>b. first name</td>
<td>a. year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>a. full name</td>
<td>c. both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Christie</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>c. last name</td>
<td>a. year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>a. full name</td>
<td>a. year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly Fiorina</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>b. light</td>
<td>b. first name</td>
<td>b. for president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>c. last name</td>
<td>a. year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kasich</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>c. last name</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>b. first name</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>a. full name</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Santorum</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>a. full name</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>c. last name</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>d. none</td>
<td>d. neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin O’Malley</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>b. sans serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>c. last name</td>
<td>c. both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>a. serif</td>
<td>a. bold</td>
<td>b. first name</td>
<td>a. year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Q12 Alt Logo</th>
<th>Q13 Slogan</th>
<th>Q14 Length</th>
<th>Q15 Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>c. not included</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>a. different</td>
<td>a. in both</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Christie</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>b. 6 or longer</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly Fiorina</td>
<td>c. NO ALT</td>
<td>c. not included</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kasich</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>c. NO ALT</td>
<td>c. not included</td>
<td>b. 6 or longer</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>c. NO ALT</td>
<td>a. in both</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Santorum</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>c. not included</td>
<td>b. 6 or longer</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>a. in both</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>b. toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin O’Malley</td>
<td>b. similar</td>
<td>b. only one</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>a. away</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>a. different</td>
<td>c. not included</td>
<td>a. 5 or shorter</td>
<td>a. away</td>
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