REPRESENTATIVE FORM AND THE VISUAL IDEOGRAPH: THE OBAMA

"HOPE" POSTER

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those who encouraged my lifetime learning. My mother, Kathy Terrell used every experience in life as a learning opportunity. My father, Jerry, never accepted the standard answer as the as the only answer. Chris Curtis, a husband who though he may not have understood what I was talking about, always listened to every nerdy monologue about rhetoric. Above all, my dear son, Jasper, who is in many ways a better rhetorical scholar than me and the most persuasive person I know.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

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In this study, Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler's method, based on Michael McGee's ideograph, is applied to non-discursive forms in order to understand the extent to which these images can be understood as a representative form functioning ideographically. Artifacts for analysis include the 2008 Shepard Fairey Obama "PROGRESS" and "HOPE" images, related campaign graphics, and parodies, political and non-political, humorous and serious. Literature on visual rhetoric, the ideograph, and extensions of McGee's ideograph to visual forms was reviewed. When the method was applied to the artifacts, the Obama "HOPE" image was found to be an example of a representative form. Additionally, the representative form was demonstrated to function ideographically in the parodied examples analyzed in this thesis. Opportunities for further study on the visual ideograph and additional artifacts were proposed.

Kristina H. Sheeler, Ph.D., Chair

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Introduction

The Obama "HOPE" graphic, surprised audiences by how different it was from other contemporary political images. Digital photography has made full-color photographic pictures the norm for campaigns. Instead, the HOPE graphic used a four-color graffiti-style stencil. The subject's pose was also highly unusual. Rather than a smiling candidate, Obama was positioned slightly off center, with an up-turned gaze. The effect did not make the candidate appear friendly or approachable, but rather resolute and defiant. This image would have seemed out of place in any other election, but came to define the 2008 presidential contest.

Yet there were interesting features beyond the design. First is the image's resemblance to twentieth century South American, socialist political posters. Also notable is the picture's similarity to the famous Che Guevara portrait from 1960, which has become the icon of political rebellion from that day to this. Additionally, there was something epic about the scale of the piece that is similar the propagandistic banner behind Orson Welles in a well known scene from *Citizen Kane*. All of these allusions made lead the rhetorical scholar to wonder, "What ideological message was the image presenting to the audience?" How might rhetorical scholarship come to understand the persuasiveness of the graphic as a political artifact? Was the message being sent to the audience in accord with what the campaign intended? And how what was the reaction in media coverage and from the opposing campaign? Certainly, pondering these questions led me to choose the Obama "HOPE" poster and related graphics for thesis study.

Significance of the Obama "HOPE" Poster

Of all the images produced during the 2008 U.S. presidential election, none was more memorable than the Obama "HOPE" poster. The image was created in one day by graffiti artist, Shepard Fairey, using a stylized stencil screen print of an Associated Press photographic portrait. Three hundred fifty posters were sold that same day and another three hundred fifty posted in public. Using the money received from the sale of the posters, Fairey printed an additional 300,000 posters and 100,000 stickers, all but 2,000 given away free of charge (Barton, 2008). The image was an instant success, going "viral" on the internet in a matter of weeks. As *The Guardian's* Laura Barton wrote, the image "acquired the kind of instant recognition of Jim Fitzpatrick's Che Guevara poster, and is surely set to grace T-shirts, coffee mugs and the walls of student bedrooms in the years to come" (Barton, 2008, para.2).

The image moved beyond its original presentation as a campaign poster, transforming it into a pop culture phenomenon. The style was appropriated for other uses, including parodies of other candidates, anti-Obama propaganda, and humorous parodies of iconic characters such as Alfred E. Neuman. Conservative talk show host Glenn Beck, noting the "progressive" ideology of the "HOPE" graphic, commissioned a series of "conservative" posters promoting "FAITH," "HOPE," and "CHARITY," featuring John Adams, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, respectively. After the successful election of Obama, a mixed media version of the image was commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution for the National Portrait Gallery thus solidifying its reputation as an American classic. Owing to the graphic's success, it is certainly an artifact worthy of rhetorical analysis.

This thesis extends the work of Michael McGee on the ideograph by analyzing the Obama "HOPE" poster and related images using Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler's framework for studying visual rhetorical forms. I argue that the Obama "HOPE" image is an example of a representative form. I further argue that this representative form functioned ideographically, conveying ideological messages when imported into other graphics. In order to arrive at this conclusion, this study first reviews literature on visual rhetoric, methods for studying the visual ideographs, and extensions of ideographic studies to include non-discursive forms, which leads to two research questions. Next, I explain the method employed to answer these questions, thoroughly discuss the artifacts under analysis, and proceed with analyses and conclusions.

Review of Literature

The literature review surveys the foundational literature on visual rhetoric in general and the Obama image in particular. Michael McGee's foundational work on the ideograph as unit of rhetorical analysis is discussed. I will connect he work on the discursive ideograph to visual rhetorical study by presenting the work of Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler. Edwards and Winker's work demonstrates a framework for applying McGee's ideographic analysis to non-discursive artifacts they call the "representative form." Finally the last two sections present other literature on the ideograph by authors responding to McGee's work. One section includes articles which analyze, critique, or extend McGee's work on the ideograph. The second section presents applications of ideographic analysis and describes case studies on visual rhetoric.

Significance of Visual Rhetorical Studies

Study of visual rhetoric is important to the larger field of communication because scholars in many fields have noted a world-wide increase in the use of visual communication. From advertising on the streets to the World Wide Web, we are surrounded by visual images. Some scholars even propose that contemporary culture may be moving further away from a focus on linguistic symbols to visual ones. In his commentary "Learning in the Age of Television," Neal Postman (1986) describes the "evolutionary" movement of communication from a primary focus on oral, to written, and finally to visual communication. While Postman or other cultural critics may bemoan this "visual turn," no one can deny that we are living in an increasingly visual culture. As Sonja Foss (2004) observes, "Visual artifacts constitute a major part of the rhetorical environment, and to ignore them, to focus only on verbal discourse means we understand

only a minuscule portion of the symbols that affect us daily" (Foss 2004, p.303).

Furthermore, while we have always been surrounded by visuals, the rise of the internet

brings with it an ever-growing body of images designed to persuade.

In their essay "Visual Rhetoric in Communication: Continuing Questions and

Contemporary Issues," Olson, Finnegan, and Hope present (2008, p.4) three justifications

for the study of visual rhetoric. They note that "rhetorical critics typically do not guide

students in the production of images," "yet many students of rhetoric go on to work in

areas that center on the production of images such as political campaigns, advertising,

and Web design." Also, these authors note the proliferation of digital technologies which

feature visuals, but also suggest that many more "laypersons" are creating visual images.

Therefore, both amateur and professional designers are in need of a complex vocabulary

of terms ("kerning," "cropping," "burning in") to create and assess images. Additionally,

the authors propose that "traditional 'talk and text' rhetoric has not always been an option

for groups marginalized by class, race, gender, sex, or sexuality" (Olson et al. 2008, p.4).

These groups or individuals might "turn instead to forms of social action more visually

oriented, such as marches, rallies, street theater, emblems, posters, cartoons, murals, and

demonstrations" (Olson et al. 2008, p.4). As a result, scholars need to have a way of

studying these visual expressions for "understanding challenges to power hierarchies"

(Olson et al. 2008, p.4). Clearly, there are innumerable reasons for studying the

development of visual rhetoric as an integral part of contemporary communication

studies.

Visual rhetorical study frequently utilizes the same vocabulary as that of

discursive rhetoric (e.g. *enthymeme, topoi*). Visual scholars often explore common

rhetorical devices such as depiction and metaphor. Burkean concepts of symbolic action, such as framing, identification, and representative anecdote provide foundations for visual rhetorical study as presented in the work of Olsen et al's. Yet, Olson et al. like many other visual scholars note the need for expanding the language of discursive study so that it applies to the complex nature of visual artifacts. The persuasive function of visual forms may be understood using this traditional discursive vocabulary. Yet, as Olson et al. (2008) point out, the frequent use and distribution of visual forms facilitate a necessity for examining the political and ideological messages they convey.

The study of public and political rhetoric frequently involves analyses of the ideology manifest in these artifacts. Scholars seek to answer questions such as what are the ideological structures inherent in messages presented to various audiences? Furthermore, how do issues of differences in power structure affect the reception of ideologies among audiences? And what is the extent to which these ideological messages influence these audiences in relation to their political beliefs and actions? One way of addressing these questions is to explore how these visual forms function as ideographs. Next McGee's (1980) work on the ideograph as a means for understanding ideology in rhetorical artifacts is discussed.

Ideograph: McGee

Michael C. McGee's 1979 conference paper, "The 'Ideograph' as a Unit of Analysis in Political Argument." The next year, he published, "The 'Ideograph': A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology" (1979; 1980). McGee suggests that "ideology must be studied by analyzing the messages which 'persuade' individuals to accept the 'reality of life' as it is pictured in the products of the culture industry, film, magazines, illustrated

newspapers, radio, television, and best selling literature'" (1980, p.11). Grounded both in

the rhetorical works of Kenneth Burke and Marxist materialist critique, McGee argues

that neither method is suitable for understanding complex political discourse.

According to McGee, "human beings are 'conditioned' not directly to belief and

behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or

excuses for behavior and belief" (1980, p.6). McGee uses the metaphor of the Chinese

character, or ideogram, which conveys more than just a sound or a word. Rather, the

ideogram conveys an idea in pictorial representation. Words like "law," "liberty," and

"tyranny," contain "unique ideological commitment" and are thus the "building blocks of

ideology" (McGee, 1980, p.6). As ideographs are so infused with meaning, a method is

necessary to aid in unpacking this abstract language. This method is a two-part analysis

of the diachronic structure and synchronic relationships of ideographs. By way of

example, McGee uses the ideograph <equality>.[1] Ideographs like <equality> are

analyzed "by comparisons over time" which "establish an analog for the proposed present

usage of the term" (McGee, 1980, p.10). These meanings are "touchstones for judging

the propriety of the ideograph in a certain circumstance." Yet meaning is not static, but

rather "expands and contracts," because "situations seeming to require its usage are never

perfectly similar" (McGee, 1980, p.10). In other words, ideographs like <equality> can

be analyzed "vertically," over time, to better understand their rhetorical significance. For

example <equality> might have very different meanings to the authors of the American

Declaration of Independence than to American Civil Rights leaders of the 1960s, and yet

another meaning to members of the Soviet Socialist Republic during the Cold War. These

comparisons over time, give a richer understanding of the meaning and functioning of

ideographs. While this analysis was useful, McGee (1980) found that it was not entirely sufficient for understanding the ideograph.

It is not enough to only understand the ideograph's meanings over time. For the second part of McGee's (1980) method, ideographs must also be analyzed synchronically in relation to other ideographs. Called the "horizontal" analysis, "synchronic" refers to the ideograph's meaning as compared with other ideographs in a particular context. For example, <equality> might be compared with <freedom>, <independence>, or <justice>. If diachronic analysis is a "touchstone" for meaning then synchronic analysis is a "snapshot" in time that serves the rhetorical critic in understanding the complexities of ideographs. Indeed, contemporary authors find this method particularly useful for analyzing graphic and media artifacts like the one under study in this thesis. There is a rich body of literature that both expands upon and challenges McGee's analysis.

In "Public Knowledge and Ideological Argumentation," McGee (1979) wrestles with his previous work, only three years later. In this article, he and author Martha Anne Martin compare Lloyd Bitzer's "notion that there is a timeless 'public' possessed of a unique kind of 'knowledge'" and McGee's proposal that there is an "imminently present 'people possessed of a historically-material 'ideology'" (McGee & Martin, 1983, p.47). McGee describes Bitzer's approach as outmoded and questioned his own method as not entirely sufficient for understanding ideographs in the media age of the 1980's. There is tension which moved McGee to refute his own argument as he proposed another method for ideographic analysis.

In "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," McGee (1980) begins with a meta-analysis of rhetorical critique from Aristotle's "art of

persuasion" to Burke's "social process of identification." He found them lacking in some ways for analyzing the artifact. The problem for McGee was two-fold. First, these approaches are critic-focused, "always trying to make the world confirm" to their opinions of "salience, attitude, belief, and action" (McGee, 1990). Secondly, these methods presuppose that the text is "fixed" or "finished." Instead, McGee posited that texts are only "apparently finished discourse" that are "a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which [the text] was made" (McGee, 1990, p.275). In order to obtain a more developed picture of the whole "text" McGee (1990) invites the critic to examine three structural relationships. One is the relationship between an apparently finished discourse and its sources. The second is the relationship between the apparently finished discourse and culture. Lastly, McGee (1990) recommends that the critic examine the relationship between the apparently finished discourse and its influence.

The relationship of the apparently finished discourse and its source is not specifically defined by McGee, but explained by way of example. McGee notes that a political speech may have 8000 words, but the press coverage of that speech may only be 250 words. This "fragment" reflects the "point," "bottom line" or "nutshell" of the artifact. The apparently finished text of the speech is thus reduced or condensed into a fragment that McGee notes, "seems more important [rhetorically] than the whole from which it came" (1990, p.280). Next, the apparently finished discourse has a relationship to the culture whereby it interacts with "a matrix of rules, rituals, and conventions that we 'take for granted' by assuming their goodness and truth and accepting the conditions they create as the 'natural order of things'" (McGee, 1990, p.281). McGee likens this to Aristotle's enthymeme or the Greek pre-cultural notion of doxa. Either of which help

explain the relationship of the apparently finished discourse to what modern authors call "culture" (McGee, 1990, p.281). Last, the relationship between the apparently finished discourse and its influence, "calls attention to the fundamental interconnectedness of all discourse" (McGee, 1990, p.282). This appears to be McGee's major focus, moving the locus of control of the discourse from the critic to a web that connects the speaker, critic, and the audience, allowing them all to participate in the discourse. In the last section of the article, McGee attempts to explain why this fragment analysis is helpful to the rhetorical critic.

The evolution of the ideograph as conceptualized by McGee begins to lay the foundation for the study of an artifact that appears not only to morph over time, but to be connected to a host of persuasive values that might be activated in different ways for different audiences. The Obama "HOPE" poster's function as an ideograph is not fully understood as a fixed moment in time. Its distribution via the internet and non-traditional media channels open the image to a wide array of potential audiences. Unlike more traditional rhetoric, the audience is not only recipient of the message, but also a participant in its meaning. Additionally, audiences function as rhetors as they reproduce these images and distribute them via other channels to new audiences. In doing so, the ideology manifest is not solely under the control of agents of societal power. The distribution of this new media artifact democratizes the readings such that audiences are participants in the creation and dissemination of ideology. As McGee might note, the discourse is only "apparently finished," and in fragments that ought to be most effectively understood in relationship to its source. Together, the diachronic and "fragment" analysis aid the scholar in understanding the ideology manifest in the ideograph.

Just as the "HOPE" graphic must be examined diachronically for its movement over time, a synchronic analysis would compare the Obama "HOPE" poster to other related visual ideographs. For example, how might the "HOPE" poster be understood in relationship to a parody version of the same image which changes "HOPE" to "NOPE?" Furthermore, how might either image be assessed when contrasted with an image of John McCain in the same style? Also, the ideographs need be understood as "apparently finished" "fragments" which have a relationship to both "society" and their "influence." For example, how might the artifacts be understood in relation to the internet "culture" which produced and disseminated the images? Or how might the artifacts be understood in relation to their influence on political or popular culture? Both the 1980 and 1990 articles by McGee provide useful methods for understanding the Obama "HOPE" and related graphics as visual ideographs.

Ideograph Extended

  Related works on the ideograph. The next group of articles critiques McGee and expands his theory and methods in some novel ways. In "Toward a Poststructural Ideograph," Swenson (2008) agrees that McGee's ideograph has led authors to valuable conclusions. However, he argues that McGee's approach yields a single conclusion, that the ideograph has essentially one meaning in the final analysis. Swenson employs Derrida's language, referring to this idea as a "metaphysical presence" (Swenson, 2008, p.12). For Swenson, this limits the analysis and excludes the possibility of understanding the fragmented nature of contemporary audiences and their receptions of the manifest ideology. Swenson argues "a poststructuralist reading of the ideograph will circumvent the problems of structure and the metaphysics of presence latent in McGee's thesis"

(Swenson, 2008, p.2). By reading the ideograph poststructurally, scholars "may even be able to reinvigorate the study of ideographs that has waned in the past decade" (Swenson, 2008, p.2). Swenson applies a poststructuralist reading of the ideograph to describe the tension between the terms <servant leader> and <Christ-centered> as they are employed in the official discourse at a small, Christian liberal arts university in Nebraska. Swenson once again highlights the limitations of McGee, but augments the method with Derrida's "rhetoric-as-becoming" (Swenson, 2008, p.7).This poststructuralist reading allows the author to understand the ideograph's meaning as a relationship between the rhetor and audience that is more flexible than McGee's. The approach yielded a rich understanding of the ideographs by focusing on McGee's 1990 work on "fragments."

Lastly, Davi Johnson's "Mapping the Meme: A Graphical Approach to Materialist Rhetorical Criticism," questions the usefulness of the ideographic approach for analyzing internet-age artifacts. Instead, Johnson proposes the "meme" as a productive concept for the analysis of contemporary culture. In his article, Johnson employs both the ideographic and memetic and found the memetic provides a richer understanding of <discrimination> as it applies to acceptance of homosexuals in American society (Johnson, 2007). Each of these articles demonstrates the usefulness of McGee's method while expanding the theory in novel ways.

Both Swenson and Johnson augment McGee in useful ways for an examination of artifacts like the Obama "HOPE" graphic. While it is serviceable to analyze the diachronic and synchronic functions of the ideograph and come to a single conclusion of the ideology manifest, doing so omits some interesting factors. The Obama graphic's distribution via the internet changed the relationship between rhetor and audience. The

decentralized nature of the internet means audiences were more fragmented than traditional public channels. The internet also allowed for a different kind of relationship between audience and artifact. Internet audiences were free to distribute, alter, and redistribute images. The "HOPE" graphic, like any internet meme, was free to evolve through its iterations. These factors complicate an analysis of the ideograph, but a poststructuralist reading, as presented in Swenson or Johnson, augment McGee for an analysis of "new media" ideographs.

Another series of articles investigate more foundational aspects of McGee. A 1990 special issue of the *Western Journal of Speech Communication* included several articles that further illuminate McGee's work on audience, object, and method by comparing his work with that of Michael C. Leff. Dilip P. Gaonkar's "Object and Method in Rhetorical Criticism: From Wichelns to Leff and McGee," examines the objects, methods, and basic differences in the critical projects promulgated by Leff and McGee. The article employs an analysis of the essay "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," by Herbert A. Wichelns as well as McGee and Leff's influential responses to an essay by Edwin Black (Gaonkar, 1990). The same journal included Celeste Condit's "Rhetorical Criticism and Audiences: The Extremes of McGee and Leff." Condit looks at the "essential components distinguished in the programs of rhetorical criticism" by Leff and McGee and the larger "significance of close reading to the field of humanities" (Condit, 1990, p.330). Finally, in the short but effective article, "History, Culture, and Political Rhetoric," John M. Murphy examines political rhetoric, the ideograph, the source of authority in a political speech, and the linguistic context of a political speech (Murphy,

2001). While these pieces do not have a direct application in my analysis of the visual ideograph, they are foundational to an understanding of McGee.

Visual ideograph. In the thirty years since Michael Calvin McGee published his first works on the ideograph, an interesting body of literature has been produced that analyzes, critiques, and expands his original theory and methods. This section further illuminates McGee's theories of the ideograph as well as the methods for analyzing them. Next, a selection of articles that critiqued some elements of McGee's work is included. Then a small body of literature that expands McGee's theory and methodology into some intriguing contemporary contexts concludes the section. Through this review, McGee's theories lays a foundation for this analysis of the Obama "HOPE" Poster.

Edwards and Winkler's Representative Form

In "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph," Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler conduct a three-part analysis of the image of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima and its use in editorial cartoons. First they review literature on the visual form and repetitive form. A representative form is defined as an image which "transcends the specifics of its immediate visual references and, through a cumulative process of visual and symbolic meaning, rhetorically identifies and delineates the ideals of the body politic" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.295). Using this method, they find it a "suggestive, but limited explanation for the power and rhetorical function" of the image (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.296). By defining the image as a "representative form" the authors are able to "more fully account for the rhetorical experience and function of the parodied Iwo Jima image in cartoons" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.296). Edwards and Winkler could thus isolate the ways in which the parodied image functions as a visual ideograph. In doing so,

the authors challenge McGee's assumption that, "only verbal expressions can fulfill such a rhetorical function" as an ideograph (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.292).

Edwards and Winkler continue their analysis by applying each of the tenants of the ideograph as described by McGee to the Iwo Jima cartoons. First, Edwards and Winker note that the Iwo Jima images did seem to qualify as "an ordinary term in political discourse" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p 297). McGee requires that an ideograph have wide distribution into popular culture, rather than having its power reserved for the political elite. Second, Edwards and Winker find that the Iwo Jima image represents a "high order of abstraction" and "demonstrate[s] elasticity" to function for a "wide range of modern usages" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.299). Third, the Iwo Jima images meet McGee's mandate that an ideograph "warrant the use of power," "excuse behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial," and "guide behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable" (McGee as quoted in (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.301). Lastly, Edward and Winker note that the Iwo Jima images certainly meet McGee's requisite that ideographs be "cultural-bound," working to define and exclude groupings of the public. This was evidenced in the application of the image to a wide variety of situations that define American culture from baseball to the military scandals (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.302).

Ideograph: Case Studies

Discursive ideographic studies. Following in the tradition of McGee, most ideographic study analyzes linguistic elements in rhetoric. Still, a small but intriguing body of literature examines visual elements too. However, both types of analysis are

firmly grounded in critical rhetorical methods, emphasizing rhetorical studies' heuristic function. Dana Cloud has one of the most interesting collections of works on the ideograph. For example, "The Rhetoric of <Family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility," examines the use of the ideograph in the 1992 presidential campaign (Cloud, 1998). The analysis demonstrates that <family values> functions to scapegoat black men and poor Americans for social problems. However, <family values> also resonates with a utopian narrative that made scapegoating less apparent and more persuasive. Together, these functions construct the family as the agent of all responsibility and social change, while privatizing social responsibility for ending poverty and racism. Several authors explored ideographic deployment in Latin cultures in America (Delgado, 1995) and Cuba (Delgado, 1999) (Spencer, 2007). Delgado argues that Fidel Castro's speech, "Words to the Intellectuals" developed ideographs which furthered the ideology of "Castroism." Spencer discusses Castro's use of Che Guevara's "*hasta la victoria siempre*" as an ideograph for communicating an ideology similar to the American ideographic usage of <liberty>. Other works explore ideographic usage in Asian countries (Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999) or China (Xing, 1999). Cho, Kwon, et al. examine Korean and American television commercials, comparing and contrasting <individualism> which was found more in Korean artifacts and <collectivism> found more frequently in American media. Xing studies Chinese communist slogans for their persuasive effects on the audience, meeting changing social needs while still maintaining the communist party's control of mainstream Chinese ideology. Covering a vast array of cultures and topics, certainly the ideograph has a prominent place in critical rhetorical study.

Visual ideographic studies. While the collection of visual ideographic literature may be smaller than the linguistic, a variety of artifacts and approaches are employed. Cloud's analysis of *Time* magazine photographs provides a useful example for this thesis (Cloud, 2004). The study explores how the <clash of civilizations> is represented visually in photographs from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Cloud argues that representations of Afghan women and American soldiers participated in the more general category of "the clash of civilizations," which constitutes a verbal and a visual ideograph linked to the idea of the "white man's burden" (Cloud, 2004, p.395). Through the construction of binary oppositions of <self> and <other>, the paternalistic stance toward the women of Afghanistan and the representation of modernity as liberation, are justifications for war that contradict the actual motives for the war (Cloud, 2004). There is certainly no shortage of visual rhetorical study of advertising, but Edward McQuarrie's (1999) analysis, like Edwards and Winkler's discussed earlier, combine more traditional tropic/metaphorical analysis with McGee-like ideographs (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). Catherine H. Palczewski's very thorough study of "anti-woman" suffrage postcards provided a good example for the challenges of presenting graphic images in the text of ideographic studies (Palczewski, 2005). Palczewski posits that images of the Madonna and Uncle Sam are employed to reinforce gender norms of <woman> and <man> (Palczewski, 2005). Lastly, Pineda and Sowards take a unique approach by extending the visual ideograph to include flag waving at Latin American immigration demonstrations as a form of visual rhetorical argument (Pineda & Sowards, 2007). Flag waving serves as a visual argument for establishing cultural and national citizenship while also creating a form of visual refutation of Anglo-American hegemony. Each of these studies

demonstrates a clear connection between visual forms and their persuasive rhetorical functions as ideographs.

Research Questions

Based on this literature, the current analysis proceeds to answer two questions:

RQ1: How might Edwards and Winkler's concept of the representational form further an understanding of the Obama "HOPE" poster and related images function as ideographs?

RQ2: To what extent does the Obama "HOPE" poster and related posters meet the tenants of McGee's ideograph despite being visual rather than discursive forms?

Method

This analysis will build upon Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler's 1997 article, "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph: The Iwo Jima Images in Editorial Cartoons." Similar to Edwards and Winkler, this study will employ a series of images including the original Obama "HOPE" poster and a contrasting version called the Obama "NOPE" poster. Additionally, I will include other political images from the 2008 political campaign. Other images include parodies used for political, pop culture, and social action messages employing the representative form. As Edwards and Winkler did in their study, I will first discuss the creation of the images and then their dissemination into popular political culture.

The first research question will explore the "representative form" as defined in the Edwards and Winker article (1997). One key concept in defining the representative form is Burke's "representative anecdote. The second is Baty's "representative character." Together these concepts help guide an understanding of how popular images function not as icons with fixed denotations, but rather representative forms which can be used to convey meanings in a variety of contexts. This analysis will explore the extent to which the Obama "HOPE" image can be designated as a representative form and how the concept of the representative form allows for an understanding of how the image functions rhetorically.

For the second research question, I will continue on to a definition of the ideograph as set forth in Michael Calvin McGee's 1980 article, "The 'Ideograph': A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology." As McGee limited his description of the ideograph to only linguistic forms, I, like Edwards and Winkler, must expand McGee's theory to

include visual forms. An analysis of the representative form as visual ideograph will proceed in four parts. First, I will explore the degree to which the artifacts meet McGee's contention that ideographs must function as "ordinary [language] terms found in political discourse" (McGee, 1980). This is a particularly useful analysis for non-discursive forms like the visual ideograph, which function in "popular history" via contemporary media channels. Second, I will discuss the degree to which the artifacts meet McGee's mandate that an ideograph be "high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal" (McGee, 1980). Third, I will examine the degree to which the artifacts "warrant power" and "guide behavior" of their audiences. Fourth, I will talk about the degree to which the artifacts are "culture-bound," meaning how contemporary "society's interactions with ideographs work to define and exclude groupings of the public" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997). By defining McGee's four elements of ideographs and expanding the method to visual forms as set forth by Edwards and Winker, an analysis of the Obama "HOPE" poster and related graphics will yield an understanding of how the artifacts function as persuasive rhetorical objects in contemporary culture.

Description of Artifacts

Before applying the method, the artifacts chosen for analysis must be explained. This explanation involves descriptions of the graphics' design elements such as shape, line, color, style, tone, medium employed for creation of a graphic, or other aesthetic elements. In some cases it is also necessary to provide background information on aesthetic elements borrowed from other works of art which have been employed by artist Shepard Fairey and others in the creation of their works. Additionally, some discussion of the dissemination of the graphics, particularly via electronic media, is germane to a full understanding of the graphics as contemporary visual artifacts in the Internet age.

A discussion of the artifacts must begin with Shepard Fairey's seminal art project, "Obey Giant," and its critical role as a foundation for the Obama "HOPE" graphic. The next series of graphics include a progression of Fairey graphics from the original "PROGRESS" graphic, to the "HOPE" poster. Then I include examples of political graphics in the Fairey style, seen around the time of the 2008 presidential election. This section concludes with non-political graphics in the "HOPE" style which serve as examples of the power of the ideographic in popular culture. After familiarizing the reader through a discussion of some example artifacts I continue on to an application of the method.

"OBEY Giant" Project

Nearly twenty years before he created the Obama "HOPE" poster, artist Shepard Fairey designed and disseminated a graphic known as "OBEY Giant." While a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, Fairey become interested in the stencil art process which would later become his primary medium. While attempting to teach a fellow student the technique, the two found an advertisement which included an image of

professional wrestler Andre the Giant. While his associate did not appreciate the image, Fairey thought it was very amusing (Annobil, 2008). He took the image and created a simple, two-color stencil of a closely cropped portrait of the wrestlers face (see Figure 1). After creating several versions of the graphic, in 1989 he added the word "OBEY" at the bottom of the stencil. In doing so, Fairey created what he deemed to be a parody of a propaganda poster, clearly authoritarian, but with no definable political message. "OBEY Giant" was made into paper and vinyl stickers which were distributed by Fairey, often copied, and became a common site in urban areas throughout the 1990s (Pincus, 2007). Yet, Fairey intended "OBEY Giant" to be more than just a piece of "guerilla art."

Figure 1. "OBEY Giant."

In Fairey's 1990 manifesto, later published on his website, he described the project as "an experiment in Phenomenology." Based in the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger, Fairey described Phenomenology as an attempt "to enable people to see clearly something that is right before their eyes but obscured; things that are so taken for granted that they are muted by abstract observation" (Fairey, 1990). The first aim of

Phenomenology, as interpreted by Fairey, is to awaken a sense of wonder about one's

environment. Through "OBEY Giant," Fairey sought to engage an observer in an

experience which transcended the purely aesthetic. He discussed this in his 1990

manifesto:

> The OBEY sticker attempts to stimulate curiosity and bring people to
> question both the sticker and their relationship with their surroundings.
> Because people are not used to seeing advertisements or propaganda for
> which the product or motive is not obvious, frequent and novel encounters
> with the sticker provoke thought and possible frustration, nevertheless
> revitalizing the viewer's perception and attention to detail. The sticker has
> no meaning but exists only to cause people to react, to contemplate and
> search for meaning in the sticker. Because OBEY has no actual meaning,
> the various reactions and interpretations of those who view it reflect their
> personality and the nature of their sensibilities (Fairey, 1990).

The artist proposed that viewers familiar with either the sticker or the image of Andre the

Giant might find the graphic merely amusing. This audience would derive only

"straightforward visual pleasure" without "burdening themselves with an explanation."

Yet the "paranoid or conservative" viewer might condemn it as having "subversive

intentions." Because of the wide distribution of the image and its popularity, Fairy

remarked that the graphic also highlighted the "conspicuously consumptive" nature of

society. He noted that to some audiences, the poster's "familiarity and cultural resonance

is 'comforting'" (Fairey, 1990). Regardless of the audience's response to "Obey Giant,"

Shepard Fairey's experience with and commentary is useful for understanding this

seminal image.

Obama Graphics

The original Obama graphic was an eighty-five by fifty-five centimeter screen

print, created by Shepard Fairey in 2008 (see Figure 2). The poster's background was

cream, which also served as a framing border to the portrait. It employed only three other

colors; navy, muted light blue, and primary red. The palate was a notable departure from Fairey's typical black, read, and beige hues. Navy served as the solid areas of the image, including Obama's hair and suit, while also outlining the basic form of the figure. The image was divided into color blocks in the upper corners. Appropriately, red dominated the right and light blue the left, in what appeared to be the association with red as the color of the political "right" and blue the political "left." A vertical line, highlighted in cream, down the center of Obama's face divided the picture in to equal parts, red and blue. In doing so, Obama's face appeared as a bridge, uniting both political ideologies though symbolic action. This composition also appeared to be an illusion to Obama's centrist political platform. While most of the graphic was dominated by solid color blocks, Fairey utilized a greater variety of color, highlight, shading, and crosshatching on the candidate's face. The image seemed to communicate that while the rest of the United States might be divided into blocks, Barack Obama, and by association his political ideology, was more varied, subtle, and complex.

Figure 2. "Obama PROGRESS Poster."

Compositionally, the image was similar to political portraits only in that it was a head and shoulders framing of the subject. Notable was the positioning of the body. His shoulders and upper torso were turned slightly to the right, rather than the more forward-facing pose of many political portraits. In contrast Obama's head was turned significantly to his left. His gaze was not direct to the viewer, but off in the high distance. Unlike the smiling photographs typical of political candidates, Obama's expression was resolute and contemplative. While no scholarly work yet exists on the subject, it should be of note that the "HOPE" graphic bore a striking compositional similarity to the iconic 1960 photo, "Guerrillero Heroico," of Che Guevara by Alberto Korda, later made into a poster in 1968 by stencil artist, Jim Fitzpatrick (see Figure 3). While Shepard Fairey has not gone on record as confirming the connection, it is the speculation of many viewers that perhaps

the particular choice of photograph used as a basis for the "HOPE" poster, from the many

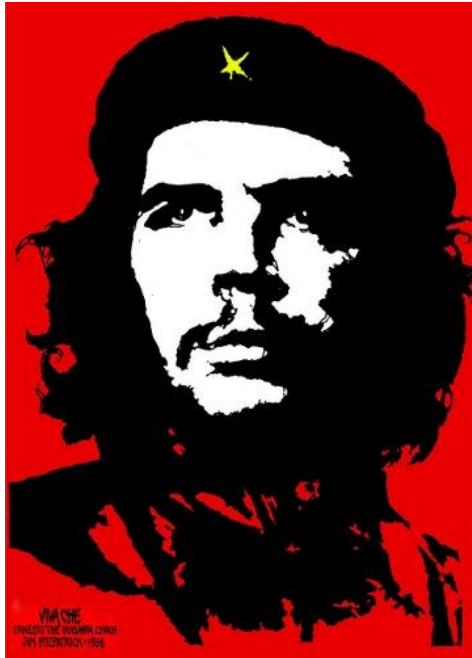available to Fairey, was influenced by its visual style.

Figure 3. "Che Guevara."

The "Obama HOPE Poster" includes two discursive features in addition to visual

elements. Fairey's original design included the word "PROGRESS" in a bold, san-serif

font, in light blue at the bottom of the graphic (see Figure 2). The pin on Obama's lapel

was a hybrid of the campaign's "rising sun" style "O" logo, with Shepard Fairey's

stylized "sheriff badge," used in many of his pieces dating back to the "OBEY Giant"

period. After Fairey sold the entire first printing of the "PROGRESS" posters and sticker,

the artist was contacted by the Obama campaign to create an officially sanctioned poster

(see Figure 4). As Fairey discussed in an interview with *Wired* Magazine, the campaign

"said 'progress' sounded too Marxist" and they requested that he change the text to

"HOPE" (Wortham, 2008). The text "HOPE" was much more prominent in the image

than "PROGESS," partially because of the reduced number of letters, but additionally,

the font has been "kerned" or stretched out to fill the space. It would seem that both

visually and rhetorically, "HOPE" struck a much deeper resonance with the audience, as the reworded version dominates the cultural memory of the audience.

Figure 4. "Obama HOPE Poster."

Political Graphics in the Obama "HOPE" Style

The influence of the Obama "HOPE" graphic extended far beyond the image's use as an official campaign graphic. The availability of imaging software, the free exchange of images on the Internet, as well as the popularity of the original poster, allowed for anyone to create and disseminate their own Fairey-style images (Linthicum, 2008). The digital music and entertainment magazine *Paste* developed and promoted a site called "Obamicon.me" which allowed users to upload their own images and create a Fairey-style graphic. Over 70,000 images were uploaded to the site within the first two weeks of its opening (Linthicum, 2008). Some of the first examples of this were graphics

directly relating to the 2008 presidential race between Barack Obama/Joe Biden and John

McCain/Sarah Palin. All of these images utilized the Shepard Fairey four-color, stylized

stencil aesthetic. The source images for these "parody" graphics vary to meet its intended

purpose, but primarily source materials are photographs of candidates in wide circulation.

Most are based on a pun or parody of the "HOPE" text. Many versions include candidates

McCain or Palin with the text, "NOPE" (see Figure 5). An alternate version of the

original Obama graphic also used "NOPE" and "HYPE" as an anti-Obama message.

Also, while the 2008 presidential election was in some ways viewed as a referendum on

the George W. Bush Republican administration, some graphics used unflattering pictures

of the then president with the caption, "DOPE." Interestingly the only feature beyond

visual style that the images share, were that all political graphics were negative against a

candidate or political figure and none gave a positive message about any of their subjects.

Figure 5. "Sarah Palin NOPE."

Non-political Graphics in the Obama "HOPE" Style

Parodies of the Obama "HOPE graphic extended far beyond the candidates of the 2008 presidential campaign. As was evidenced by the number of images created on sites like "Obamicon.me," virtually any subject was fodder for Fairey-style graphics. A survey of available images on the Internet reveals the graphics fall into a few main categories. One group includes well known fictitious characters as political candidates in a humorous parody of the Obama image. Such examples include comedian Bob Hope with the text "HOPE," a Shepard Fairey created image of satirist Stephen Colbert, and *MAD Magazine* character Alfred E. Neuman with the caption "HOPELESS" (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. "Alfred E. Neuman for president…hopeless).

Another group includes well known historical figures, popular contemporary people, and recognizable characters in humorous associations, most based on a parody of the "PROGRESS" or "HOPE" text. Examples include biologist Charles Darwin with the text, "GRADUAL CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN"/"SLOW GRADUAL CHANGE

OVER TIME," Groucho Marx with the caption "MARXISM," and Kermit the Frog with

the word "FROGRESS."

In contrast, the final group is comprised of images with positive associations

between the subject and text. Some are political such as political commentator Glenn

Beck's commissioned paintings of John Adams, George Washington, and Benjamin

Franklin paired with the words "FAITH," "HOPE," and "CHARITY," respectively. The

images were featured on the "Glen Beck Program" during the first year of Obama's

presidency and sold online at Beck's website (see Figure 7.) Other positive, non-political

messages included graphics of Jesus Christ with the message "HOPE," Pope Benedict

XVI with "POPE," and numerous civil rights leaders such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. also connected to the slogan "HOPE." A small number of graphics were not tied

to a specific person or character, but rather advocated on behalf of a social issue, cause,

or presented a policy action: images of LGBT couples with text like

"MARRIAGE"/"EQUALITY" and graphics with shelter dogs employing the word
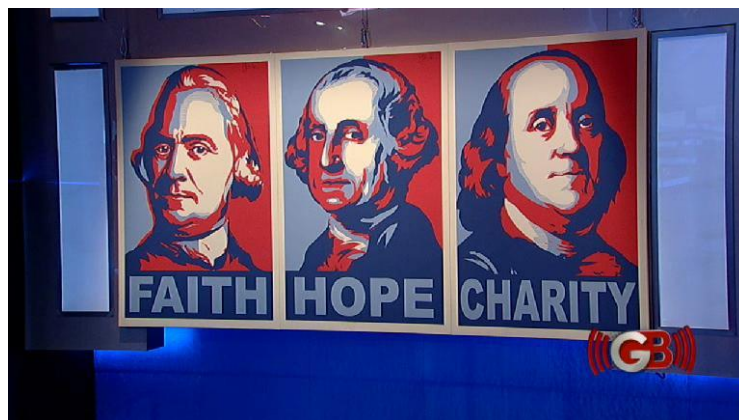
"ADOPT."

Figure 7. "Faith, hope, charity."

A review of the artifacts shows a progression from the Shepard Fairey Phenomenological art project, "OBEY Giant" to the Obama "HOPE" and "PROGRESS" posters. Political images created during the 2008 presidential election demonstrate how the Fairey style was used to frame negative arguments against candidates and related political figures. Parodies, both political and non-political, used humor to communicate ideas about their subjects, based primarily in pun and word association. Finally, graphics utilized positive framing to advocate for social values, causes, and policy issues. With a discussion of the artifacts in place, the next section applies Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler's extension of Michal McGee's work on the ideograph to non-discursive artifacts to assess how these graphics might be interpreted as representative forms, the first research question guiding this study.

Application of Method

This analysis answers two research questions:

RQ1: How might Edwards and Winkler's concept of the representative form further an

understanding of the Obama "HOPE" poster and related images' *function* as ideographs?

RQ2: To what extent does the Obama "HOPE" poster and related images meet the

tenants of McGee's ideograph despite being visual rather than discursive forms? If so,

how?

To answer the first question, I will compare the Obama "HOPE" graphic and

related artifacts to Edwards and Winkler's articulation of the representative form. I will

explore the extent to which the representative form accounts for the rhetorical experience

and function of the Obama "HOPE" poster and its parodies. To answer the second

question, I will isolate the ways in which the essential elements of the Fairey style,

appropriated in a number of contexts, functions as a visual ideograph, thus challenging

the assumption that only discursive forms may fulfill such a rhetorical function. I will

analyze the extent to which the graphics meet Michael McGee's definition of the

ideograph. These features include the ideograph as an "ordinary term in political

discourse," "abstraction representing collective commitment," "warrant[ing] power,

guid[ing] behavior," and the degree to which they are "culturally bound."

Representative Form

In positing the concept of representative form in their 1997 article

"Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph," Edwards and Winkler refer to a related

construct, Burke's "representative anecdote" (Burke, 1969). Edwards and Winker note,

though an anecdote is a formal feature, the representative anecdote is "not merely a

reductive element featured in the text" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.124). Barry Brummett further explains that the representative anecdote may be a filter identified by the critic in the reconstruction of the discourse (Brummett, 1984). For example, artists creating parodies of the Obama "HOPE" graphic function as cultural critics, employing the Fairey style not because it is literally embedded in the discourse of the 2008 presidential election, but because it provides a perspective on the situation. According to Burke, the representative anecdote functions as a discussion point, frame, or prototype that "sums up action" (Burke, 1969, p.61). As the representative anecdote is a collective understanding of events, it is "sufficiently generalized to extend far beyond the particular combination of events named in any one instance" (Burke, 1957 p.260). The representative anecdote must be "supple and complex enough to be representative of the subject matter…It must have scope. Yet it must also possess simplicity, in that it is broadly a reduction of the subject matter" (Burke, 1969, p. 60).

The Fairey style functions in some ways like a representative anecdote in the Obama related graphics. Due to its composition, its visual power is a kind of simplicity, which allows for the recognizability of the abstract symbolic allusions we bring to the image from our familiarity with the original "HOPE" graphic. The use of the four color stencil graphic style, the head and shoulders framing of the subject, and the font and word choice, make the graphic instantly recognizable, drawing the audience back to the graphic's original iteration, the "HOPE" poster. But in contrast to the simplicity of the representative anecdote, the application of the Fairy style also possesses sufficient complexity to be applicable to a wide variety of unrelated subjects. From the political to the comically absurd, the Fairey style can accommodate a near infinite array of messages.

The anecdotal nature of "HOPE" poster as a "vote Obama" message comprised only a handful of the images surveyed. While some send a "vote Obama" message, they did so only through the negative framing of the political opposition. A Sarah Palin or John McCain "NOPE" functions essentially the same as "HOPE" for the Obama campaign, by supporting Obama and opposing the Republican candidates. In similar way, the image of Alfred E. Neuman uses the anecdote to comic effect by paring a "HOPELESS" comedic figure as an exact foil of the strong, confident image of "presidential" Obama. Yet most of the other images, particularly the comically absurd, do not refer back directly to the historical event of the 2008 election, other than to employ the absurdity of a Kermit the Frog in the context we once saw candidate Obama. Additionally, a level of complexity complicates the anecdotal nature of the image, as it works with and against images in the Fairey style. Therefore, the image functions representatively, not as an anecdote, as a representative form.

The second concept important to Edwards and Winkler's discussion of representative form is S. Paige Baty's work on "representative character," which extended the work of Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swindler, and Steven Tipton (1985). According to the authors, a person (character) is abstracted and elevated to the status of a cultural figure, and becomes a surface for the articulation of the political character, embodying cultural ideals. As Bellah et al. described the concept:

> A representative character is more than a collection of individual traits or personalities. It is rather a public image that helps define for a given group of people, just what kinds of personality traits it is good and legitimate to develop. A representative character provides an ideal, a point of reference and focus that gives living expression to a vision of life (Bellah et al., 1985).

The Obama "HOPE" image shares some features with the representative character. While grounded in specificity, Obama as a character was abstracted into a symbol or concentrated image, and provided an exemplary model for human motive in the association with that which was ideal through the values of "PROGRESS" or "HOPE." The pairing of the text is an important element in this graphic in establishing the representative character which harmonizes with the campaign's message. Without the caption, Obama's pose could be read as aggressive, like the Guevara image. In labeling the image as "HOPE"ful, Fairey gives a lens through which to interpret with positive associations rather than negative ones. In other graphics, such as the Sarah Palin "NOPE" set a negative frame, creating a contrast which directed the audience to associate the vice presidential candidate with everything that is not "good and legitimate to develop."

Baty, in her study of James Monroe, gives an example of how a cultural figure comes to represent and articulate the political character. Not figures as static representations, representative characters are "reconstructions that reveal the nature of conversations…even as they draw on material from the past…[They point] to inclusions and exclusions made in the greater construction of national identity" (Baty, 1995, p.49). The representative character is a featured element of mass-mediated modes of remembering that reconstitute the pace of politics each time they are invoked. Such representations help articulate the fast-paced space of politics, and "allow for the building and expressing forms of community" (Baty, 1995, p.41). Each invocation of a representative character adds to the definition of the character.

The Obama "HOPE" poster constituted a "reconstruction that revealed the nature of the conversation about the present" (the 2008 political campaign and its rhetoric of

"PROGRESS" or "CHANGE") while "drawing on materials from the past (associations

with "OBEY Giant," "Guerrillero Heroico," South American Socialist Political

posters/graffiti, and Soviet Constructivist art). Baty's notion of mass-mediated modes of

remembering were particularly apropos to the images of Obama. The wide distribution of

the posters and stickers as well as spreading of the image electronically, were a function

of the fast-paced space of contemporary politics. Further, audience generated parodies of

the image "allow[ed] for building and expressing forms of community" (Baty, 1995,

p.41). Not only the original graphic, but each iteration added to the definition of the

representative character.

Yet the Obama parodies do depart from the construct of the representative

character in some ways. As Edwards and Winker (1997), discuss while the image of the

flag raising at Iwo Jima contained individual marines who were lauded by the military as

heroic, it is the collective representation of heroism which gives the image its rhetorical

force. So it is not the image of the individual character which is memorable but the

totality of the image as a representation of heroics. In the same way, while Obama is

represented as an admirable, it is not the character of Obama which is directly employed

in the parodied images. Rather there is a representation of the totality of "PROGRESS"

or "HOPE" as embodied by the character of Obama. Again, the connection between the

text and the graphic is critical to the creation of the image as a laudable representative

character. The caption provides a "text" for how to read the graphic as a representative

embodiment of "HOPE." This abstraction, applied in many contexts shares less with

Baty's (1985) representative character than with Edward and Winkler's formulation of

the representative form. As I will discuss in the next section, a representative form functions as a visual ideograph in the Obama "HOPE" and related images.

In summary, Edwards and Winkler (1997) posited the representative construct drawn from Burke's representative anecdote. It functions as a frame or lens through which the critic views the discourse and provides perspective on its message. The Obama "HOPE" graphic provides a touchtone of meaning and the Fairey style extends that frame of meaning out, influencing the meaning of further iterations of related graphics. Because of the simplicity of text and graphic, the "HOPE" poster is both a collective understanding of the 2008 election, but also generalized and supple enough to extend beyond into the larger society discourse on unrelated events. Additionally, the representative form shares tenants with Baty's (1995) "representative" character. The compositional elements of Obama's pose, the use of color, and the simple text, extend meaning beyond a campaign advertisement. Obama becomes a representative, standing in for positive social vales like "PROGRESS," "CHANGE," or bipartisanship. Together, the representative anecdote and representative character inform the concept of the representative form. The representative form extends meaning out beyond an image's original context and carries that meaning out, employing it into further contexts in foils and parodies. In the case of the Obama "HOPE" graphic, the representative form conveys ideological meaning, placing it within the definition of McGee's ideograph.

Visual Ideograph

Edwards and Winker describe McGee's ideograph as "culturally grounded, summarizing, and authoritative terms that enact their meaning by expressing an association of cultural ideals and experiences in an ever-evolving form within the

rhetorical environment" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.125). Through its usages and applications, an ideograph's meaning is developed, functioning as an abstraction and a fragment within the discourse. For McGee, ideographs are discursive elements such as "freedom," "liberty," or "patriotism" that create communities based in beliefs and ideological constraints. While McGee limited ideographs to linguistic forms, Edwards and Winkler argued that the exclusion of non-discursive forms, "lacked a clear rationale" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.125).

Though McGee mandates that the relevant discourse be "political language preserved in rhetorical documents" (McGee,1980, p.5), Edwards and Winkler argue that he "never address[es] the potential inclusion (or exclusion) of non-discursive forms" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.126). Edwards and Winkler posit that McGee "disregards the rhetorical potential of visual images" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.126) when he defines the ideograph as "language imperatives which hinder and perhaps make impossible pure thought" (McGee, 1980, p.9). In their article, Edwards and Winkler reject the notion that ideographs must necessarily only be linguistic and apply the four tenets of McGee's ideograph to the Iwo Jima image in order to demonstrate that the method is useful for explaining the representitive form.

While it is accurate to say that McGee did not overtly exclude visual forms, he did deliberately define ideographs as "political *language* preserved in rhetorical documents" and "*language* imperatives which hinder and perhaps make impossible pure thought" (McGee, 1980, p.9). Yet he may not have closed off the possibility of including visual forms the way Edwards and Winker suggest. McGee's foundation for the ideograph

begins first with the visual form, though a discussion of its roots in ideographic forms, before applying it to discursive artifacts.

McGee begins his argument with a metaphor to describe the ideograph as similar to ideographic forms like Chinese characters. Unlike Latin letters, which convey only sound forms, ideographic "letters" convey not only linguistic sounds, but also units of meaning. For example, a character might express the sound for the word "house," in one situation, but also graphically represent the concept of "house" in another. Perhaps this is merely a metaphor for McGee, but he clearly has some interest exploring how nondiscursive forms share meaning as "discourse fragments" which multiple publics appropriate for diverse purposes. The Obama "HOPE" poster and related graphics are definitive examples of the importance of graphics in the Internet Age. Most interesting is the fact that these images include both text and graphics. So, they pose a test case for determining the validity of Edwards and Winkler's expansion of McGee's method. I will move on to applying the four features of the ideograph to these hybrid discursive/nondiscursive artifacts.

Ordinary term in political discourse. The first feature of the ideograph is that it is "an ordinary language term found in political discourse (McGee, 1980, p.15). Ideographs are not reserved for the political elite, but are "transcendent, as much as an influence on the belief and behavior of the ruler as on the ruled" (McGee, 1980, p.5). Artifacts which expose ideographs are not limited to academic treatises or national documents, but are also "popular history" such as songs, plays, films, novels, or other forms of common discourse. This is yet another area where a case can be made for expanding McGee's definition of the ideograph to include nondiscursive forms.

It could be argued that the Obama "HOPE" poster does not qualify as an "ordinary image" because it was commissioned as an official piece of campaign rhetoric. However, because Shepard Fairey created the "PROGRESS" image previous to its use by the campaign, the graphic's rhetorical power is not limited exclusively to the political elite. Similarly, the Iwo Jima image was originally a propaganda piece, actually restaged and photographed for the express purpose of shoring up support for World War II efforts in the Pacific theatre (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p. 126). Edwards and Winkler argue in their article that it was not until the appropriation of the visual form into political cartoons that it became an "ordinary image in political discourse" and thus an ideograph. In the same way the Obama "HOPE" poster may not have become an "ordinary image" until users began to employ the ideograph through their variations.

Use of the Fairey style as visual material for parody images disseminated the ordinary visual image into both elite and non-elite public discourse. Access to millions of viewers and the creation of new content by audiences lent the graphic "as much influence on belief and behavior of the ruler as on the ruled" (McGee, 1980, p.5). The foremost examples of this include the "NOPE" graphic with images of McCain, Palin, but most notably Obama. The Obama campaign attempted to control the message by commissioning a version of the graphic requesting Fairey change the text from "PROGRESS" to "HOPE." Still, users created "NOPE" and "HYPE" images which definitely demonstrate the ability for the "ruled" to participate in the discourse and thus "influence the belief and behavior of the ruler."

Abstraction representing collective commitment. The second characteristic of an ideograph as defined by McGee is that it be a "high-order abstraction representing

collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal" (McGee, 1980, p.15). Edwards and Winker define the abstraction as "necessary to distinguish between those publics that fall within the social control motivated by the term and those that fall outside those parameters" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.127). The "equivocal" and "ill-defined" goal is allowed by the ambiguity of the nature of the ideograph. This allows for the inclusion of groups that might otherwise feel excluded from the discourse. In other words, the abstract nature of the ideograph allows for a flexibility of meaning which democratizes communication of political ideology. This flexibility allows for its deployment in both positive associations ("HOPE") as well as in negative associations ("HYPE").

The compositional, symbolic, and stylistic elements of the Obama "HOPE" poster constitute a visual abstraction representing collective commitment to quintessential values. For example, the division of the "HOPE" graphic into red/right and blue/left halves united by the figure of Barack Obama contributes to the image as a representative form representing a collective commitment to bipartisanship. Bipartisanship was a central feature of the candidate's platform and visually represented in the "HOPE" graphic. However, it is "ill-defined" in that it is not directly articulated by the image. In contrast, it would seem that the text "HOPE" is much more overt as a collective goal. But as was a popular topic of conversation during the 2008 election, the audience was often left with the question, "hope for what?" A common critique among political commentators and citizens alike was that the graphic was so ambiguous it was devoid of meaning and failed to have resonance for many. Reince Priebus (2012), writing for *Politico*, called Obama's

media, "a campaign about nothing," that "the 'change we have been waiting for' was not a philosophy. It was a poll-tested slogan."

The "ill-defined" goal, "HOPE," left the ideograph open for reinterpretation. This took the form of humorous subjects, such as an image of *Star Wars* character, Luke Skywalker above a "HOPE" caption in an allusion to episode four of the saga entitled *A New Hope*. Yet serious subjects like same sex marriage were conveyed with images of embracing LGBT couples also with the text "HOPE." While the Obama "HOPE" poster may have been critiqued for lack of specificity of meaning, as an ideograph the "high order of abstraction" and "ill-defined normative goal" allowed for the democratization of the discourse. The ambiguity allowed for the ideograph to be more inclusive of groups that might otherwise be excluded from the conversation. Anyone with a computer and Internet access was free to create and share an image, inviting others to commit to a collective goal.

Warrants power/guides behavior. Third, McGee maintains that an ideograph "warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable" (McGee, 1980, p. 15). Shepard Fairey discussed these concepts in his 1990 manifesto, months after he and others began posting thousands of "OBEY Giant" posters and stickers. The menacing face of seven-foot four inch, five-hundred twenty pound Andre the Giant, paired with the demand, "OBEY" would seem a clear direction to guide the behavior of the audience. Despite Fairey's insistence that the graphic was without meaning and that the Phenomenological experience would not direct the viewer, he did concede that responses would vary among

the audience. Fairey wrote that while those familiar with professional wrestling, his work, or street art in general, would interpret the image merely as humorous,

> The PARANOID OR CONSERVATIVE VIEWER however may be confused by the sticker's persistent presence and condemn it as an underground cult with subversive intentions. Many stickers have been peeled down by people who were annoyed by them, considering them an eye sore and an act of petty vandalism, which is ironic considering the number of commercial graphic images everyone in American society is assaulted with daily (Fairey, 1990).

Similarly, Fairey's 2008 creation of the Obama "PROGRESS" poster also seemed to be an attempt to guide behavior. The inclusion of the text "PROGRESS" maintained a "subversive" motive. As the Obama campaign communicated to Fairey, some viewers might perceive the image as "eccentric" or "antisocial" in its association with "PROGRESS" as a socialist concept. Together the Obama campaign and Fairey amended the graphic with the word "HOPE," in an attempt to "guide behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable" (McGee, 1980, p.14).

Culture bound. The final characteristic McGee identified for the ideograph is that it must be culture-bound. He insists that society's interaction with ideographs work to define and exclude groupings of the public. He claims that members who do not "respond appropriately to claims on their behavior warranted through the agency of ideographs" would experience societal penalties (McGee, 1980, p. 15-16). As discussed earlier, the Obama "HOPE" graphic's use of red/white (cream)/blue and Obama as a "bridge" between extremes of "right" and "left" served as visual representations of the message of unity and bipartisanship the campaign aspired to communicate to the voting public. The choice of the word "HOPE" also united the audience with a common value all viewers could share. However, the deep polarization and political divide leading up to

the 2008 presidential election surely affected the ability of much of the American population to be receptive to the message of the "HOPE" image. The audience's interaction with the ideographs, either as viewers or generators of their own content defined and excluded groupings of the public.

As was discussed in the presentation of the artifacts earlier, the political graphics relating to the 2008 presidential election were as polarized as the voting populace. Messages positively framed by the pro-Obama camp were rejected and refuted via the creation of negatively framed anti-Obama graphics like "NOPE" and "HYPE." Pro-Obama designers negatively framed the Republican candidates also with "NOPE" and "DOPE" paired with images of McCain, Palin, and George W. Bush. Through framing, messages targeted their publics, reinforced commitments to a candidate or a party and created "out groups" excluded from a particular message. While no "agency of ideographs" overtly demanded that audiences "respond appropriately" or face societal penalties, captions implied that a vote for the candidate labeled as "DOPE" would have negative consequences for American society.

Campaign graphics were not the only examples of the culture-bound characteristic of the ideograph in the images surveyed. While the mandate to guide behavior through the agency of the ideograph was much more serious in the political graphics, other parodies had much less heady demands on audiences. In most of the humorous parodies, groups were defined and excluded based on familiarly with cultural figures, fictitious characters, or other subjects employed by the designer. For example those over thirty might enjoy a graphic of Bill Clinton with the word "GROPE" or *Seinfeld*'s "Soup Nazi" with the caption "SOUP," or comedians Cheech and Chong with the word "TOKE."

While excluded from the previous images, a younger audience might have responded to Heath Ledger as Batman's The Joker with the text "JOKE." Viewers familiar with the figure or meme were "in" on the joke, "respond[ing] appropriately." Those not responding as the agency warranted might not face stiff "societal penalties," but would be "out of the loop" of contemporary culture.

In summary, the Obama "HOPE" image, as a representative form does function as an ideograph in the parodied graphics. Despite its status as an officially sanctioned campaign image, its initial presentation ("PROGRESS") as well as its use in the parodied graphics that followed, was not exclusive to the power elite, but also available to all audiences. Fairey's design elements allow for a "high order of abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular, but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal (McGee, 1980, p.15). From the directing nature of the "OBEY" graphic, to the call for "PROGRESS," "HOPE" or other rhetorical demands, the ideograph warranted power and guided behavior of the audience. Finally, the Obama image as ideograph was culturally bound in that it defined groupings of the public through inclusion, exclusion, and participation by viewers and creators of parodied images. As the representative form can be demonstrated to meet the four tenets of McGee's ideograph, the Obama "HOPE" image can be classified as visual ideograph.

Discussion

RQ1: How might Edwards and Winkler's concept of the representative form further an understanding of the Obama HOPE poster and related images' *function* as ideographs?

As a representative form, the parodied images created in the style of the Obama "HOPE" Poster meet Edwards and Winkler's prescription that representational forms transcend their specific referents, gains meaning from their subsequent symbolic associations, and help create and reaffirm the identity of the body politic through their ideographic functions. Edwards and Winkler's conceptualization of the representative form extended the previous interpretations of how visual images function within societal contexts. Previous scholarship focused exclusively on the iconic relationship of an image to its verbal referent. In contrast, the representative form, rather than the icon is "more authoritative because it expresses a concept that an icon can only reconstruct through illustration" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.130). In other words, an icon like a red octagon, refer back to a discursive form, a word, or concept like "stop." In contrast, a representative form takes an image, such as the flag raising at Iwo Jima, and through its rhetorical action functions as an ideograph. The repetitive form is not fixed in its meaning in the same way an icon is. This opens up the opportunity to import the ideograph into yet another context, carrying along the previous meaning, and importing it into a new context.

This process can be seen with the Obama image. While the original image is tied to "HOPE," the ideographic use of the construct can be analyzed synchronically in its relationship to other ideographic uses. For example, how "HOPE" embodied in the image of Obama contrasts with "NOPE" for Sarah Palin. While any picture with the caption, "NOPE" negatively frames the person above it, a full understanding of "NOPE" can only

be understood in its relation to the original graphic. In most campaigns, a smiling picture of a candidate would be considered a "hopeful" image. But when the Palin image is used in the graphic, the audience is not only asked to reject Palin, but also to refer back to a positive association with Obama. Obama's image, through its association with "HOPE" and its usage, becomes the representation of hopefulness and the standard by which succeeding images may be viewed by the audience. Palin, in contrast, is established as a foil for "HOPE." In this way, the Obama image does not function as an icon, referring back to a specific referent. Instead, the meaning of the image transcends its original context and gains further rhetorical power in its association with subsequent image. This establishes the "HOPE" graphic as a representative form, rather than an icon.

Diachronically, "HOPE" can be compared with the iterations over time in the further parodies. Compare Obama's "HOPE" to Alfred E. Newman's "HOPLESS"ness. It is not merely that the goofy, smiling face of Newman is "HOPELESS." That has long since been established by *MAD Magazine*'s publication of the silly character and his antics. The parody's humor is a function of the audience's comparison to the previously established image of Obama as a representation of "HOPE." Again, the meaning of the image transcends its original context and functions less as a direct representation or icon and instead functions as a representative form.

Appropriation and recontextualization are the central features of the transformation of visual images into representative forms. In doing so, the creator of a Fairey-style parody transformed an "ordinary term in political discourse" ("HOPE") through "abstraction representing collective commitment." By choosing the situational context for the use of the image, the artist identified the times and places that warrant

ideological judgment. Examples such as positively and negatively framed political graphics, "warranted power" and "guided behavior" of the audience through use of the Obama graphic's political message. Like McGee's verbal ideographs, representative forms garnered their meaning through the description they provided to situations. As McGee identified, they must be "culturally bound" in that society's interactions with ideographs work to define and exclude groupings of the public. A designer of an image can elevate actions through a complementary comparison to the visual ideograph and advocate for positive social change as in Beck's "FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY" POSTER." Or a parody can denigrate actions that failed to meet the moral standards established by the ideology such as in the Bill Clinton "GROPE" image. In these examples, the images meet McGee's requirement that ideographs "respond appropriately to claims on their behavior warranted through the agency of ideographs" or thus "experience societal penalties" (McGee, 1980, p.15-16). Clearly, the "Obama HOPE Poster" and related images meet the four tenets of McGee's ideographs, despite being non-discursive rather than discursive forms.

Not only does the parodied context of a representative form identify the specific circumstance which inspired the ideology's application, it also can draw attention to key elements of the ideology at issue in the subsequent images. An artist can direct the audience's attention by the addition, omission, substitution, or distortion of visual elements. For example the austere pose of Obama in the "PROGRESS" or "HOPE" graphics stood in contrast with the smiling, forward-facing pose of Sarah Palin or the bewildered expression of George W. Bush in the "NOPE" images. The audience would respond not only to the negative framing of the text, but more immediately to the visual

comparison to an image with which they were already very familiar. For the audience to respond to an image reiterated in an array of forms, they must have a prior memory of the original. By comparing the new rendition of the image to the memory of the original form, the audience can participate in the reinforcement of the ideograph's categorical meaning. The expansions and contractions of this memory result from the parodied contexts.

Edwards and Winker note that "since words have a limited capacity for manipulation before their recognizability is lost, the opportunity for potential audience participation in the linguistic realm is comparatively small" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.132). Visual ideographs like the "HOPE" image can use elements such as the red/blue, Republican/Democrat division to bolster tenets of the ideology. In the case of the Obama graphic, the ideology is bipartisan unity. Edwards and Winker posit that "the inclusion of these icons can both constrain and expand the meaning of representative forms" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p.132). Therefore, they argue that representative forms in their parodied contexts would also have persuasive potentials unavailable to their linguistic counterparts. In both the Iwo Jima parodies and the Obama related parodies employ not only visual elements, but also text. Captioning is an important to both the Iwo Jima related cartoons and the images I surveyed. While visual elements allow for a greater flexibility of meaning and are more openly available for import into other context, neither the cartoons nor the Obama related graphics can be fully assessed as exclusively non-discursive artifacts.

RQ2: Does the "Obama HOPE Poster" and related posters meet the tenants of McGee's ideograph despite being visual rather than discursive forms?

While McGee's ideographs were exclusively discursive, Edwards and Winkler expanded the ideograph to include non-discursive forms such as graphics. This thesis makes an important contribution through the consideration of both discursive and non-discursive forms in the functioning of ideographs. Michael Osborn foresaw a stronger symbolic potential for icons in asserting "the combination of ideograph and icon may be especially potent in popular discourse, because it offers the virtues of both abstract and concrete rhetorical expression" (Osborn, 1994, p.93). This has particular relevance to the artifacts used in this study as they contain both linguistic and visual elements. The power in their ideographic functions necessitates the pairing of the image with the text. The image of Obama is as iconic as that of Che Guevara, but the full ideographic function was not manifested until it was paired with the text, "PROGRESS" and later, "HOPE."

Confirmation that certain visual images can function as ideographs was shown through the images' ability to transcend particular groupings of symbolic or rhetorical contexts. The situations prompting the use of the Obama graphic are not wholly recurrent. Instead, they vary from the political ("HOPE"/"NOPE"), to popular culture ("FROGRESS"), to social message ("ADOPT"). As in McGee's example, the parodied image is "paramorphic, for even when the [image] changes its signification in particular circumstances, it retains a formal, categorical meaning, a consistent reference to its history as an ideograph" (McGee, 1980, p.10). One of the main ways the parodied images called forth the original context was the Fairey aesthetic style. Unlike the Iwo Jima images, the Obama parodies were linked via the graphic style and text (primarily through verbal pun or other association). I propose that the ideographic use harkened back to the "OBEY Giant Project." I would call this an ideograph approaching the notion of

<authority>. It was a directive to the audience to "listen up," or "pay attention" and "follow" for their own benefit. The rhetoric took on a heuristic function which matched well with its linage to the "OBEY" project and to McGee's four tenets of the ideograph.

Beginning with the "Obama PROGRESS Poster" on through campaign graphics, to the various parodies, these images constituted representative forms. The visual style and composition utilized in graphics relating to the original image, in contrast to it, and borrowing from it to employ ideological constructs via the ideograph. The ideographic use of the image met the tenets of McGee's ideograph, because they could be demonstrated to be "an ordinary term in political discourse," "abstractions representing collective commitment," "warranting power/guiding behavior," and "culturally bound." While the visual nature of the graphics allowed for exportation to a near infinite number of contexts, the text also allowed for flexibility while still referring back to the original context, thus maintaining the whole graphics ideographic rhetorical function.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the ideographic study can be extended to include non-discursive forms through representative forms in the rhetoric. After an analysis of the "Obama HOPE Poster" and related graphics, it is desirable to consider other representative forms and what the future holds for the study of the visual ideograph. Certainly Edwards and Winker's example of the flag raising at Iwo Jima worked well for applying McGee's method to a non-discursive form. Paul Messaris, in his book, *Visual "Literacy:" Image, Mind, and Reality*, suggests that images such as Grant Wood's *American Gothic* or James Montgomery Flagg's "I Want You" poster of Uncle Sam were widely parodied, these resonant images would be interesting for ideographic study

(Messaris, 1994). Edwards and Winker proposed Mt. Rushmore and well known Viet

Nam era photographs as possible representative forms functioning as ideographs. In my

reading for this project I found a number of images in Robert Hairman and John Louis

Lucaites' *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal*

Democracy. These included the 1945 "Time Square Kiss" between a returning sailor and

a nurse, which has been restaged with same-sex couples by apparel company, *Diesel,* and

numerous military service people as a commentary on same-sex marriage and

homosexuals in the military. While these were all excellent examples of possible

artifacts, images relating more directly to the "Obama HOPE Poster" are available for

extensions to this study.

In solidarity with the "Occupy Wall Street" movement, which began in September

of 2011, Shepard Fairey produced a parody of his own graphic for publicity by the

occupiers. Fairey used the same pose and body position as with Obama, but replaced the

president's image with an "occupier" wearing a "hoodie," a Guy Fawkes mask, and a

button which reads, "We are the 99%." The caption at the bottom stated, "Mr. President,

we HOPE you're on our side" (see figure 8). The graphic was not only notable for its use

of the Fairey style but for the incorporation of some of the iconic images of the "Occupy

Movement." The image of Guy Fawkes has been a symbol of resistance for over four

hundred years, but has recently become associated with the "Occupy Movement" though

its use by Internet pranksters and hackers acting on behalf of the "99%" protesters. The

black hooded sweatshirt worn by Fairey's "occupier" has associations with anti-capitalist,

anti-globalist, and anarchist youth movements in the United States and Europe since the

1999 Seattle World Trade Organization protests. The hoodie and mask have both served

as symbols of both anonymity and group identification for members of the "Occupy movement" and beyond.

The appropriation of the "Obama HOPE Poster" imagery is not confined only to contemporary political movement in the United States. The "Arab Spring" uprisings of 2011 were notable for participation by Middle Eastern youth and for their use of websites like Facebook and Twitter. Protesters created graphics for online organizing and political posters for direct actions, many times utilizing the "HOPE" graphic as a template for political rhetoric. Revolutionary candidates were lauded as Obama was in the original image with positive captions. Leaders they hoped to oust, like Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, were very negatively presented in parody posters and signs. The visual ideograph's flexibility of meaning paired with any audiences' interest in the graphic nature of the representative form ensures that these images will continue as an important part of rhetorical studies.
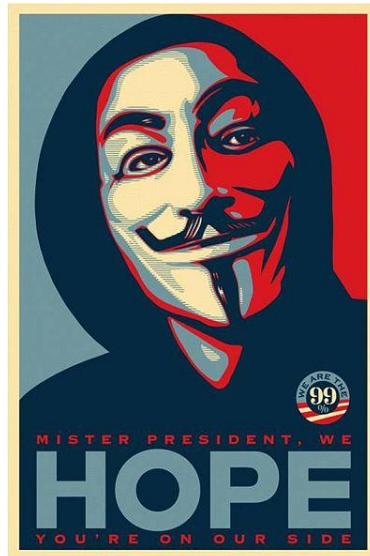
(Figure 8. "Shepard Fairey Occupy Poster")

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[1] As is the convention in the literature from McGee and later authors, in a discussion of McGee, I refer to ideographs using < > to distinguish them from other linguistic elements.

Curriculum Vitae

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             Major Area: Master of Arts in Applied Communication
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Fall 2008	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-7769	23
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Fall 2009	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-15153	20
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Spring 2010	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-20450	20
	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-20456	25
	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-20458	25
Fall 2010	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-1611 (Themed Learning Community- Engineering)	26
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	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-5196	25
Spring 2011	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-21800	24
	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-21803	25

	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-21805	23
Summer 2011	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-1589	13
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	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-17299	24
Spring 2012	R110 Fundamentals of Public Speaking-8957	23
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PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2008- Judge, IUPUI Dominata Classic Speech Competition
2012   Judge, Curtis Memorial Oratorical Contest

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2011   Organizer, The Indianapolis International Tibet Movement Refugee Outreach, *IUPUI Department of Sociology*
2010   Organizer/Participant, IUPUI United Way Day of Caring, *IUPUI Department of Psychology*
2010   Assistant, Annual Pumpkin Drop, *IUPUI Department Engineering Studies*

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

2010   Judge, IUPUI Fall Speech Night Spring/Fall, Final Round
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