

'Aim High': Toward an Analytical Schema for Visual Rhetoric

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In the field of communication criticism, a great deal of effort has been expended in developing analytical schema; from neo-Aristotelian criticism to postmodern critique, scholars have developed a variety of perspectives by which to offer interpretations of discursive events. For nondiscursive communication, however, fewer options exist--there is no widely accepted theory or critical perspective by which one can describe, interpret, and evaluate non-speech acts such as visual messages. Perhaps this is the case because critiquing discursive acts still confounds and challenges us, and so that is where our attention is drawn. Or perhaps it is so because some scholars still need to be convinced visual messages are worthy of critique as a form of persuasion. Whatever the case may be, this paper accepts as its premise that visual messages deserve critical inquiry, and that some of the analytical concepts used to assess verbal messages are also useful in examining visual messages. Hence, this paper seeks to develop an analytical schema for visual persuasion, and to illustrate that visual rhetoric is worthy of the sustained attention of the communication criticism community.

In order to accomplish these goals, a case study approach is adopted. In particular, this study focuses on institutional recruiting by universities and by the armed forces. Both types of institutions depend for their livelihood on attracting and retaining those they recruit. Therefore, they devote considerable resources to recruiting and retention efforts.

One of the primary tools used by recruiters is visual imagery. Taking the form of films, videotapes, television advertisements, catalogues, brochures, pamphlets, billboards, etc., recruiters seem to recognize the power of the visual image to entice audiences to attend to the message. The message is "come and be with us." But the question is, how is that message conveyed? Of course, the verbal/textual aspects of the message present various persuasive appeals that can be easily examined. But perhaps more interesting is how the visual elements of the message influence the audience. One might ask, then, how an institution can use visual images to recruit and retain members.

Accordingly, this paper explores that question and develops an analytical perspective that is somewhat complex: drawing from the work of Lucaites and Condit (1995), McGee (1995), Osborn (1986; 1990a; 1990b), and Messaris (1989), it proffers a way to conduct rhetorical analyses of visual images when those images use the characteristics of a culture to persuade. The thesis of this essay is that recruiters use certain characterizations of their institution to appeal to prospective members. Furthermore, these characterizations are endowed with rhetorical power because they are culture-bound, and because they form a common verbal as well as visual vocabulary that is used to persuade. When recruiters use this common visual vocabulary, they engage in culturetypal rhetoric. In the end, examining the recruiters' use of the strategies of associational juxtapositioning or reaffirmative depiction can reveal the ways in which the visual culture is presented. In the pages that follow, I will explain the elements of the analytical perspective by discussing characterizations, culturetypes, associational juxtapositioning, and reaffirmative depiction using examples of institutional recruiting to illustrate the concepts.

Characterizations

To characterize is to describe distinctive qualities or traits. In Burkeian terms, Lucaites and Condit (1995) note that "[c]haracterizations are the labels attached to agents, acts, scenes, agencies, or purposes in the public vocabulary . . . [which] integrate cultural connotations and denotations while ascribing a typical and pervasive nature to the entity described" (p. 459). These authors use as an example the characterization of "Northeastern liberal," which they argue "has become a label which essentializes the politically active members of New England and surrounding states as elitist, radical, and out of touch with America's heartland" (p. 459). A characterization, then, goes beyond a label or a classification by collecting and organizing both connotative and denotative meanings into an associational matrix. According to Lucaites and Condit (1995), "Characterizations . . . provide the first step in the move from the material experience of daily life to collective valuation through the simple process of providing concrete but motivationally loaded names to politically salient entities" (p. 459).

Characterization is an inherently rhetorical activity. The act of characterizing reveals just as much about the person who offers the characterization as it does about the thing or idea being characterized. Consider some characterizations of college: a freshman sees it as one big party (the movie Animal House may be used as a specific characterization); a parent calls it a home away from home; an associate professor explains that at her institution she must publish or perish; a professional football coach recruits players from a place those in his sport call "Linebacker U."; and a popular satirist sings of "ivy covered professors and ivy covered halls" (Lehrer, 1981). Now consider some characterizations of the armed forces: a recruit in basic training calls it "hell on earth"; a fighter pilot views himself and his brethren as elite warriors who are making the world safe for democracy (the movie "Top Gun" may be used as a specific characterization); a Congressional

representative decries base closures because they displace courageous Americans who only wish to serve their country; and a Veteran's Day parade showcases the latest equipment and weaponry used by "a lean, mean, fighting machine." Each of these characterizations makes the move from "the material experience of daily life to collective valuation through the simple process of providing concrete but emotionally loaded names" for college and the military (Lucaites & Condit, 1995, p 459).

Examining the characterizations of a particular rhetor (say, the freshman, the professor, the recruit, or the congressperson) may be enlightening, depending upon the analytical goal sought. For the purposes of this essay, though, it is more useful to delineate the characterizations independent of particular people who may offer them. In that way, it will be easier to see how the characterizations can be used by numerous rhetors to persuade numerous audiences. In addition, the potency of a particular characterization can be examined in order to gauge its rhetorical significance.

Culturetypes

The argument offered here is that the characterizations of an institution used by recruiters are quite potent because they tap into a culturetypal rhetoric that appeals to the potential recruit. One way to understand culturetypes is to compare them to the more common notion of archetypes. Osborn (1990a) calls culturetypes "the counterpart of archetypes" (p. 123). He says culturetypes "are culture-specific symbols that resonate important values" (1990a, p. 123). More specifically, Osborn (1990a) argues that "archetypes and culturetypes brace and complement each other, culturetypes expressing the special values and meanings of a society, archetypes anchoring the cultural system in enduring meaningfulness" (p. 123). As an example, Osborn (1990a) notes that "[c]ulturetypes remind us of what it means to be an American, archetypes of what it means to be human" (p. 123). Overall, to Osborn (1986), "the term ["culturetypes"] signifies the timeliness and

specificity of their power [as special symbols] in contrast with the timelessness and cross-cultural power of archetypal symbols" (p. 82). Culturetypes, then, in counterpart to archetypes, are culture-bound and may change over time.

According to Osborn (1986), there are a number of ways to invoke culturetypes as a rhetor. One may use stereotypes, icons, God and devil terms, narratives, rhetorical fantasies, myths, and/or ideographs. A brief explanation of each strategy is in order.

First, Osborn (1986) says that "stereotype . . . functions simply to establish and acknowledge the personal and institutional roles within a society. Stereotypes are prearranged ethos that performs vital culturetypal work. Most often, stereotypes are accepted without question and without awareness of their service as anchors of the social order. They become notorious only when individuals chafe within the limitations on action and becoming that stereotypes can impose" (pp. 82-83). He also notes that "[s]tereotypes discipline perceptions into common patterns" (1986, p. 89).

Second, icons, according to Osborn (1990b) are "rigidified" symbols (p. 9) that "provide gathering points for secular worship" (1986, p. 89). As symbols, they suggest "secular sacredness" and are powerful due to "the awe and reverence they can inspire when employed in the communicative commerce of people" (1986, p. 82).

Third, ultimate terms, according to Richard Weaver, may also be called "God and devil terms." Osborn (1986) borrows Weaver's construct to note that "God and devil terms offer hierarchy and symbolic structure for the developing of group identity" (p. 89). He also says such terms convey both "sacredness and the sense of dialectical order" (p. 82).

Fourth, with respect to narratives, Osborn (1990a) mentions that "culturetypes receive their charge of special symbolic meaning through narratives that are heavily freighted with social significance" (p. 123). Lucaites and Condit (1995) also feature narratives as part of their analysis of

culturetypal rhetoric. In particular, they "extend" Osborn's meaning of "culturetypal" "to include sacred narratives and characterizations as well" (1995, p. 473). They argue that "[t]he culturetypal rhetor . . . has culturally authorized characterizations and narratives in place which link and support the community's key values" (1995, p. 462).

Fifth, drawing from the work of Ernest Bormann, Osborn includes group fantasies as characteristically culturetypal. Osborn (1986) states that "rhetorical fantasies and narratives" are "very much related to the work" of culturetypal depiction (p. 90). He also observes that culturetypes "often derive their power from fantasies and folk tales in which they are embedded, fiction which often passes for history" (1986, p. 90).

Sixth, Osborn (1986) sees a mythic quality to culturetypes. He explains: "To the extent that they compress and resonate stories that explain the origins and purposes of a society, culturetypes may come to function as implicit myths. As expressions of mythos, they may constitute a source of proof in rhetoric that rivals logos, ethos, and pathos" (p. 90).

Finally, Osborn (1986) points out that visual texts that "express an underlying ideology in which they are grounded and which they constantly express and promote" can be said to be ideographic (p. 82). Ideographs, according to Michael McGee (1995), are "one-term sums of an orientation" which serve as "the basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology. . . . Like Chinese symbols, they signify and 'contain' a unique ideological commitment; further, they presumptuously suggest that each member of a community will see as a gestalt every complex nuance in them" (p. 445). As a formal definition, McGee (1995) lists the following characteristics:

An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It 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. (p. 452)

McGee (1995) summarizes his definition by noting that "ideology is a political language composed of slogan-like terms signifying collective commitment" (p. 452). As examples, McGee cites the concepts "liberty," "equality," "property," "religion," "right of privacy," "freedom of speech," and "rule of law," among others.

The seven constructs discussed above (stereotypes, icons, God and devil terms, narratives, rhetorical fantasies, myths, and ideographs) can be considered to be "species" of a culturetype (Osborn, 1986, p. 89). In other words, culturetypes are inclusive of these constructs. As an illustration, Osborn (1990b) discusses how icons and ideographs can be combined in films to depict culturetypes:

[T]he natural synecdochic process of film has produced what we may call an icon, a rigidified symbol as potent in its way, and perfectly complementary to, the ideograph McGee has identified in verbal discourse. Both are charged with ideological energy, each implies the content of the other, and both anchor the cultural system in which they work, supplying the opposite needs of ideal concretion and ideal abstraction. Together they may comprise an even larger category I have called culturetypes, symbols which in their immediacy and particular application stand over against the cross-cultural and cross-millennial power of archetypes. (pp. 9-10)

Using this kind of example, Osborn (1986) implies that the critic can look at both species of culturetype to discover the "rhetorical energy" (p. 82) of the film.

While stereotypes, icons, God and devil terms, narratives, fantasies, myths and ideographs all may be present in a given culturetype, it seems reasonable for a critic of visual persuasion to

focus on one species in the discourse of a given culturetype. Doing so allows the critic to make claims about how that species influences the culturetypal rhetoric being analyzed. By way of illustration, then, I will provide a more complete discussion of ideographs and then examine this species of culturetype as it relates to institutional recruiting in higher education.

The reason why a rhetorical critic might wish to isolate and analyze ideographs is to see how they function to establish collective commitment and to justify social beliefs and actions.

Ideographs define rhetorical communities and demarcate a shared cultural system, since "[e]ach member of the community is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for 'belonging' to the society" (McGee, 1995, p. 452). Analyzing this vocabulary of ideographs, then, provides insight into the processes of collective valuation. Moreover, identifying ideographs allows a critic to investigate their use as a form of argument "more pregnant than propositions ever could be" (McGee, 1995, p. 445). This example from McGee (1995) illustrates:

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.

When a claim is warranted by such terms as "law" "liberty," "tyranny," or "trial by jury," in other words, it is presumed that human beings will react predictably and autonomically. So it was that a majority of Americans were surprised, not when allegedly sane young men agreed to go halfway around the world to kill for God, country, apple pie, and no other particularly good reason, but rather, when other young men displayed good common sense by moving to Montreal instead, thereby refusing to be conspicuous in a civil war which was none of their business. . . . We make a rhetoric of war to persuade us of war's necessity, but then forget that it is a rhetoric--and regard negative popular judgments of it as unpatriotic cowardice. (p. 445)

McGee's (1995) example of a rhetoric of war warranted by a vocabulary of ideographic concepts is compelling. Turning to examples of ideographs from the realm (or rhetoric) of higher education, a vocabulary of ideographic concepts that similarly function to condition belief and behavior may be isolated. For instance, I would argue that "academic freedom" is an ideograph that is used to apply to the rhetorical community of professors. This ideograph guides, warrants, and excuses certain beliefs and behaviors of professors. "Tenure" is a related ideograph premised on the need to protect "academic freedom." At present, a few states including California are considering abolishing the tenure system (presumably warranted by invoking the ideograph "accountability"), to which most professors reply (often with an incredulous, pious tone) that academic freedom would be jeopardized. One wonders what happens to the "publish or perish" ideograph if tenure is abolished and academic freedom is threatened. To paraphrase McGee (1995), we have made a rhetoric of higher education to persuade us of higher education's necessity, but then forgotten that it is a rhetoric--and regard negative judgments of it as anti-intellectual.

These examples of ideographs in higher education discourse are illustrative of the fact that ideographs cluster together. As Lucaites and Condit (1995) note, "[i]deographs are not free-floating terms. They are bound for their meaning and significance to other ideographs to the community's dominant characterizations, and to existing and pervasive cultural narratives" (p. 462). The critic seeks to ascertain the vocabulary of concepts that cluster together as ideographs; doing so, however, is dependent on the nature of the text being examined (as is the case with all rhetorical criticism). Verbal and written texts lend themselves fairly well to ideographic analysis. Visual texts, though, sometimes present more of a challenge. Osborn (1986) says that "[i]deographs, which in McGee's discussion tend to be more abstract and less pictorial than other [forms of visual depiction], . . .

compensate for whatever unifying power they lack by their flexibility for use in various contexts" (p. 89).

Notwithstanding the tendency of ideographs to be conceptual rather than visual, Osborn (1986; 1990a; 1990b) specifically includes McGee's notion in each of his essays on visual communication cited in this paper. As a matter of fact, ideographs are a key component in Osborn's theory of culturetypal rhetoric. The point is that even though ideographs are abstractions, those abstract concepts can be depicted in the gestalt of a visual image. This is an important point to make, because Osborn cautions against appropriating analytical concepts that may be instructive with verbal and written texts and overlaying them for use with visual texts. As he puts it, "Too often we continue to superimpose the vocabulary, and, worse still, the perspectives of verbal figuration upon the non-verbal, despite the admonition of Innis, McLuhan, and others that fundamental changes in media entail fundamental shifts in mental processing" (Osborn, 1990b, p. 1). Presumably, because ideographs are part of his system of culturetypal visual depiction, one can conclude that Osborn is convinced of the applicability of ideographic analysis to visual messages.

For the critic, though, there is still the problem of "seeing" ideographs, given their inherently conceptual nature. One would be hard pressed to find visual depictions of "academic freedom," "tenure," or "publish or perish." But there are other ideographs that cluster to form the vocabulary of concepts associated with higher education that I think can be "seen." Those ideographs are embodied in characterizations of university life. I contend that many of the characterizations have become, through cultural conditioning, ideographic. By examining three clusters of characterizations, the ideographs contained within them will become more apparent, as will the culturetypal discourse of higher education.

Architectural Metaphors

Carol Severino has conducted research comparing urban and rural universities. According to Severino (1995), numerous metaphors in the discourse about higher education feature architectural motifs to describe universities, regardless of their location. She states that "the American university has continually been characterized as a 'fortress' with 'cloistered walls,' another term for 'ivory tower,' protecting scholars and their life of the mind from the encroachments of daily life and those undeserving or undesirous of scholarly endeavors" (Severino, 1995, p. 10). Whether the characterizations are literally true, or whether they are embraced by the universities themselves, is not important here. The point is that such metaphors as "hallowed gates," "points of entry," "open doors," "a city without walls," and the ubiquitous "ivory tower" are often used to characterize institutions of higher learning.

These characterizations reveal an abiding cultural commitment to access for those who seek advanced education. Severino's (1995) review of the higher education literature of the last three decades reveals that "walls are contrasted with doors, gates, gateways, and pathways, all of which represent democratic access by and to the . . . community" (p. 11). Visually, when one examines recruiting materials produced by universities, it is quite common to see pictures of campus entrances, buildings, and in particular any architectural feature on campus that resembles a tower or cupola.

Agrarian Myths

Frederick Rudolph (1990), author of The American College and University: A History, traces higher education to its roots in rural America. Universities were founded in keeping with what Rudolph (1990) terms "the agrarian myth." Severino (1995) explains it this way:

The original charters of many American colleges involved religious missions associated with the country--pastoral in both senses of the word. The founders of early American colleges believed that a young man's mind had to be nurtured and his morals developed in the fresh country air, away from the foul-smelling fleshpot of a city with its temptations and immigrant hordes. . . . Land, and if not land, landscape, the wilderness tamed, was thought to be a source of moral virtue, a component of not only "the agrarian myth," but the campus and dormitory lifestyle, what Rudolph calls "the collegiate way." A necessary component of "the collegiate way" was small towns in the countryside. (p. 5)

When Rudolph characterizes "the collegiate way," a central tenet of that characterization is spatial. Colleges are often in park-like settings and seek to create the impression that there is plenty of space. Land and landscape are cultivated to create the optimal atmosphere for higher learning. Some may characterize such landscaping as an attempt to transcend "worldly" considerations so as to allow purity of thought. The agrarian myth reflects a "prejudice against the corrupt city and in favor of the pure and innocent country [which] has pervaded American thinking since the early days of the republic and influenced the development of American colleges" (Severino, p. 4). This agrarian myth appears to be a popular characterization for higher education institutions. Visually, the characterization takes the form of scenic pictures of outdoor locations on the campus.

Such characterizations featuring pastoral images may be considered ideographic and therefore culturetypal. Bias toward the purity of the country has shaped the nation's valuation of where a college is located and what it should look like. The college "campus" (meaning "field" in Latin) has often been construed as a place "where young men sat under trees communing with God and nature and contemplating eternal truths" (Severino, 1995, p. 6).

A pastoral environment is necessary for this kind of imagery to endure. Creating an atmosphere conducive to learning, replete with an abundance of landscaping and perceived space, is a common goal at American universities. As the agrarian myth connotes, "[t]he growth of vegetation is associated with growth of the spirit. Even the word 'academy' comes from the Gardens of Academus, later called Academia, the park in Athens where Socrates and Plato taught" (Severino, 1995, p. 6).

Given these mythic characterizations, it is no wonder Severino (1995) has found a "tradition of ambivalence toward the urban university," based in part on "the widespread intellectual and popular hostility to the city in general" (p. 2). These urban universities struggle with an image problem because they are located in the 'concrete jungle'. It is no matter that the image problem may be ill-founded. As long as the ideographic agrarian myth guides the culturetypal rhetoric, these urban colleges will continue to struggle with their image. The myth is quite powerful, as well as pervasive: "That these connections between the bucolic and the moral, between the natural and the holy, may be more common in memory, fiction, and motion pictures than in reality--that they are part of the 'agrarian myth'--does not make them any less emotionally and politically potent" (Severino, 1995, p. 8). The potency of the agrarian myth as an ideographic form places it squarely within the realm of the culturetype of college. This is not surprising, since Osborn (1990a) suggests "that we look to the celebration of ideographs at the core of many if not all important cultural myths" (p. 123).

Relational Representations

The final cluster of characterizations of college isolated here concerns relationships. When people characterize college, they often refer to relationships between professors and students, between students themselves, and between students and the institution. College is represented as a

place to be nurtured and mentored by professors. It is also represented as a place to make life-long friends. Moreover, universities are represented as providing for all of the needs of those in their "campus community." Relationally (and metaphorically), one might infer that professors are parents, friends are siblings, and the campus offers all of the comforts and resources of home. This "home away from home" affords young students the opportunity to make the final transition into adulthood. With respect to the relationship between professors and students, and between students and the institution, Mary Trachsel (1995) has identified characterizations that describe these relationships in maternal terms. She finds that "[t]he maternal metaphor is especially conspicuous in the texts academic institutions publish to communicate a teaching ideal to students, prospective students, and a public comprised in part of the parents and guardians of students" (Trachsel, 1995, p. 9). When students graduate, the maternal characterization allows them to "leave the nest" or "cut the apron strings" and "go out into the 'real world,'" secure in the knowledge that they have been well prepared by the university and its professors. Characterizing the various relationships established during the years of higher education appears to be a popular and useful way of making sense of the college experience. And visually, these characterizations are manifest in pictures of professors and students working closely and happily together, in pictures of students at social gatherings such as sporting events, and in images of graduation day.

Characterizing relationships between professors and students, between students themselves, and between students and the institution forms the basis for the ideographs featuring how relationships are represented. The mentoring, often parental role of professors coincides with depictions of the institution as a "home away from home" and the student's friendships as enduring for a lifetime.

The maternal metaphor that Trachsel (1995) finds "especially conspicuous" in higher education is a prime example of how ideographs related to relationships fit into the culturetype of college (p. 9). Labeling the metaphor a "prominent gendered . . . cultural archetype," Trachsel (1995) asks,

[W]hy have we historically referred to our institutions of higher learning in maternal terms? Where does alma mater, the nurturing, bountiful mother, fit into the picture? Why are graduates of colleges and universities known as alumni and alumnae--literally translated, "suckling sons and daughters"? Certainly the breastfeeding metaphor in this terminology suggests connection rather than separation, interdependence rather than the assertion of independent identity. (p. 8)

The figurative entailments of the metaphor feature the bond between the student and the institution, undercutting the notion that college fosters individuation. The metaphor is ideographic in that it represents the orientation of the university and depicts its culture.

This metaphor, as well as the other ideographs associated with relationships, are part of the culturetypal rhetoric of higher education. Together with the characterizations of architectural metaphors and agrarian myths, it is clear that ideographs function as a species of culturetype. As such, they "imprint certain symbolic configurations upon our minds" and endow them with "an especially intense cultural energy" (Osborn, 1986, p. 82).

Using visual examples of ideographs to illustrate the culturetypal rhetoric of higher education institutions is by no means meant to imply that other species of the culturetype are not also present in visual depictions of college. One might easily discover iconic or stereotypic images, for instance. Or some images might take on a mythic quality, or depict college in ultimate terms, or

perpetuate rhetorical fantasies. Each species could be analyzed to discover the rhetorical power of visual representations of college.

Similarly, one could analyze the imagery used in recruiting materials produced by the armed forces to ascertain the species of culturetype present. For example, in comparison to the higher education culturetype, the military culturetype at present does not appear to feature many clear-cut examples of ideographs. Remember that culturetypal rhetoric is time-bound, so perhaps because the United States is not currently at war the recruiting advertisements do not focus heavily on ideology. Comparing recent ads to those during the "evil empire" days of conflict with the former Soviet Union, however, might be quite illuminating. It may also be the case that advertisements during the days of the draft differ significantly in their ideological bent than those today which seek volunteers. These historical comparisons may reveal ideographic imagery, but in my review of current recruiting materials ideographs do not seem to be as prominent in military culturetypal rhetoric as do other species of culturetype such as myth, stereotype, and icon.

For instance, one television commercial produced by the Marine Corps is reminiscent of the myth of King Arthur and the sword Excalibur. The male character, clearly on some sort of quest, must make his way through what appears to be some sort of stone castle filled with a maze of hallways, fire-breathing gargoyles, a floor that threatens to swallow him up, and various other obstacles which must be met with extraordinary physical and mental prowess. At the end of his quest, the man enters a room with a mirror-like orb into which a sword is cast. As he withdraws the sword, his image in the orb very briefly reflects a Marine in full dress uniform. But his adventure is not yet complete: he is threatened with great physical harm by a creature akin to a cyborg, so he strikes out at the creature, obliterating it with his sword. Having thus met all of the physical and mental challenges and proven himself as a warrior, the man is ultimately transformed into a Marine.

The mythic properties inherent in the imagery in this commercial are fairly clear, and are illustrative of the military culturetype.

Another example of the culturetype may be seen in an advertisement produced by the Air Force. In "Hot Rod," a young man in jeans and a T-shirt is driving a high-performance "muscle car" in the desert at high speeds. He stops the car, gets out, and admires the engine; just then, an Air Force jet screams by at low altitude. He gazes after it longingly, and it is clear to the viewer that he intends to trade in one high-performance machine for another. Reminiscent of the persona of James Dean, from a fantasy theme perspective, one might call this commercial "'Rebel without a Cause' gets one."

These two advertisements illustrate the use of two species of culturetypal rhetoric of the military. In conjunction with the analysis offered earlier concerning ideographic imagery in the culturetypal discourse of college, it should be clear that any species of culturetype may yield significant insights into the rhetorical power of images used to influence audiences. What is left is to suggest two ways that culturetypal imagery works with its audience: associational juxtapositioning, and reaffirmative depiction.

Associational Juxtapositioning

By way of illustration of this concept, let us return to the example of the college culturetype. When universities invoke ideographs to characterize their institution in recruiting materials, they make use of a strategy that is grounded in advertising as a form of rhetoric. Associational juxtaposition is a "standard advertising strategy" wherein the image of a product (e.g., a specific university to which a student is being recruited) is juxtaposed "with an image of a person, object, or situation towards which the intended audience can be assumed to have positive feelings" (e.g., an ideograph such as the agrarian myth) (Messaris, 1989, p. 1). For our purposes, the ideograph, as part

of a culturetypal rhetoric of higher education, forms a presumably positive image of college in the mind of the audience. When students or parents peruse materials from a particular college, they compare their image to what the university represents about itself. They juxtapose their ideographic image with the image presented by the university.

It seems reasonable to conclude that universities know this. It appears that they intentionally depict themselves in ways that correspond to ideographic characterizations. Presumably, that's how they sell themselves. And they rely heavily on pictures to do it. As Messaris (1989) explains, "[W]hat this kind of visual device aims for is to transfer the viewer's (presumably positive) response from the background image to the image of the product. In other words, the goal of the ad is to create an association in the viewer's mind between the product and the image it is paired with" (p. 1). The emotional associations of the background image are transferred to the "new" image accompanying it. Since the effectiveness of the advertising strategy relies on having a strong background image, this paper argues that the background image exists through the ideographic characterizations perpetuated in the culturetypal rhetoric of higher education.

Assuming that the strong background image exists, how do college advertisers transfer that image to their own "product"? Messaris (1989) explains:

As Stout (1984) has pointed out, the theoretical model in which associational juxtaposition in advertising is typically based is that of Pavlovian conditioning, according to which repeated exposure to a pair of stimuli--one positively valued (the unconditioned stimulus), the other neutral (the conditioned stimulus)--eventually leads to a "conditioned" (i.e., artificially induced) positive response towards the initially neutral stimulus. There is considerable evidence that this kind of manipulation of response is effective for both human and animal subjects, and, within this larger body of evidence, there is also some research which

specifically supports the notion that Pavlovian conditioning can work with pictorial stimuli.

(p. 2)

It is not difficult to imagine that the research on associational juxtapositioning could be extended by conducting studies on college recruiting materials. One could ask students and parents to characterize their conceptions of higher education, then show them images of specific institutions to see (1) whether their characterizations appeared in visual form in the texts, and (2) whether they had a more positive response to an institution when their characterizations appeared in its literature. Such research might confirm the hypothesis that students and parents approach college recruiting materials with a set of pre-determined, culture-bound characterizations, and they then compare specific institutions to their background image of college.

If such research were conducted, another crucial question could be asked: did students and parents derive any new characterizations of college from looking at the visual texts that they didn't have before? Answers to this question would be vital for gauging the culturetype of college. Recall that culturetypes are time-bound and culture-bound (as opposed to archetypes). If the audience develops new cultural understandings based upon new or different ideographs, and if those new cultural understandings catch on, the culturetype will change. For instance, if urban colleges are successful in removing the prejudice associated with the city, then the agrarian myth as it applies to universities may become a thing of the past. Monitoring the culturetype in this way allows the critic to see whether the recruiting materials are producing, rather than simply reflecting, ideographs. By examining the specific texts and ascertaining whether any new ideographs are present, the visual discourse is treated as generative.

As this example illustrates, recruiters can use one or more of the species of culturetype as the means by which they juxtapose a familiar general image with an unfamiliar specific one. Whether

the image is stereotypic, iconic, ideographic, etc., viewers will likely transfer their response to a known stimulus (conceptualization of "college") onto an unknown entity (e.g., Podunk University). Associational juxtapositioning, then, is one means by which visual culture can be communicated.

But one crucial question must be addressed: what end is served by communicating about the culture? What is the goal of the communication? In the case of visual depictions of the college culturetype, the goals are (1) to persuade prospective students to go to college, and (2) to choose a particular university from among the thousands they might attend. The recruiting materials produced by universities to achieve these goals are designed to facilitate the decision making process of the students. Associational juxtapositioning helps them make their decision because it organizes their perceptions and thus helps them to act.

But what about culturetypal rhetoric that is not intended to facilitate decision making or result in specific action? What if the goal of the communication is to celebrate the culture rather than to get an audience to act? In such cases, associational juxtapositioning may not be the most illuminating means by which to examine the end served by communicating about the culture.

Reaffirmative Depiction

Another way to communicate visually about culture is through reaffirmative depiction. This kind of rhetoric seeks to reaffirm identity and "maintain the structures of society against the ravages of time, the erosion of memory, and the decay of commitment. Typically such rhetoric is ritual celebration, which follows highly constrained patterns of feeling and reflection" (Osborn, 1986, p. 95). In Aristotelian terms, this type of rhetoric would be called epideictic. It is designed to celebrate, to praise, to promote an image.

The recruiting materials used by the military offer excellent examples of reaffirmative depiction. In many significant ways, these materials may be considered image advertisements: they

are not intended to persuade the viewer to act as much as they are designed to promote positive feelings about the military and the nation. For example, one would not join the Marine Corps because one expects to vanquish cyborgs with the swing of a saber. But the mythos of the conquering hero is sustained in the ad, and the viewer is reminded that the military makes heroes. Viewers are invited to celebrate the obliteration of the enemy as they admire the hero's successes. The visual message is epideictic, and the strategy of "[r]eaffirmative depiction guards the sacred fire around which a nation or a subculture gathers periodically to warm itself in recognition of its being" (Osborn, 1986, p. 95).

In sum, when culturetypal rhetoric is designed to induce action, perhaps the deliberative strategy of associational juxtapositioning is an appropriate means by which to achieve one's communicative goal. But when culturetypal rhetoric is designed to celebrate, to praise, to promote an image, perhaps the epideictic strategy of reaffirmative depiction is the favored means to achieve the communicative goal.

Conclusion

This essay sought to suggest some ways that a critic of persuasion can study visual images as they relate to culture. One way to do so is to start with characterizations of a culture. These characterizations are likely manifest in one or more rhetorical strategies used by rhetors in their visual appeal. Such strategies as stereotypes, icons, ultimate terms, myths, fantasy themes, and ideographs resonate within a culture and are considered to be species of what has been called culturetypal rhetoric. Since these species are endowed with significant rhetorical power, they are important elements in culturetypal rhetoric. Depending upon the goal of the discourse, its producers may use associational juxtapositioning or reaffirmative depiction to communicate about the culture. Associational juxtapositioning involves transferring one's background image or characterization to a

new image. This approach is used in deliberative discourse wherein the image is designed to elicit a particular action from the viewer. Reaffirmative depiction, by contrast, is used in epideictic discourse to bolster a pre-existing image and celebrate the culture being depicted.

In the above examination of the visual imagery used in institutional recruiting materials, this paper has demonstrated how each of the constructs can be used to analyze the visual culture represented. No attempt was made to offer a complete accounting of how to use the constructs, nor should it be inferred that the schema offered is comprehensive. Indeed, the species of culturetypes in particular offer a fertile field of inquiry for the development of the schema. And other forms of discourse besides institutional recruiting materials should be analyzed to determine to what extent the schema is generalizable. But perhaps, to borrow an Air Force slogan, if critics of visual persuasion "aim high" the schema offered may have some heuristic value.

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