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The campaign slogans of 2008 and 2016 : meta-analysis of the literature produced on political slogans with a view to establishing a protocol for analyzing the structure and rhetoric of Barack Obama's, John McCain's, Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's slogans

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École Normale Supérieure de Lyon
Département des Langues, littératures et civilisations étrangères
Parcours « Études Anglophones »

The campaign slogans of 2008 and 2016

Meta-analysis of the literature produced on political slogans with a view to establishing a protocol for analyzing the structure and rhetoric of Barack Obama's, John McCain's, Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's slogans.

Mémoire de Master 1
Soutenu le 22 juin 2018

Sous la direction de M. Sébastien Mort
Maître de conférence à l'Université de Lorraine

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Introduction

Slogans are a key component of political campaigns. These short formulae represent the candidate and encapsulate his message, his program and his values. They are constantly referred to in speeches, scattered by the media and waved about by partisans. In that way, they have a role to play in the outcome of a presidential election. In that sense, the question of what makes a “good slogan,” if it exists, is essential. A campaign slogan is a linguistic phenomenon consciously elaborated in the context of a political campaign. It is a “short and striking formula”, polemic and “easily repeatable”, designed for the purpose of provoking action in the mass by conveying a passionate meaning or displaying rational arguments. Its “power of incitation” goes beyond its explicit meaning.¹ Therefore, the term “slogan” can be more or less pejorative. The idea that slogans have a relative value is widespread in the general opinion. It results in both scientific and informal attempts of defining what makes a “good slogan”.² Through a meta-analysis of previous studies of advertising slogans, this paper formulates a definition of the campaign slogan and devises a method for analyzing it, crossing civilizational and linguistic approaches.

The analysis of slogans is necessary for multiple reasons. First, scholarly research came to a consensus on the definition of slogans as linguistic constructions designed to be repeated, and not thought upon.³ Thus, exploring the linguistic and logical strategies which structure the formulae can bring awareness to the assumptions and biases they conceal. Second, in the context of presidential elections, slogans are often denounced as a way of controlling voters via an appeal to their emotions.⁴ Designing a method of analysis will contribute to the neutralization of what is considered as a deceiving performative tool.⁵ Finally, slogans also encapsulate the set of ideas, values, and vision upheld by the candidate and appealing to the electorate. With a view to understanding the mindsets of the role-players in an election, the slogan is a revealing element which is worth our attention. The first goal of this paper is thus to examine the linguistic

¹ Olivier Reboul, *Le slogan*, Éditions Complexe (Bruxelles: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 43.

² Bellak, Leopold. “The Nature of Slogans.” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 37, no. 4 (October 1942): 496–510. 508

Bienkov, Adam. “‘Red, White and Blue Brexit’: The Worst UK Political Slogans of All Time.” Business Insider. Accessed January 24, 2018.

³ Lasswell and Leites, *Language of Politics; Studies in Quantitative Semantics*. 13 ; Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans”; Reboul, *Le slogan* 49 ; Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, “Characteristics” ; Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires en anglais contemporain*, “Faire émerger des sens multiples. »

⁴ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans”; Reboul, *Le slogan*, 24; Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires en anglais contemporain*. 27

⁵ Bradley and Meeds, “Surface-Structure Transformations and Advertising Slogans”; Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans”; Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans”; Reboul, *Le slogan*; Dovring, *Road of Propaganda ; the Semantics of Biased Communication*.

mechanisms of campaign slogans, to understand why the addresser designed this tool, and to bring awareness to its consequences. The second goal is to analyze the slogans of the Republican and Democratic nominees during the 2008 and 2016 campaigns, in an attempt to understand why some failed, and why some were effective.

The main purpose of this paper is to answer the following questions: How can a very short formula become an active tool in a political campaign? Thanks to what mechanism does the slogan become a role-player in political campaigns? Ultimately, is there such thing as a “good” slogan, and how can we define it? Can a heuristic examination of the formulae lead to a better understanding of its underlying strategies?

So far, the scholarly research has not come to a consensus as to what is an adequate research design to analyze slogans properly. Because of its form, the slogan calls for a multidisciplinary approach and can be explored from extra-textual perspectives—like psychology, political science, cognitivism or neurology—and formal perspectives—such as linguistics or logic. Starting from this observation, this paper revisits the available literature in order to devise the most effective method of slogan analysis. The main literature that has been written on slogans so far can be divided in two categories: one that defines the slogan through its origins and reception; another that is historically located after the structural revolution of linguistics and abstracts the slogan from its context and analyzes its form.

In the first category, early authors like Lumley, Sherif, Bellak and Dovring⁶ have a sociological and psychological take on the slogan. The concept of propaganda is defined as “biased communication”, the “purpose” of which is to “convince somebody of something – usually something controversial.”⁷ The slogan is explored via its context of emergence, and especially by the way it is disrupted by propaganda. A strong suspicion towards the use of slogans is both the starting and ending points of these studies. In later sociological and political studies, this primary bias is overcome. Jamieson’s research falls into these types of studies, which make sense of the slogan in the broader landscape of its social context.⁸

⁶ Lumley, Frederick Elmore. *Means of Social Control*. The Century Social Science Series. New York and London: The Century co., 1925; Sherif, M. “The Psychology of Slogans.” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 32, no. 3–4 (October 1937): 450–61; Bellak, Leopold. “The Nature of Slogans.” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 37, no. 4 (October 1942): 496–510; Dovring, Karin. *Road of Propaganda; the Semantics of Biased Communication*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1959.

⁷ Lasswell, “The Function of the Propagandist.”, referred to in Dovring, *Road of Propaganda; the Semantics of Biased Communication*. 5

⁸ Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. *Electing the President, 2008: The Insiders’ View*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

———. *Packaging The Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*. Third Edition. Oxford University Press, USA, 1996.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. *The Interplay of Influence: Mass Media & Their Publics in News, Advertising, Politics*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1983.

The second strain of research abstracts the formulae from their context. Their assumption is the conviction that the slogan does not stem from “confused and critical situations” or “the propagandist”⁹, but from the conscious will of an advertising team. Some studies, like Reboul’s work, highlight the rhetorical power of the slogans, in relation with logic.¹⁰ A different technique, experimented by Greven, breaks the slogan down in grammatical, lexical and semantical units.¹¹ Later works benefit from the progress of cognitive research and link the morphemes and lexemes to specific mindsets of the audience. In this category, Grunig explains cognitive mechanisms on the basis of an architectural study of the formulae, while Baidullayeva uses grammar as a proof of cognitive realities.¹² By reintegrating the notion of historical specificity in the definition of the slogan, Domínguez tries to link formal, rhetorical and cognitive approaches.¹³ Unlike Jamieson, he focuses on the structural linguistic strategies which make the slogan a branding tool.

Much of that research focuses on commercial slogans and calls for a specific understanding of the difference between political, commercial, and ideological slogans. This distinction, which authors like Reboul or Domínguez try to outline, calls for a constant redefinition of the slogan, with the help of political science researchers like Gillies and Wheeler¹⁴. This leads us to conclude that slogans can be categorized on the basis of their underlying intention: a slogan can be the product of an advertising campaign for a political or commercial brand, or the result of a popular and spontaneous initiative. In the context of a political campaign, the slogans are elaborated by a campaign staff and advertised throughout the entire campaign. Therefore, the literature written specifically on commercial slogans can legitimately be considered as relevant, as it also analyzes the relationship between a slogan and its brand. This relationship is “characterizing”¹⁵ both the slogan and the brand: the effect the two entities have on one another is reciprocal. The slogan is the result of a brand strategy but, once it is released to the public, the slogan becomes an active tool of the campaign, with a specific power which is worth analyzing.

⁹ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans.”

¹⁰ Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹¹ Greven, Hubert A. *La langue des slogans publicitaires en anglais contemporain*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982.

¹² Grunig, Blanche. *Les mots de la publicité : l’architecture du slogan*. Paris: CNRS, 1998; Baidullayeva, Assel Batyrova. “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans.” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 5 (September 4, 2015): 270.

¹³ Domínguez, Fernando Navarro. “La rhétorique du slogan : cliché, idéologie et communication.” *Bulletin Hispanique* 107, no. 1 (2005): 265–82.

¹⁴ Gillies, Jamie. *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*. Palgrave Studies in Political Marketing and Management. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Springer, 2017; Wheeler, Alina. *Designing Brand Identity: A Complete Guide to Creating, Building and Maintaining Strong Brands*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley, 2006.

¹⁵ Domínguez, Fernando Navarro, “La rhétorique du slogan.”

Relying on the meta-analysis of the literature on slogans, this paper elaborates a methodology for analyzing the slogan, and applies it to the slogans of the 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns. The electoral campaigns of Barack Obama, John McCain, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were similar on numerous levels. 2008 and 2016 were characterized by the election of the candidate running on the promise of change, over the candidate running on experience. Therefore, these similarities can also be found in the constitution of the candidates' brand, especially as the sociological contexts of the campaigns are comparable. Nevertheless, the four slogans under study do not convey the same messages. The establishment of a protocol for analyzing "Make America Great Again!," "Stronger Together," "Yes We Can" and "Country First" starts with a contextual and historical approach to the formulae: what were the main messages that had to be conveyed by the slogans? What were the principal concerns of the audience? How did the political atmosphere of 2008 and 2016 influence the campaigns? Then, a study of the structural form of the slogans is necessary to understand how a specific linguistic form carried the brand narrative. This is the first part to understanding the "characterizing" relationship between the slogan and the brand: how does the brand narrative shape the slogan? The morpho-syntax, phonic organization and semantic content of the formulae are investigated in order to understand the strategies implemented within the slogans' structure. Finally, investigating the rhetoric and logic of the slogan is the key to understanding the active power of the slogan. By being part of a populist discourse, the slogan creates the illusion of unity and unanimity, gives a sensation of proximity and ultimately plays a role in the outcome of the elections. Analyzing the 2008 and 2016 slogans is a heuristic inquiry within the electoral process.

1. From suspicion to sloganeering: the dynamic evolution of the studies of slogans

Because of its consequences in the social sphere, the analysis of the slogan is very much linked to its context of production. In this study, we analyze the historical dynamics underlying the production of the literature on slogans from the beginning of the 20th century to this day. Many elements evolved throughout that time period, from the research method to the definition of the slogan. Four main trends can be outlined. The contextual studies produced from the 1920s to the 1940s developed a sociological analysis of slogans. Frederick Lumley, Leopold Bellak, Karin Dovring and Valerie Noble focused on the slogans' etiology and their reception.¹⁶ Then, from the 1950s to the 2000s, the formal analyses abstracted the formulae from their contexts of production and examined them as structured codes. Olivier Reboul, Hubert Greven and Samuel D. Bradley and Robert Meeds were part of this movement.¹⁷ In the late 2000s, the evolution of society and democracy steered research towards an understanding of slogans as branding tools. Katherine Hall Jamieson provided the most thorough examination of slogans in that regard.¹⁸ Finally, contemporary analyses of the formulae by scientists such as Blanche Grunig, Assel Batyrova Baidullayeva and Fernando Domínguez¹⁹ investigate the mental operations triggered by these linguistic phenomena on the audience's cognition.

1.1. During wartime: a slogan is a threatening social tool

The first strain of research consists of the studies produced on slogans during wartime. This literature is very much influenced by the ideological context of the first part of the 20th century. The Marxist theories steered social sciences towards an understanding of society in terms of masses, hierarchy, and disruptive forces.²⁰ Furthermore, the emergence of mass propaganda intensified the need to debunk the manipulation which was suspected to be at work. All of these elements have to be taken into consideration to understand why the analysis of slogans originated in the field of sociology. The first piece of work written on that subject is *Means of*

¹⁶ Bellak, "The nature of slogans;" Karin Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*; Lumley, *Means of social control*; Valerie Noble, *The effective echo : a dictionary of advertising slogans*, John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History (New York: Special Libraries Association, 1980).

¹⁷ Samuel D. Bradley et Robert Meeds, « Surface-Structure Transformations and Advertising Slogans: The Case for Moderate Syntactic Complexity », *Psychology & marketing* 19, n° 7-8 (7 janvier 2002): 595-620; Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires en anglais contemporain*; Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁸ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*; Jamieson and Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*.

¹⁹ Assel Batyrova Baidullayeva, "Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, n° 5 (4 septembre 2015): 270; Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan"; Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

²⁰ Ludwig Grünberg, "Marx et la perspective sociologique en axiologie," *L'Homme et la société* 10, no. 1 (1968): 103–10.

Social Control by Frederick Lumley, published in 1925.²¹ Lumley places his sociological understanding of the slogan in the broader analysis of its social context, and thus defines slogans as means of social control in a social environment whose order has been disrupted by internal forces.²² For Lumley, the social order is defined by three characteristics: time and space arrangement, the relationship between people and elements, and dependability. Repetitions and patterns constitute this order. Disruption is the rupture of these patterns by either external forces—like natural events, or internal forces. Internal forces result from the division of any group by either the “routiniers” who advocate “invariability” or the “innovators” who advocate “variability and change”. Disruption stops when there is “reconciliation of the two groups.”²³ When disruptive forces create crises, the need for social control is actualized through the physical force method—for example the action of pushing each other—or the human symbol method—“gestures, sounds, writing, [...] engagement rings”.²⁴ Slogans are part of this second group. Lumley studied a list of campaign slogans ranging from the French “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*” to the American mercantilist formulae of “Laissez-faire” and “Free Competition.”²⁵ He focuses on the reception of slogans by the public—which he analyzes as a sociologist—and on the purpose they serve. The main goal of the slogan is to “challenge [...] immediate participation”—that is to get “others to do, believe, think, feel [...] as we wish them to”, thanks to a “transference of will.”²⁶ In order to achieve that goal, it has to be “an appeal and a program”.²⁷

Lumley is also the first scientist to establish the etymology and history of the concept of slogan. He traces its roots back to the contraction of the Gaelic words *Shuagh*, meaning an army or fighting group, and *Ghairm*, the call. It referred to the rally-cry that assembled the clan in times of aggression.²⁸ So far, this etymology has not been reconsidered by any other scientific research. Its connection with our contemporary understanding of the word is undeniable: the slogan still has that unifying purpose—it aims to create an “association of individuals.”²⁹ Lumley’s suspicion towards slogans is very strong: they are deceptive symbolic tools, used by authoritative power to control society in a time of disruption. The slogan appeals to the

²¹ Lumley, *Means of social control*.

²² Lumley, *Means of social control*, 8-12.

²³ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 8.

²⁴ « Two Methods, » in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 8.

²⁵ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 164-165.

²⁶ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 13, 165.

²⁷ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 161.

²⁸ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Ginn, 1906), 177 ; quoted in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 158.

²⁹ “Association d’individus” in “Slogans publicitaires, politiques, idéologiques”, Reboul, *Le slogan*.

“shallow, so childishly attentive, so unguarded, so eager for new stimuli”.³⁰ Elements of “mythology” and thus of irrationality are implemented in order to mislead the mass into believing an irrational truth.³¹ This vision of the mass and the suspicion towards slogans results in a lack of scientific objectivity. The same scientific trend is followed by Muzafer Sherif in his 1937 article “The Psychology of Slogans.”³² The author focuses on the proliferation of political slogans from 1840 to 1936, with emphasis on the Nazi slogans, the suffragettes, president Wilson’s campaign or the French and American revolutions. Sherif defines slogans as spontaneous psychological devices emerging in an unstable situation. “Slogans may serve as crystallizing points in the confusion of a crisis which tends to develop into a new regulation of a new order.”³³ Although the author makes very clear his wish to go further than Lumley in the psychological understanding, this definition of the concept of slogan remains consistent with Lumley’s work. Indeed, like Lumley, the emphasis is placed on the context of crisis—or “critical period”—and on the reception—or “psychological basis of the use and effectiveness of slogans.”³⁴ Nevertheless, Sherif understands society as a perceptive entity while Lumley prefers to see it as an organized structure. Sherif sees society as a potentially unstable aggregate of individual perceptions; Lumley, on the other hand, considers it as a whole. Consequently, Lumley analyses the reception of slogans in terms of the variation and change it produces within an organic society. On the other hand, Sherif provides us with an analysis of the reception within a society made of perceptive individuals. This allows Sherif to notice psychological techniques implemented by the propagandist. For example, he underlines the discrepancy between the Nazi ideology and their choice of socialist slogans, which appealed to the public opinion in the state of misery and insecurity of the period.³⁵ Slogans do not necessarily symbolize the propagandist’s ideology. Slogans match their audience’s perceptions—they are an expression of a critical situation.

The Second World War and the massive progress of propaganda led to the emergence of the desire, among the scientific community, to go further in the psychological understanding of slogans. The emergence of psychoanalysis moved the scientific focus away from the study of the historical and sociological contexts and shifted it to the psychological devices at work. In 1942, Leopold Bellak analyzed the contemporary slogans during war time as psychoanalytical

³⁰ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 169-170.

³¹ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Ginn, 1906), 176, qt. in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 175.

³² Muzafer Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 32, no. 3-4 (October 1937): 450-61.

³³ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 458-459.

³⁴ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans.”

³⁵ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” “Slogans are especially effective in critical periods.”

and sentimental devices raising an emotional response in the public.³⁶ The concepts of super-ego, ego or aggression, inspired by the Freudian theory, allow the author to devise a typology of slogans. The corpus is exclusively composed of political and propagandistic slogans such as “Pay your taxes, beat the Axis!,” which is categorized as an appeal to “aggression” or “Make the world safe for democracy,” which belongs to the slogans appealing to the “super-ego.”³⁷ Following a less psycho-analytical and more communicative trend, Karin Doving understands the slogans of her era as symbolic tools of propaganda, resulting from a communicator’s strategy to combine his and his public’s interests.³⁸ Her work is etiological: it focuses on the context of production of the slogans as part of a communication process. The slogans do not emerge purely from a context, they are thought upon and designed by a communicator. It derives from a larger frame, the analysis of propaganda, which is in itself part of an ontological reflection. Doving characterizes the order of human nature by many elements, among which the problems of “successful communication.”³⁹ Communication ontologically emerges from the need to survive, get the best of nature and create a new order, which has to be communicated. In that context, it is the “policy of the society”⁴⁰ and “an art.”⁴¹ The propagandist is like an artist who presents a certain side of reality with a view to merging “his own and his public’s interests in a certain direction.” Without him, the problems of “successful communication” usually result from the “lack of equilibrium in education, raining, culture, and interests.”⁴² Although her approach is mainly theoretical, Doving illustrates her study with Communist slogans such as “Stalin, Stalin, Stalin!” or “Down with the Emperor!”⁴³ Again, we can underline the analyst’s very strong suspicion towards slogans, as it hinders the neutrality which guarantees the pursuit of scientific objectivity of a study. Because of the observation of the tragic effects of propaganda during World War II, Doving sees slogans as tools to alienate men from their freedom. They “make individuals into a mass,” and threaten the ideology and the community.⁴⁴ The self-declared purpose of her work is to restore freedom from the powers that be.

This sociological trend does not end with the emergence of structuralism. Indeed, more recent studies of commercial slogans attempt to theorize their “psychology”. Valerie Noble

³⁶ Bellak, “The nature of slogans”.

³⁷ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 503-504.

³⁸ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*.

³⁹ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 11.

⁴⁰ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 19.

⁴¹ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 12.

⁴² Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 17.

⁴³ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 120.

⁴⁴ Doving, *Road of Propaganda*, 131.

conceptualized this idea in her study of a collection of advertising slogans of the contemporary Anglo-American society. She defines the formulae as repeated phrases characterized by a specific rhetoric and based on association and music-like poetic patterns, which make memorization easier.⁴⁵ Like previous work, the author focuses on the reception of the formula, and not on its specific form. From 1925 to 1970, scientists tended to study slogans via an analysis of the contexts of reception and creation. The slogan is seen as a product of its context, whether seen as psychological with Lumley, perceptive with Sherif, or communicative with Dovring. The emitter of slogans is never identified: it is “the propagandist” for Sherif and Dovring, “the popular leader, the agitator and the conscriptor” for Lumley—that is, implicitly, whoever has authority.⁴⁶ These studies fall within the fields of psycholinguistics or sociolinguistics. As a consequence, the form of the slogan is never properly studied. The end of the contexts of crisis of the two World Wars, the end of massive war propaganda and the progress of the linguistic science led to the transition from philology—that is to say a study of the text—to linguistics—meaning the study of the language.

1.2. The structural influence: a slogan is a code

The second trend that is central in the history of the studies of slogans is the formalist movement. After a gradual evolution of the structuralist ideas in Europe in the beginning of the 20th century—from the publication of the first structuralist theories in 1916 by Ferdinand de Saussure⁴⁷ to Noam Chomsky’s work on transformational generative grammar⁴⁸—a new light was shed on slogans. They were gradually perceived as formal codes that had to be analyzed as structured and decomposable textual entities. Furthermore, as society was becoming more and more consumerist since the 1950s, science started to take interest in commercial slogans.⁴⁹ Two different types of influence can be identified in this category: work that uses formalism to analyze slogans, and work that uses slogans to challenge formalism. In the first group, Reboul abstracts the slogan from its historical and sociological context. In so doing, he aims to understand the specificity of the formulae’s linguistic form through an understanding of their system of signs.⁵⁰ Thus, Olivier Reboul defines slogans as formulae characterized by their use of rhetorical, logic and semantical strategies which motivate an active response in the audience.

⁴⁵ Noble, *The effective echo*.

⁴⁶ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 454 ; Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 160 ; Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 14.

⁴⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale (1916)* (Paris: Payot, 2005).

⁴⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino, 2015).

⁴⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *La société de consommation: ses mythes, ses structures*, Folio Essais 35 (Paris: Denoël, 2015).

⁵⁰ Reboul, *Le slogan*.

Unlike previous studies, Reboul identifies the power of pressure of the slogan.⁵¹ The author does not see the formulae as results of various phenomena, but as the principle of others. The slogan has an authoritative and active power: it influences the social movements and, ultimately, contributes to the creation of a new form of society. Influenced by the communicational studies of the Circle of Prague, *Le Slogan* theorizes a typology of slogans structured by three categories—ideological, political, and commercial. Reboul warns the reader against the dogmatic and Manichean power of ideological slogans. His suspicion is grounded in an extensive analysis of what makes a slogan rhetorically deceptive. Besides, as a philosopher of education, Reboul distances his work from any political theory. This allows him to take a very large corpus under consideration, ranging from French commercial slogans like “Blancheur persil” to Nazi propaganda like Goebbels “Allemagne, réveille-toi”.⁵² His analysis does not result from the emergency of a context, but by the progress of the pedagogical philosophy. Thus, he underlines the pedagogical function of ideological slogans and dissociates its literal sense from its practical one. Their dogmatic content justifies a collective practice.⁵³ The scientific perspective on slogans has shifted from the previous studies: Reboul defines the slogan by his mastery of the rhetoric of the short-cut, and not by any political or sociological context. This shift is noticeable in the analysis of the French slogan “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.” Sherif asserts that the slogan emerged as a “magic torchlight which crystallized the aspiration of the masses in a shortcut way” in a context of separation between “superstructure of norms” and “reality”.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Reboul uses this slogan to exemplify the fact that a slogan’s definition cannot exclusively depend on its context of production. Indeed, the context is interesting: the revolutionary slogan went from the polemical formula in 1789 to the unifying devise that we know nowadays as a consequence of a shift in mentalities. It was emptied from its controversial meaning. Nonetheless, it is not part of what defines the slogan. The reduced form of the formula is really what makes its essence. Thus, “everything is not relative in the sceptic sense of the term.”⁵⁵ In 1982, Hubert A. Greven intensified this formalist trend in his analysis of commercial slogans in English between 1960 and 1970.⁵⁶ He conducts a qualitative analysis of 918 slogans and classifies their common features on different levels. He underlines for example the juxtaposition of propositions in “Drinka pinta quencha thirst” or the assonances

⁵¹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 42.

⁵² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 26-37.

⁵³ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 103.

⁵⁴ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 458-459.

⁵⁵ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 41-42.

⁵⁶ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*.

in “Bridge that gap with Cadbury’s Snack.”⁵⁷ Unlike Reboul, who had completely abstracted the slogan from its context, Greven’s linguistic and sociological approach reconnected the formulae with the historical and sociological circumstances of its emergence. Greven defines the slogan as a tool in an advertising campaign. Thus, in order to properly understand how the slogan works, the conditions of its construction have to be taken under consideration. Greven and Reboul belong to the same formalist trend: they examine slogans as part of language—a defined set composed of symbols distributed in a logical system which regulates their usage and relations. Nevertheless, when Reboul considers that the etiological context of construction of the slogan is only secondary—its form is really what defines the slogan—Greven reintroduces it in the definition of the slogan.

A second trend in formalism challenges the linguistic theories by applying them to slogans. While Reboul and Greven undertook an investigation of a wide range of slogans, the scientists in this category selected a much smaller corpus. Formal and generative grammar argues that that structures come before and make sense of the linguistic creations. Thus, numerous analyses of slogans were designed to test this theory. It is the case with the study by Samuel D. Bradley and Robert Meeds. The analysts focus on Chomsky’s statement that a sentence can be divided in its “underlying structure that conveys [its] meaning” and its superficial structure that determines “how words and phrases are arranged.”⁵⁸ The authors tests Chomsky’s theory by examining the deep structures and surface structures of slogans, to ultimately link them to cognitive theories.⁵⁹ They conclude that there is a positive cognitive effect of the “moderate complexity” in the surface structure. Similarly, Raphaël Micheli and Stéphanie Pahud wonder whether a syntagmatic analysis of speech could help identify the specificity of slogans in Switzerland.⁶⁰ They focus on the five main slogans of the 2011 federal elections, among which “Succès. Suisse. PDC” or “Vert’libéraux naturellement.” In order to analyze these slogans, the analysts structure their investigation in three levels: they investigate the words, isolated syntagma and the predicative structures. The theory comes to the conclusion that slogans display linguistic strategies in order to convey their message “between the lines” rather than “explicitly.”⁶¹ The textual analysis has a hermeneutic function: it verbalizes this implied message.

⁵⁷ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 83-211.

⁵⁸ Bradley et Meeds, “Surface-Structure Transformations and Advertising Slogans”.

⁵⁹ Bradley and Meeds, “Surface-Structure Transformations and Advertising Slogans.”

⁶⁰ Raphaël Micheli and Stéphanie Pahud, “Options épistémologiques et méthodologiques de l’analyse textuelle des discours : l’exemple d’un corpus de slogans politiques,” *Langage et société* 140, no. 2 (2012): 89–101.

⁶¹ Micheli and Pahud, “Options épistémologiques et méthodologiques de l’analyse textuelle des discours,” §42-43.

1.3. Branding: a slogan is a cog in the mass media machinery

The third trend in the literature written on slogans follows the studies of branding. Its emergence has to do mainly with two elements. The first one is the development of advertising techniques and the professionalization of this sector, and the second one is the evolution of both the political science and the political habits in the Western world. Indeed, the current “post-broadcast era” is characterized by an emphasis on the immediacy and the personality of the candidate during the campaign.⁶² The expression “post-broadcast era” refers to the increasing amount of media, to the diversification of their nature and consequently, to the evolution of advertisement.⁶³ In this context, the growing influence of mass media and social networks led to an increase in catchphrases and slogans in the political field. These two historical phenomena led to the development of a new definition of slogans as part of mass media.⁶⁴ Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s work starts by placing the slogans in the historical background of mass media, amongst other advertising strategies that a political campaign might use, like photos or radio and television commercials.⁶⁵ Thus, Jamieson examines slogans as part of a presidential brand, supported by an ad agency with a specific strategy—either explicit or implicit—and advertising a specific candidate personality. Jamieson does not focus on the formal and textual strategies of the slogan, but on how they serve a particular purpose in a campaign. In *Packaging the presidency*, the study of the 1972 slogan “President Nixon. Now More Than Ever” is examined in the light of the campaign strategic memos and polls, which later unveiled how this slogan was perceived.⁶⁶ As a tool in the campaign, the scientist studies the slogan as the end of a political process, and rarely as the beginning of a cognitive one. Steven A. Seidman, another analyst, defines slogans as part of a visual tradition.⁶⁷ In his work on posters and visual tools of propaganda, the author points at the historical emergence of slogans, and the differences in various countries. Nowadays, this third trend of studies is the dominant one, as political advertising grows more and more embedded in marketing strategies.

⁶² Jacques Chevallier, *L'État post-moderne* (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 2004); Pierre Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)* (Collège de France, Paris: Amphithéâtre Marguerite de Navarre - Marcelin Berthelot, 2008) ; Bruce A. Williams et Michael X. Delli Carpini, *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁶³ Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*.

⁶⁴ “Chapter 2”, “Chapter 5.” In Jamie Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, Palgrave Studies in Political Marketing and Management (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Springer, 2017).

⁶⁵ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson, *Electing the president*, 2008; Jamieson et Campbell, *The interplay of influence*.

⁶⁶ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*, 328.

⁶⁷ Steven A. Seidman, *Posters, Propaganda, & Persuasion in Election Campaigns around the World and through History* (New York: P. Lang, 2008).

1.4. The rise of cognitive studies: a slogan triggers mental processes

A fourth trend within the literature on slogans is influenced by both the progress of cognitivism and neurolinguistics. In this category, studies range from purely theoretical examinations to thorough descriptions of the phenomena. Blanche Grunig's investigation provides a structural and theoretical analysis of French commercial slogans of the end of the 20th century.⁶⁸ She defines slogans as structured elements showing specific morphemes and lexemes which compose its architecture. It is meant to appeal to specific cognitive and memorial responses, and it is at the service of the brand. The analyst does not analyze the extratextual elements of creation of the slogan under consideration. Nevertheless, she tries to connect a formal analysis of the slogan to cognitive realities. This allows her to underline, for example, the four structural characteristics of poetry which are used by slogans to produce a cognitive effect on the audience. These characteristics are "segments [...] of constant length" having "in final position [...] a similar sound."⁶⁹ In the same way, Assel Batyrova Baidullayeva's article tries to understand the cognitive mechanisms in advertising in Russia.⁷⁰ In this publication, the author examines how the cognitive capacity of the advertising slogans technically work. The analyst highlights the main cognitive models which are inherent to slogans: "Power your brain with Nuts" shows for instance the influence of the advertising object (chocolate bar Nuts) on an addressee, and "Tele-2. Always cheaper" postulates the superiority of the advertising object over some alternative object, which is not directly named.⁷¹ Other studies try to link the extratextual analysis of branding to the intra-textual structural analysis. Here, Fernando Domínguez explores commercial strategies based on a definition of the slogan as a usually anonymous and striking formula with an incentivizing power.⁷² The anonymity is defined by a "scheme of communication where neither the addressee nor the speaker is specified."⁷³ A slogan performs a function of characterization, in relation with a brand. His analysis focuses on identifying the means of this relation of characterization between the brand and the slogan. For example, Domínguez links the infinitive form of Groupe Mont Blanc's "Bâtir en confiance" to the virtualization of the process which both defines and characterizes the product.⁷⁴ Finally, some of this literature tries to go back to describing the slogan, without trying to theorize it. For example, Duffy investigates the impact of slogans in a self-declared

⁶⁸ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

⁶⁹ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 179.

⁷⁰ Baidullayeva, "Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans," 270.

⁷¹ Baidullayeva, "Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans," 273.

⁷² Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan."

⁷³ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 268.

⁷⁴ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 279.

empirical way.⁷⁵ He blames the theorists for having viewed slogans as “isolated communications having no connection to a social propagation mechanism such as the one described in memetics.”⁷⁶ This empirical analysis of rhetoric is combined with a sociological analysis of the public. This is also operated by Andrew D. Lewandowsky in his theorization of poles to determine brand recognition.⁷⁷ This sociological examination of the audience is conducted thanks to polling, which reveals for example

a positive correlation between participants who recognized the Obama slogan and participated via Obama. [...] This may indicate that 95 memorable political slogans take time and energy to learn and can inspire people on a certain level to participate in the election.⁷⁸

This brief overview of the historical dynamic of the study of slogans leads us to a deeper understanding of the methods which have been used to theorize this linguistic phenomenon. Since the 1980s, a shift from a “society of generality” to a “society of particularity” has taken place on the political field. Society does not exist as an aggregate, but as a web-like structure. A contemporary version of politics gains popularity, characterized by negotiation and transparency—it is the post-modern state.⁷⁹ It results mainly from the collapse of a vision of the administration as the incarnation of the general interest, endowed with a legitimacy of identification to the social generality. From Wilson to Kennedy, this vision of the political field was dominant in the USA. We are today in the “new age of particularity,” where mass movements have been replaced by individual negotiation, and where the executive power is the legitimate holder of the political power.⁸⁰ This phenomenon rearranged the social reality from an aggregative architecture to a web-like structure.⁸¹ The heterogeneous electorate is not unified by a coherent organization anymore, but it is characterized by communication between dissimilar particularities. In this definition, theorized by Jacques Chevallier, the postmodern state emphasizes negotiation and transparency, and the face of the consumer becomes more important than the face of the voter to build legitimacy.⁸² This political evolution led to the emergence of political advertising and to a shift towards a “personal branding” of the

⁷⁵ Curt Paul Duffy, “Twilight of the Slogans: A Heuristic Investigation of Linguistic Memes Using Mixed Methods” (Fielding Graduate University, 2013).

⁷⁶ Duffy, “Twilight of the Slogans,” 4.

⁷⁷ Andrew David Lewandowski, “Obama™: Political Branding and Participation in the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election” (Georgetown University, 2013).

⁷⁸ Lewandowski, “Obama™,” 92.

⁷⁹ Chevallier, *L'État post-moderne*; referred to in Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁸⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique : impartialité, réflexivité, proximité*, Points. Série Essais 641 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2010).

⁸¹ Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁸² Chevallier, *L'État post-moderne*; referred to. in Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

candidates.⁸³ We are in the post-broadcast era of political fragmentation.⁸⁴ The densification of the information on the political market has led to the necessity, in the political campaign, to have a very effective and striking slogan. What, in this context, is the best theoretical tool to analyze the slogan? Methodologically speaking, the slogan was first defined through its origins and reception, before being abstracted from its context by the structural revolution of linguistics. The concept of branding reintegrated a contextual approach to formal analyses.

⁸³ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 117.

⁸⁴ Amanda D Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New-York: New-York University Press, 2007).

2. From an etiological to a formal methodology: building a protocol

In the article “Red, white and blue Brexit: The worst UK political slogans of all time”⁸⁵, two slogans are criticized by the author. The first one—“a red, white, and blue Brexit”—is mocked because of its lack of symbolic meaning. On the other hand, the linguistic awkwardness of “Chillin, Meetin, Tourin #Votin” is denounced. These two slogans typically exemplify how symbolism and linguistics are two key components that confer efficiency and credibility to slogan. Are there any other key characteristics of slogans? What strategy can we use to analyze them? With the support of the previous literature, we establish a specific methodology for analyzing slogans as linguistic phenomena. So far, four strains of research can be outlined. Analysts have defined slogans on the basis of extratextual components, the structural form, their cognitive power, and their function in a branding mechanism. Ultimately, the overview of this research allows us to build a protocol for analyzing campaign slogans.

2.1. A slogan is defined by its extra-textual components

A first trend in the existing science of sloganeering analyzes the slogans extra-textual components. Language is defined as a social institution which holds together by the collectivity’s consent, and by its use of language.⁸⁶ Thus, this strain of research focuses on the link between mentalities, institutions, and language—it is sociological linguistics.

2.1.1. The 14 features of a symbolic tool

In the beginning of the 20th century, theorists like Lumley analyzed slogans as specific linguistic tools designed by a higher authority to control the mass.⁸⁷ This standpoint is influenced by two main scientific trends. First, the historical materialism inspired by Marx is undeniably very present. Historical materialism is the idea that “production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people” determines its organization and development.⁸⁸ Methodologically, this theory focuses on the causes of change, before analyzing the change itself. Lumley’s stance on slogans is etiologic, and thus follows this pattern. The analyst also considers language as a social fact and adopts the Marxist terminology of the “mass” or the overall idea of social control. Second, Lumley supports the idea of a “conditioned reflex” as the first “effect” of social

⁸⁵ Adam Bienkov, “‘Red, White and Blue Brexit’: The Worst UK Political Slogans of All Time,” Business Insider, accessed January 24, 2018.

⁸⁶ Lumley, *Means of social control*, 13.

⁸⁷ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*.

⁸⁸ Frederick Engels, “Frederick Engels’ Speech at the Grave of Karl Marx” (Highgate Cemetery, London, March 17, 1883); qt. in Robert C. Tucker, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978).

control.⁸⁹ The same way the ringing of the bell associated to the delivery of meat to a dog triggers a rejection of saliva, language triggers inhibited or re-attached reflexes via symbolism. This influence is the trace of the empirical psychological research of the end of 19th century. In this context, Lumley's work explains the reason for the slogan's existence and efficiency both by the disrupted context and the popular reception of the slogan. The mechanism he highlights is a chain of events. A disrupted context leads to a need for social control, which entails the emergence of an irrational and magical slogan, gradually mythologized by the mass and ultimately resulting in deceptive effects. Lumley is the first analyst to try to establish a "method" for analyzing slogans.⁹⁰ He highlights the fourteen features of the slogan, which are rhythm, alliteration, antithesis, combined with alliteration, repetition of sound, affirmation, brevity, appeal to curiosity, punning, sentiment of patriotism, friendliness, appearance of being essential truth of whole philosophies, authoritative note, and class appeal.⁹¹ These categories were not questioned until the emergence of structuralism. Indeed, structuralist theories clearly dissociate formal features—like Lumley's "alliteration", semantic ones—like "affirmation", and rhetorical ones—like "friendliness." This approach qualifies the fourteen features of the slogan: for instance, all slogans do not contain a "class appeal."⁹²

In the context of a research, Lumley's method provides some very interesting elements. First, the analysis of the context in terms of disruption of the social order is very relevant in the situation of a political campaign. Indeed, the goal of a political campaign is a reorganization of the political structure. Second, Lumley recognizes the particularity of the rhetoric of slogans by examining how its goal and its designers are specific. Finally, the scientist unites commercial and political slogans under the concept of the "campaign", as a disruptive moment "wherever there is a division of opinion over what seems to be an important matter to some, where 'heat' is generated in the division, [...] wherever, in short, a 'campaign' is organized the slogan appears".⁹³

Nevertheless, many methodological choices can be questioned in this work. In terms of the scientific perspective, this analysis stems from a massive ideological bias. Lumley wants to debunk a first ideology—social control—by applying another one—suspicion towards slogans. This leads to an underestimation of the possibility of a positive effect of slogans. Furthermore, an understanding of the slogan through its context has three main problematic downsides. First,

⁸⁹ Ernest R Groves, *Personality and Social Adjustment*. (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925); referred to in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 22.

⁹⁰ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 28.

⁹¹ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 169-170.

⁹² "Idéologie et langage," in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 111-116.

⁹³ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 167.

slogans can only exist in disrupted context. Second, slogans are only results of disruption, not active triggers of social disruption. The third and probably most dangerous consequence of this etiological analysis is the relativity that is at the root of the definition of slogans. Finally, Lumley himself points the limits of his study. Indeed, he recognizes his choice to focus on the irrational effects of slogans on the mass, rather than on the linguistic grounds of this irrationality. He thus acknowledges that this methodology cannot provide an exhaustive analysis of the influence of the slogans, because it cannot be measured at the time of the book: “social sciences are not yet able to give such results”⁹⁴. Although the analyst attempts to formulate the rhetorical characteristics of the slogan, the fourteen features he analyzes are too generalized, and consist more of a description of phonetic, formal and psychological features, than a real theorization of the formal specificity of slogans. Overall, as pointed out by Sherif⁹⁵, this first work lacks a conceptual scheme, and suffers from the bias which is at its basis.

2.1.2. Slogans as strictly defined by context

After the First World War, the emergence of the behaviorist theories of Leonard Bloomfield and Zellig Harris steered the studies of language towards the field of psychology.⁹⁶ Psychology defines linguistic phenomena in relation with both the situation in which they occur and with the reaction of the addressee. This trend in the linguistic studies led to the work conducted by Sherif⁹⁷ who describes slogans as spontaneous psychological devices emerging in unstable situations to crystallize confusion. This investigation is influenced by a mentalist stance on behaviorism: it considers that languages are mechanics of the mind. Sherif also incorporates the recent psychological ideas of “perception” and “stimulus” of the end of the 19th century into his study of the reception of slogans.⁹⁸ He underlines the importance of the Gestalt perceptive theory, which has its origins in the writings of Kurt Koffka, Max Wertheimer and Wolfgang Köhler. This theory aims to describe the organization of the stimulus pattern in the context of more or less chaotic situations. Thus, in order to analyze the stimulus pattern identified by the Gestalt theorists, Sherif elaborated a method based on two main criteria. The first one is the examination of the context of crisis: an unstable context favours the emergence of a slogan which will regulate the shattered norms. The second one is its reception—or “appeal”—which depends on the organization of the stimulus and salient features constituting perception.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 177.

⁹⁵ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 454.

⁹⁶ Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1933).

⁹⁷ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans.”

⁹⁸ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 455.

⁹⁹ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 450.

The adoption of such a methodology entails many positive consequences. To begin with, Sherif's theory is not triggered by a fundamental suspicion towards slogans, like Lumley's. The theorist is unbiased; he adopts a scientific standpoint and aims at neutrality. Therefore, Sherif theorizes a "good" slogan: it has lots of "appeal" and is "spontaneous"¹⁰⁰. Then, Sherif's work takes the social context of emergence of the slogan into consideration thereby effectively focusing on the link between the linguistic formula and its reception. Unlike Lumley, the specificity of the perceptive theory enables an examination of the slogan as the mirror of a social configuration, and not as a mere result of this configuration. This element is decisive, from a scientific standpoint. Lumley considers slogans as consequences of an attempt to control society, thus implying that slogans can be deceptive and that they can misrepresent the social organization. On the other hand, considering—like Sherif—that slogans are mirrors of the social configuration suggests that slogans necessarily reveal a truth about the system that produced them. Nevertheless, many elements remain obscure in this analysis. The first one could be generalized to the whole Gestalt perceptive theory. This method of description relies on the principle that the accumulation of patterns and stimuli creates a whole which is "something else" than the sum of its parts.¹⁰¹ The totality should be analyzed, but the elements of which it is constituted are not considered. Thus, it depicts the formulae's role in the audience's perception, but it does not provide us with a method for analyzing the structure of slogans as a linguistic system. Practically, this leads to the absence of a formal analysis of the external criterion—that is, a grammatical, phonetic or lexico-semantic analysis. Furthermore, "salient features" of the "stimulus field" are responsible for the production of slogans. Thus, nobody is responsible for the design of a slogan: they completely depend on the generalized confusion of the society, not on the thought process of a team. They are "short-cut characterizations of the direction and temper of the time and situation."¹⁰² Thus, "we do not know whence the American slogan for the present war will come."¹⁰³ As a consequence, Sherif claims that a good slogan cannot be analyzed because it is "spontaneous."¹⁰⁴ The self-declared foundations of this study are questionable: even though the author aims to scientific neutrality, his basis is "judgement and perception."¹⁰⁵ He does not conduct an exhaustive study or a thorough survey to confirm his intuition.

¹⁰⁰ Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 456.

¹⁰¹ Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, Routledge, International Library of Psychology 7 (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

¹⁰² Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," p.456.

¹⁰³ "Posters and Slogans," *The Nation* 104, no. 2712 (June 21, 1917): 728; qt. in Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 457.

¹⁰⁴ Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 456.

¹⁰⁵ Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 450.

Finally, a scientific gap is pointed by Bellak. Sherif believes that formulae ranging from 2 to 7 words effectively encapsulate the people's sentiments "because it is the best possible expression of existing sentiments at a given time".¹⁰⁶ Bellak qualifies this statement, and asserts that slogans are manipulative because "[...] formulate certain sentiments, thus bringing them into action rather than others."¹⁰⁷ After Lumley's suspicion towards the idea of a "good slogan" and Sherif's affirmation that it exists, Bellak brings highlights to the elements that constitute it.

2.1.3. A slogan is strictly defined by its reception: appealing the superego, the ego or the aggression

After the Second World War, psychoanalysis gave a whole new dimension to the behaviorist and mentalist trend that was observed in Sherif's work.¹⁰⁸ Linguistics still defined language in relation with its context of production. This resulted from the inspiration of social theories like Marxism, which viewed language as a social entity: the social studies viewed language as a prism through which relations of power could be analyzed. The integration of a psychoanalytical criterion in a theory of slogans was operated by Bellak¹⁰⁹. The analyst defined slogans as psychoanalytical and sentimental devices raising an emotional response. According to him, slogans are directive language: it uses or implies "the imperative or hortative" in order to "arouse much affective response."¹¹⁰ The slogan emerges in a context of crisis where people undergo a psychological regression. In these situations, people see symbols as the embodiment of their dreams, and slogans appeal the super-ego, ego and aggression, depending on the target.¹¹¹

Here, slogans are also examined within their context of production and, like the previous studies of the beginning of the century, emphasis is placed on the reception of the formula. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis allows for a first attempt to theorize what makes the slogan "magic". Indeed, this term was present in all of the previous writings, from Le Bon's affirmation that slogans are "magic words" which do not "represent the truth"¹¹² to Sherif examination of the "magic focal catchwords for intense action and feeling"¹¹³ slogans can become. Nevertheless, Bellak is the first analyst to actually attempt to theorize what magical power slogans have. According to him, the key to the slogans' influence is "appeal".¹¹⁴ Thanks to

¹⁰⁶ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans," 502.

¹⁰⁷ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans," 502.

¹⁰⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (New York: Norton, 1975).

¹⁰⁹ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans."

¹¹⁰ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans," 497.

¹¹¹ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans," 503.

¹¹² Le Bon and Miall, *The World in Revolt*, 234; qt. in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 179.

¹¹³ Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 458.

¹¹⁴ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans," 503.

psychoanalysis, Bellak is able to distinguish between the sentiments to which an effective slogan appeal. The scientist categorizes the sentimental and rational appeal, thanks to the psychoanalytical terminology of the “superego”, “the ego”, and the “aggression.”¹¹⁵ For instance, Woodrow Wilson’s “Make the world safe for democracy” is an appeal to the superego—the conscience—while Benjamin Franklin’s “We must hang together, or we will hang separately” appeals to the ego—or the reason.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Bellak underlines the influence of the first theories on the notion of “brand” by Ronald B. Shuman. Shuman establishes a “Slogan Rule of Three” composed of the mention of firm, brand and product in the slogan.¹¹⁷ This is the beginning of the brand strain in the research on slogans. Nevertheless, this work suffers from the same subjectivity that had been denounced in the previous writings. Indeed, the sentiment of the people is the main criterion examined by the author to determine the success of the slogan. Consequently, the immediate correlation between the public’s “sentiment” and the “power” of the slogan is questionable.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Bellak’s understanding of the slogan still depends on its production and its reception, mainly because it lacks an examination of the structural and formal features of the slogan’s symbols. It is even more relative than Lumley and Sherif’s analyses: according to Bellak, the “context”, “familiarity” or “history” are not part of the slogan’s essence, but they merely condition its success in the audience.¹¹⁹ Thus, the psychoanalytical notion of “appeal” seems to be the only element determining the slogans’ essence. Finally, Bellak’s work still relies on Lumley’s classifications which are very descriptive and generalized.

In the examination of the etiological and psychological analyses of Lumley, Sherif and Bellak, two elements remain problematic: First, the idea that slogans completely depend on emotion is unsatisfying. Indeed, the contemporary article “Red, white and blue Brexit” proves that certain slogans are extremely unpopular, even if they try to appeal to the audience’s emotions. That way, “Chillin, Meetin, Tourin #Votin” was an “embarrassing [...] attempt to appeal to millennial voters.”¹²⁰ Second, slogans must be considered to be the result of a strategy: they are built by specific people for a specific goal. We thus need to adopt an analytical strategy, rather than a descriptive one, in order to abstract the characteristics of an effective slogan.

¹¹⁵ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 503.

¹¹⁶ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 503.

¹¹⁷ Ronald B. Shuman, “Identification Elements of Advertising Slogans,” *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1937): 342–52.

¹¹⁸ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 505.

¹¹⁹ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 505.

¹²⁰ Bienkov, “Red, White and Blue Brexit.”

2.1.4. A slogan is designed by its emitter: understanding the communicator's interest

This methodological shift is operated after the publication of Chomsky's work on transformational grammar.¹²¹ His linguistic theory is not based on the observation and classification of facts, but on a preconceived theoretical model from which to interpret facts. This turning point in the linguistic field led to a new conception of the slogan: it is not merely described as a linguistic fact, but as an act of relation mastered by a speaker. Chomsky emphasizes the differences between act of communication—implying transmission and information in a social context—and act of relation—which can be an interaction with one's environment.¹²² The theoretical model of transformational grammar allows the analyst to understand the relation between the speaker and his environment. In 1959, two years after Chomsky's publication of *Syntactic Structures*, Dovring's study defined campaign slogans as symbolic tools of propaganda, resulting from a communicator's strategy to combine his and his public's interests.¹²³ The analysis still explicitly adheres to the Marxist sociology, through the definition of political communication as "propaganda". The difference with the previous stance on slogans is that the analyst thinks of slogans in terms of communication strategy. Communication is ontological: it is one of man's tools to survive. Propaganda uses this basic need and focuses on fiction to control the public's interests. In this ontology, slogans are symbolic tools in a specific propaganda. It is the result of a strategy of the communicator in a system of a "biased communication"¹²⁴. It emerges as a response to a mass's demand and becomes a myth. As a result, slogans are part of symbols. They have the power to cause a "sleeper effect"¹²⁵ which allows the communicator to merge his interests and the public's. The "sleeper effect" is the mechanism of anonymization of both the speaker and the addressee: the slogan's credibility is reinforced by the vagueness of its source.

While the studies of the first half of the century mainly focused on the context of production and the reception of slogans, studying the communication process is the first attempt at understanding the origin of the making of slogans, which aligns with Chomsky's definition of language as a preconceived set of tools that can be mastered. Slogans do not come from

¹²¹ Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*.

¹²² Wiktor Osiatynski, éd., "On Language and Culture, Noam Chomsky interviewed by Wiktor Osiatynski", in *Contrasts: Soviet and American Thinkers Discuss the Future*, MacMillan, 1984, 95-101.

¹²³ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*.

¹²⁴ Harold D. Lasswell, "The Function of the Propagandist," *International Journal of Ethics* 38, no. 3 (1928): 258-68, referred to in Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*.

¹²⁵ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 131.

“forces,”¹²⁶ “critical times”¹²⁷ or “one particular social group,”¹²⁸ they come from “a skilled communicator.”¹²⁹ Furthermore, Dovring goes further into Sherif’s distinction between slogans resulting from a thought process during peaceful time, and slogans spontaneously emerging during social tension. On the one hand, Sherif explained that spontaneous slogans stand out “as short-cut characterizations of the direction and temper of the time and situation,”¹³⁰ and concluded that they could not be analyzed. On the other hand, Dovring defines human interests as creator of slogans, thus enabling an analysis of these interests as the key to understanding slogans. The desire to theorize and abstract the dominant features of specific acts of language runs throughout Dovring’s analysis. Finally, even though this theory is grounded in the Marxist ideology through a terminology of the “mass”, “propaganda” and the “ideological atmosphere,”¹³¹ Dovring does not condemn slogans, unlike the previous Marxist theorists who viewed slogans as a deceptive tool of social control; still he recognizes the power of these agents of disruption, which shape the mass. Nevertheless, a negative intuition is at the root of this study, as shown by its self-declared purpose: Dovring wants to “control war propaganda before it controls us.”¹³² She acknowledges that she had a “good excuse for this book”, which was “To increase our awareness of the propagandists who want to lead our decisions without our understanding what is going on.”¹³³

This first standpoint—an attempt at bringing the secret mechanisms of propaganda to light—is far from neutral and we need to keep in mind its possible influence on the outcome of the study. It questions the ideal of objectivity which is at the root of a scientific work. Furthermore, Dovring makes a “quantitative” attempt at analyzing slogans, as opposed to a qualitative one.¹³⁴ This explains the lack of textual or linguistic analysis of what makes a communicative event a tool for propaganda. Finally, as a consequence of the fact that Dovring’s study is centered on the designing process of the slogan, it lacks an examination of its reception. Yet, Dovring’s work undeniably brings our attention to the fact that the quality of a slogan does not completely depend on its reception or on its context, like the theorists of the first part of the 20th century suggested. Slogans are the result of a communication strategy whose mechanism we need to understand.

¹²⁶ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*.

¹²⁷ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 457.

¹²⁸ Bellak, “The Nature of Slogans,” 497.

¹²⁹ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 14.

¹³⁰ Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 456.

¹³¹ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 114.

¹³² Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 6.

¹³³ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 7.

¹³⁴ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 50-51.

2.2. Slogans as defined by their textual components

2.2.1. The rhetorical and poetic form of slogans

A definition of the slogan through its extra-textual components—its context of production, origin and reception—raises methodological problems. The influence of linguistic formalism in the science of sloganeering adds a new perspective to our attempt to establish a method for analyzing slogans. The linguistic revolution that occurred in the middle of the 20th century, particularly with the theories of Chomsky's generative and transformational grammar¹³⁵, encouraged scientists to abandon their purely sociological understanding of language. Instead, they adopted a structural point of view on the linguistic code.

Like Bellak, Noble implicitly agrees with Chomsky's idea of a pre-existing linguistic code which can be mastered and designed for a specific purpose.¹³⁶ Yet, she goes further into the analysis as her work reexamines the link between the linguistic formula and psychology, which had been the focus of preeminent in studies of propaganda at the beginning of the 20th century, notably in Sherif's *Psychology of Slogans*. Nevertheless, she steers her study differently: instead of investigating the addressee's psychological response to slogans, she postulates "a theory about [the slogans]' psychology"¹³⁷. In so doing, she is the first analyst to abstract the slogan from both its historical context and the condition of its reception. She defines slogans as easy-to-remember phrases designed by a team¹³⁸ who advertise a brand by using figures of speech in order to provoke specific psychological, emotional and mnemonic effects in the public.¹³⁹ Taking into consideration both the design process and the reception of the slogans represents an attempt at reaching a more thorough understanding of the sloganeering process. Noble is influenced by the emergence of cognitive theories, as shown by the terminology of logic she uses when describing the mnemonic process: according to her, the mind works in "patterns"¹⁴⁰ and "continually searches for likenesses and relationships."¹⁴¹ She concludes that the power of slogans is of the same nature as music and poetry which "historically stem from the physiological rhythm inherent in every human being."¹⁴² Psychoanalytic theories are still very visible, as Noble defines the slogan as a "conscious or unconscious effort to hook into the reader's subconscious."¹⁴³ Nevertheless, her theory remains very hypothetical, as pointed out

¹³⁵ Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*.

¹³⁶ Noble, *The Effective Echo*.

¹³⁷ Noble, *The Effective Echo*, vii-viii.

¹³⁸ Noble, *The Effective Echo*, vii-viii.

¹³⁹ Noble, *The Effective Echo*.

¹⁴⁰ Noble, *The Effective Echo*, 4.

¹⁴¹ Noble, *The Effective Echo*, 4.

¹⁴² Noble, *The Effective Echo*, 4.

¹⁴³ Noble, *The Effective Echo*, 4.

later by Duffy who argues that “the evaluation of the slogan effectiveness was ultimately a matter of intuition.”¹⁴⁴ A reason for this observation is the absence of an analysis of the way slogans are linked to music or poetry. As mentioned in the article “British election slogans are vague and—gasp—verbless,” a phonetic understanding of slogans is necessary.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, the article points at the phonetic similarity between the Conservative slogan “Are you thinking what we’re thinking?” and a catchphrase from the Australian children’s program “Bananas in Pyjamas”— “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”. This unfortunate phonetic similitude was the origin of the slogan’s unpopularity. Finally, although Noble provides us with an exploration of the way slogans are designed, she does not mention the role of the context which, as underlined by ‘Red, white and blue Brexit’: The worst UK political slogans of all time’ has a role to play in a slogan’s effectiveness.¹⁴⁶ “Red, white and blue Brexit” was a failure in the political context of 2016, as the colors it mentioned could refer to many symbols—like the Norwegian and French flags. In her quest to understand the psychology of slogans themselves, Noble has moved away from a purely extra-textual analysis and has pointed out the fact that the key to the slogan’s power could be within “the speech” itself. Nevertheless, we still have no conceptual scheme as to how to understand slogans. Furthermore, a contextual analysis cannot be discarded.

2.2.2. A slogan is a specific language in itself

2.2.2.1. A rhetorical analysis

As the linguistic studies evolve in the 1960s and 1970s, so does the scientific stance on slogans. Reboul’s work is the first one to try to establish a protocol for analyzing slogans, using the recent linguistic theories that had emerged thanks to Chomsky’s generative and transformational grammar, the communicational studies of Jakobson, Benveniste and Austin, Husserl’s studies on logic, and the General Rhetoric (Groupe Mu, Genette and Fontainier).¹⁴⁷ A grammatical analysis of slogans is grounded in these influences, completed by communicational and rhetorical examinations of their roles in society. In terms of the psychological elements of this analysis, Reboul attempts to clarify the Freudian “joke” with the help of Lacan.¹⁴⁸ The analysis clearly shifts away from a contextual definition of language to a formal definition, where the functions of language are connected to its structure. Reboul

¹⁴⁴ Duffy, “Twilight of the Slogans,” 4.

¹⁴⁵ Josh Burek, “British Election Slogans Are Vague and - Gasp - Verbless,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 2, 2005.

¹⁴⁶ Bienkov, “Red, White and Blue Brexit.”

¹⁴⁷ Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁴⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. (New York: Norton, 1960) ; referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 61.

considers slogans as formulae displaying rhetorical, logic, and semantical strategies which make them causes of action. This study, which completely abstracts slogans from their context of emergence and reception, integrates the political notions of propaganda, ideology and mass, which are the visible proofs of a Marxist stance on society.¹⁴⁹ The theory states that the slogan is an essentially perlocutionary formula, defined by its impact, and not by its meaning.¹⁵⁰ It focuses on the poetic, emotive and phatic Jakobsonian functions, and closes communication onto itself.¹⁵¹ Because both its author and its addressee are anonymous, it contains an affirmation and an element of self-justification.¹⁵² It appeals to both passion and reason and can be either misleading or truthful. Nevertheless, if slogans are truthful, they are always summary.¹⁵³ A summary truth, according to Reboul, withstands analysis because it tends to destroy the very conditions of truth, which are doubts or the need for proof and dialogue.¹⁵⁴ Thus, even when they are not openly misleading, slogans are deceptive. Alongside with psychoanalytic theories, Reboul argues that the slogan appeals, shows, or demonstrates. It appeals by establishing an optimistic climate through rhetoric, shows by provoking needs, or proves by provoking preferences.¹⁵⁵ Its logic and rhetoric make it prone to repetition and concision; it takes the form of a self-justified formula—close to the magic spell—which satisfies the childish urges of the addressee.¹⁵⁶ Whether it provokes a reaction or a conversion, the slogan interrupts the thought. It is a flash of ideology, and thus, such underlying ideology needs to be understood to properly analyze the slogan.

From a scientific perspective, many positive consequences are worth noticing in Reboul's theory. We are going to underline the merits of its method, the object he chooses to study and his results. From a methodological perspective, Reboul takes previous studies under consideration. In one theory, the author connects Dovring's examination of the underlying "interests" and of the "sleeper effect"¹⁵⁷, and Bellak's psychoanalytical theory of the conscious, the unconscious, and the sentimental¹⁵⁸. Reboul summarizes these studies as follows: "Le slogan *formule* un besoin collectif, [...] *transfère* un besoin réel sur un objet ou sur un acte sans rapport direct avec ce besoin, [...] *concilie* de besoins opposés entre eux, ou des habitudes

¹⁴⁹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 76, 95, 128.

¹⁵⁰ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 19.

¹⁵¹ Jakobson, "Chapter XI"; referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 20.

¹⁵² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 34.

¹⁵³ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 45.

¹⁵⁴ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 68.

¹⁵⁶ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 61-64.

¹⁵⁷ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*, 131; qt. in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 35.

¹⁵⁸ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans." Referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 85-87.

opposées à une situation nouvelle [et] *promet*.”¹⁵⁹ Even though Reboul aligns with this literature, his approach remains very innovative. Indeed, he integrates the theories of Austin and Jakobson and investigates slogans under the paradigm of the function of language.¹⁶⁰ Thanks to this evolution, while Sherif only identifies the processes of symbolism and regression, Reboul identifies the specific types of passion to which the slogan appeals. These can be for example pleasure or aggressiveness.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the reliability of his work is bolstered as the author acknowledges the threat that his own bias represents for the objectivity of his work.¹⁶² He is indeed the first analyst to mention the reception of the concept of slogan itself. Reboul warns his fellow researchers and himself against the bad reputation slogans have in the general opinion, and against the tendency to fall into the relativism which threatens any purely extra-textual study.¹⁶³

The object under study is also very innovative. Reboul does not focus exclusively either on the psychological reception or the sociological context. He abstracts the slogan from the condition of his production and examines the different categories which elaborate this specific linguistic code. This leads to a structured investigation including, among other elements, an analysis of the addresser and addressee of slogans. His phonetic analysis allows for the theorization of the intonation and typography that is specific to slogans. Furthermore, he conducts a psychological analysis in terms of satisfaction and transfer of needs.¹⁶⁴ It is connected to a semantical investigation of slogans that aims to debunk the root of this psychological power and of his impact on mental operations. This method tries to abstract the slogans' signifiers—by undertaking a formal external analysis of slogans as agents of pleasure—and signified—by stating their assertive and demonstrative characteristics. This structural method allows the scientist to theorize the specific rhetoric of the slogan: the rhetoric of the short-cut via repetition, and of the linguistic satisfaction of needs. The method is not grounded in the idea that the slogan is a mere result of its context, either produced by or stemming from the social environment in which it was produced. It becomes an active and powerful linguistic phenomenon that can be analyzed as such.

In so doing, the scientist goes further than Dovring in her analysis of slogans' as tool of propaganda.¹⁶⁵ Reboul describes the goals, strategies, and ideologies characterizing the slogan.

¹⁵⁹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 61.

¹⁶⁰ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Jakobson, “Chapter XI;” referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁶¹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 64-68.

¹⁶² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 15.

¹⁶³ “Un terme péjoratif,” Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁶⁴ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Dovring, *Road of Propaganda*.

Because his method and his object are more clearly defined, he can establish a typology of slogans according to their impact. He identifies multiple forms of slogans. For instance, Reboul identifies slogans which appeal in the same way as the Freudian “joke”¹⁶⁶ as opposed to “slogans-arguments.”¹⁶⁷ The form of the Freudian “joke”—like “I like Ike”—is made to bypass the censure of logic by creating a feeling of power through the mastery of formal technique. On the other hand, “slogans-arguments”—like “Giscard d’Estaing, un vrai président”—rely on logic itself, and can for example state a fact, offer an alternative or eliminate an enemy. Another distinction isolates commercial slogans from political and ideological ones.¹⁶⁸ Thanks to the influence of the Group Mu’s theoretical frame, Reboul is able to describe the logical strategies implemented by the slogan and their relation with rhetoric.¹⁶⁹ Finally, he concludes on a methodology of how to interpret a slogan: “Réfuter, [...] choisir, [...] compléter, [...] intégrer, [...] constater le non-sens.”¹⁷⁰ That way, Reboul refuses the demonization of slogans by calling for a form of counter-propaganda: slogans are necessary and bad slogans need to be fought with good slogans. According to the author, the form of the slogan in itself is not harmful, and propaganda is the essence of democracy if any cause has the ability to promote itself. Reboul calls for the constant need to oppose a counter-propaganda to the official one and believes “good slogans” are effective weapons.¹⁷¹ This analysis provides a very innovative and thorough understanding of slogans and its grounding in the form of slogans in itself can become a basis for our own protocol.

Nevertheless, a few points remain questionable or incomplete. First, although the author gives a very good explanation of the signifier as a specific and structured speech, it does not go into the details of its specific linguistic features. This is shown by the absence of structural, syntactic, lexical, or phonetic analyses. Second of all, the assertion that the strength of the slogan is encapsulated in its form neglects the contextual frame of the slogan. This leads for instance to doubts as to how to decipher whether a slogan provokes an automatic reaction—an act which is not processed by the conscience of the receiver and which is triggered by formal tricks—or a conversion—a steady and conscious shift of the receiver’s believes.¹⁷² It also results in the main criticism that has been made later on by analysts such as Domínguez: although Reboul’s explanation of the signifier is extremely explicit, it does not provide us the

¹⁶⁶ Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.

¹⁶⁷ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 68-71.

¹⁶⁸ “Slogans publicitaires, politiques, idéologiques”, Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁶⁹ Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique générale* ; referred to in “La classification des figures” Reboul, *Le slogan*..

¹⁷⁰ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 121-124.

¹⁷¹ “Conclusion,” in Reboul, *Le slogan*.

¹⁷² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 90-93.

means to identify it.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the assertion that the slogan has a strong mnemonic power lacks cognitive support, as proven by the absence of a neurolinguistic or cognitive analysis of the notion of need. These questionable aspects of Reboul's theory lead us to go further into the formal analysis of linguistic structures and to reconsider the importance of a contextual approach of slogans.

Reboul shifted away from an etiological analysis of slogans and from the relativity that was necessarily attached to it. Nevertheless, his approach still characterizes the power of slogans through the analysis of its rhetoric, which is the study of language in relation with its context. We thus need a deeper analysis of the form in itself, and to support the rhetorical analysis with cognitive or neurolinguistic evidence, especially when rhetoric plays with sounds and logic. With a view to establishing a research protocol, we agree with Reboul's difference between political and advertising slogans.¹⁷⁴ This definition states that the goals are different, whether it is selling or claiming power. While an advertising slogan calls for individual interests and the dissociation of individuals, a political one calls for collective interests and the association of individuals. Finally, according to Reboul, the addressee to an advertising slogan is passive, when the one to a political slogan is active.¹⁷⁵ In the process of analyzing political slogans, acknowledging this distinction does not prevent us from considering the literature written on advertising slogans. Indeed, we will undertake a meta-analysis on the research made on advertising slogans as well, for three reasons. First, we consider the methodology displayed in the previous literature. Second, we are interested in the form, which is similar to any slogan according to Reboul. Finally, as we will further mention later, we live in a consumerist society where marketing strategies are implemented to politics.

2.2.2.2. *A structural analysis*

In that perspective, Greven's examination of English advertising slogans represents a very thorough and methodological analysis.¹⁷⁶ The author adopts a structural methodology influenced by the Saussurean school of linguistics and by Chomsky's generative grammar¹⁷⁷. Like Saussure, Greven's method starts from a corpus of slogans, from which he extracts and classifies the main phonemes, morphemes, and lexical characteristics. Adopting a point of view similar to Chomsky and Reboul, language is seen as a code. A linguistic phenomenon is the result of a creative process where the emitter masters the pre-conceived system. Some ideas of

¹⁷³ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 267.

¹⁷⁴ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 93-95.

¹⁷⁵ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 93-95.

¹⁷⁶ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*.

¹⁷⁷ Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*; Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale (1916)*.

the Circle of Prague show throughout Greven's work, especially Nikolai Trubetskoy's theory on morphophonology.¹⁷⁸ Morphophonology studies the interaction between morphological and phonetic processes. The terminology introduced by Austin and Searle's classification of the illocutionary acts is also embedded in Greven's work.¹⁷⁹ This examination is tinted with mentalist behaviorism, which implies that the mind is active and that language is more than a regular formal structure. It acknowledges the role of cognition; yet, it does not analyze it.¹⁸⁰ This theory identifies three main functions of the slogan: it acts on the public, creates needs, and tames the consumer—meaning that it gives the illusion of a personal contact through positive images.¹⁸¹ Greven tries to understand how the emitter mastered the rules of language to achieve these three goals.

The methodological qualities of such an approach are numerous. First, Greven's study is grounded in a strong scientific heritage, from Reboul to Lumley. Reboul's identification of a rhetoric of the short-cut is defined as follows: "Raccourci linguistique dont les traits particuliers attirent inconsciemment l'attention du lecteur."¹⁸² The author also takes over Lumley's intuition of a process of a "transference of will"¹⁸³: "Le slogan opère un transfert de l'objet au symbole, en rapprochant d'un besoin réel (boire, par exemple) un objet crée de toutes pièces (du chocolat liquide), par l'intermédiaire d'une motivation évidente ou secret, correspondant à un besoin détourné (chaleur, prestige)."¹⁸⁴

Not only is the methodology in itself structured, but the reasons for this specific organization are also accounted for. In order to undertake his quantitative analysis, Greven infers from 938 slogans what he believes are the general rules of sloganeering. Greven selects and organizes five levels of analysis: the thematic, morphosyntactic, graphic, phonic and lexico-semantic levels of investigation are purposefully arranged in that order.¹⁸⁵ The scientist begins by underlining the themes that are recurrent in English advertising slogans. This first step in his work allows him to clarify the most obvious message delivered by slogans, and to make it the basis for his study. With a view to our own study of political slogans, the distinction made by Greven between advertising and political slogan is worth mentioning: the analyst acknowledges

¹⁷⁸ N. Trubetskoy, *Principles of Phonology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971).

¹⁷⁹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁸⁰ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 27.

¹⁸¹ "Buts et méthodes de la publicité," Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 21.

¹⁸² Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 21.

¹⁸³ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 52.

¹⁸⁵ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 25-30.

that there is no fundamental difference between an advertising slogan and a political slogan,¹⁸⁶ except for the themes the slogans address.¹⁸⁷ He then develops the detailed syntagmatic analysis which was missing in Reboul's work. This purely structural perspective is closely connected to a second understanding of slogans, on the symbolic level. Nevertheless, this stage of the definition of the slogan is devoid of any subjective or intuitive bias. For example, the idea of "phonetic symbolism" does not exclusively rest upon "subjective reactions."¹⁸⁸ Greven defines it as such: "Existence d'un procédé reposant sur l'utilisation, au sein de certaines syllabes, d'un même pattern consonantique."¹⁸⁹ This research is based on mnemonic processes. According to Greven, slogans have the power to "form mental images:" the analyst connects a structural linguistic approach to cognitive theories.¹⁹⁰ We can also underline that the author chose to read the rhythmic and intonative patterns of the linguistic formula in terms of beats, which is, as theorized by Derek Attridge, much more relevant than any other syllabic poetry theory based on the French meter.¹⁹¹ The foot-scansion and syllable-based meter are basis for a traditional method of scansion which fails to "indicate clearly the position of beats," thus resulting in "more of a theoretical experience than an experiential reality."¹⁹² In a study of slogans, where language is vernacular, this element is particularly important. Finally, this methodology allows the scientist to create a typology of slogans in four categories. Slogans relating to the "elementary solicitation" give a plain and straightforward order. The "dramatic simulation", on the other hand, transmits the voice of an individual who campaigns for the object advertised. The "positive argumentation" draws attention to a special feature of the object. Finally, slogans which are "call for the dream" link the object advertised to a fantasy.¹⁹³ Although this typology is specifically designed to make sense of advertising slogans, the criterion of the appeal inherent to the specific communicative strategy is interesting and meaningful. Indeed, whether the slogan under study advertises an object or a candidate, the thorough examination of its form has a final purpose: it allows the analyst to underline what information is transmitted by the slogan, and through which referent. Understanding this communicative strategy highlights the appeal the slogan has on the audience.

¹⁸⁶ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 19-20.

¹⁸⁷ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 49-52.

¹⁸⁸ "Symbolisme phonétique" and "réactions subjectives," trans. from Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 215.

¹⁸⁹ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 215.

¹⁹⁰ "Former des images mentales", trans. From Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 27.

¹⁹¹ Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, English Language (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2014).

¹⁹² Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, 141.

¹⁹³ "solicitation élémentaire", "solicitation dramatique", "argumentation positive", "appel au rêve", trans. from Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*. 319-320.

Nevertheless, this study focuses on slogans designed for a commercial purpose. Within the framework of our study, this focus has two downsides. First, Greven's analysis does not highlight what experience proves to be some key components of a political slogan, like its context of reception and creation. For instance, the criticism of the slogan "Red, white and blue Brexit" mainly attacks the fact that those three colors do not represent anything in the specific context of a campaign designed to prompt a departure from the EU.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, red, white and blue are the colors of numerous other European flags. Focusing exclusively on the form of the slogan cannot indicate this element. Furthermore, the very nature of the two forms of slogans are different: once it is in the public sphere, the advertising slogan is much more controlled than the political slogan. Because the purpose of the political slogan is to reach as many people as possible, it has to be anonymous, disembodied, and to be able to be identified as a slogan when inserted in an everyday life speech. On the other hand, an advertising slogan can remain linked to a specific typography or a vocal intonation. Greven also recognizes the incompleteness of the analysis on the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic levels.¹⁹⁵ The mention of Young's early writings on cognitivism at the end of Greven's work can be considered to be an attempt to understand how linguistics build mental images in the public.¹⁹⁶ However, we could add that the cognitive and rhetoric powers of slogans are not thoroughly investigated.

Regardless, thanks to this study, we now are able to go deeper in the analysis: Reboul formulated his intuition that the slogan's role in society derives from its specific rhetoric. This rhetoric stems from the particular linguistic structures that Greven has highlighted. The purely formal analysis of the text is common to any slogan, but we need to clarify two questions: is this specific rhetoric of slogans limited to Reboul's "shortcut"? Can cognitive and neurolinguistic studies bring evidence to bear that the slogan does have a persuasive effect?

2.3. A slogan as defined by its cognitive power

A cognitive approach to slogan seems necessary in order to answer these questions. To that end, the meta-analysis of the literature that connects slogans to cognition is particularly relevant. It can be divided into two trends.

The first one is based on an architectural examination of the structure of the slogan, supported by cognitive elements. Grunig's work is based on a functionalist and structuralist

¹⁹⁴ Adam Bienkov, "Red, White and Blue Brexit: The Worst UK Political Slogans of All Time," Business Insider, accessed January 24, 2018.

¹⁹⁵ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 12.

¹⁹⁶ London University College, Communication Research Centre, and A. J. Ayer, *Studies in Communication* (London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1955); referred to in Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 320.

understanding of advertising slogans.¹⁹⁷ The influence of the studies on logic, following Husserl's writings, can be perceived in the analyst's desire to draw the logical equation that is elaborated by the slogan.¹⁹⁸ With the help of the cognitive science, the author defines slogans as structured elements showing specific morphemes and lexemes, which ultimately compose its architecture. They are meant to raise specific cognitive and memorial responses and serve the brand. In terms of methodology, the analyst combines a structural and a logical examination of slogans. As a result, she identifies key notions—like the “polyconnexion”¹⁹⁹, “isotopy”²⁰⁰ or “antonyms”²⁰¹—which are at the root of the structural ambiguity of slogans. Grunig goes beyond the Group Mu's theories by questioning Louis Hjelmslev's glossematic. This qualification is very important for our study. According to Hjelmslev, the connotation is based on a denotation. The denotation is based on the simple model [signifier + signified]. For instance, the signifier “table” is attached to the object of a piece of furniture with a flat surface supported by legs. The connotation can be depicted as such: [signifier (signifier + signified) + signified]. In a connotation, the signifier in itself is already denoted. For a carpenter, the denotation “table” might be inserted in a more complete denotation scheme where the main signified might be work and duty. Grunig gives the example of the sea: its denotation is the wide expanse of salt water, and its connotation is the affective value it has for every one of us. Denotations are facts, and connotations are symbols.²⁰² In the connotation, the emotional value is constitutive of the signified form. Greven asserts that this assertion is problematic because this affective value could derive from an empty form and it can be shared by multiple people, because our affections are “highly socialized.”²⁰³ This is very important for work on political slogans, where connotations play a role in unifying a group of people behind a common reality, as we will see later. Furthermore, the link to cognition allows Grunig to go further than a description of structuralist entities: she is able for example to connect the phonetic structure to cognitive factors.²⁰⁴ Her study is finally completed by an analysis of the psychological appeals. The analyst identifies the urges on which the slogans play, like “desire”, “nostalgia”, “narcissism”, “drive to death” or “to life.”²⁰⁵ Grunig's analysis is close to Reboul's²⁰⁶: these

¹⁹⁷ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

¹⁹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations; Prolegomena to Pure Logic.*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁹⁹ “Polyconnexion”, trans. from Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 32.

²⁰⁰ “Isotopie,” trans. Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, “Faire émerger des sens multiples.”

²⁰¹ “Antonymes,” trans. From Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, “Le sens des contraires.”

²⁰² Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*. 321

²⁰³ “Hautement socialisé,” trans. from Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 160.

²⁰⁴ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 179.

²⁰⁵ “désir”, “nostalgie”, “narcissisme”, “pulsion de mort” ou “de vie”, trans. from Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*. “Répondre au désir.”

²⁰⁶ “Le pouvoir du slogan,” in Reboul, *Le slogan*.

urges are voids that the slogan pretends to fill, bringing a sense of satisfaction and power in the audience.

In the context of our attempt to establish a specific protocol for analyzing political campaign slogans, we need to highlight the elements which need to be developed or discarded. First, although she acknowledges the potential interest that cognitive sciences could have for slogans, this is insufficient and does not constitute a thorough investigation of slogans in a cognitive perspective. Second, Grunig explicitly insists on the difference between political and advertising slogans, but she does not say why, except for the idea that studying a political slogan implies taking the context of its creation into consideration. For our meta-analysis, Grunig's conclusions on the specific techniques of commercial advertising slogans are not relevant; we only focus on her methodology. In that sense, we need to keep in mind that the difference between advertising and political slogans creates obvious methodological incoherence, like the absence of reference to the process of oral repetition. This incoherence brings us back to Reboul's distinction between political and commercial slogans.²⁰⁷ Greven goes beyond structuralism and integrates the specific rhetoric of logic that gives the slogan its power. In so doing, she underlines that the methodology of analysis and typology of political and advertising slogans are bound to be different.

The second trend that tries to connect slogans to the field of cognition reverses the dynamic: instead of starting from a structuralist approach to deduce cognitive effects—in the same approach as Grunig's—grammar is the second level of analysis which supports a first investigation on mental images. Baidullayeva tries to understand how the cognitive capacity of the advertising slogans technically work.²⁰⁸ A slogan is “a “linguo-semantic unit, activating a chain of cognitive and associative bonds.”²⁰⁹ The author asserts that the combination of three elements entail the slogan's cognitive capacity. First, the “rise of the text's informative value” is “connected to the activation of [...] manipulation” thanks to the use of the “implicit”. Second, “the intensification of the emotive features” pushes for the addressee's emotional reaction. Finally, the slogan has to be in its “shortest form.”²¹⁰ These cognitive characteristics of the slogans are implemented by the syntax, mainly thanks to its ambiguity and its ellipses. The author devises a method of analysis based on the description of cognitive phenomena through visible and tangible syntactic manifestations. Like Grunig, this investigation represents an attempt to unite the form and the cognition. Nevertheless, where Grunig only describes the

²⁰⁷ “Slogans publicitaires, politiques, idéologiques,” Reboul, *Le slogan*.

²⁰⁸ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans.”

²⁰⁹ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 270.

²¹⁰ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 270.

cognitive effects, Baidullayeva tries to classify the cognitive mechanisms in two categories— associative and dissociative strategies. The associative strategy “stresses out connections between different objects” and the dissociative strategy emphasizes “distinct features of an advertising objects and its separation from the mental image of other objects, phenomena or ideas.”²¹¹ This categorization allows her to create a typology of slogans based on their “cognitive models.”²¹² These patterns are summarized by the three logical formulae of the relation between the advertising object and the addressee: the advertising object can either operate a transformation of the addressee, refer to the addressee, or postulate its superiority over another advertising object.²¹³ This type of method is very abstract, and purely dedicated to the description of the relation between syntax and cognition. Even though this element should be taken under consideration when analyzing slogans, it is not sufficient to provide a thorough examination of slogans. The linguistic, phonetic, grammatical, or rhetoric criteria are missing from this study. The very abstract point of view of the scientist also entails an absence of contextual and historical analysis. Finally, the fact that her analysis is dedicated to commercial slogans involves the need to carefully examine how her results could apply to political slogans.

We can conclude that analysts have gone further than the description of structuralist features. The structuralist investigation has become one stage in the frame of a broader analysis. Grunig makes it the base of a rhetorical analysis based on semantical and logical characteristics, with further psychological and cognitive developments. On the other hand, Baidullayeva makes it one of the elements which produce a cognitive effect on the human brain. Our study cannot be built upon a solid cognitive analysis because it would need a practical neurolinguistic experimentation and a very extensive examination of contextual elements. We choose, like Grunig, to start with a structuralist approach, on the basis of which we ground our study. In order to establish the methodology, we need to convert the intuition of the distinction between political and advertising slogans that was formulated by Reboul, Grunig and Greven into a clear redefinition of the political slogan. In order to do that, we need to analyze how any slogan, whether advertising or political, is a branding tool with specific goals, calls, links and result.

2.4. A slogan is defined as a branding tool

Again, the literature written on that matter displays a wide range of methodologies. Although different theories have emerged, all of them aim at making sense of the slogans and ultimately draw a typology according to the concept of branding. Domínguez’s methodology is

²¹¹ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 271.

²¹² Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 273.

²¹³ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 273.

very close to Grunig's: the analyst starts with an architectural approach of slogans, and moves to cognitivism with the help of logic, functionalism, and structuralism.²¹⁴ His work is innovative because it evolves towards a rehabilitation of the analysis of the context of production and reception of the slogan. Domínguez defines the research on slogans as such:

La recherche interprétative sur le slogan s'inscrit dans l'objectif d'évaluer les faits linguistiques se rapportant à l'activité de qualification. [...] L'étude doit porter non pas sur les modes de qualification à l'intérieur du slogan, mais sur la *relation qualificative* qui unit le nom de marque au reste du slogan.²¹⁵

The slogan is an act of characterization of an extratextual entity. In order to analyze it, the scientist should not focus on the characterizing relation between the brand and the slogan, but rather on the modes of characterization within the slogan. Amongst all of the recent approaches, Domínguez chooses to follow Amossy's pragmatic argumentative analysis.²¹⁶ Amossy's methodology takes into consideration four main elements: they are its rhetorical methods, the enunciative device, the interactional dynamic and the institutional, social, and historical data. Following this methodology, Domínguez defines the slogan as a striking formula with an encouraging power, usually anonymous:

Une formule frappante nous transporte à l'impact du slogan, à son style. Il s'agit de l'enveloppe formelle du slogan ou de ce que le linguiste Jakobson appelait sa fonction poétique, parce qu'elle met l'accent sur la rime, l'assonance, le rythme, le parallélisme, etc. Lorsqu'il se présente comme une réussite verbale qui fait plaisir, le slogan prédispose en faveur de ce qu'il défend. La force du slogan peut aussi résider dans son caractère ludique. La publicité, qui multiplie les jeux de mots et les allusions, en fait un emploi massif, mais le slogan politique en use aussi largement.

Une formule dont le pouvoir d'incitation excède toujours le sens explicite fait penser à la force de frappe du slogan qui ne se limite pas cependant aux jeux formels qui offrent la prime du plaisir. Si le slogan agit sur le publique, c'est parce qu'il l'amène à activer des significations implicites qui s'appuient sur un savoir commun et des croyances partagées. Comme le slogan publicitaire, le slogan électoral puise sa force de persuasion et de séduction dans ce qu'il exprime entre les lignes plus que dans ce qu'il pose explicitement.

Une formule le plus souvent anonyme. En général, le slogan électoral, comme d'ailleurs le slogan publicitaire, est anonyme. Il s'insère dans un schéma de communication où ni l'allocutaire, ni le locuteur ne sont spécifiés. La source collective dont il provient,

²¹⁴ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan."

²¹⁵ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," » 277-278.

²¹⁶ Ruth Amossy, *Les idées reçues: sémiologie du stéréotype* (Paris: Nathan, 1993); Ruth Amossy, *L'argumentation dans le discours: discours politique, littérature d'idées, fiction* (Paris: Nathan, 2000); R. Amossy, A. Herschberg Pierrot, and W. D. Redfern, "Stéréotypes et Clichés," *French Studies*. 52, no. 4 (1998): 492.

c'est évidemment le parti. [...] On est de face à un format d'énonciation qui comporte plusieurs instances de locution.²¹⁷

It serves a function of characterization, in relation with a brand, and it is thus the expression of an object, and not the reconstruction of an experience. The slogan is a system of sound, meaning, and cultural representations intended for specific mental operations, at the service of a brand. Their architecture relies on lexemes—like isotopies or repetitions—and morphemes—like its structural ambiguity or interpretative structures. The slogan is more than a pleasurable formula: it is intended to produce cognitive effects which appeal to human passions.²¹⁸

This approach very effectively combines intra-textual and extra-textual analyses. First, from a methodological perspective, this work is based on a thorough meta-analysis of the literature that has been produced on speech and communicative sciences. This element allows Domínguez to follow Ferraz's definition of the slogan, as opposed to other ones because it stresses the importance of both the addressee and the brand, and methodologically categorizes rhetorical devices according to their "graphic", "phonic", "morphosyntactic" and "lexico-semantic" features.²¹⁹ Domínguez's analysis focuses on the formula as a communicative device, rather than on its purely architectural features. This communicative stance on speech is further developed by a functional Jakobsonian analysis and a rhetorical development, in line with Amossy.²²⁰ Furthermore, communication is analyzed through the lenses of psychological and psychoanalytical theories that we could link to Bellak's work.²²¹ This psychological approach to communication is grounded in a deeper cognitive understanding of the mental operations resulting from slogans. Domínguez introduces the concept of branding: it is not only mirrored by the slogan, but the slogan actively takes part in the making of the brand.²²² On a purely formal level, this work also takes into consideration Grunig's examination of the slogan as a grammatical, semantic, and phonetic system.²²³ Thus, Domínguez play on two levels of analysis—a purely structural one and a communicative one. This is legitimated by the idea that, in order to study slogans, the analyst needs to consider the relation between the slogan and the brand, and not only the slogan as a characterizing agent. Nevertheless, the fact that Domínguez

²¹⁷ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 267-268.

²¹⁸ "La fonction poétique du slogan : l'importance du thymome et de la rime." In Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan."

²¹⁹ "Le niveau graphique [...] phonique [...] morphosyntaxique [...] lexico-sémantique," trans. from Antonio Ferraz Martínez, *El lenguaje de la publicidad* (Madrid: Arco Libros, 2011) ; referred to in Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan." 274-275.

²²⁰ Amossy, *Les idées reçues*; Amossy, *L'argumentation dans le discours*; Amossy, Herschberg Pierrot, and Redfern, "Stéréotypes et Clichés."

²²¹ Bellak, "The Nature of Slogans."

²²² Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 279.

²²³ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

analyses French commercial slogans is problematic for three reasons. First, although his approach can be applied to any language, we cannot expect the same results, especially for the investigation of the determination for instance. His analysis of the article zero in French can hardly characterize an English occurrence of the phenomenon.²²⁴ Then, in order to follow Domínguez's methodology and study the characterizing relation between the slogan and its brand, we need to make the case that political campaigns rely on the same advertising strategies. Finally, Domínguez's work provides us with an insufficient awareness of the context, designers and addressees, and overall etiology of the slogan.

A second analysis of slogans as branding tools is salient in the existing literature written on the matter. These analyses are supported by the same notion of branding, but do not develop a theoretical frame. The slogan is defined as a part of a political campaign. Kathleen Hall Jamieson's writings are an example of these theories which focus on the political formula as the end of the political branding process.²²⁵ These examinations start with a thorough investigation of the presidency in terms of context, ad agency, strategy—whether explicit or implicit—and candidate personality.

The qualities of such a stance on slogans are undeniable. First, it locates the slogan in relation with both its historical and ideological context, and its addresser and addressee. Jamieson for instance underlines the legal rules of campaigning, and mentions the context and the cost of the campaign in the mass media, or the potential influence of other slogans in the making of a new one.²²⁶ For example, Jamieson underlines the grammatical similarities between Reagan's 1984 campaign and Bush's 1988 campaign.²²⁷ The grammatical structures of Reagan's "Leadership that's working" and Bush's "Experienced Leadership for America's future" draw a continuity between the two candidates. Furthermore, the analysis of the campaign strategy and the historical context sheds a new light on the message of slogans²²⁸. The process of elaboration of a slogan becomes tangible: it allows us to connect the political and electoral strategies to the linguistic ones. However, in the framework of an extended analysis of slogans, some elements are missing in these writings. First, the absence of a linguistic theoretical frame results in the absence of an analysis of slogans as linguistic entities. The concept of slogans is not even defined, which leads to confusions. The distinction between

²²⁴ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 279.

²²⁵ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*; Jamieson and Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*.

²²⁶ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson and Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*.

²²⁷ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*. "1984: Presidential Prerogatives Presidential Preemptions," 450.

²²⁸ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson and Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*; Daniel Romer et al., *Capturing Campaign Dynamics: The National Annenberg Election Survey, 2000 and 2004* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

slogans, watchwords, catchwords, mottoes, and shibboleth is essential to understand the specificity of the slogan. For instance, the criticism of the formula “Ted Kennedy, because we’ve got to do better” and its labeling as a “catchphrase” rather than as a “slogan” is unclear and questionable.²²⁹ According to Bellak, this phrase is not a catchphrase because it “says something about the future,” which is a specificity of the slogan.²³⁰ The reception of the formula in the audience is scarcely mentioned, especially when it comes to the psychology of the receptor. As Seidman acknowledges, “more investigation is needed on the effect of slogans.”²³¹ Finally, as Jamieson underlines, slogans “can function as an optic through which the campaign can be viewed.”²³² Nevertheless, in order to properly analyze slogans, we need not seeing them as mirrors, but as participants of a brand.

In order to analyze slogans in the contemporary electoral field, these definitions are essential. Indeed, the slogans occurring in our contemporary world are grounded in market-based political strategies. The audience is segmented, specific targets are identified, and communication “effectively [positions] its candidates and policies with its chosen audience.”²³³ In this perspective, the concept of “branding”, as defined by Sizemore, is relevant to our study.²³⁴ Both Jamieson and Domínguez acknowledge the need for the concept of branding, but it lacks a definition. “Branding” is defined by Sizemore as “a marketing concept that has a high rate of success in identifying and introducing a product to the mass market”²³⁵. It is composed of a brand, understood as the “outwards symbol that distinguish a product or service from others in its category” and ultimately as an assortment of expectations established by the seller that, once fulfilled forms a covenant with its buyers.²³⁶ In order to build the character’s ethos and pathos, branding establishes a “branding rhetoric.” The brand is formed by a “brand identity” which rules the perception of the brand in the marketplace, a “brand essence” which makes the core of its identity, “brand stewards” who are in charge of the brand on the marketplace, and a “brand positioning.”²³⁷ Analyzing contemporary slogans implies taking into consideration the new marketing strategies and considering the candidate as a brand.

²²⁹ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*, 387.

²³⁰ S. I Hayakawa, *Language in Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941) ; quoted in Bellak, “The nature of slogans,” 98.

²³¹ Seidman, *Posters, Propaganda, & Persuasion in Election Campaigns around the World and through History*. 125

²³² Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*, 88-89.

²³³ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 31.

²³⁴ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign.”

²³⁵ William Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign” (Lamar University - Beaumont, 2008), 1.

²³⁶ Lynn B Upshaw, *Building Brand Identity: A Strategy for Success in a Hostile Marketplace* (New York: J. Wiley, 1995); quoted in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 3.

²³⁷ William Sizemore, “Chapter 1: Linking Branding, Rhetoric, and Politics,” in “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign” (Lamar University - Beaumont, 2008).

2.5. Building a protocol

After this meta-analysis of the main literature produced on slogans so far, we can clearly identify a history of the investigations of slogans. During the first part of the 20th century, those were descriptions of the context of production and reception, in either sociological, psychological, or psychoanalytical terms. The evolution of linguistics led to the implementation of new formalist and structuralist techniques, and the specific language of slogans began to be theorized in terms of their structure. Alongside with this shift, the concept of slogan was rehabilitated, thanks to the disappearance of the authors' distrust towards the effect of slogans in society. The end of the 20th century and the rise of new marketing strategies blurred the distinction between political and advertising slogans. They were unified under the banner of "branding techniques." In order to analyze slogans in relation with their brands, the reinsertion of an analysis of contextual elements was operated. Nowadays, new cognitive and neurolinguistic theories begin to be applied to these formulae.

Slogans nowadays are implemented by an advertising team for specific marketing strategies. In the context of a presidential election, they are a top to bottom process elaborated by an association of people who aim to create an image for an object. In the 2008 and 2016 elections, slogans were the result of a thought process on the basis of sociological studies of the electorate. Considering that we are now in a post-modern state, as defined earlier, "private sector-style personal branding techniques are going to be part of future national campaigns."²³⁸ Some of these techniques are scientific-based studies of public opinion and of the strategic shifts in the discourse of the candidate, depending on his audience. Gillies draws a link between advertising for a sports team and a political candidate: "signs, slogans and rallies" are examples of the growing similarity between the private-sector branding and the political branding.²³⁹ We thus decide to follow Domínguez's line and to study the characterizing relation which unites the brand and the rest of the slogan instead of exclusively describing the modes of characterization inside a slogan.²⁴⁰ The candidate who is branded shapes the slogan and the slogan shapes the brand. Both dynamics need to be analyzed. We rely on the definition of "brand" and of the elements that compose it—like the "branding essence" or the "branding rhetoric"—theorized by Sizemore.

The slogan ties together characteristics of its context, its addresser and its addressee. We can identify an analogy between commercial and political slogans, not only because both of them

²³⁸ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 118.

²³⁹ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 118.

²⁴⁰ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan."

emerge from the disruptive moment of the “campaign”—as theorized by Lumley and Sherif²⁴¹—but because they are agents of disruption themselves. Their power of pressure has an effect on the outcome of the campaign. Thus, a sociological analysis of the context, following the model proposed by Jamieson, is necessary to fully grasp the contextual and political atmosphere.²⁴² This will provide the information that is necessary to understand the mindset of both the audience and the designers, and to characterize the campaigns as historical events. We have to identify and examine the strategy, goals, and messages that help the addresser build his slogan. We also need to define the addressee’s main concerns and aspirations, in order to identify the appeal of the slogan. In the contexts of the 2008 and 2016 elections, the electorate was expecting to hear the same dominant message of change, because the context of the two campaigns shared similarities, such as the economic and financial crises or the distrust towards politicians of the establishment for instance. These correspondences stirred the messages of Obama and Trump in the same direction--this element is key to understanding the emergence of the specific slogans “Yes We Can” and “Make America Great Again.”

Once this examination of the context of production has been thoroughly conducted, we need to investigate the linguistic strategies that were devised to communicate the candidate’s message. The designers build a characterizing relation between the slogan and the brand. This relation has to be analyzed under different lenses. On the one hand, we consider the slogan’s structural features in accordance with Greven’s methodology. We start with the morphosyntactic level—that is the elaboration of the form of the slogan based on the main themes of the campaign. A syntagmatic analysis of the internal structure of the slogan helps us underline its grammatical specificity. Like Greven, we keep the traditional distinction between morphology—the study of words’ internal structure—and syntax—the study of the relation of words between themselves. A second level investigates the phonic level through graphemes and phonemes. The last level is lexico-semantic and thoroughly studies the vocabulary in a conceptual and stylistic way.²⁴³

On the rhetorical and logical level, we adopt the approaches implemented by Reboul and Grunig.²⁴⁴ Alongside with Reboul, we emphasize the slogans’ rhetoric of the short-cut and the multiple strategies it unfurls to bypass logic. These strategies can be psychoanalytical—like the appeal to specific urges—or rhetorical—like authoritative formulae.²⁴⁵ The specifically logical

²⁴¹ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, “Disruptive Factors”; Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans.”

²⁴² Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*; Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*; Jamieson and Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*.

²⁴³ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*.

²⁴⁴ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*; Reboul, *Le slogan*.

²⁴⁵ Reboul, *Le slogan*.

structure of the slogan is investigated thanks to Grunig's approach to the morphemes and lexemes of slogans. For instance, the analyst's development on the contrary and the contradictory in slogans is essential to analyze the slogans of the 2008 and 2016 campaigns.²⁴⁶ Finally, Domínguez's *La rhétorique du slogan* gives us an interesting introduction of cognitive concepts into our protocol. A thorough cognitive analysis of slogans would necessitate an extended analysis of voters' brain activity, which is not available to us. Nevertheless, Domínguez deduces cognitive developments from his formal analyses. We adopt the same approach and choose to bring cognitive concepts as part of a secondary stage in our analysis.

We analyzed the qualities and the downsides of the different methods used by analysts to approach slogans throughout history. In our contemporary political context, slogans have a growing importance, as private-sector marketing strategies are implemented to politics. In that perspective, we established a methodology that we believe might prove effective, based on the idea that a slogan is characterized by a brand and characterizes the brand. In order to test this protocol, we analyze the relative efficiency of slogans in the 2008 and 2016 campaigns.

²⁴⁶ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

3. The 2008 and 2016 campaigns: sloganeering to market a brand

The 2008 and 2016 elections were characterized by the election of the candidate running on the promise of change, over the candidate running on experience. How can the criteria that we defined above be used to analyze the efficacy of Obama's slogan "Yes We Can" in 2008 and Trump's "Make America Great Again!" in 2016? Similarly, did their opponents suffer from a less effective slogan, whether it is McCain's "Country First" or Hillary Clinton's "Stronger Together"? If yes, what elements can account for this failure? As detailed in our protocol, we first analyze the sociological context of the campaign and the constitution of the candidate's brand. Then, a structural analysis of the slogans underlines the way a specific message has been conveyed in this context.

3.1. 2008-2016: two very similar electoral contexts

3.1.1. The political backgrounds

Investigating the 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns reveals a context of crisis common to the two situations. The candidates faced similar issues and dynamics in what the electorate perceived as an atmosphere of crisis.

In her introduction to *Electing the President*, Jamieson underlines the main characteristics explaining such a turn in political history.²⁴⁷ According to her, the key factors that monopolized the political background in 2008 were the economic deficit and the financial crisis, the influence of the two wars waged by the United States at that time, the search for Bin Laden, and the rise of environmental issues on the political scene. The economic deficit of 2008 had resulted in a feeling of "ongoing class struggle in the context of increasing economic and social inequality."²⁴⁸ In 2016, the main issues the electorate wanted the candidates to address were the economy, immigration, and healthcare.²⁴⁹

3.1.2. An analogy between issues and dynamics

The brand of the candidates who ran for president share common characteristics. First, both elections came after two terms of a very influential president. In a 2006 memo written to Senator Obama, the Democrat David Axelrod argued that "the most influential politician in 2008 won't be on the ballot. His name is George W. Bush".²⁵⁰ According to Axelrod, this led to the need

²⁴⁷ Jamieson, *Electing the President*, 2008.

²⁴⁸ Ben Casselman, "Stop Saying Trump's Win Had Nothing To Do With Economics," *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), January 9, 2017; referred to in Michèle Lamont, Bo Yun Park, and Elena Ayala-Hurtado, "Trump's Electoral Speeches and His Appeal to the American White Working Class," *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, no. S1 (November 1, 2017).

²⁴⁹ Gallup, "Presidential Election 2016: Key Indicators," Gallup.com, accessed April 27, 2018.

²⁵⁰ Jamieson, *Electing the President*, 2008, 68.

for “profound change,” for “a remedy”.²⁵¹ In 2016, the campaign also took place after two terms of a very reformatory politician, President Obama. In July 2016, the satisfaction with the current state of affairs was only 17%.²⁵² Again, the need for a change came as a consequence of the previous presidency. Furthermore, the candidates used some of the specific techniques of political branding used by Obama during his 2008 campaign. They had to continue “the Obama model, of building a personality-driven mass movement where party brand is secondary.”²⁵³ The electorate was not receptive to the values that characterized the Democratic and the Republican Parties, but to the “brand ‘promise’” of the candidate.²⁵⁴

Second of all, the losing candidates suffered from unfavorable dynamics. In 2008, John McCain faced difficulties on many different levels. In terms of branding, he made a very polemical decision when he chose his running mate. As Axelrod underlines, choosing Palin put a shadow on “Country First”: “You had blown up your message. You had spent the summer talking about [...] putting country first. Then you chose someone who wasn’t experienced, made her a celebrity, and appeared to put politics ahead of the country in choosing and unexperienced candidate.”²⁵⁵ This element can be understood as one of the reasons for the failure of the relation between the slogan and the brand it characterized. McCain was also handicapped by the financial issues surrounding the management of his campaign which was overwhelmingly funded by the Republican Party. This led to an equivocal advertising campaign: 21% of the advertising campaign was dedicated to the Republican National Committee ads, 45% to McCain ads, and 32% to hybrid ads with a double messaging.²⁵⁶ As a consequence, McCain struggled to brand his specific personality and suffered from his constant affiliation to his party. Personality branding and partisan branding clashed on the advertising scene. “It’s very difficult to drive two messages, particularly when one of those is a generic one that has to be a Republican message,” Steve Schmidt would conclude later.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, as Jamieson highlights, the Republican candidate faced the challenge of running for president at 72 years old.

Finally, many contextual elements turned out to unfold to McCain’s disadvantage. The war in Iraq cast a shadow on the Republican Party, especially after the Blackwater security controversy in September 2007, and so did the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy.²⁵⁸ Similarly, in

²⁵¹ Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 68.

²⁵² Gallup, “Presidential Election 2016.”

²⁵³ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, Chapter 1, 5

²⁵⁴ “Chapter 1: The 2016 US Presidential Election,” in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*.

²⁵⁵ Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 74.

²⁵⁶ Rich Beason in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, “Chapter 7: Political Party Panel.”

²⁵⁷ Steve Schmidt in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 57.

²⁵⁸ Bill McInturff in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, “Chapter 4: the Roll of Polling.”

2016, Clinton's personalized brand struggled to convince voters. The candidate had to create a new image after her career. As Doom underlines, she was a very experienced lady in an election seeking new faces, and who faced a "challenge in creating a new, more favorable image that could still include her past achievements."²⁵⁹ Furthermore, she suffered from an investigation that was conducted after some private emails were revealed to the public. According to Jennifer Palmieri, the scandal was not properly managed by the campaign staff. The candidate finally suffered from sexist criticism, as she aimed at becoming the first woman president of the United States.²⁶⁰

On the other hand, Obama and Trump benefited from a very favorable situation. The electorate was ready for change, because of their weariness and mistrust for the establishment. In 2008, the Bush Administration was thought to be mainly responsible for the political and economic difficulties of the United States—thus, Obama embodied the change they needed and the addition of Joe Biden to his presidential ticket comforted people. As Axelrod highlights, "Barack Obama was more than enough change for people. [...] They wanted to know that there would be people around him to help him implement that change."²⁶¹ In 2016, this need for a change remained, but its reasons were different. The political atmosphere had evolved: experience, qualification, and political correctness were not the dominant trend anymore. On the contrary, three elements became dominant. First, conventional marketing frames and theories had been implemented in politics. They can be strategies like the specific positioning of the candidate to its audience, thanks to a segmentation of the market. They also consist in the mastery of social media by the candidate, such as the numerous deals Palin signed with popular companies like Pepsi and Ford or her mastery of Facebook and Twitter.²⁶² It led to a new relationship between party and voters. The empathy and familiarity with the candidate was reinforced, and the feeling of acquaintance and resemblance has become a key element in the relationship between the candidate and the voters.²⁶³ Finally, partisan values were undermined in creation of political opinions. The "brand 'promise' of the candidate," constituted of both his program and his ethos, became essential.²⁶⁴ Trump's strategy astutely capitalized to this new political climate. Trump "[appealed] directly to primary electors, without

²⁵⁹ Jilanne K. Doom, "Decoding the Candidates: A Semiotic Analysis and Literacy Guide to Graphic Design Principles in Political Campaign Branding" (Georgetown University, 2016), 45.

²⁶⁰ "Chapter 5: Keep your head (and your heart) during a storm," in Jennifer Palmieri, *Dear Madam President: An Open Letter to the Women Who Will Run the World*, Grand Central Publishing (New York, 2018).

²⁶¹ David Axelrod in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 73.

²⁶² Laurie Ouellette, "Branding the Right: The Affective Economy of Sarah Palin," *Cinema Journal* 51, n° 4 (2012): 186.

²⁶³ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 190-191.

²⁶⁴ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*. "Chapter 1: The 2016 US Presidential Election"

the party apparatus” and operated a “shift towards personalized branding.”²⁶⁵ This refusal to follow the “established decorum of campaigning” created a feeling of freshness.²⁶⁶ In reality, this technique was part of a rhetoric “which rested upon careful data-driven, market- and brand-focused strategy years in the making.”²⁶⁷

To this first change in attitude was added the deviation that Trump operated from traditional Republican discourse. Trump advocated the protection of the American industry from international markets, hence his suspicion towards China, and a lesser involvement of the United States in international affairs. This line of policies is at odds with the Republican ideas.²⁶⁸ This strategy broke with the traditional similitude between the discourse of the candidate and the one of the party he is affiliated with. The line of values of the Republican party has been constant since Ronald Reagan. The absence of change in the policy is visible in the consensus on the principle of lowering taxes, to which every Republican candidate in 2016 agrees.²⁶⁹ Trump, on the other hand, stood opposed to some of these ideas or exacerbated them, on immigration for example.²⁷⁰ Therefore, Obama and Trump have in common both this unconventional approach to politics and the fact that they had more financial resources than their opponents. Finally, in the context of the post-broadcast era, both Trump and Obama had the edge in the social media.²⁷¹ The post-broadcast era refers to the period which followed the network-era, where television was the main medium. This era is characterized by the development and the increasing omnipresence of numerous technologies and programs. “Members of the public [...] tailor their political information intake” thanks to “the diversity of information sources.”²⁷² Obama’s campaign was shaped by his presence on the internet, especially through his campaign website barackobama.com and Facebook.²⁷³ Trump’s use of Twitter also made him very popular “among frequent social media users.”²⁷⁴

Similarly, the two leading candidates had to face many different attacks. The Republican Party condemned Obama on the basis of main weaknesses which were later highlighted by the Republican Chris Mottola. McCain attacked his opponent on his celebrity and lack of

²⁶⁵ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 2.

²⁶⁶ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 2.

²⁶⁷ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 3.

²⁶⁸ Michael E. Meagher, “The U.S. Presidential Campaign, 2016: A Historic Realignment?,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies; Pasadena* 28, no. 1/2 (2016): 19–40.

²⁶⁹ “Chapter 4,” Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*.

²⁷⁰ Sébastien Mort, “Introduction : Le Parti républicain en 2016 : l'impossible renouveau ?”, *Politique américaine*, n° 29 (octobre 2017): 9-21.

²⁷¹ Soumitra Dutta and Matthew Fraser, “Barack Obama and the Facebook Election,” *US News & World Report*, November 19, 2008; Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*.

²⁷² Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 14.

²⁷³ Kenski, Hardy, et Jamieson, *The Obama victory*.

²⁷⁴ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 19.

experience. He also mentioned the economic disaster that could result from a tax raise, Obama's defense of sex education, and his refusal to intervene in Iran, alongside with criticism against Biden.²⁷⁵ Trump suffered from similar offensives from the Democratic campaign. In the same way as Obama, his lack of experience, his celebrity, his moral, geopolitical and economic choices were heavily criticized. We need nevertheless to add that the very particular character that Trump branded remained unscathed from these attacks; it even benefitted from them. Thus, on the ground of this similarity, we can legitimately compare the advertising strategies that were implemented by both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, because they faced similar situations and had to carry out defensive procedures against similar offensive arguments from their opponents.

3.1.3. The electorate's concerns

The "mass market" in which the candidates had to position their brands show numerous similarities.²⁷⁶ A continuity is also visible in the third party that is the electorate, especially in terms of their concerns. Lamont highlighted the main characteristics of the 2016 electorate. The first one is the "ongoing class struggle in the context of increasing economic and social inequality."²⁷⁷ In 2016, the white working class felt "ignored by progressive elites." We can draw on analogy with the 2008 concern over high gas prices, which was one of the main issues at the time of the campaign.²⁷⁸ Second, "racism and race resentment"²⁷⁹ were very present in the post-Obama era. This led to a public desire for a departure from the former president. In 2008, the situation was similar because of the context of the war in Iraq, which became the main argument in favor of a break from Bush's mandate. The third element is xenophobia: the 2016 campaign was influenced by "a backlash against international global competition, with undocumented Mexican immigrants as scapegoats."²⁸⁰ The "fear of Muslims in an international context where terrorism has become more prominent"²⁸¹ and "a reassertion of traditional gender

²⁷⁵ Chris Mottola in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, "Chapter 5: Advertizing."

²⁷⁶ Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 1.

²⁷⁷ Casselman, "Stop Saying Trump's Win Had Nothing To Do With Economics"; referred to in Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, "Trump's Electoral Speeches and His Appeal to the American White Working Class."

²⁷⁸ Nicolle Wallace in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*. "Chapter 1: The Vice-Presidential Campaign."

²⁷⁹ Brian F. Schaffner, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tatishe Nteta, "Explaining White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism" (Conference on The U.S. Elections of 2016: Domestic and International Aspects, IDC Herzliya Campus, Israel, 2017), 29; Sean McElwee, "How Racism Helped Trump & Halts Progressive Policy," Demos, accessed March 19, 2018.

²⁸⁰ Michele Kearney, "The Roots of Trump's Trade Rage," *Michele Kearney's Economics and Foreign Policy Blog* (blog), January 16, 2017; John M. Abowd and Richard B. Freeman, eds., *Immigration, Trade, and the Labor Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), referred to in Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, "Trump's Electoral Speeches."

²⁸¹ Nathan Chapman Lean, John L Esposito, and Jack G Shaheen, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Hatred of Muslims*, 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2017); Douglas Pratt and Rachel Woodlock, eds., *Fear of Muslims?: International Perspectives on Islamophobia*, Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Regulating Religion

roles”²⁸² were the two last elements which defined the public opinion in 2016. The suspicion towards “traditional media and political elites” was a key factor in 2008.²⁸³ It was also predominant in 2016.²⁸⁴ In the same manner, “heavy political polarization between and within major political parties” shaped the political campaign.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the role played by social media was unprecedented in the 2016 campaign. Trump “adopted a broader populist messaging and mobilizing strategy” than other Republicans.²⁸⁶ For instance, with 7,908,579 followers on Twitter and 31,830 tweets in 2016, Trump’s presence on the platform exceeded Obama’s, who only had 112,000 followers in 2008.²⁸⁷ Trump’s use of Twitter privileged the diffusion of simple messages, with a “repetitious” vocabulary.²⁸⁸

Such continuity between the historical and political contexts in which the slogans had to be implemented warrants our comparative study of the 2008 and 2016 slogans. How did slogans differ, in these similar “mass markets”? This question requires us to examine the similarities and differences in the branding strategies of the candidates in order to understand the design and the effect the slogans had on the campaigns.

3.2. Branding a candidate, a party and a vision of the country

3.2.1. Branding tools

Before analyzing the branding strategies, we need to define the branding tools. Indeed, the resources of the campaign are the first constraints to which the branding process is subjected. In 2008, polling played an even more crucial role for both Obama and McCain than it did in the previous electoral campaigns. Thanks to the internet, strategies such as drilling allowed the staff to more sharply understand what the voters expected.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Obama had more

in *Diverse Societies* (Springer International Publishing, 2016); referred to in Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, “Trump’s Electoral Speeches.”

²⁸² Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta, “Explaining White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism.” referred to in Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, “Trump’s Electoral Speeches.”

²⁸³ Julia R. Azari, “How the News Media Helped to Nominate Trump,” *Political Communication* 33, no. 4 (September 8, 2016): 677–80; Gallup. “Confidence in Institutions.” Gallup.com, 2016; referred to in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 67.

²⁸⁴ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 5.

²⁸⁵ Shanto Iyengar, “E Pluribus Pluribus, or Divided We Stand,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80, no. S1 (January 1, 2016): 219–24; Gary C. Jacobson, “Polarization, Gridlock, and Presidential Campaign Politics in 2016,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667, no. 1 (September 1, 2016): 226–46; referred to in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 67.

²⁸⁶ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 5.

²⁸⁷ Matthew Fraser & Soumitra Dutta, “Obama’s Win Means Future Elections Must Be Fought Online,” *The Guardian*, 11 juillet 2008, sect. Technology; Jun Hyun Ryoo et Neil Bendle, “Understanding the Social Media Strategies of US Primary Candidates,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 16 (July 6, 2017), 4.

²⁸⁸ Brian L. Ott, “The age of Twitter: Donald J. Trump and the politics of debasement,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, December 2016, décembre 2016, Department of Communication Studies, College of Media & Communication, Texas Tech University édition, 64.

²⁸⁹ Joel Benenson in Jamieson, “Chapter 4: The Roll of Polling,” in *Electing the President, 2008*,

means of communication than his opponent. The candidate was not financially restrained by his party as McCain was. Furthermore, Obama's advertising campaign created the "neighbor-to-neighbor technic" which consisted in spreading the brand of the candidate at the local level: Obama's supporters were given printable material which they could hand out around them.²⁹⁰ Obama's team gave their supporters the opportunity to solicit the voters of their local community. The candidate's presence on various platforms, such as Twitter or his website *barackobama.org*, diversified the resources available for the supporters, and thus facilitated the access to the material branded by the campaign. "Yes We Can" gave the whole campaign its coherence, uniting the electorate behind a common phrase. In 2016, social media became the most effective tool, especially the social network *Twitter*. In a study of campaign slogans, this element is extremely important because the number of letters in a tweet are limited. "Make America Great Again!" and especially the hashtag "#MAGA" became tokens of recognition for Trump's supporters on social media. Thus, catchphrases in general became essential in both 2008 and 2016, either for leaflets or for tweets. Both McCain and Clinton did not make any specific use of their slogans and the formulae were not as present on the public sphere as their opponents'.

3.2.2. The branding rhetoric

The "branding rhetoric" is the tool that is used by the candidate to build the character's ethos and pathos.²⁹¹ The ethos is the personal character of the candidate, while the pathos is the set of elements meant to appeal to the audience's emotions. In the 2008 and 2016 campaigns, the candidates adopted "personalized branding" in order to build a "personality-driven mass movement where party brand is secondary."²⁹² This choice is the result of a shift in the political sphere as in contemporary politics, citizens concentrate on the immediacy and the personality of a character. This is the result of a new trend in the modern political field: sceptic citizens refuse the world of antagonism they can perceive in the political debate. This antagonism is of two kinds. First, it represents the divergence of opinion between the main politicians, which is criticized by voters who believe the debate is futile and nonsensical. The antagonism is also created by the political discourse: it is the internal antagonistic frontier separating the 'people' from power.²⁹³ This antagonism results in the rejection, by voters, of their feeling of separation from the establishment. In this context, political campaigns advertise individualities rather than

²⁹⁰ Karen Finney in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, "Chapter 7: Political Party Panel."

²⁹¹ Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign."

²⁹² Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 2, 5.

²⁹³ Savage, "Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse," 181.

ideas.²⁹⁴ Thus, two elements identify the characterizing relation between the slogan and its brand. They are their “brand identity”—“a particular set of brand elements”²⁹⁵—and their “brand essences—”the core” of their identities.

In 2008, Obama’s advertising campaign was remarkable by its “consistency.” The “core message” of Obama’s campaign was “change”, and his consistency throughout the entire campaign “gave people [...] a sense that this guy had a core.”²⁹⁶ Obama formulated three “imperatives”: he had to “own change,” “focus [...] on the economy” and reassure the people.²⁹⁷ In terms of his ethos, Obama respected three “essential pillars” to build his brand essence. These pillars were “unity”, “change” and “honesty,” all of these conveyed with an optimistic tone.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, the branding identity that was built by McCain suffered from the lack of unity of its brand essence, which was mainly the result of the financial necessity to integrate RNC advertising within the candidate’s campaign. Nevertheless, McCain’s advertising strategy focused on giving “a credible message on the change and reform issue,” creating a “distance [...] from the administration,” appealing “to the middle of the electorate” and exciting “the base of the party.”²⁹⁹

In 2016, Trump adopted an identity based on “change”³⁰⁰ and “trustworth[iness]” that was based on a “research-driven” strategy.³⁰¹ It allowed him to be very thoroughly informed about his electorate’s concerns and to adjust his speech accordingly. Trump operated a “brand refresh” which affiliated him with the traditional Republican values like Reagan’s conservatism, Nixon’s protectionism, and Wallace’s populism³⁰², which gave the candidate a solid base, unified by nationalism and the restoration of an idealized past. In turn, the candidate refreshed his base thanks to his charismatic personality and to “the increasing use of social media.”³⁰³ Clinton’s campaign was thus competing against an extremely powerful branding character. Moreover, she had to bear the burden of her experience, which ultimately led to the “challenge [of] creating a new, more favorable image that could still include her past achievements.”³⁰⁴

²⁹⁴ John R Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans’ Beliefs about How Government Should Work* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); referred to in Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

²⁹⁵ Upshaw, *Building Brand Identity*, 24-25, qt. in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign”, 11, 15.

²⁹⁶ David Plouffe in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 37.

²⁹⁷ Jim Margolis in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 118.

²⁹⁸ Jim Margolis in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 123.

²⁹⁹ Steve Schmidt in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 29.

³⁰⁰ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates,” 53.

³⁰¹ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 30, 6.

³⁰² Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*. “Chapter 4: Trump and the Republican Brand Refresh.”

³⁰³ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 78.

³⁰⁴ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates,” 45.

She chose to focus on “unity.”³⁰⁵ This prove to be ineffective because the economy was the voters’ main concerned on Election Day. Furthermore, her message was inconsistent. According to Gillies, the main difference between the two candidates was the message: Trump’s branding focused on “a mass movement idea,” whereas Clinton’s adopted “a strategy of inclusiveness [...] using slogans such as Stronger Together.”³⁰⁶ Thus, the dynamic of the message was different. We can characterize Trump’s rhetoric by a dynamic of expansion, constantly adjusting and adapting his message to a broader electorate. Trump broadens his discourse by adding new notions and initiatives to his program. On the other hand, Clinton’s was in a dynamic of inclusion of the electorate to a firm message.

We can underline the continuity between the campaigns of Trump and Obama. They both adopted a “personality-driven movement where party brand [was] secondary.”³⁰⁷ Their approach to politics was very “unconventional” and did not “fit the American presidential narrative.”³⁰⁸ The personality of the candidate played a more important role than partisan values in the campaign, and the idea of change from the established political life of the country appealed to voters. Moreover, Jamieson’s work highlights the consistency of the notion of “change” in the past century, as shown by Carter’s slogan “Leadership for a change” or Clinton’s 1992 “For people, for a change”. The notion of “change” is decisive in a presidential campaign.³⁰⁹ The “brand essence” is constituted of the main notions meant to advertise the personality of the candidate. The slogan encapsulate this “brand essence” through the linguistic strategies that were designed to carry this message.

3.3. ... Advertised by a slogan with rhetoric characteristics...

Our formal analysis of slogans is structured around the methodology designed by Greven for his analysis of commercial slogans.³¹⁰ As part of an analysis of political slogans, the thematic level of investigation constitutes the definition of the “brand essence” and the “brand identity” of the candidate. We move on to the second stage—the analysis of the morphosyntactic level in terms of phrase—that is the internal structure of words—and syntax—the external relation of words between them. Then, Greven also examines the graphic level, which is irrelevant in the context of our investigation because as slogans are mainly conveyed orally. The third level of our analysis is the phonic level: it studies the sound system of slogans

³⁰⁵ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 90.

³⁰⁶ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 116.

³⁰⁷ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 4.

³⁰⁸ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 5.

³⁰⁹ Jamieson, *Packaging The Presidency*, 38, 490.

³¹⁰ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 28.

in terms of graphemes and phonemes. Finally, a lexico-semantic analysis of the formulae describes the vocabulary that is chosen by the advertising team. This investigation is designed to provide us with a thorough understanding of how the signifiers carry the signified.

3.3.1. A meaningful morphosyntax

This morphosyntactic analysis follows Greven's methodology in *La langue des slogans publicitaires en anglais contemporain*. We conduct an extended syntagmatic analysis which divides our corpus between two categories. "Make America Great Again!" and "Yes We Can" are ambiguous because of a verb, whereas the ambiguity of "Stronger Together" and "Country First" is encapsulated in an adverb.

3.3.1.1. "Make America Great Again": a plurality of interpretations

The main characteristic of "Make America Great Again!" is the plurality of interpretation that we can infer from its syntax as the ambiguity of the mood of the verb "make" allows a syntactic pluri-interpretation. There are three ways of analyzing this phrase, depending on the type of sentence of the slogan. It can be a minor sentence—a proposition that functions as a full sentence but lacks grammatical completeness—or a major sentence—a grammatical proposition. First, it can be a reduced statement at the infinitive mood following the scheme "Morpheme + Verb + Adverb". In that configuration, the slogan is a minor sentence "(Subject) + Verb + Object + Adverb" at the infinitive mood. The verbal group is completed by its object, the nominal phrase "America", and by the adverbial phrase "again." It has a simple and intuitive syntax, which affords opportunities for the audience to complete the sentence and make it a major complete sentence such as "[Let's] Make America Great Again!". This configuration calls for an enunciative, affirmative and active sentence, as the minor proposition is completed by a verb at the imperative or the indicative mood.

Second, "Make America Great Again!" can be described as a major statement at the imperative mood. It follows the scheme "Nominal phrase 1 + Morpheme + Copula + Nominal phrase 2 + Adjective 2 (+ Adverb)," theorized by Greven.³¹¹ It is made of a verbal group "make," modified by two morphemes: one is the imperative mood, the other one is the second person of the singular or plural. The first nominal phrase is elided because of the imperative mood. This imperative sentence is enunciative and active. A third interpretation is possible. The slogan can be a reduced statement at the indicative mood corresponding to the same scheme as the second interpretation. There are two differences: the subject is elided, and the morpheme that modifies the verbal group "make" is the present of the indicative. This third possible

³¹¹ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 62.

understanding of the sentence calls for a reconstruction of the minor proposition into a major one—that is to say for the addition of the missing subject. The result would be “[We] Make America Great Again!” We can also display this configuration in terms of proposition: the audience is left with a proposition that can be understood as (1) an unfinished infinitive proposition, (2) a finished, independent and imperative proposition, or (3) an unfinished indicative proposition. The ambiguity of the verb is a conscious branding choice: indeed, we need to keep in mind that this formula stems from Reagan’s slogan for the 1980 elections—“Let’s Make America Great Again.” Suppressing the imperative “Let’s” gives the audience three choices of interpretation instead of a single injunction at the imperative.

Even though the verbal group is problematic, the sentence is coherent. It is composed of the nominal phrase “America” in medial position with the function of direct object. It is characterized and post-modified by the adjectival phrase “great” in medial position with the function of complement of the object, according to the structure “head + adjectival phrase”. The adverbial phrase of time “again” is in final position, and composed of its head, the lexical adverb “again”. In contrast with the present tense in the verbal group “make,” this adverbial phrase creates a reference to a bygone past. The verbal group is in initial position, post-modified by the adverbial phrase “again.” In the same way that its mood was unclear, its tense is too. It could thus be interpreted in three ways. A first interpretation can define “make” as an unfinished infinitive verbal group, without the preposition “to” which usually precedes an infinitive form. This nominal form of the verb expresses the potentiality of the process.³¹² Second, in the case where it is a simple verbal group at the imperative, its head is “make” at the present tense. The imperative has a minor temporal function, as “it is not a localization of the process in time, but the speaker standing with his speech act.”³¹³ Third, this simple verbal group can be composed of the head “make” at the present of the indicative. In the imperative and in the indicative, the question of whether it is an instantaneous present or a permanent present is ambiguous. The limitation of the extension of this present in the past is blurry. Nevertheless, the presence of the past, conveyed by the adverbial phrase “again”, excludes the possibility of an interpretation of this tense as a present of general truth. The exclamation mark which figures in the official slogan is rarely present on t-shirts, caps and signs. Nevertheless, it adds a cheerfulness to the formula. In terms of morphosyntax, “Make America Great Again!” stands out by the ambiguity of its process. Depending on the way we choose to understand it, the slogan can express the incitation by injunction in the imperative mood or the conviction by declaration, in the

³¹² Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 278.

³¹³ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité* ; referred to by Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan. ”

indicative and infinitive moods.³¹⁴ These two interpretations of action ascribe a different role to the subject. In the imperative mood, he or she is passive and the injunction does not leave him or her a choice; in the indicative and the infinitive, he or she is neutral, as the slogan evokes the essence of the movement encapsulated in the verb “Make” without any morpheme to properly define the mood and the tense of the verb.

3.3.1.2. “Yes We Can”: a straightforward and adaptable syntax

Obama’s ‘Yes We Can’ is less ambiguous. It can be interpreted in two ways depending on the verbal group—either a major statement or a reduced one. This statement is constituted of an independent vocative “Yes”. The verbal group “can”—in final position in the slogan—is modified by two grammatical morphemes. It is followed by a pronominal phrase “We” at the second person of the plural, employed as the subject of the verb “can”. This pronominal phrase is only made of its head “We”. “Can” can be analyzed in two ways. It can be understood as part of a minor anaphoric statement. “Can” is a modal expressing the capacity or the ability to do something that has already been mentioned. Its semantical value relies on a fully semantical verb, which should textually or contextually precede it, but which is here absent. Indeed, the meaning of “can” is defined by its context. We can also analyze it as part of a reduced statement on the model [Nominal phrase + modal verb + *missing verb*]. In that configuration, “can” is part of a complex structure. The head of the verbal group is missing, and post-modified by the modal “can”. The presence of this modal calls for another verb at the infinitive mood, on the model of “Yes We Can [do something].” It thus is a simple major sentence, starting with a vocative and composed of a simple proposition made of a subject and a verb. This sentence is enunciative, affirmative, and active. Therefore, the question of whether “We Can” is a finished and independent proposition is debatable and the value of the present tense is also questionable. In the absence of qualification, there is an ambiguity between an instantaneous present and a permanent one. The slogan expresses conviction via the assertion that is conveyed by the use of the vocative “Yes” and the declarative value of the proposition “We Can.” We also need to mention that the slogan is composed of three monosyllabic words, with an Anglo-Saxon origin.

Before moving on to an analysis of McCain and Clinton’s slogans, we can already underline the flexibility and adaptability of Obama and Trump’s slogans. Their ambiguity allows them to make sense by themselves or to be very easily inserted in any other context. Both can be the beginning of another sentence and “Make America Great Again!” can even be its beginning or its end.

³¹⁴ Searle, *Expression and Meaning*. Referred to by Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 149.

3.3.1.3. *“Country First”: an elliptic minor proposition*

“Country First” and “Stronger Together”, on the other hand, are much less ambivalent because their ambiguity is encapsulated in the adverb, and not on the verb. “Country First” is a reduced statement, corresponding to the scheme [Nominal Phrase [(+Verb) (+Adverb)]]. It is a simple minor sentence. In the major sentence from which it derives, it can either be employed as the subject or as the object. The nominal phrase “Country” is placed in initial position in the slogan. The absence of an article before the common noun “Country” can either be interpreted as a zero-marking, expressing the generalization of the concept, or as an ellipsis. If “country” is analysed as characterized by the zero-marking, the slogan points at the general concept of the country. It refers to the general concept of “country.” In the case of an ellipsis, the most intuitive options are a pronoun on the model “[Our] country first” or a definitive article, on the model “[The] country first”. In any case, “Country” is completed by the phrase “first”, which can be both an adjectival phrase and an adverbial syntagm.

The minor sentence can derive from three major sentences. The two first options consider “first” as an adjective. On the first hand, the major sentence from which the slogan derives can be on the model [Country [is/will be] first.] In that configuration, the nominal phrase “Country” is a common noun, made of the head “Country” only. “Country” is in initial position and is employed as the subject. It is post-modified by the adverbial phrase constituted of the head “first” in final position. “First” is a complement of the subject. There is an ellipsis of both the relation of identity—“is”—and of the grammatical morpheme of the tense of the verb—present or future. A second analysis is possible whereby the minor sentence can also derive from a major one on the model of [First Country comes before Second Country.] Nevertheless, the order of the terms in the slogans and the counterintuitive effect of an inversion between the noun and the adjective prompt us to reject this interpretation.

In the case where “first” is understood as an adverbial syntagm, the major sentence from which it derives is on the model [[Make/Put] Country First]. This hypothesis is reinforced by the insertion of the slogan in speeches and interviews. Axelrod gives an example of this very frequent phenomenon and mentions “putting country first.”³¹⁵ The nominal phrase is the proper noun “Country”, employed as the direct object complement to a verb that is absent from the slogan. This nominal phrase is directly followed by the adverbial phrase “first.” This adverbial phrase is in final position and is composed of the head “first”. This lexical adverb can express either a spatial or a temporal position: it expresses the general idea of “before anything else”.

³¹⁵ Jamieson, *Electing the President*, 2008, 74.

Nevertheless, whether we choose to consider “Country” as the subject or as the object of a major sentence, the syntactic structure is very easily completed. The slogan is a verbless proposition. Thus, its incomplete nature invites the audience to a reconstitution of a major sentence. This slogan is very short. It is composed of two simple words of Saxon origin. It can express two notions: if we reconstitute the major sentence [Country [is] First], it encapsulates an attempt at convicting the audience by declaring a simple truth at the affirmative form. On the other hand, if we reconstitute the major sentence [[Make] Country First], the slogan becomes an incentive.

3.3.1.4. *“Stronger Together”: a straightforward minor proposition*

Finally, Clinton’s slogan—“Stronger Together”—is the least ambiguous. This formula is a reduced statement, composed of two adverbial syntagma, on the scheme [Adverb (+Adverb)]. What characterizes the slogan is the ellipsis, as the first adverbial phrase of this simple minor sentence is “Stronger.” The head of this phrase is a lexical adverb, built on the root of the adjective “strong” with the comparative suffix “-er”. Three elements are missing in this comparative construction. The first one is the subject; what is stronger? The second one is the link and the correlative; what is stronger than what? The third element is the reference; on what scale is what stronger than what? The second adverbial phrase “Together” consists of its head “together” only. This verbless proposition is exclusively composed of adverbial syntagma. This encourages the audience to reconstitute the major sentence from which it derives. This major sentence is on the model [Subject + Verb + (Stronger Together)], namely [We are [Stronger Together]]. This major sentence is syntactically intuitive and corresponds to common expectations. Thus, the adverbial phrase “Stronger” expresses the means and is the attribute of an elliptic subject. The initial position of this lexical adverb in the slogan is explained by the ellipsis of both the subject and the verb. “Stronger” is post-modified by “Together”, which, on the other hand, is employed as a phrase of manner. It expresses the means by which an elliptic subject will become strong. This sentence is enunciative, affirmative and active, is made of very simple words of Saxon origins, and expresses the idea of conviction, via the proclamation and the assertion.

This morphosyntactic analysis of these four slogans allow us to identify some of the mechanisms. The formulae are different in three ways. First, we can identify two main categories—slogans which encapsulate a movement and slogans which suggest a movement. Because “Make America Great Again!” and “Yes We Can” include a verb, the expression of movement makes them dynamic; their ambiguity stems from the interpretation of this verb. In the case of “Make America Great Again!”, the question lies in the mood of “Make.” For “Yes We Can,” the nature of “can” is debatable. On the other hand, “Stronger Together” and

“Country First” are verbless, and thus involve a movement which is not characterized. Their ambiguity stems from the incomplete adverbial phrase. Ambiguities are the result of different strategies, and this has a consequence on the interpretation of slogans. Obama’s and Trump’s slogans consists in directing a movement which is already present within the verb--the task of the audience is to transform “make” and “can” into an urge, an invitation, or a recommendation, depending on the context. The interpretation of “Country First” and “Stronger Together” requires for the public to actively create, or recreate, the dynamic. The absence of a verb leaves the addressee with the task of actively creating the movement.

Second, there is a play on major and minor sentences. Trump’s and Obama’s slogans can be interpreted as both because they stand by themselves, but they can also become the base for a longer sentence. On the other hand, the McCain’s and Clinton’s slogans of and are necessarily incomplete propositions, and they thus inevitably call for the reconstruction of a major sentence. Finally, the formulae display different morphosyntactic methods. The ellipses of “Country First” and “Stronger Together” are methods of rhetorical condensation—the abbreviation of a formula to its most reduced form. It usually involves the removal of minor morphemes such as subjects, articles or prepositions. On the other hand, the imperative or enunciative of “Make America Great Again!” and “Yes We Can”, and the use of pronouns are methods of rhetorical implication of the audience. Nevertheless, we can also underline common features. First, all of these slogans are devoid of the mention of the brand—that is the candidate.³¹⁶ Second, however we choose to interpret the slogans, the formula are characterizing and defining their brands, rather than narrating a story or bringing new arguments. Indeed, verbless propositions such as Clinton and McCain’s slogans express a present of general truth; the infinitive of Trump’s slogan sets the action in a virtual place and its imperative is atemporal.³¹⁷ The choice of a present tense—whether it is limited by the expression of the past with “again” in Trump’s slogan or unlimited with “can” in Obama’s—characterizes the candidate. Thus, we can say that all of them express an activity of characterization of the ethos, and neither a reconstruction of an experience which plays on the pathos, nor a display of arguments which belongs to the logos.

3.3.2. The mastery of phonic schemes

After an examination of the morphosyntactic structures of the slogans, we move on to understanding their phonic organization. Alongside with Grunig, we can underline the cognitive effect of phonology. The analyst examines the “structuration of sound,” based upon the idea

³¹⁶ Ferraz Martínez, *El lenguaje de la publicidad*; quoted in Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 274.

³¹⁷ Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 279.

that the reader hears an “internal voice” when he is reading.³¹⁸ The sound patterns produce a cognitive effect, as it creates a relation of identity between the elements of the formula. A clear differentiation between slogans stands out of this investigation.

3.3.2.1. “*Make America Great Again!*”: a phonic masterpiece

“Make America Great Again!” displays numerous phonic strategies. If we choose to understand it as an incomplete infinitive or indicative proposition, the formula is a prosiopesis.³¹⁹ This figure of speech consists in the pronunciation of a word or phrase without vocalizing its initial sound. Here, this absent sound could be the subject “we” or the imperative verb “let’s.” Because this phenomenon is very common in everyday speech, the audience is accustomed to the mental process of recreating the first part of the proposition. Thus, the absence of a subject or preposition before the verbal phrase “make” is less problematic. The intonative structure is not definite. The absence of punctuation and the indetermination regarding the mode of the verb allow the public to hear the slogan in many different ways.

At the indicative and infinitive, the tone of voice is descending. At the imperative tone, nevertheless, the urge that is encapsulated in the idea of command leads to an ascending intonation. The intonative malleability allows an emotional interpretation of the slogan. In terms of sonorities, “Make America Great Again!” displays a complex consonantal framework: alliterations are intertwined. The phonetic transcription of the slogan is:

[meɪ/kə'/mɛ/rə/kə/greɪ/tə'/gɛn]

We can identify the voiced bilabial nasal [m] and the voiceless velar plosive [k] in “Make” and “America”. The pattern also includes the alveolar approximant [r] of “America” and “great” and the voiced velar stop [g] which can be found in “great” and “again”. This complex framework creates continuity between the consonants. There is a sensation of coherence between the words which contain the same consonantal patterns. This effect is reinforced by the presence of a complex assonantal thread. Indeed, vocalic harmony is created by the regular swinging between three phonemes—the complex vowel [eɪ] in “Make” and “great,” and the phonemes [ə] and [ɛ] in “America” and “again”. This pattern is reinforced by the position of these phonemes on the beats, which creates balance and thus, harmony. Such sound pattern reveals two strategies. The first one is the vocalic harmony which brings unity to the formula and makes it very easy to memorize. The second one is the phonetic symbolism of the slogan, which is the creation of links and associations between words through the medium of phonetic

³¹⁸ "Structuration du son," "voix intérieure"; trans. From Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 176.

³¹⁹ Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969); referred to in Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 186.

similarities. It is defined by Greven as the “existence of a process relying on the use, amongst certain syllables, of the same consonantal pattern”. This process is visible for example in the alliteration of the phonemes [m], [r] and [k] which refers to the word “America”.³²⁰ It subtly reinforces the connection between the brand and patriotism.

In terms of syllabic architecture, two elements characterize “Make America Great Again!”. First of all, the syllabic sequences are very regular and follow the scheme (CV|CV|CV|CV|CV|CCV|CV|CVC)—where C represents the consonants and V the vowels. This pattern is very easy to pronounce. Second of all, the phonetic transcription of the slogan [meɪ/kə'/mɛ/rə/kə/greɪ/tə'/gɛn] reveals syllabic interdependence. This mechanism is created by the liaisons between the words, placed at the second and the seventh syllables. The effect of such a process is to create harmony between the words and reinforce the process of memorization. Finally, the slogan’s beat pattern follows the scheme Oo|Oo|oO|Oo—with [O] representing a beat and [o] an offbeat. This pattern can be analyzed as a tetrameter, composed of measures that are dissyllabic, but symmetrical. It corresponds to an alternating of iambs and trochees, structured as such “iamb-iamb-trochee-iamb.” This rhythmical structure corresponds to the English prosody and gives the slogan a “jauntier feeling, an underlying cheerfulness.”³²¹ The scheme is very straightforward: “Make”, “America” and “great” are stressed. The regularity is emphasized by the fact that “make” and “great” share the same phoneme [eɪ] and are even followed by the same phonemic offbeat [ə]. There is a beat in initial position, which makes the slogan stand out and creates an idea of impulse. Furthermore, the assonances are placed on the beats. Therefore, multiple phonic processes are at play in this slogan. The assonances, alliterations, and rhythmic patterns create vocalic harmony which allows for an easy memorization of the formula.³²² Moreover, this structure can be connected to the four principles of poetry that Grunig identifies in slogans.³²³ Indeed, the syllabic regularity corresponds to the “segments” we can find in verse poetry. These segments’ length is constant, and the slogan uses internal rimes. Many cognitive factors stem from these characteristics. Sound creates relations of identity, which are a “primitive component [...] of what the human brain can conceive and perceive today.”³²⁴ The cognitive association of notions and concepts with each other is illogical: it is a purely phonic construction. The listener identifies a concept

³²⁰ “Existence d’un procédé reposant sur l’utilisation, au sein de certaines syllabes, d’un même pattern consonantique “, Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 215.

³²¹ “Une allure plus primesautière, une gaité sous-jacente “, Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 224.

³²² Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 215, 228.

³²³ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 179.

³²⁴ “Composante primitive [...] de ce que le cerveau humain aujourd’hui peut concevoir et percevoir. ” Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 183.

to another one—for instance, “America” and “great”—based on the phonic similitude that these words share.

3.3.2.2. “Yes We Can”: advertising a voice

Obama’s “Yes We Can” is very different from Trump’s slogan. Indeed, the 2008 formula stands in opposition to the tradition of slogans which plays on words and sounds. The slogan’s intonative structure can be interpreted either as descending or as ascending. An ascending intonation adds an affective nuance or emphasizes the responsive nature of the formula—on the model [No you can’t—“Yes we can.”] Again, this intonative malleability paves the way for an emotional reaction to the slogan. In terms of the sonorities, the slogan displays neither alliterations nor assonances. The phonetic transcription of the slogan is:

[ˈjɛs/wi/ˈkæn]

The consonants are the semi-consonants [j] and [w], the voiceless alveolar fricative [s], the voiceless plosive [k] and the alveolar nasal [n]. The vowels are very distinct one from the other: the slogan includes a closed [i], an open-mid [ɛ] and a near-close [æ]. The vowels and consonants are not the most common ones noticed by Greven in English slogans.³²⁵ The semi-consonants [j] and [w], for example, are one of the rarest occurrences in slogans in general. This structure dissociates the slogan from the tradition of sloganeering and branding—it conveys the notion of “change” that runs throughout the Obama campaign.

In terms of the distribution of consonants and vowels, the syllabic sequences are symmetrical. They correspond to the scheme (CVC|CV|CVC). Because the first and third consonants are semi-consonants, the slogan displays a majority of semi-consonants and vowels, which are easy to vocalize. The rhythmic pattern is very simple: it is composed of two beats, separated by one offbeat, on the scheme O|oO. The slogan starts with the exclamation “Yes” which constitutes the first monosyllabic measure. This measure is stressed. The intuitive prosody of the slogan marks a pause after the first measure. Thanks to this pause, the dissyllabic measure “We can” is emphasized. This pattern is organized around two beats—one in initial position and one in final position. This architecture endows the formula with vigorous dynamism, and thus makes memorization easier. The slogan also displays an audacious structure with anti-rimes, which is regularized around an offbeat center.³²⁶

The choice of a formula which contrasts with traditional slogans is very meaningful. The prosody of “Yes We Can” is much closer to a normal exclamation by the candidate than any

³²⁵ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 210-218.

³²⁶ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 183.

other slogans. Its phonetic characteristics associate the slogan to everyday-life speech. The exclamation “Yes” and the response-like structure of the formula underline the idea that it belongs to the field of conversation. Choosing an informal slogan goes with idea of honesty and change that Obama wanted to advertise. It is a way for the candidate to say that he does not advertise a slogan, he advertises his voice. The focus is therefore not put on the campaign as a branding offensive, but as an encounter with a man.

3.3.2.3. “Stronger Together”: consonantal issues

The other democratic slogan—Clinton’s “Stronger Together”—corresponds to the conventions of sloganeering as exposed by analysts such as Greven. The formula can be voiced as a prosiopesis because of its reduced form. In that case, the beginning of the sentence is not vocalized. The intuitive interpretation of the sentence is “[We are] Stronger Together.” The intonative structure is descending. In terms of sound patterns, “Stronger Together” is transcribed:

[ˈstrɔŋgərtəʃgɛðər].

We can identify an assonance in the sound [ə], which results in the internal rime /er/. This assonance results in the emergence of phonetic symbolism. Indeed, this phenomenon creates a cognitive association of “Stronger” and “Together,” by phonic anticipation. The consonantal pattern creates an alliteration. The voiceless dental [t] can be found in the syllables “stron” and “to.” Placed at the beginning of both words, this consonant gives a detonative feeling to the slogan. The alveolar consonant [r] can be found three times in initial, medial, and final positions. The voiced velar stop [g] can be found two times in medial position. There is a clear symmetry between the consonants. As a result, this alliteration makes for the easier memorization of the slogan and the sense of coherence. Nevertheless, the use of the voiced dental fricative [ð] and of the voiceless fricative [s] are do not encourage the repetition of the sentence. Indeed “the frequent repetition of these consonants produces difficulties of pronunciation.”³²⁷ Furthermore, the juxtaposition of consonants that we find in the consonantal patterns “str” and “ng” makes the vocalization of the slogan harder. Thus, in terms of the repetition, the phonic structure of “Stronger Together” is not optimal.

The syllabic structure of the formula follows the pattern (CCCV|CCVC|CV|CV|CVC). Neither regularity nor specific scheme stand out of this architecture. On the contrary, there are twice as many consonants as there are vowels, which make the slogan hardly repeatable. In

³²⁷ “La répétition fréquente de ces consonnes engendre des difficultés de prononciation ; » trans. from Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 208.

terms of rhythmic strategy, the slogan is a dimeter, composed of a dactyl and a trochee on the model Ooo | Oo. Like “Make America Great Again”, this structure corresponds to the English prosody. Therefore, it is easy to memorize. We can also underline the fact that the internal rime [ər] is placed on the offbeat that follows a beat, which emphasizes the rhyming effect. The phonic strategies of this slogan are much less structured than “Make America Great Again!”. “Stronger Together” does have a consonantal and assonantal pattern, but its design is very simple and the choice of consonants does not make memorization easier. Furthermore, this slogan can be decomposed in segments displaying a rhyme in final position, but their length is not constant. The cognitive strategies taken from poetry are thus not fully exploited.³²⁸

3.3.2.4. “Country First”: an irregular and bland formula

McCain’s campaign slogan—“Country First”—and “Stronger Together” share many common phonic patterns. Like the 2016 Democratic slogan, “Country First” can be interpreted as a prosiopesis. In the case where we analyze the slogan as a derivation of the major sentences “[We put] Country First” or “[Let’s put] Country First,” the subject and the verb are not vocalized. The intonative structure of the proposition is descending. In terms of the sound patterns, the formula employs neither alliterations nor assonances:

[ˈkʌn/tri/fɜrst]

The consonants are numerous and varied: they are the voiceless plosive [k], the alveolar nasal [n], the voiceless dental [t], the alveolar approximant [r], the voiceless labiodental fricative [f] and the voiceless alveolar fricative [s]. This consonantal pattern lacks regularity and does not link the terms together. Fricatives like [s] and [f] are juxtaposed in the same syllable and voiceless consonants are numerous. These two patterns are not easy to pronounce.³²⁹ The consequence is that the formula does not encourage repetition and memorization. The syllabic sequences are irregular. They follow the pattern (CVVC/CCCV/CVCCC). Again, the overrepresentation of consonants does not facilitate the pronunciation of the slogan. The beat pattern of the slogan is the same as “Yes We Can”—it follows a [OoO] scheme. Nevertheless, this rhythm is not emphasized by a play on assonances and alliteration like “Make America Great Again!” or “Stronger Together”, or by an emphasis on the beats like in “Yes We Can.” The phonic strategies that are displayed in McCain’s slogan create a bland formula. It lacks the regularity and phonic coherence which can ultimately encourage the memorization of the formula.

³²⁸ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

³²⁹ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 210-218.

Examining the phonic structure of the four slogans allow us to infer two categories. In the first one, “Make America Great Again!”, “Stronger Together” and “Country First” are relatively successful attempts at following the traditional rules of sloganeering. These norms have been theorized by many analysts in the 20th century. From Lumley to Domínguez, there is a scientific consensus on the phonic features of a slogan: it plays on “rhythm”, “alliteration”, “repetition of sound”³³⁰ and is close to poetry and oral speech.³³¹ Ultimately, this phonic process helps memorization and repetition.³³² In this category, Trump’s slogan shows a real mastery of the conventions of sloganeering. Clinton and McCain’s design, nevertheless, are much less sharp. The consequence of this phonetic form is the feeling that “words think for us,” the same way that the Freudian joke does.³³³ Thanks to its form, the formula bypasses the censure of logic and tricks the audience’s mind into thinking that it makes sense. The plays on alliterations and assonances give the illusion of an absence of coercion. By his phonetic mastery, “Make America Great Again!” is a great deal more effective in “making [people] believe” this absence of censure.³³⁴ Thus, by bypassing logic, it thinks in place of the audience.

A second category of slogans includes the formula which do not follow the traditional rules of sloganeering. In this section, “Yes We Can” is characterized by a phonetic architecture which is remarkable by its closeness to everyday speech, rather than to the Freudian joke. All of the slogans share the common strategy of brevity. Indeed, the measures are composed of dissyllables and trisyllables They are the most frequent of the “traditional English prosody.” Therefore, they are very easy to memorize.³³⁵ They follow the principle of isochronism which is at the root of the English rhythmic pattern: sequences have an equal duration and recur at regular intervals.³³⁶ Finally, we can correlate the historical outcome of the election and the phonetic design of slogans. Indeed, both “Make America Great Again!” and “Yes We Can” stand out. “Make America Great Again!” is very easy to repeat. As Reboul underlines, “the very own strength of slogans is not to be repeated, but to be repeatable.”³³⁷ They are designed to be easily memorized and they are pleasant to say. The plays on metaplasm—that is on the phonic morphology of the message—and metatax—or the syntax—are designed to make the

³³⁰ Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 170.

³³¹ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, “Libres chants”

³³² Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 215, 228; Lumley, *Means of Social Control*, 170; Reboul, *Le slogan*, 48.

³³³ “Les mots pensent à notre place,” Reboul, *Le slogan*, 64.

³³⁴ “Le slogan fait croire,” Reboul, *Le slogan*. “Désir contre réalité ”

³³⁵ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 228.

³³⁶ Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 220 à 228.

³³⁷ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 52.

slogan repeatable.³³⁸ “Yes We Can,” on the other hand, is designed with the specific purposes of being easily memorized and repeated and relates to everyday-life speech rather than to marketing strategies.

These examinations of the metatext and metaplasms of the slogan depicted the ambiguous inner structure of slogans and their repeatable phonic designs. An investigation of the metasemes allows us to look closely at the meaning of the slogans’ words.³³⁹

3.3.3. An empty semantic toolbox

The semantic analysis of slogans focuses on the meaning of the lexis chosen by the campaign strategists. The meaning of a slogan is “all the sentences by which it can be replaced.”³⁴⁰ It is the unfolding of the rhetoric of condensation that is operated within the slogan. It corresponds to the “deep structure” of the propositions.³⁴¹ Because of the ambiguity that we identified in the slogan’s syntactic structure, understanding the meaning of a slogan is always an act of interpretation. A semantical examination of the four slogans under study reveals the inner ambiguity of their vocabulary. The play on isotopies and temporalities convey a large panel of plural interpretations, gathered under very broad and blurry concepts.

3.3.3.1. “Country First”: a missing scale of value

McCain’s slogan immediately recalls the slogan “America First,” which was used by many political leaders throughout history. It was first used by the Democrat Woodrow Wilson in the 1916 presidential campaign. Then, the slogan was taken by the Republican Party, notably by Pat Buchanan in 2000. It refers to a foreign policy doctrine of nationalism and anti-interventionism which is supported by the Republican Party. The slogan “Country First” bears this Republican heritage. It affiliates McCain with the isolationist tradition of the party. The formula is constituted of two words. “First” is an absolute superlative with no reference or pre-modifying syntagma; it can be interpreted as an adverb of time, place or manner with a particular deictic denotation. This denotation is the relation between the linguistic sign and its primary—or direct—content. Greven defines denotation as follows: “Propriétés sémantiques qui permettent de designer [un terme] à l’attention d’un lecteur ou d’un auditeur, par rapport à un autre ou à une série d’autres éléments.”³⁴² Here, the denotation implies a spatial or temporal

³³⁸ Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique générale* (Paris: Seuil, 1998) ; referred to in Olivier Reboul, “La classification des figures,” in *Le slogan*, Éditions Complexe (Bruxelles: Presses universitaires de France, 1975).

³³⁹ Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique générale*; referred to in Reboul, “La classification des figures.”

³⁴⁰ “L’ensemble des phrases par lesquelles on peut la remplacer;” trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 121.

³⁴¹ Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*. 16, quoted in Bradley and Meeds, “Surface-Structure Transformations and Advertising Slogans,” 598.

³⁴² Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 266.

context. We cannot point the direct content to which “first” refers, because the precise context is not mentioned.

Another interpretation of “first” is possible. It can be an ordinal numeral adjective with an imprecise denotation. Nevertheless, we mentioned the fact that the major sentence from which it derives—“First Country [comes before Second Country]” is counterintuitive, and thus rejected from our study. The substantive “Country” also lacks referential characterization. This common noun is not particularized by an article. If we consider that the noun is characterized by a zero-marking, “Country” refers to the general concept of the homeland, and connotes a strong patriotism. Yet, we need to underline that the slogan derives from “America First.” The voters thus make a distinction between the concepts of “America” and “Country.” “Country” refers to the land, the soil, outside urban areas. The patriotic value is stronger than in “America,” and the connotation is very different. “America” refers to either the land of the Founding Father or to the delusion of the present state of the country. It points at an historical entity. On the other hand, the “country” is the land defined by its people. It is a social entity. The denotation of the terms “Country” and “First” is imprecise, because of the abbreviated grammar of the “block language.”³⁴³ “Block language” is characterized by verbless proposition where the relations between the elements of the statement are left to the judgement of the reader, in the absence of a precise context. The consequence of this use of block language is the materialization of the country in a particular context. As a result, we can identify two processes: the first one is the incarnation of a plural entity—the Country—on a scale of indefinite values. “Country” is ranged according to an unknown criterion and compared to unknown opponents. By doing so, “Country” is given a form of unity: it holds together against adversaries. The second one is a definition of the country in relation with this scale of values. It gives the illusion of a logical definition, but the two terms of the relation—that are the country and the scale of values—are missing.

Nevertheless, three elements are clear. The first one is the semantical field of hierarchy. Indeed, “Country” is included in a larger frame. Whether “Country [is] first” or we need to “[put] Country First,” America is always included in a broader structure. Only the nature of this context is debatable; its presence is certain. The campaign played on this ambiguity, as we can see in the TV ad “Love 60,” where McCain is presented as someone who “has always put his country and her people before self, before politics.”³⁴⁴ This ad gives an example of the infinity

³⁴³ Heinrich Straumann, *Newspaper Headlines; a Study in Linguistic Method* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1935) ; qt. in Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 273.

³⁴⁴ Chris Mottola in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, “Chapter 5: Advertising”.

of possibilities the slogan offers: the hierarchy puts country before “self” and “politics”. This campaign argument suffered from the choice of Sarah Palin as running mate. McCain “appeared to put politics ahead of the country” by making this decision, instead of “putting country first.”³⁴⁵

The second explicit is the climate of optimism and exceptionalism that is created by the slogan’s semantical field. Indeed, “Country First” abstracts the formula from its context, in order to keep only the essence of the comparative. This process deprives the formula of a clear meaning. Nevertheless, it initiates the exaggeration that is at the root of any hyperbole. “Le slogan ne [...] dit rien, mais il emporte la confiance par le climat d’optimisme qu’il crée.”³⁴⁶ This point is emphasized by the isotopy of exceptionalism that is displayed in the slogan. An isotopy is the repetition of basic semes in the slogan. Here, the association of “Country” with the superlative “first” refers to the notion of the unprecedented and the extraordinary. These brand techniques allow the candidate to stand out in the political field. Finally, the third characteristic of this slogan is the need it provokes. The formula operates a transfer of the need of ambition and power. Indeed, thanks to the lack of reference, the scale of values on which the “country” is placed is adaptable to the audience’s needs. “Country” can refer to any individual experience of America.

3.3.3.2. *“Make America Great Again”*: a dynamic, nostalgic and vague enthymeme

Trump’s slogan is part of a historical tradition. Indeed, the slogan is heir to Reagan’s campaign for the 1980 elections. Reagan ran under the banner “Let’s Make America Great Again.” He notably used the sentence in his Address at the Republican National Convention in Detroit in 1980.³⁴⁷ Thus, the slogan affiliates the “Trump” brand with this major figure of the Republican Party. Reagan is indeed praised by the population as the president who ended the Cold War and established the very successful Reagonomics. According to Will Bunch, “public opinion” rates Reagan as the “40th [best] president.”³⁴⁸ This is already a strong political argument to attract Republican voters. The slogan also displays four main semantical characteristics, according to Doom.³⁴⁹ The first one is the “assumption that America is currently not great.”

³⁴⁵ David Axelrod in Jamieson, *Electing the President*, 2008, 74.

³⁴⁶ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 84.

³⁴⁷ Ronald B. Reagan, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit,” July 17, 1980.

³⁴⁸ Scott Horton, “Tear Down This Myth: Six Questions for Will Bunch”, *The Stream - Harper’s Magazine Blog* (blog), February 19, 2010.

³⁴⁹ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates.”

The second one is the “vagueness of language,” especially the word “great,” which “has a different definition for many types of people.”³⁵⁰ Indeed, the word “great” is the second most used substantive in Greven’s corpus.³⁵¹ It is a very common word in sloganeering because it can receive numerous definitions. A eulogistic adjective expresses quality, it is also an irrational term with a tendency towards the hyperbole, which appeals to the emotions of the public. The denotation of this seme is imprecise because the adjective is not specified and points to emotions which are hard to evaluate. The adjective “great” is also a “misplaced” word—meaning that it belongs to the oral language rather than to political discourse.³⁵² Two consequences stem from the choice of such a discursive strategy. First, it disorients the audience and breaks political habits. It emphasizes the idea of change that was at the heart of the candidate’s campaign. Then, it creates an effect of accommodation to the public and of convergence between politics and the social reality. The use of casual language brings the world of politics closer to voters and implies that they share the same reality.

The third semantical element that Doom underlines is the return to the “time of greatness” that is operated by the word “again.”³⁵³ The adverb “again” expresses the repetition of action and has a particular deictic denotation. It refers to a history, in a precise context, but whose time is not specified, which adds to the general ambiguity of the slogans’ semantics. We already mentioned the context of class struggle, racism and fear of globalization in which Trump was elected.³⁵⁴ Thus, the assertion that America is not great echoed these social, economic and political concerns. We can go even further and underline the fact that the slogan integrates three temporalities. The past is included by the word “again”, and the verb “make” implies a movement from the present to the future. A reference to time is encapsulated in both words, thus creating an isotopy of the seme of time. The slogan operates two definitions of the present state. The first one is hopeful and relative to its future: it is the dynamic created by “make”. The second definition is depreciating and relative to its past: it is the nostalgia expressed by “again”. This order is meaningful: referring to the past after having mentioned the future gives an argumentative connotation to the adverb “again.” The feeling of nostalgia leads to the need for a better future with Trump and operate as a tool for Trump to keep his promise.

This process occurs in an antonymic way, thanks to two methods. First, the mention of the future as the first word and of the past as the last one creates a parallelism. It emphasizes the

³⁵⁰ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates,” 53-54.

³⁵¹ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*. “Niveau lexico-sémantique.”

³⁵² “mots déplacés;” trans. From Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 34.

³⁵³ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates,” 53-54.

³⁵⁴ Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, “Trump’s Electoral Speeches and His Appeal to the American White Working Class.”

contrast between temporalities. Second, the grammatical subordination of the adverb “again” to the verb “make” restores the hierarchy between the future and the past through a conceptual valorization of the future. The verb expresses the movement towards a better future with Trump; this verb is higher than the nostalgic adverb in the grammatical hierarchy of the proposition. This allows us to assess that, cognitively speaking, this slogan operates an affirmation of superiority. It corresponds to the scheme “Advertising object → (superiority) → alternative advertising object,” because it postulates the superiority of the candidate—associated with the future and the past—over some alternative advertising object—associated with the present.³⁵⁵

Finally, the last characteristic that Doom mentions is the “energetic and entertaining appeal” that is conveyed by the exclamation point at the end of the proposition.³⁵⁶ The verb “make” also encapsulates this energy. This verb is one of the most used words in Greven’s corpus.³⁵⁷ This verb of action is semantically very poor. It can mean many things, especially with the post-modification of the vague adjective “great.” Indeed, instead of specifying the type of action that is referred to by the word “make,” this post-modification contributes to the vagueness of the action. The semantical value of this term is thus “nearly non-existent.”³⁵⁸ The verb is a grammatical support to the statement, and the entire semantic weight relies on the rest of the proposition. Nevertheless, even considering the absence of reference, the reader is left with the notions of power and possibility.

The word “America” is a substantive with a deictic particular denotation. The word “America” in itself feels “insincere” and “cynical” in our contemporary society because it represents the delusion of the American dream and contrasts with the anti-immigration rhetoric.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the reference to the past capitalizes on the negative connotations of contemporary America: “America” has two distinct meanings. The first one is the negative contemporary reality that people experience. The second one is the fantasized America of the Founding Fathers and of “the days when one could raise three children in a decent-sized house without a college education”—the “America” of the American dream.³⁶⁰ The use of the word “America” is very closely connected to the isotopy of time. Indeed, the word “America” is very negatively connotated when it comes to stating the fact that it is currently not great. It is nevertheless also positively mythologized in the context of a nostalgic discourse. Trump plays on this ambivalence: the candidate associates his characters to the mythologized America of

³⁵⁵ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” 187.

³⁵⁶ Doom, “Decoding the Candidates,” 53-54.

³⁵⁷ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*. “Niveau lexico-sémantique.”

³⁵⁸ “Valeur sémantique quasiment nulle;” trans. from Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 250.

³⁵⁹ John McWhorter, “Campaign Slogans: Hits and Misses (Opinion),” *CNN*, February 13, 2016.

³⁶⁰ McWhorter, “Campaign Slogans.”

past and future. In so doing, he both emphasizes and discards the negative contemporary America. Moreover, “America” constitutes a synecdoche, where the whole of the country refers to a part of it in the mind of the audience. Indeed, the term is confusing in the fact that it can refer to many different scales—the federal state, the state or the local community. Without characterizing “America,” the slogan plays on a simplification of this plural entity into an unspecified—and thus malleable—element.

As a whole, the semantic value of the slogan is “enthymematic”—that is constituting an allusive and non-rigorous argument.³⁶¹ It is “a deceptively abstract call to action, but the specific means of making America great again [are] implied (and easily understood): Vote for Trump.” We can analyze the process that leads to this call for action in terms of psychological transfer, following Reboul’s methodology.³⁶² The first stage of the transfer is the formulation of the collective need for American exceptionalism and patriotic power. Then, this real need is transferred on the action of “making America great.” The vagueness of this act conciliates antagonist needs in the formulation of the collective urge for power. The underlying promise is “vote for me, I will make America great again.” Thus, the slogan plays on its essential indeterminateness. The consequence is a plurality of interpretation of the formula, which can result in sometimes antithetical understanding. When people in the streets are asked about their perception of the slogan, the explanation go from a “return to constitutional Republican principles” to “less government, more money in my pocket at the end of the week, less controls, less regulations, lower taxes, smaller government.”³⁶³ Discourses of nostalgia, anti-globalism or anti-socialism can all be inferred from the slogan as well.

Although “America” and “Country” seem to be synonyms, McCain’s “Country” does not evoke the same ambivalence between a mythicized nation and a disappointing reality. The use of “country” is part of a Republican tradition:

The Republican Party, the conservative party of values, community, and national pride has tended to supply candidates who have emphasized space over time. And so [...] Reagan declared *Morning Again in America* and McCain maintained, *Country First*. This rhetorical patterning occurs, possibly, because [...] conservatism is based on values which are necessarily grounded in communities and spaces.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Lauren Potts, “Problem Definition and Causal Attribution During the Republican National Convention: How #MAGA Discourse on Twitter Framed America’s Problems and the People Responsible” (Purdue University, 2017), 4.

³⁶² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 61.

³⁶³ Adriana Usero, “What Does ‘Make America Great Again’ Actually Mean?,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 2016, sec. PostEverything

³⁶⁴ Roderick P. Hart and Elvin T. Lim, “Tracking the Language of Space and Time, 1948—2008,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 3 (2011): 607.

On the contrary, “America” is set in a movement from the past to the future. It associates the candidate with progress, change, and reform, which are Democratic notions. While McCain’s slogan is mainly spatial, Trump’s slogan refers is both spatial and temporal, taking from both the Democrat and Republican rhetoric.

3.3.3.3. “Stronger Together”: the isotopy of movement

The Democratic slogan “Stronger Together” plays on the same semantical strategies as the Republican slogans that we analyzed. The comparative adverb “stronger” derives from the adjective “strong” which expresses quality. This adjective is irrational—it refers to feelings, and not to logic or reason—and points to a subjective reality. The comparative is characterized by the vagueness of its reference. Thus, it implies an imprecise denotation. The absence of reference empties the adverb from its concrete semantical value. This method is very common in the language of slogans. Over 90% of the comparatives of superiority listed by Greven are missing their referent.³⁶⁵ Therefore, the audience is left with two general concepts. First, “stronger” involves contrary and weakening forces. Second, it introduces a notion of time—a base time characterized by weakness that can either be present or past, and a movement towards a future characterized by strengthening and empowerment. The adverb “together” expresses manner. Its denotation is also vague. Nevertheless, a dynamic is encapsulated in this term. Indeed, the adverb “together” expresses the movement of incarnation of a plural society in a unified system. The semantical value of the slogan “Stronger Together” is thus mainly characterized by an isotopy of movement. The first movement is a motion towards empowerment, set in an infinite and continuing motion. The second one is a dynamic motion towards unity. Because these two adverbs are missing the verb they are supposed to characterize, the audience is free to determine the nature of the movement that is expressed by both adverbs—its concreteness, speed, actual action. Nevertheless, the efficiency of this method to rally the voters is questioned by the echo this slogan had on the media. Indeed, the description of “Stronger Together” as “steady and boring” in the media can be explained by the lack of verbal and concrete movement in the slogan.³⁶⁶ This slogan, like “Country First” and “Make America Great Again,” operates a psychological transfer.³⁶⁷ The universal feeling of weakness is provoked by the reference to potential empowerment conveyed by the comparative form. This feeling of weakness can correspond to any interpretation. The absence of the reference and

³⁶⁵ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, 275.

³⁶⁶ Tamara Keith, “How ‘Stronger Together’ Became Clinton’s Response To ‘Make America Great Again,’” NPR.org, August 8, 2016.

³⁶⁷ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 58.

to the polysemy of the adjective “strong” makes it adaptable to any need the audience might perceive. After having provoked that sensation of weakness, the slogan elicits a preference by identifying the idea of power and of community with Clinton’s brand. The cognitive strategy behind this phenomenon is described by Baidullayeva’s cognitive model.³⁶⁸ The slogan “Stronger Together” postulates the superiority of the advertising object “community”—associated with “Clinton”—over some alternative advertising object. This alternative object is not directly named. The main semantical force of “Stronger Together” is thus its absence of reference and its movement towards community. Nevertheless, this movement lacks definition.

3.3.3.4. “Yes We Can”: *optimism, community, movement*

Obama’s slogan “Yes We Can” has the form of an answer. It starts with the affirmative interjection “Yes,” which implies a preliminary conversation. The indetermination surrounding this conversation gives many potential meanings to the interjection. Two types of answers are possible. “Yes We Can” can be the response to a closed question on the model “[Can you do something?]-Yes We Can.” It can also be a reaction of denial on the model “[You can’t]-Yes We Can.” Any type of answer provides the slogan with an assertive and directive tone and blocks the possibility of discussion. The pronoun “we” at the first person of the plural has a particular deictic denotation. It includes the ad executive inside its message. “We” is a crowd—the nature of which requires a deeper investigation in the next part. The last word—“can”—is a verb of action. It is semantically poor, as it is usually only the grammatical support to the rest of the proposition. Nevertheless, here, this verb is at the heart of the message. We already mentioned the interpretative opportunities this effect implied. Indeed, it can be understood as a modal verb following another verbal phrase. In that case the response-like structure of the formula is emphasized, because the meaning of the verb “can” depends on its conditions of use. For instance, in the model “[Can you fight?]-Yes We Can,” “can” means “fight”. Nevertheless, in the case where “can” is a modal verb in an incomplete verbal phrase, the meaningful element, supposed to be on the left of the verb, is absent, following the model “Yes We Can [do something]”. Thus, the audience is left with two possibilities for interpretation: they either have to reconstruct the conversation to which “Yes We Can” is the answer, or to complete the rest of the sentence with a verb. Either way, the audience has to determine the meaning of “can” by themselves. The only semantical element that is without doubt conveyed by this verb is the notion of ability, capacity and potentiality. The absence of semantical

³⁶⁸ Assel Batyrova Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 5 (September 4, 2015): 273.

determination pushes the audience to focus on “we” and to find a meaning for “can.” Affirmation, community and possibility convey a feeling of optimism. The psychological transfer stems from the feeling of weakness. The slogan raises the question “what do I want to do” and, instead of giving a response, leaves the audience with the task of defining an empty movement. Nevertheless, the movement does not lack definition like “Stronger Together.” Obama immediately directs the listener to his character. Indeed, after having underlined this vacancy of movement, the candidate implied by “we” appears as the necessary condition for the actualization of the potentially encapsulated in “can.” The slogan “Yes We Can” is characterized by the climate of optimism it induces, by a feeling of community and by the possibility of various interpretations of the same movement.

The meaning of the four slogans share common points and differences. The common points are the psychological strategies of the slogans and their play on temporalities. The three main differences are the types of interpretations the formulae call for, the historical traditions of the words and the main symbols chosen to support the candidates’ brands. We examine the common points. The slogans operate a psychological transfer in a similar way. All of the slogans tap into the universal feeling of weakness. “Yes We Can” and “Stronger Together” transfer it to a need for community. “Make America Great Again!” and “Country First” transfer it to a need for patriotism. Nevertheless, all of the slogans share the same impulse towards empowerment. Historically, Obama’s and Trump’s slogans, which actualized this movement in a verb, tended to be more successful than the verbless propositions of Clinton’s and McCain’s campaigns. The concept of empowerment becomes a process thanks to a play on temporalities which is visible in all the slogans. The comparative of “Stronger Together” and “America First,” and the dynamic of “Yes We Can” imply two temporalities—that are an original and a future state. Yet, “Make America Great Again!” encapsulates three temporalities—past, present and future.

Three differences can be outlined in this corpus. First, the words chosen by the advertising strategies bear various traditions. The Republican slogans refer to the historical heritage of the party, whereas the Democratic ones do not; they are unprecedented. Depending on their brand essence, these strategies prove to be relatively effective. Indeed, referring to the Republican heritage was decisive for the maverick Trump because it reassured the Republican audience. On the contrary, this choice proved to be to McCain’s disadvantage as the candidate suffered from the absence of change in his campaign.

A second difference allows us to categorize the slogans according to the various types of interpretations for which they call. Slogans like “Make America Great Again,” “Country First” and “Stronger Together” require that the audience picks an interpretation. Indeed, the slogan

has a meaning which justifies contradictory propositions among which the public has to choose. On the other hand, “Yes We Can” asks the addressee to complement the interpretation; the slogan is theoretically true but remains silent on its practical implications.³⁶⁹ Finally, a third semantical difference lies in the main isotopies we can perceive in the formulae. The Republican slogans emphasize patriotism, implying the pre-existence of a people inhabiting the nation, and the Democratic slogans focus on unity, aiming at the making of a people. “Make America Great Again!” and “Country First” associate patriotism and exceptionalism. Trump emphasized that point in political discourses, where he mentioned the threat that Clinton could represent for the “American heartland” and her tendency to favor “globalism over Americanism”.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the question of the entity these words refer to is debatable. Indeed, both “Country” and “America” resist to a structuralist interpretation of the correspondence between a signifier and a signified. There semantical values are connotations—it follows the scheme [signifier (signifier + signified) + signified].³⁷¹ The core of the signifiers “America” and “Country” is undefined. These words are not correlated with a precise entity implied by a context. On the contrary, they are loaded with affective values which can either be shared or specific to each individual. The relations between the elements of these formulae are left to the judgement of the addressee. This reinforces the associative aspect of the statement. On the other hand, the Democratic slogans focus on unity. Both “Stronger Together” and “Yes We Can” unify a plural society through the words “together” and “we.” This community is gathered in the same movement encapsulated in the verb “can” or in the comparative. Nevertheless, the connotation is as problematic as in Republican slogans. The collectivity that is signified refers to a plurality of emotional interpretations. The investigations of these slogans on the semantical level puts forward the diversity of the meanings that are implied by their lexis. The slogans convey a feeling of movement, optimism, and either patriotism or unity.

All of the formulae use an elliptic discourse which allows for semantic ambiguity. This is their most effective power. “The unsaid” functions because the addressee actively supposes what the slogan doesn’t tell him.³⁷² None of the slogans puts the “brand” of the candidate directly forward. Instead, whether they are equivocal “block” phrases or major propositions, slogans associate the candidate with wide notions and a general movement. All the formulae

³⁶⁹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 122.

³⁷⁰ Trump/Pence campaign, “Declaring American Economic Independence,” June 28, 2016; qt. in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 41.

³⁷¹ Hjelmslev, *Outline of Glossematics*. Referred to in Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 160.

³⁷² Olivier Reboul, “Le pouvoir du slogan,” in *Le slogan*, Éditions Complexe (Bruxelles: Presses universitaires de France, 1975).

share the use of the codes of oral language, in terms of lexis, prosody and morphology. They are brief and simple. Some slogans are easier to memorize. This is either the result of the skillful elaboration of their phonic system or of their originality in the advertising market. These slogans happen to have won the election. Others suffer from a weak phonetic mastery and do not encourage cognitive actions.

This purely formal analysis does not allow us to fully understand the slogans. We understood how their structure makes them repeatable and memorizable. Nevertheless, analyzing the design of the signifier only underlines the way they carry the signified. It only unveils one direction of the relation, from the brand to the slogan. Yet, a slogan is not only mirroring the themes that were chosen by the “brand stewards”.³⁷³ In order to fully understand the characterizing relation between the slogan and the brand, we have to analyze the way the slogan has an active part in the brand. A rhetorical and logical investigation shapes a broader political and philosophical message and explore how the slogan is “an indirect revealer of a natural logic integrated by the speaking subjects.”³⁷⁴ Because the essence of the slogan is rhetoric, we have to be aware that this investigation will empty it from its practical power.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan”; Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign.”

³⁷⁴ “Révélateur indirect d’une logique naturelle intégrée par les sujets parlants,” trans. from Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 280.

³⁷⁵ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 124.

4. The 2008 and 2016 campaign: the political rhetoric of slogans

In an advertising campaign, slogans' power is beyond the control of the campaign staff. Understanding their formal features highlight how some formulae are more likely to be memorized than others. The slogans' rhetoric encapsulates a clear political message and an interpretation of the political reality. The "magic"³⁷⁶ pointed out by scientists is one of the effects of the strategies the slogan displays to defy logic.

4.1. A blatant political message

4.1.1. 2008: the questionable hero vs. the unifying manifesto

The speech's rhetoric makes it a means of persuasion. It is both "the intellectual, cognitive, affective, and social considerations that guide the writer or speaker to use the language as he or she does" and "the effect it actually has on people who listen to it or read it."³⁷⁷ According to Aristotle, a speaker or writer has three means of persuasion— "ethos," "logos" and "pathos."³⁷⁸

In the 2008 election, McCain focused on his ethos—that is on his personal character—and set himself as a "straight-talker, an honest man, a leader we can believe in."³⁷⁹ He incarnated the "brand steward" of the Republican Party and became directly responsible for the brand. His slogan was thus used in a strategy of heroization of the candidate, notably in his speeches. In July 2008, McCain starts by casting himself as a hero: "I have been an imperfect servant of my country. But I have been her servant first, last and always." Then, he refers to his slogan, and associated it to this heroic ethos: "I will always put this country first."³⁸⁰ McCain's rhetoric was characterized by what Lakoff defined as a "male form of communication"—a type of communication "which evokes individual strength and accomplishment."³⁸¹ Nevertheless, in order to be effective, this strategy implies an irreproachable brand identity. In McCain's case, a distinction has to be made between his "brand essence"—the "central nature" of what he represented—and his brand identity—the "particular set of elements [...] which determine how that brand will be perceived in the marketplace."³⁸² His brand essence of "dedication, patriotism

³⁷⁶ Gustave Le Bon and Bernard Miall, *The World in Revolt: A Psychological Study of Our Times* (London: Fisher, 1921), 234ff; qt. in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*; Reboul, *Le slogan*, 88 ; Sherif, "The Psychology of Slogans," 458-459.

³⁷⁷ William A Covino and David A Jolliffe, *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 8; qt. in Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 5.

³⁷⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (New York: Modern Library, 1954).

³⁷⁹ Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 11.

³⁸⁰ John McCain, "Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting in Denver, Colorado" (Denver, CO, 2008); qt. in Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 95.

³⁸¹ Robin Tolmach Lakoff, "The Politics of Nice," *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture* 1, no. 2 (2005): 173-91; referred to in Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 39.

³⁸² Upshaw, *Building Brand Identity*, 24-25. Qt. in Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 11, 15.

and experience”³⁸³ was good, but his brand identity was mismanaged. The choice of Palin put a shadow on “country first.”³⁸⁴ Finally, the argumentation that is presented by “Country First” can be defined as an assessment, or a contract. If the slogan is understood as “[I put] Country first” or “Country [should be] first,” we can categorize the formula as a “slogan-assessment.” It simply chooses to “enounce [certain] facts” rather than others. The audience judges whether this statement is right or wrong. The slogan becomes a “slogan-contract” when its interpretation is “[I will put] Country First.” The formula takes the appearance of a rational clause.³⁸⁵ Again, these two structures reinforce the male communication: McCain characterizes himself as a leader. Both the slogan-contract and the slogan-assessment depend on the presence of the speaker who states the affirmation.

On the other hand, the argumentative value of “Yes We Can” can be defined as the one of a “slogan-manifesto” adopting a pathetic tone. These types of slogans tend “to create the existence of what it states by the simple fact of stating it.”³⁸⁶ It is very close from performative language because the voice which sends the message vanishes behind his statement. “Slogan-manifestos” are much more likely to be spread and seized by the electorate. This “slogan-manifesto” plays on pathos. Obama effectively focused on the desire for change.³⁸⁷ He adopted a “female communication,” which fosters a “sense of community” and “invokes a more [...] intimate association of the electorate to the candidates.”³⁸⁸ The idea of community implied by the personal pronoun “we” in “Yes We Can” is an indication of this type of communication. In the whole, “Country First” did not persuade as effectively as “Yes We Can” for two main reasons. First, McCain chose a rhetoric of ethos which suffered from his brand identity. His slogan mainly characterizes his individual accomplishments, but the whole of his campaign did not convince the electorate; second, Obama had a more powerful rhetoric thanks to the unifying dynamic that the slogan-manifesto and the female communication entailed.

4.1.2. 2016: the candidate of the mass vs. the inadequate inclusiveness

In the 2016 campaign, Donald Trump’s charisma was very powerful. As a maverick, the candidate played mainly on ethos and pathos. Unlike McCain, he did not try to appear as a patriotic hero. Instead, he embodied an honest and straight-forward American who did not hide

³⁸³ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 15.

³⁸⁴ David Axelrod in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 74.

³⁸⁵ “Slogan-constat” and “slogan-contrat;” trans. from Olivier Reboul “Constat, contrat, chantage, manifeste,” *Le slogan*, Éditions Complexe (Bruxelles: Presses universitaires de France, 1975).

³⁸⁶ “[le slogan manifeste] tend à créer l’existence de ce qu’il affirme par le simple fait qu’il l’affirme;” trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 73.

³⁸⁷ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 16.

³⁸⁸ Lakoff, “The Politics of Nice.” Referred to in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 39.

the machinery behind his politics. The basis of his appeal to the voters' emotions was his constant reference to an idealized past, free from globalization and immigration. "Make America Great Again!" reflects this cohabitation of ethos and pathos. It can be understood in two ways, either as a slogan-contract or as a slogan-blackmail. If it is interpreted as "[I will] Make America Great Again!", the formula is a slogan-contract. If the addressee chooses to understand the slogan as an imperative, it is a "slogan-blackmail"—the "statement of an alternative where, one of the terms turning out to be catastrophic, the other one is self-evident."³⁸⁹ It is a form of blackmail because the slogan takes the appearance of a choice, but really does not leave any. Here, the alternative is between voting for Trump—who will make America "great"—and not voting for Trump—leaving America in its current state of non-greatness. Whether it is a slogan-contract or a slogan-blackmail, the ethos of the candidate is very present. It makes the formula an example of male communication.³⁹⁰ The rhetoric of the formula is also tinged with pathos, notably in the isotopy of exceptionalism and the nostalgic reference to the past. Furthermore, Trump built a narrative around his slogan. In an interview, the candidate explained that the slogan came to him as he "felt that jobs were hurting," a few days after Mitt Romney's loss in 2012

I looked at the many types of illness our country had, and whether it's at the border, whether it's security, whether it's law and order or lack of law and order. Then, of course, you get to trade, and I said to myself, 'What would be good?' I was sitting at my desk, where I am right now, and I said, 'Make America Great Again'.³⁹¹

The creation of a background story for his campaign strategy is proof of the candidate's mastery of the rules of advertising. It creates an anecdote and adds to the feeling of honesty and truthfulness that constituted Trump's character. Finally, Trump's rhetoric capitalized on the context of "post-broadcast era."³⁹² This media regime is characterized, among others, by the "emergence of individual-based [...] micro-political realities."³⁹³ This individualized nature of the electorate provided Donald Trump with the opportunity to adopt a "modified catch-all

³⁸⁹ "énoncé d'une alternative dont l'un des deux termes s'avérant catastrophique, l'autre s'impose de lui-même"; trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 71.

³⁹⁰ "Slogan-contrat," Reboul, *Le slogan*, "Constat, contrat, chantage, manifeste."

³⁹¹ Pamela Engel, "How Trump Came up with His Slogan 'Make America Great Again,'" Business Insider, accessed November 26, 2017.

³⁹² McKinney, "Consistency and Change in Political Campaign Communication." Qt. in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*. 14

³⁹³ Bruce Bimber, "The Internet and Political Fragmentation," in *Domestic Perspectives on Contemporary Democracy*, by Peter F. Nardulli (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Bruce Bimber, "Digital Media and Citizenship," in *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication*, ed. Holli A Semetko and Margaret Scammell (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2012); Lance Bennett, "The Uncivic Culture: Communication, Identity, and the Rise of Lifestyle Politics," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31, no. 4 (1998): 741–61; referred to in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*. 14

approach.”³⁹⁴ This campaign approach was designed to deploy a broad and consensual rhetoric in order to target the widest base of support. It explains the rhetoric of “grandiosity, informality and dynamism” that we can underline in the slogan’s semantic.³⁹⁵ Clinton’s slogan, on the other hand, adopted a rhetoric characterized by a female form of communication. Indeed, the slogan underlines the sense of community the candidate wanted to associate with her campaign. “Her campaign focused on a strategy of inclusiveness.”³⁹⁶ Furthermore, the advertising campaign focused on her ethos as the candidate indeed represented the stability and experience of traditional politics, as opposed to the inexperience of her opponent. Nevertheless, these two main characteristics—the focus on the candidate’s ethos and on unity—did not resonate with the electorate’s main concern at the time of the campaign.

This showed up in polling going into Election Day. [...] The economy was the most important issue to voters. [...] 32% of respondents said Clinton had focused on the candidates’ personal qualities [...]. Only 18% thought the economy was one of the main messages of her campaign.³⁹⁷

Thus, Clinton’s call for unity was ineffective because it was not what the most important demographic in the election was voting on.³⁹⁸ “Stronger Together” can be categorized as a “slogan-assessment” or a “slogan-blackmail.” Indeed, we can interpret the formula as the sentence “[We are] Stronger Together,” the slogan limiting itself to stating a fact. We can also understand the slogan as a call, on the model “[Let’s be] Stronger Together.” In that case, the alternative underlying the message of the slogan pits a situation of strength in unity against a situation of weakness in division. It leaves the electorate no choice; it has to choose the first option. In the 2016 elections, “Make America Great Again” appealed to a wide electorate and proved its acute understanding of a political atmosphere where individualities played a major role. While both candidates chose to focus on ethos, Trump benefited from the introduction of pathetic elements in his discourse, notably in the slogan “Make America Great Again!”, and from the strength of his brand identity. On the other hand, Clinton’s choice of a female form of communication did not match the voters’ expectations and tarnished the identity she had to advertise.

³⁹⁴ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 16.

³⁹⁵ Sara Ahmadian, Sara Azarshahi, and Delroy L Paulhus, “Explaining Donald Trump via Communication Style: Grandiosity, Informality, and Dynamism,” *PAID Personality and Individual Differences* 107 (2017): 49–53; referred to in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 16.

³⁹⁶ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 116.

³⁹⁷ Ariel Edwards-Levy, “Americans Care Most About The Economy. They Think Trump And Clinton Don’t,” *Huffington Post*, May 11, 2016, sec. Politics; referred to in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 90.

³⁹⁸ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 90.

As a whole, we can divide the slogans on the basis of their rhetoric. The form of communication and the techniques of persuasion sort the slogans in various categories. First, the Republican slogans adopt a male communication, supported by the identity of the candidate. The Democratic slogans opt for a female communication, where the community is showcased. Although the distinction between “male” and “female” is not a relevant wording, the concepts it refers to remain pertinent for our study. Second, all of the candidates chose to base their overall campaign rhetoric on their ethos. This choice corresponds to the shift toward a personalized branding in a context of “personalization of politics.”³⁹⁹ “Make America Great Again,” “Stronger Together” or “Country First” reflect that choice by simply stating a truth, establishing a contract, or implicitly blackmailing the addressee. The effectivity of the slogans depends on the brand identity as a whole: if it is not properly managed, the ethos of the candidate negatively influences the perception of the slogan. It has been the case for “Country First.” On the other hand, “Yes We Can” is a manifesto designed to blur the presence of the candidate in order to give a sense of unity.

All of the slogans share common points. Their rhetoric is characterized by the absence of logos—the third mode of persuasion built on arguments contained in the speech itself. Indeed, this can be explained by three main elements. First, slogans are characterized by their brevity. Second, the appeal to the broadest electorate possible would be weakened by a mention of a particular element of the candidate’s program. Emphasizing on broad and consensual notions is safer. The third reason is the emergence of personalized branding. The electorate votes for a candidate, and neither for a party nor for a program. The use of empty signifiers, the focus on unity and the absence of logos is a response to this shift in the political discourse. The last element that the slogans have in common is the unifying force they apply over the heteroglossy of the political narrative. The heteroglossy is the coexistence of various discourses in the same language. The slogan encapsulates a multiplicity of diverse languages. The four slogans focus on “the hegemonic identity of ‘the American people’” and imply “a potential for collective political action.”⁴⁰⁰ They modify the political language because they “simultaneously [involve] both language and forms of social action and presupposes their inextricable connection.”⁴⁰¹ In order to do that, the focus on unity is essential. The social sphere is characterized by what Bakhtin has termed “heteroglossy” in the context of the novel—the coexistence of various

³⁹⁹ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 117.

⁴⁰⁰ Ritchie Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” *The Sociological Review* 58, no. 2 suppl (December 1, 2010): 184.

⁴⁰¹ Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 184.

discourses in the same language.⁴⁰² Unifying these languages makes the slogan an element of “politicians populism”—which is defined by “non-ideological appeals for ‘the people’ to build a unified coalition.”⁴⁰³ Slogans qualify their brands by applying a unifying force to the multiplicity of voices of the electorate. The origin of this process is fictive: the slogans’ strongest argument promotes a fictional unity that could happen in the future.

Two main questions are raised by this observation. First, what is the nature of the unity that is fostered by the rhetoric of slogans? According to Foss, “shared fantasies provide the ground for arguments or establish the assumptive system that is the basis for arguments.”⁴⁰⁴ What exactly are these “fantasies” on which our four slogans root their performative power? Rosanvallon goes even further, saying that the play on fantasy is the root of our contemporary democracy:

La légitimité d’exercice repose sur la prise de conscience du fait que la volonté générale n’est pas simplement exprimée par le moment électoral pour une raison simple : le moment électoral ne met en place qu’un pouvoir des majorités, et que la démocratie tout entière repose sur cette fiction que les majorités représentent la totalité de la société, que les majorités représentent l’intérêt général, alors qu’elles n’expriment de fait qu’un intérêt limité.⁴⁰⁵

The fiction is the ground on which democracy is established, and it constitutes the “basis for arguments” which Foss refers to. It raises a second question: do slogans have a role to play in the creation of this fiction? Slogans are part of a populist discourse. In a reciprocal motion, it rests on the illusion of unity that it creates within the electorate. Ultimately, this unity fosters a specific vision of unanimity which influences the votes. Therefore, the notions of unity in itself needs to be defined. It is the key to understand the “magic” trick that slogans operate on the electorate.⁴⁰⁶ This proves that persuasive and fictional rhetoric has a “characterizing” effect on politics.⁴⁰⁷

4.2. A populist discourse

The analysis of the rhetoric of slogans raised a first question. We underlined the focus that is put on unity and community by all the slogans. Nevertheless, before even considering the

⁴⁰² Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

⁴⁰³ Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 2.

⁴⁰⁴ Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 107; qt. in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 44.

⁴⁰⁵ Pierre Rosanvallon, “La question de la légitimité démocratique : l’exemple de la Justice,” *Après-demain* 30, NF, no. 2 (2014): 5–6.

⁴⁰⁶ Le Bon and Miall, *The World in Revolt*, 234ff, qt. in Lumley, *Means of Social Control*; Reboul, *Le slogan*, 88 ; Sherif, “The Psychology of Slogans,” 458-459

⁴⁰⁷ Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 277.

nature of this community, several questions are raised. How is this idea of unity conveyed? Where does it come from? Our four slogans share a common populist feature which makes them powerful within the electorate. This power comes from logic, which brings the abstract of unity to existence. This process constitutes a part of the explanation of what constitutes the “magic” of slogans: the mastery of logic forges unity and transforms the abstract into the concrete.

Populism was theorized by Laclau in *On Populist Reason*. It is:

A discursive phenomenon in which hegemonic political identities are constructed through ‘empty signifiers’, which link together popular demands in a chain of equivalence or stable discourse. This stability of the chain of equivalence is achieved through the differentiation of an excluded element, which forms the basis of an antagonism.⁴⁰⁸

Following a Lacanian conception of society, Laclau believes that society is necessarily unstable. It is constantly dislocated by disruptive crises which increase with the amount of political subjectivities in the political sphere. The term political subjectivity here refers to individual political points of view as affected by psychological processes. In this context, populism is a means to stabilize a symbolic order. It stabilizes the discourse: it stems from popular demands treated by the political power as equivalential and not differential. Popular demands are managed according to the idea that they have the same value and present identical features, and not as they are unlike in nature or form. In order to create this equivalence in the chain of demands, it needs antagonisms. This is why “political identities” are built on exclusion. This exclusion is operated through discourse, and especially through the use of “empty signifiers”. Particular signifiers are emptied of their meaning in order to represent the “‘absent fullness’ of a symbolic order.”⁴⁰⁹ In a dislocated society, the creation of antagonisms via empty signifiers creates a feeling of unity and a potential for collective social action. Slogans are tinged with this populist discourse.

4.2.1. A dislocated social order

The social order in 2008 and 2016 was dislocated for many reasons. The financial crisis of 2008 “fragmented the social order” and led to “democratic demands” which, because of the mismanagement of the Republican institutional order, were treated as equivalential and became popular demands.⁴¹⁰ In 2016, this financial crisis has expanded to a social and political one: the demands of the people focused on the distrust towards the media, the establishment and an

⁴⁰⁸Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 181.

⁴⁰⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 70-71; qt. by Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 183.

⁴¹⁰ Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 183.

ongoing class struggle. These demands—formulated by “a downwardly mobile white working class that [felt] ignored by progressive elites”—were also treated as equivalential.⁴¹¹ In this context, the political discourse and slogans used the populist strategies described by Laclau to stabilize the social order.

4.2.2. “The differentiation of an excluded element”

First, populism created antagonisms. Depending on the slogans, antagonisms can be divided between contradictory antinomies—like “Make America Great Again!” and “Yes We Can”—and contrary antinomies like “Stronger Together” and “America First”. Within the slogan, contradictory elements exclude each other, whereas contrary elements of an opposition can cohabit.

The antinomy in Trump’s slogan is implicit, but its two terms are present. The mention of a current “non-great” state requires identifying the people responsible for it. On the other hand, the dynamic towards a great America seems to be inspired by the candidate himself. Its implicit form is strategic. Indeed, it makes the antinomy even more effective: without explicitly defining the terms, the brain of the receiver establishes the network of references himself.⁴¹² He defines the context and the scapegoats through his own judgement. As such, the slogan offers an interpretation of reality as it divides “the people, parties, and policies that entered the discourse [...] into two camps: those trying to make America great versus those trying to keep America bad.”⁴¹³ In that sense, the “out-group” is necessary to convey a sense of security, and to ultimately gather the people together.

Obama’s slogan “Yes We Can” works the same way. Its response-like form involves a preceding contradiction, especially if the interjection “Yes” expresses a denial or a refutation. Therefore, the discourse of empowerment “We Can” follows a second type of discourse which has to be reconstituted by the addressee. This second discourse is characterized by disparagement and lack of confidence in the people. In addition, implying a second discourse means implying a second speaker. Again, the antinomy underlying “Yes We Can” is implicit, but it remains an essential means to build the “political identity” of the people as defined by Laclau.⁴¹⁴ “Yes We Can” and “Make America Great Again!” share a common point: they feature contradictory antonyms. Indeed, the two terms of the antinomy are completely incompatible; one excludes the other. They cannot cohabit in the same space. People who

⁴¹¹ Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, “Trump’s Electoral Speeches and His Appeal to the American White Working Class,” “Introduction.”

⁴¹² Blanche Grunig, “Le choc des contraires,” in *Les mots de la publicité: l’architecture du slogan* (Paris: CNRS, 1998).

⁴¹³ Potts, “Problem Definition and Causal Attribution During the Republican National Convention,” 4-5.

⁴¹⁴ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

keep America in its current state of badness cannot be people who will make it great. Similarly, people who believe “we” can’t are not the ones stating that “we” can. Even more, one of the category has to disappear in order for the other one to live.

On the contrary, “America First” and “Stronger Together” are calling for contrary antonyms. McCain’s slogan refers to a part of the political sphere which does not put “Country First.” Nevertheless, they might put it in second or third place. The antinomy lies on a gradation, and not on an exclusion. “Stronger Together” follows the same pattern. The comparative implies a state of weakness in division. Nevertheless, the antonymic term is a relative state of lesser strength. The underlying narrative that Clinton wanted to convey was that community was weak today and that Trump was a divider. Yet, logically, “less strength today” does not mean “no strength today.” Clinton’s discourse follows this rhetoric: she asserts that “America already is great, but we are great because we [...] will work with one another.”⁴¹⁵ Thus, “Stronger Together” does not necessarily implies that society is not strong as it is. The scapegoats are not pointed out as weak, but as less strong. In “Stronger Together” and “Country First,” the terms of the antinomy are not excluding one another. Even though they go in separate ways, they do not cancel each other out. This division between contradictory and contrary terms of the antinomies is powerful in the populist discourse. The exclusion operated in discourse is a great deal more powerful through contradictions. The part of the population excluded has to disappear from the political sphere. If it does not, it represents a threat to the community of legitimate citizens that is created by this discourse. On the other hand, contrary antonyms can cohabitate.

4.2.3. Empty signifiers “link together popular demands in a chain of equivalence”

Empty signifiers “link together popular demands in a chain of equivalence or stable discourse” because they represent the symbolic order.⁴¹⁶ After underlining the absence of semantic value of the slogans, we now turn to the “chain of equivalence or stable discourse” that the formulae create. By producing cognitive connections, a logic network performs cognitive associations in the addressee’s understanding of the situation. The slogans bring abstracts to existence through logical methods. They can be the use of the enthymeme—a syllogism relying on probable and implicit premises, the “category mistake”⁴¹⁷ which places objects in categories that are not their own, and problematic connotations.

⁴¹⁵ “Transcript of the Second Debate,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 2016, sec. Politics; qt. in Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 89.

⁴¹⁶ Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 183.

⁴¹⁷ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2013); quoted in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 75.

Slogans rest on a common enthymematic logic. An enthymeme is a rigorous syllogism—a chain of arguments composed of two premises leading to a conclusion—which relies on probable and implicit premises.⁴¹⁸ Reboul explains the phenomenon: “Tout l’art du slogan est de polariser l’attention sur une prémisse indiscutable et de masquer l’autre, qu’on demande d’admettre en évitant de le formuler.”⁴¹⁹ Our slogans follow an enthymematic scheme: [irrefutable major premise + concealed minor premise leading to a scapegoat → conclusion biased in favor of the branded candidate]. For example, the major premise in “Make America Great Again!” is the notion of progress and empowerment. The three minor premises are that America has coherence as a unity, that it is in a “state of badness, and [that] the implicit culprits [are] everyone not in alignment with Trump.”⁴²⁰ The conclusion is “Vote for Trump.” All minor premises are implicit and very questionable. Nevertheless, because of the irrefutability of the idea of progress, the minor premises are concealed and do not go through logic’s censorship. All of the other slogans conceal the same argument stating the current state of weakness. The slogans of Trump, McCain and Obama hide it behind an irrefutable major premise—the need for progress and empowerment. “Stronger Together” qualifies this argument by adding the notion of community as a major premise. Thus, “Stronger Together” is the only slogan which does not take for granted the unity of “country”, “America” or “we.” Clinton’s slogan, questions the fact that these notions progress as a whole on a stable scale. For the three other slogans, taking unity for granted is very powerful because the addressee does not question this reality. The logic of the enthymeme is the first technique implemented by slogans to create a “chain of equivalence” in popular demands. Ultimately, the strategy results in the feeling of contributing to a unified discourse.

The second technique is the “category-mistake.”⁴²¹ It consists in placing an object in a category that is not its own. All of the slogans share a first common “category-mistake” strategy. All of them materialize an abstract—whether it is America, the country or the people—into a uniform and standardized entity. Then, a second category-mistake can be identified in certain slogans. This second element places the first “category-mistake”—the standardized abstract—into a category where it does not belong. The notions of greatness, strength and primacy in the slogans of Clinton, McCain and Trump classify the country and the community as valuable objects, characterized by a certain quality. Nevertheless, determining a value to a plural entity—whether it is “America” or the people—is impossible. Finally, a third

⁴¹⁸ Aristotle, *The Organon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938).

⁴¹⁹ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 74.

⁴²⁰ Potts, “Problem Definition and Causal Attribution During the Republican National Convention,” 4.

⁴²¹ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2013); quoted in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 75.

category-mistake lies in “Stronger Together,” where the comparative places the notion of strength in the category of objectively quantifiable objects. The community is at n strength and considers being $n + x$ strength, n being a tangible and sizeable quantity. Nevertheless, it is actually subjective and relative. Thus, “Stronger Together” shows three occurrences of this strategy: it materializes the people into a uniform entity, characterizes it by its “strength” and defines the notion of strength as a quantifiable object. This strategy very subtly bypasses logic: the audience do not perceive the incoherent use of abstracts and their position on inadequate scale of values. Illogical associations are created in the voters’ cognition, contributing to the transformation of singular demands in an equivalential discourse. For example, the abstract “America” is materialized differently by each individual. Nevertheless, everybody calls it “America.” Thus, the fiction that demands are equivalent is created.

The use of connotations are the third method that can be examined in the building of a “chain of equivalences.” This “chain” is structured around an affective value shared by a group, which, as underlined by Grunig’s questioning of Hjelt’s theory, can be conveyed by a connotation.⁴²² Indeed, Hjelt theorized the connotation by the following scheme: [signifier (signifier + signified) + signified.] Nevertheless, Grunig criticizes two arguments of this theory. According to her, the couple [signifier + signified] at the core of the connotation could be “empty”.⁴²³ Then, the affective value of the connotation could be shared by a group of people, because emotions are socialized. On this basis, we present a two-steps argument. First, connotations do give the slogans’ their affective value, but the couple [signifier + signified] at the core of the formulae can be “empty.” Second, as predicted by Grunig, the affective value of the connotation is shared by a group. Actually, the creation of the “chain of equivalences” mentioned by Laclau as one of the means of populist discourse is operated by the socialization of the connotations’ affective value. Slogans contribute to the creation of a common referent. Connotations are key to understanding the slogans’ power. In the case of the slogans of 2008 and 2016, we already mentioned the absence of reference in every word of the formulae. We can classify the connotation in two categories: some—like “America” and “Country”—rest on a meaningful denotation. Other—like “great” and “we”—rest on an empty denotation. The connotation of “America” illustrates the first category. It can be decomposed as:

[signifier “America” (signifier “America” + signified “nation of the United States”)
+ affective signified X].

⁴²² Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 160.

⁴²³ “Vide,” Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 160.

The same scheme applies to “Country.” The symbolic value of the connotation—the X in our formula—can take many forms because the words “America” and “Country” are antonomasias. They build a relation of contiguity and necessity between the specific experience of the addressee and the bigger abstract that is his country. Nevertheless, the denotative core of this connotation is not empty: it refers to a political national entity. On the other hand, words such as “together,” “great” and “we” are more problematic: they rest upon an empty denotation. For example, “Together” can be analyzed as such:

[signifier “together/we” (signifier “together/we” + signified Y) + affective signified X].

In this case, not only do voters have a different symbolic interpretation [X] of the community, they can also interpret the object [Y] referred to by “together” or “we” in different ways. It could be the local community, the family or the whole federal nation. The denotation at the core of the connotation is unstable because it relies on an affective, singular and personal perception of the community, rather than on a fact. Connotations have a social and political consequence when they are combined with concealing metaseemes—figures of speech that characterize the message’s meaning.⁴²⁴ In “Make America Great Again!,” for example, the very semantically charged “great” cognitively overpowers the antonomasia “America” to bypass the censure of logic that is operated by the connotation. The emphasis on the word “great” conceals the difference between the denotation “America” and the connotation “America.”

Slogans combine symbolic connotations with the enthusiastic dynamic and general ideas of empowerment that are encapsulated in their vocabulary and syntax. The result of this combination can be summed up by two cognitive effects. On the one hand, each voter receives a validation of his own affective interpretation. On the other hand, he or she gets the feeling that his or her affective value is shared and generalizable. But this is illogical: individual interpretations of the signified X or Y are distinct for each and every voter because they are not rational. On the contrary, they are either affective—in the case where X is the only unstable element of the equation—or “empty”—in the case where both X and Y are irreferential. We can thus underline the social reunion that is operated via connotations. Slogans give the audience the feeling of having the same demands and understanding the same symbols. The formulae contribute to the creation of “chain of equivalences” in popular demands via the emergence of cognitive associations which bypass logic. In the whole, this federative power of slogan is the result of a metalogism. The Group μ defines metalogisms as figures of speech focusing on the “connection between the statement and its referent.”⁴²⁵ Thanks to this strategy,

⁴²⁴ Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique générale*.

⁴²⁵ “Rapport de l’énoncé à son référent;” trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 78 ; referring to Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique générale*.

the advertising campaign features a populist voice. The use of enthymemes, category-mistake and connotations produce a cognitive bypass of logic which results in the feeling that the individual demands are equivalential throughout the whole community.

Slogans are produced in dislocated social orders to create antagonisms through contradictory or contrary antonyms and bind the electorate together by creating the illusion of the existence of equivalential demands. Following Savage's elaboration on Laclau's definition of populism, we have demonstrated that that slogans are tools characterized by "empty signifiers" connecting "together popular demands in a chain of equivalence." This "stable discourse" is achieved through the differentiation of an excluded element.⁴²⁶ This observation illustrates Foss's assertion that "shared fantasies provide the ground for arguments."⁴²⁷ In that sense, slogans modify the campaign's branding rhetoric and brand identity. We need now to analyze the final element in Laclau's definition: does this whole populist process lead to the creation of "hegemonic political identities"?⁴²⁸ In other words, can slogans demonstrate the fiction that is at the root of democracy?⁴²⁹ This element helps us define more thoroughly the "characterizing relation" that the slogan shares with its brand.⁴³⁰

4.3. A discourse on democracy

The investigation of the populist nature of slogans led to the analysis of the slogans' illogical argumentative power. Nevertheless, the nature of the "hegemonic political identities" is still unclear: who is in power? Who is the unified mass? Slogans carry an interpretation of the democratic order characterized by fictional unanimity. We analyzed the way this fictive unanimity was rhetorically created. We now focus on its definition. By spreading a specific idea of democracy, slogans influence the way the electorate votes. In that sense, slogans characterize the political ideology that is part of the brand essence in the context of a political campaign.

Historically, a shift from a society of the generality to a society of particularities occurred at the turn of the 21st century. As a result, society does not exist as an aggregate, but as a web-like structure. People in the executive gradually loses legitimacy and a contemporary version of politics gains popularity. It is the post-modern state, characterized by negotiation and transparency.⁴³¹ In this context, Rosanvallon underlines the two main fictions underlying our

⁴²⁶ Savage, "Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse," 181.

⁴²⁷ Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 107; qt. in Sizemore, "Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign," 44.

⁴²⁸ Savage, "Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse," 181.

⁴²⁹ Rosanvallon, "La question de la légitimité démocratique."

⁴³⁰ Domínguez, "La rhétorique du slogan," 277.

⁴³¹ Chevallier, *L'État post-moderne*; referred to in Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

contemporary democracies. First, the idea of unanimity—which embodies the social generality—acts as if the majority was equivalent to the totality. Second, the identification of the nature of a regime to the conditions of his establishment is a metonymy in itself: the moment of the election seems equal to the whole mandate.⁴³² Slogans contribute to the dispersion and acceptance of both these fictions in the political market.

4.3.1. The people an inclusive and a transformative dynamic

Slogans build fictional unity and bind the people thanks to the illusion of equivalential demands. This unity is characterized by a feeling of unanimity and the refusal of a world of antagonism. Sloganeering establishes a fictive consensus both within the people in itself and between the people and the establishment. We first focus on the unanimity within the people in itself. An analysis of what “We”, “Together”, “Country” and “America” refer to is necessary to decipher the implicit concept of “people” that is conveyed. Do all slogans refer to the same people ? In order to answer these questions, we need a deeper understanding of what “people” can mean—and thus, of what “America” or “We” can refer to. According to Rosanvallon, “people” can refer to three elements.⁴³³ The “electoral people” refers to the arithmetic aggregation of individualities to form a majority. It is diversified and evanescent, but it has a strong power, notably thanks to the idea that the will of the majority represents the one of the general interest. The “social people” is the name given to minorities which bind together through events and common fights. They are figures of the social generality because they represent its constitutive minorities. Therefore, the social people has moral legitimacy.⁴³⁴ The third type of people is the “people as principle”. It is the most real of all the notions of people. It is the conception of the people that can be found in the fundamental rights—that is the figure of the discriminated, the excluded or the forgotten. The people-principle includes the whole humanity, and therefore brings the idea of political community to existence. These “three bodies of the people” lie on the people as history.⁴³⁵ The people as history is the result of the constitution of the democratic regime on a common identity. It helps tying together the will of the people and their equality. Its existence stretches on different temporalities—like the long one of memory and the short one of opinion. It engraves the momentary phenomena in the pursuit of a general goal. Within the slogans, certain clues lead towards a vision of the people and the other. We can distinguish two strategies: the first one is roots slogans in the concept of

⁴³² Rosanvallon, “La question de la légitimité démocratique.”

⁴³³ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy: Impartiality, Reflexivity, Proximity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011): 129-132.

⁴³⁴ Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁴³⁵ Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

social people and the second one stems from the people as history. Both are oriented towards the translation of these notions into an electoral people.

The slogans of the Democrats—"Yes We Can" and "Stronger Together"—are rooted in the social people. They create an atmosphere of optimism in a context of fight. "Can" and "Stronger" carry the idea of possibility and aptitude. They claim that action is possible and presupposes a current state of total or partial incapacity. Thus, "We" and "Together" are bound by a common fight against adversary forces. The only meaning these words have is their reassuring quality. "We" is a "guardian angel" associated to a "conjunction of plural and combined efforts to satisfy us."⁴³⁶ Because of the absence of reference, the addressee is free to project the fight he is leading into the words' meanings. Furthermore, the essence of the social people is the common demand that is shared by its members. We saw that the slogan contributed to the elaboration of this fictional common demand. We can add that this fiction is reinforced in the broader discourse of the campaign. For instance, President-elect Obama asserted on the day of his election: "Americans [...] sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the United States of America."⁴³⁷ Obama calls for a united force rather than for a "a collection of individuals." Thus "Yes We Can" and "Stronger Together" refer to and create a social people. In the context of a presidential campaign, the vagueness of "We" and "Together" is designed to blur the distinction between the social people and the people-electorate. The action that the addressee believes to be referred to in the slogans has to translate into votes. Nevertheless, the two slogans do not manage this transfer from social people to people-electorate the same way. "Yes We Can" presupposes this social entity and projects an active movement towards the future through the verb "can". The unanimity of the fight is not questioned. The movement goes directly towards the action, which, in the context of the campaign, means "voting". "Stronger Together," on the other hand, is designed to constitute the social people into a common fight. The movement of the two slogans is thus different. In terms of associations, "Stronger Together" is a step backwards: Clinton's slogan is a dynamic from a shattered society to a social people, while Obama's is a dynamic from a social people to an electoral one. Therefore, if the goal of these two slogans is to bring together a social generality and a unanimous voice, Obama's slogan points at the ballot boxes more straightforwardly than Clinton's.

⁴³⁶ "Ange gardien", "conjonction d'efforts pluriels concertés pour nous satisfaire", Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*, 165.

⁴³⁷ Barack Obama, "Remarks of President-Elect Barack Obama" (Chicago, IL, 2008).

Another group can be distinguished among slogans. “Make America Great Again!” and “Country First” call for the notion of people-history. Structurally, the notion of time and nationalist feelings convey the image of the people-history in “Make America Great Again!”. Indeed, it is characterized by an isotopy of time. The reference to the past and the nostalgia are acknowledgements of the nation’s historical heritage. The reference to the past associates the candidate to America’s main historical figures and makes him their legatee. It also counteracts the logical problem of the concept of revolution, which hopelessly aims to start anew and erase the past. The nationalist stereotypes emerge as a result of the use of the word “America,” as opposed to “United States” or “Country.” The slogan refers to stereotypes of the nation as heir to the Founding Fathers and to their fantasized set of values. Stereotypes are very powerful: thanks to them, the association of a proper noun to its predicate is spontaneously operated by the people’s conscience.⁴³⁸ Here, the predicate is a nationalist ideology which takes roots in the 17th and 18th century and in the Constitution. Thus, the nostalgic and nationalist significance of Trump’s slogan allows the people to identify itself to a broader national and political history.

Furthermore, one of the features of the people-history is the implication of different temporalities, from the long memory to the short opinion. We mentioned the structural hierarchy that is established between these temporalities in “Make America Great Again!”. The adverb “again” is the formal subordinate of the word “make.” It gives an argumentative value to the past: people imply their need for action from their feeling of nostalgia. Therefore, the heritage of the people-history becomes an element of proof in favor of the urge for action. In the context of the campaign, this action takes the form of electing Trump. The conversion of the people-history to the electoral people is set up by the slogan. “Country First” follows the same pattern but the slogan places less emphasis on the key concepts of tradition, time, and action. The slogan’s reference to the people-history is present, but subtle. The word “Country” is not charged with the same exceptionalist and nationalist value as “America”. We cannot categorize this slogan under the social people, as it specifically refers to the country as a whole and not as a minority united by a common fight. It relates to the people-history because it is a variation on the famous republican slogan “America First.” “America First” was used by the Republican Party throughout the 20th and 21st century to refer to the political isolationism and nationalism of the country. This historical association has three weaknesses. It appeals much more strongly to Republican voters who are sensitive to it, but it is not relatable to swing-voters

⁴³⁸ Olivier Reboul, “Slogans nationalistes”, in *Le slogan*, Éditions Complexe (Bruxelles: Presses universitaires de France, 1975).

or Democrats. Then, the slogan lacks a formal allusion to the past tradition of the country to create a link with the future. Finally, the history it refers to is very short. McCain sets himself as heir to the Republican party rather than to the Founding Fathers. In terms of electoral action, the slogan's impulse is much weaker than in "Make America Great Again!". While Trump's slogan uses a verb, the only dynamic encapsulated by McCain's formula is the superlative adverb "first." The conversion from a people as history to an electoral people is thus less powerful. Whether they refer to the people as history or to the social people, slogans create two dynamics. The first one is inclusive: it is the fictive consensus within the people that they are part of a community of demands or traditions. The second one is transformative: it is the conversion of this community into the people-electorate.

4.3.2. The legitimacy: selling legitimacy of proximity through compassion, familiarity and defective anonymity

A second fictive consensus is designed by the formulae. It creates the illusion that the people and the establishment—or society and politics—share a common direction and work hand in hand to achieve the same goal. We mentioned the historical shift from a society of the generality to a society of particularities which occurred at the turn of the 21st century. Rosanvallon theorized the translation of this shift into politics.⁴³⁹ The values of impartiality, closeness and compassion reshaped the way a country should be led. The constitution of the power of the social generality changed accordingly: the expression of the generality was not aggregative anymore. Thus, the expression of democracy was modified. A revolution in the definition of political legitimacy occurred because of the transformation of the nature of the social generality. We argue that slogans brand their candidate by asserting that he or she is legitimate because he or she acknowledges each and every social singularity—meaning that slogans brand the "legitimacy of proximity".⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, this branding strategy is an illusion. The final objective of the campaign is the vote, which actualizes the "aggregative generality" and gives legitimacy to the candidate through his establishment.⁴⁴¹ Slogans are designed to establish the legitimacy of establishment by branding the legitimacy of proximity. The legitimacy of proximity is one of the three figures of legitimacies that emerged since the 1980s. It is the result of a new way of considering generality—named by Rosanvallon as the "generality of attention to particularity."⁴⁴² The candidate to a powerful position brings the generality to reality by considering the multiplicity of the situations. He acknowledges the particularity of concrete

⁴³⁹ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 176.

⁴⁴⁰ "Légitimité de proximité", Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁴⁴¹ "Généralité agrégative", Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁴⁴² Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 185-186.

individuals, in the whole of their existence. As a result, the candidate is endowed with a legitimacy of proximity. The four slogans under study advertise the “generality of attention to particularity” through three strategies. They are familiar, compassionate and unlike commercial slogans, their imperfect anonymity serves their purpose.

Apart from the absence of reference of the formula, the slogan’s anonymity relies on the “transfer” of emotion from the addresser to the addressee that “gives the addresser the illusion that he is the origin” of the message.⁴⁴³ In other words, anonymity stems from the focus on the conative function of language, theorized by Jakobson.⁴⁴⁴ The conative function of language engages the addressee rather than the addresser. Obama is the only candidate who made the choice to make his voice audible. McCain’s, Clinton’s and Trump’s slogans imperfectly anonymize the voice of their candidate. Structurally, the slogans’ syntax is anonymous thanks to two strategies: it either plays on the conative or on the referential functions. “Make America Great Again!” operates a transfer of emotion through a motivational process. Even though many interpretations of the mode of the verb “make” are available to the addressee, it remains a formal imperative with a powerful conative function. The origin of the order is hidden behind the addressee. The voice of the candidate is thus anonymous. On the other hand, “Stronger Together” and “America First” focus on the referential function—that is the characterization of the object which is talked about. It also constitutes a way of anonymizing the candidate by hiding it behind “America” or “Together.” The slogans refer to an object, not to a character. Nevertheless, the anonymity that is created by both these strategies is only superficial. In the context of political campaigns in the post-broadcast era, the slogan is attached to a broader discourse which immediately associates the slogan to its brand. Thus, Trump, Clinton and McCain’s slogans imperfectly aim to conceal the voice of the candidate itself. On that matter, Obama’s slogan has to be separated from the three others. “Yes We Can” does not try to conceal the voice of the candidate but to anonymize the community. The choice of the interjection “Yes” in Obama’s slogan brings the focus on the candidate himself. Because the campaign brands a specific voice, the electorate spontaneously refer to him as the origin of the message. It has an expressive function. It bears almost exclusively the Jakobsonian emotive function of language, which produces a cognitive acknowledgement of the voice from which the message is originated. It is a way for the slogan to clearly mention the origin of the impulse encapsulated in the slogan through the use of the verb “can.” The transfer of emotion is thus not anonymous,

⁴⁴³ “Un bon slogan réussit à donner à son destinataire l’illusion qu’il est son destinataire ;” trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 34.

⁴⁴⁴ Roman Jakobson, “Chapter XI,” in *Essais de Linguistique Générale* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1963).

and Obama's voice remains present. Structurally, "Yes We Can" does not conceal its origin, but the nature of the community. The order of the words is very meaningful: "yes" calls for the definition of the origin of the slogan—that is Obama. "We" is partially anonymous as it refers to Obama and a mass. It could be Obama and anybody, whether they are his supporters, his family, or Biden. The presence of the candidate's voice is thus not questioned. Only the supporters are anonymous. Nevertheless, strategies of dispersion and disincarnating of the slogan were implemented to counteract Obama's presence in his slogan. Contextually, the campaign offered the opportunity of the supporters to enter the anonymous community expressed in the slogan. For example, "MyBo"—a "neighbor-to-neighbor technic" designed to attract voters—sent printable material to Obama's supporters.⁴⁴⁵ The viral video clip "Yes We Can," made by Will.I.Am, was also an example of reappropriation of the message by the electorate. As a result, Obama made the crowd the central actor of his campaign "not overshadowing the candidate but engaging with him."⁴⁴⁶ Anonymity is thus a process that is implemented by all four slogans, but it is defective: the candidate is always audible through his message. Trump, Clinton and McCain are less present in their slogans than Obama. In all slogans, the community is anonymous. Thus, Reboul asserts that "the real slogan is anonymous in two ways" because we ignore both its author and its addressee.⁴⁴⁷ This creates a proximity between the candidate and its electorate, who are connected by a same message. The author of the slogan is an unidentified mass unified by an identified candidate. The presence of his voice is stronger in "Yes We Can," than in any other slogan, and it is a strength in the context of personalized branding. Consequently, our slogans operate a technique called imputation—"the fact of disqualifying an individual or a group by giving him credit" for the message.⁴⁴⁸ Anonymizing does not only conceal the origin of the message, it also removes the identity of the addressee by forcing a message into his thoughts and facilitating its assimilation. Therefore, the audience has the feeling that the candidate addresses his message to him. He has the illusion that he is part of the "generality of attention to particularity", which gives the "legitimacy of proximity" to the candidate.

Second of all, this feeling of contiguity between the candidate and the voters is created by the familiar relationship that is implied by the formulae. Historically, familiarity in politics is not new. Presidents such as Kennedy in the 1970s and Jackson in the 19th century already shared

⁴⁴⁵ Karen Finey in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, "Chapter 7: Political Party Panel".

⁴⁴⁶ Robert E. Brown, "Conjuring Unity: The Politics of the Crowd and the Poetics of the Candidate," *American Behavioral Scientist* 54, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 386.

⁴⁴⁷ "Le vrai slogan est anonyme dans un double sens ;" trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 34.

⁴⁴⁸ "L'imputation : le fait de disqualifier un individu ou un groupe en lui attribuant la paternité," trans. from Reboul, *Le slogan*, 34.

elements of their personal life to the people. Yet, this method was simply part of a communication process. It only aimed at showing a political image, not the essence of the politician's identity. These behaviors did not reflect the presidents' character. A real rupture occurred at the turn of the 19th century, as empathy became part and parcel of the brand essence.⁴⁴⁹ Our slogans encapsulate the familiarity that is now the norm. We underlined the importance of unifying the heteroglossy that characterized the social sphere, especially in the context of a populist discourse.⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, we can go further in the analysis of this heteroglossy. Indeed, not only do the candidates unify a plural linguistic field, they also unify it behind a singular voice. The familiar voice that is characteristic of slogans bind the electoral community behind the candidate. Thus, a very effective advertising technique is to make voters hear a real voice. In that sense, the familiarity of words such as “great” in “Make America Great Again!” which belong to the modern colloquial language, contributes to the construction of the brand's ethos. “Rather than speechifying [Trump] just talks, which strokes exactly the sensibility that makes slogans like [...] "Yes We Can" so effective in our times.”⁴⁵¹ Obama's slogan is triggered by the interjection “Yes.” It encapsulates the Jakobsonian emotive function of language and highlights the voice from which the message is originated. The simplicity of the propositions and the Saxon origin shared by all of our slogans' vocabulary are also evidences that slogans convey a feeling of familiarity—and thus proximity—between politicians and their electorate. Indeed, Greven underlines that words from Saxon origins are “concrete,” as opposed to words from a Latin origin “more abstract and having a vague residue of intellectualism.”⁴⁵² This process comes as a rupture with the technocratic language that used to be the norm.

The third strategy implemented by slogans to endow the candidates with “legitimacy of proximity” is compassion. It is the result of a transformation of the criteria of political credibility in our contemporary democracies. The presence, accessibility and empathy of the candidate is a strong asset for a political campaign. In this society, there is an increased need of visualizing those for whom we vote.⁴⁵³ The empathy that is now a main characteristic of political discourse is also a result of Bush's companionate conservatism. Alongside with his project of deinstitutionalizing the public matter, Bush adopted a politic of the affects and not of

⁴⁴⁹ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 190-191.

⁴⁵⁰ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, referred to in Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁴⁵¹ McWhorter, “Campaign Slogans.”

⁴⁵² Les mots “à caractère concret ” plaisent davantage à la masse, plutôt que les mots d'origine franco-latine “plus abstraits et ayant un vague relent d'intellectualisme ;” trans. from Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*, p. 145.

⁴⁵³ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 190-191.

ideas. Manifestations of empathy became more important than the link of obligation between citizens and politicians.⁴⁵⁴ This rhetoric “built a tight emotive connection between the candidate and their supporters.”⁴⁵⁵ The most effective strategy to convey a sense of empathy is the use of synecdoche. The synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part of something refers to the whole, and vice-versa. It is a metasememe—a figure of speech which concerns the meaning of a word or proposition.⁴⁵⁶ The rhetoric of the desire in slogans rests upon a synecdoche. The energy, which is evident in society, substitutes itself to action, which is accidental. Thus, the audience cognitively associates a real energy with a potential action, which he has to define. This is visible in the verbs and the adverbs of the slogans—meaning in the elements which semantically carry movement. Indeed, we mentioned the ambivalence of “make” in Trump’s slogan. Understood as an imperative, the verb is timeless and constitutes a stance of the speaker before his speech act.⁴⁵⁷ “Make” can also be an indicative in the major proposition spontaneously inferred from the slogan. In that case, the present tense does not have any limitation either in the past or in the future. Thus, the audience is only left with the energy. Finally, if the voter understands “make” as an infinitive, he is only left with the virtuality of the process.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, however you interpret it, the energy conveyed by “Make America Great Again!” is virtual—it is not incarnated in any concrete action. The absence of limitation of the present tense in “Yes We Can” has the same effect; an infinite movement is generated and extends between the instantaneous action and the permanent movement. Furthermore, as a modal, “can” lacks a qualificative element, in the form of a semantical verb, to make the energy a reality.

The movement of “Country First” is encapsulated in the adverb “first.” This seme encapsulates a plurality of concrete definitions: it can express a temporal or spatial reality. The absence of precise meaning of this adverb prevents the voter from visualizing the concrete action that is implied. The same can be said about “Stronger Together,” which displays this strategy twice. The adverbial proposition lacks the definition of the strength and of the community to specify what accidental action is referred to. Voters are thus left with a general and evident movement, which is shared by any society. The audience has to characterize the “accidental” action. The formulae are solicitations to the voters. These solicitations are conveyed through the incitation of imperatives, the assertive statements of verbless proposition

⁴⁵⁴ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 198.

⁴⁵⁵ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 56.

⁴⁵⁶ Reboul, *Le slogan*, 77.

⁴⁵⁷ Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan,” 279 ; referring to Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité* ;

⁴⁵⁸ Domínguez, “La rhétorique du slogan ”

and the declaration of affirmative and infinitive sentences. Our four slogans share a common antonomasia of energy: the energy substitutes itself to action. Cognitively, citizens have to define this action more precisely in order to conceptualize it. It gives them the feeling that this energy is more specific than it actually is; their worries and concerns are going to be taken care of. It thus conveys a sense of empathy from the candidate to his electorate. Through the use of these three strategies—an intentionally defective anonymity, a familiarity and a compassion—slogans convey the idea of a “generality of attention to particularity.” Because voters feel like the generality is acknowledge by the candidate, the endow him with the “legitimacy of proximity.”⁴⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the legitimacy of proximity is only a pretext to actualize the aggregative generalization which ultimately leads to political representation.

4.3.3. The electoral process

The slogans implicitly refer to the electoral process in itself. The conclusion of the psychological process triggered by slogans is always “Vote for the candidate.” In this context, what does “voting” mean? Slogans build an aggregative generalization. This generalization rests upon the idea that the representative body represents the people who elected it. The reason why slogans build a fictional unanimous community—united to its political representatives by a legitimacy of proximity—is the electoral finality. We mentioned the multiple evolutions that are occurring in the political market in our era. The erosion of the electoral sacredness is a key element in this context: it does not have a dimension of determination of the politic or of shaping of the future anymore. It has taken the form of the selection of a candidate, hence the absence of emphasis placed on the program in itself.⁴⁶⁰ This candidate has to be both the expert and the neighbor. We argue that the slogan makes the candidates appear as experts by putting an ideology forward, and as neighbors by implying that the voters are in power. Nevertheless, the presence of a doctrinaire ideological message can be counterproductive.

4.3.3.1. *The candidate is an expert: doctrinaire or popular ideologies*

The slogans we study are political, but some are more ideological than others. A “political” slogan has four characteristics. Its goal is “power.” It appeals to “collective interests,” it results in the “association of individuals” and the addressee is “active.”⁴⁶¹ On the other hand, “ideological” slogans are “spontaneous,” it regularly reappears in the social context and it aims at “justifying a collective practice.”⁴⁶² Reboul illustrates this distinction by asserting

⁴⁵⁹ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 185-186.

⁴⁶⁰ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 197-198.

⁴⁶¹ Reboul, “Slogans publicitaires, politiques, idéologiques,” in *Le slogan*.

⁴⁶² Reboul, *Le slogan*, 91.

that “I like Ike” is a political slogan with electoral ambitions, and “the defense of the free world” is an ideological one. All of our slogans combine the four characteristics of a political slogan. Nevertheless, in order to encourage people to vote, slogans encapsulate ideological reminders. These ideologies can be “doctrinaire” or “popular”. “Doctrinaire” ideologies are “explicit formulations of certain fictions lived on the popular level”.⁴⁶³ “Make America Great Again!” and “Country First” advertise the national exceptionalism, conveyed by the word “America” and the reference to the slogan “America First.” They focus on a myth of a powerful country. On the other hand, “Yes We Can!” and “Stronger Together” are “popular” ideologies: they are “a complex of ideas and beliefs.”⁴⁶⁴ They formulate the fiction of the community. “Popular” ideologies are not selective and repressive like “doctrinaire ones.” This distinction is further developed by Upshaw, who asserts that Obama’s slogan is part of “politicians populism.” It is thus a “broad, nonideological coalition-building” formula.⁴⁶⁵ We argue that “Yes We Can” is in fact ideological, but not “doctrinaire”. Thus, Republican and Democratic slogans promote different kinds of ideologies. Candidates align with an ideological message. Nevertheless, another criterion helps us categorize slogans—the way this ideology is publicized. Depending on this criterion, the presence of an ideological message within the formula can be an asset or a disadvantage. McCain’s slogan, for instance, is more straightforwardly ideological than Obama’s. Indeed, the Republican slogan spontaneously refers to “America First” which is an ideological slogan belonging to the Republican set of values. This characteristic could stem from the overlapping of messages from the RNC in McCain’s campaign because of its financial support. This element could explain the difficulties McCain’s campaign faced in 2008: the nature of his slogan itself was not adapted to the new era of personalized branding. Thus, the slogans are clearly political ones. Nevertheless, they brand their candidates as heir to an ideological message, either socialist or nationalist. Ideological messages can be doctrinaire or popular ideologies. This strategy can associate the candidate to an ideological heritage and a sense of exceptionalism: he is the political expert for whom the electorate should vote. It can also hinder the construction of the candidate’s ethos.

⁴⁶³ Niveau “doctrinaire,” Jacques Ellul, “Le Rôle Médiateur de l’idéologie,” in *Démythisation et Idéologie: Actes Du Colloque Organisé Par Le Centre International d’Etudes Humanistes (Rom) et Par l’Institut d’Etudes Philosophiques (Istituto Di Studi Filosofici) de Rome.*, by Enrico Castelli and Centro Internazionale di Studi Umanistici (Paris: Aubier, 1973), 338; referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 117.

⁴⁶⁴ Ellul, “Le Rôle Médiateur de l’idéologie,” 338 ; referred to in Reboul, *Le slogan*, 117.

⁴⁶⁵ Upshaw, *Building Brand Identity*, xii; referred to in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 16.

4.3.3.2. *The candidate is a neighbor: voters are also in charge*

The candidate is also branded as its public's neighbor. The rhetoric of proximity and empathy contributes to this strategy. This rhetoric is completed by an underlying discourse regarding both the act of voting in itself and the status of the leader.

The vision of the electoral process that is conveyed by slogans is very specific. The election of a representing body is implied to be a way for citizens to control the politics via the election. This point of view stands in opposition to a vision of the election as an act of confidence—as an abandon of the people's power to the representing body. This is noticeable through the use of the verb “Make” in “Make America Great Again!”: the voter is asked to take an active part in the amelioration of America. The same idea is expressed by the inclusion of the addressee conveyed by “we” and “together” in Clinton and Obama's slogans. “Yes We Can” implies a “potential for collective political action.”⁴⁶⁶ The people are part of a movement. Nevertheless, McCain's slogan does not convey the same idea: it is part of a rhetoric of heroization of the candidate. The brand identity that McCain tried to build emphasized his dedication, experience and heroism during the war.⁴⁶⁷ But the heroic individual is outside of society.⁴⁶⁸ Thus, it is not the voter's neighbor, and McCain does not implicitly empower his electorate by this formula. The electorate is not in control; it is asked to defer its powers. We can analyze a second underlying discourse in the slogans regarding the status of the leader. Indeed, the slogans do not convey any argument or idea, they are vague, non-referential and semantically empty. We underlined how their rhetoric exclusively focused on ethos and pathos rather than on logos. The slogans do not try to “shape [...] opinions,” but to “[mimic] what specific voters thought about selected issues.”⁴⁶⁹ This strategy, identified by Gillies as “mere pandering,”⁴⁷⁰ redefines the role of the leader. It creates a complete rupture with the theory of democratic representation from which stemmed the creation of the United States. Madison's argument in favor of a wide “republic” is questioned.⁴⁷¹ Indeed, in 1787, the politician theorized the need for a balance between a direct democracy and a representative republic. He underlined the need for “fit characters” who would be competent enough to effectively represent the majority.⁴⁷² In this

⁴⁶⁶ Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 184.

⁴⁶⁷ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 15.

⁴⁶⁸ Leroy Dorsey, “The Rhetorical Presidency and the Myth of the American Dream,” in *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. James A. Aune and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station, TX: A & M University Press, 2008); referred to in Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 27.

⁴⁶⁹ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 31.

⁴⁷⁰ Gillies, *Political Marketing in the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election*, 31.

⁴⁷¹ Rosanvallon, *Les Métamorphoses de La Légitimité (La Démocratie Au XXI^e Siècle, III)*.

⁴⁷² James Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” in *The Federalist Papers*, by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961).

conception of the representative body, election represents the voters' choice of a body which is more capable than them. This theory introduces a conscient hierarchy between the representatives and the represented. Our slogans come as a rupture with this conception because they are meant to create the illusion that the speakers are both the representatives and the represented. This is the result two elements—the fictive unity that they create and the freedom that is left to the audience to determine the direction of the energy launched by the formula. “Country First” mentions neither hierarchy nor unity: only the object remains. “Make America Great Again!” goes as far as employing an ambiguous imperative, which, consciously or not, places the voter as the main actor in the process. “Yes We Can” conceal the necessary hierarchy that will be created as a result of the electoral process by creating a collective movement. “Stronger Together” also conceals the hierarchy but does not take the collectivity for granted. In so doing, the formula conveys an idea of representation based on communication between the body of representatives and the represented. This vision could be linked to Durkheim's conception of democracy as a “symbiosis of government and society.”⁴⁷³ In this context, communication between the two bodies is key. The state is a reflection of society; representation is not a substitution. The communication should be a permanent exchange between power and society. The general will is not already constituted but set in a constant motion of generalization of the social. This constant motion is the one in which “Stronger Together” is set. Nevertheless, implying such a philosophical stance on politics is contradictory with the form of the slogan. this conception of democracy presupposes a constructive communication between the body of the represented and the one of the representatives. The form of the slogan does not allow this effort of deliberation and this reflexive interaction. Thus, the action and the process of voting is cognitively linked to a specific vision of the electoral process. Contrary to Madison's conception, the representative body is actually the mirror of the people it represents.

The nature of the unity that is advertised by slogans is characterized by a fictional unanimity. First, unanimity between the people in itself results in a dynamic from either the social people or the people-history to the people-electorate. This dynamic has two sides: it is inclusive and transformative. It is the fictive consensus within the people that they are part of a community of demands or traditions and it is the conversion of this community into the people-

⁴⁷³ Émile Durkheim, “Chapter IX: Civic Morals (End)—Form of the State—Democracy,” in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992): 124-136; Émile Durkheim, “Chapter VII: Civic Morals (Continued)—Form of the State—Democracy,” in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992): 154-167; referred to in Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy: Impartiality, Reflexivity, Proximity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 213-214.

electorate. Second, unanimity between the representatives and the represented is conveyed by the defective anonymity, the familiarity and the empathy that our slogans share. It creates the illusion of a “generality of attention to personality” and gives the candidates the “legitimacy of proximity.”⁴⁷⁴ This process of creation of a fictional unanimity remains unclear in “Country First,” and this might be one of the reasons why the slogan was perceived as ineffective. Consequently, this dual unanimity does not properly translate into a specific idea of the electoral process. On the other hand, the absence of hierarchy between the leader and his electorate in the three other slogans gives the people an unconditional power. A very limited amount of words conveys a whole political theory. That way, slogans influences the way voters choose their representatives, and thus modify the “brand essence” of the candidate whom they promote. The underlying advertising strategy can be defined as such: politicians build their brand identities by playing with fantasy (what might be) and ideology (what is).⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Rosanvallón, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 185-186

⁴⁷⁵ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” 43.

Conclusion

Slogans are very short formulae, central to political campaigns. Mechanisms are implemented by the campaign strategists to convey a specific message about the brand.

The literature on slogans is part of a historical dynamic. At the beginning of the 20th century, the burgeoning research on sociology encouraged an analysis of the contexts of production and reception of slogans. The emergence of formalism placed emphasis on the structure of the linguistic events they represented. The evolution of political contexts and the emergence of political branding led to an analysis of slogans as part of advertising strategies. Today, cognitive and neurolinguistic analyses reinforce these theories. Scientists have used multiple methods to analyze the formulae. A synthesis of the theoretical frames implemented in these investigations has led to the creation of a protocol. Some analyses—like the ones of Lumley, Sherif, Bellak and Doving—produced descriptive and sociological analyses of the context of production of slogans. In an era where political propaganda was part of everyday life, the Marxist bias against the concept of slogans themselves hindered the neutrality of those scholars' scientific approach, and their studies lacked an analysis of the formal structure of slogans. The major changes in the analysis of slogans were grounded in the emergence of Chomsky's transformative grammar, the communicational study of Jakobson, Benveniste and Austin, Husserl's studies on logic and the General Rhetoric (Groupe Mu, Genette and Fontainier).⁴⁷⁶ It allowed Reboul and Noble to adopt a rhetorical approach: language came to be seen as an act of language in relation to its context.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, psycho-analytical, symbolic, and political understanding lacked a proper structural methodology which could help us identify the signifier of slogan. Underlying this issue, Greven draws a link between the symbols and the form of slogans, the signifier and the signified.⁴⁷⁸ Grunig and Baidullayeva go further in the analysis by connecting cognition to structuralism: their investigation of the logic of slogans provides a first understanding at how they bypass the mental censure and influence our votes.⁴⁷⁹ The definition of slogans as part of an advertising campaign allows us to understand how a “brand steward” designed it to encapsulate a “brand essence” in a “political market.” The slogan is created to fit a branding message, but it ultimately characterizes the “brand identity” of the object marketed.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*; Husserl, *Logical Investigations*.; Jakobson, “Chapter XI.”

⁴⁷⁷ Noble, *The effective echo*; Reboul, *Le slogan*.

⁴⁷⁸ Greven, *La langue des slogans publicitaires*.

⁴⁷⁹ Baidullayeva, “Cognitive Mechanisms of Linguistic Manipulation in Advertising Slogans”; Grunig, *Les mots de la publicité*.

⁴⁸⁰ Sizemore, “Branding Rhetoric and the 2008 Presidential Campaign.”

The protocol that we designed to analyze slogans is based on a meta-analysis of the studies of the political market and the brand strategy. Who designs slogans? To what purpose? Who will receive it? In what context? What main message needs to be communicated from the advertising team to the voters? Then, the structuralist approach adopted in this study aims to understand the linguistic strategies that were implemented by the advertising team to convey this specific message. It operates on three levels—the slogan's morphosyntax, its phonetic design, and its lexico-semantic characteristics. This investigation provides us with an explanation of why slogans are designed the way they are. On this first analysis is based a second one: how do the slogans act on the environment from where they stem? How do they actively play a role in the outcome of the campaign and, ultimately, of the election? The answer to these questions lies in an investigation of the rhetoric of slogans which plays on logic and on cognition. Therefore, it has a very powerful role within society and politics.

This protocol allows us to analyze the Republican and Democratic slogans of the main candidates of the 2008 and 2016 campaigns. The context and branding strategies of the two elections were very similar. The audience had similar economic and cultural concerns—the economic concern of the electorate in 2016 resonated with the economic deficit and the financial crisis of 2008. Similarly, racist and xenophobic feelings, as well as the suspicion towards the political establishment and traditional media are patterns of both presidential elections. In 2008, McCain's slogan emphasized the ethos of a heroic persona while Obama's was bearing a unifying message. The overlapping of the RNC message and the degradation of McCain's ethos hindered his advertising campaign. Obama, on the other hand, very skillfully associated his name to change. The 2016 campaign also pitted the candidate of change (Trump) against the candidate of experience and inclusiveness. These messages were conveyed by the linguistic structures of the slogan. In 2008, Obama's "Yes We Can" was opposed to McCain's "Country First." The phonetic analysis of "Yes We Can" underlines that Obama's advertising team chose to showcase a voice, rather than an advertising slogan. The message of the candidate's "brand essence" was properly encapsulated: the vocative and the ambiguity of the slogan conveys the ideas of optimism, community and movement. The incomplete dynamic encapsulated in the formula allowed voters to feel united by a common fight. "Country First," on the other hand, triggered a less powerful impulse because of the absence of a verb. The interpretation implied by McCain's slogan was more straightforward. The formula neither showed a mastery of the phonetic characteristics nor tried to stand out from the rules of sloganeering. The bland formula lacks regularity and thus can hardly be memorized and repeated. The slogan creates an atmosphere of optimism and exceptionalism. Nevertheless, the scale of value on which the formula is placed is left for the voters to decide. "Yes We Can"

embodied the change of his brand essence, while “Country First” suffered both from its phonetic and from the flaws of its candidate’s ethos.

In 2016, “Make America Great Again” conveyed a dynamic towards the future, supported by a nostalgic reference to the past. The ambiguity of the verb allowed voters to project their own desire. Nevertheless, cognitively, the underlying imperative form urged the people to vote for the candidate. The mastery of the phonic codes made the slogan very easy to memorize, repeatable, and suited for its diffusion on social networks. It associated the candidate with the origins of the country while emphasizing the state in which it currently was in the candidate’s view. Trump’s slogan leaves the audience with an overall feeling of enthusiasm and energy which is ambiguous enough to allow antithetical interpretations. Clinton’s slogan is formally the less equivocal. It plays on an isotopy of movement: the slogan expresses both empowerment and unity. Nevertheless, the absence of verb weakens the feeling of dynamic. Furthermore, the consonants dominate the phonetic patterns, and do not facilitate repetition. “Make America Great Again!” confirmed the maverick identity of the candidate and provided him with a sense of heritage. On the other hand, “Stronger Together” was harder to repeat and its lack of ambiguity did not allow voters to project their own desires in the formula.

Understanding their formal features highlight how some formulae are more likely to be memorized than others. The slogans’ rhetoric encapsulates a clear political message and an interpretation of the political reality. In a populist discourse, slogans are tools characterized by “empty signifiers” connecting “together popular demands in a chain of equivalence.” This “stable discourse” is deployed through the differentiation of an excluded element.⁴⁸¹ Produced in dislocated social orders, slogans create antagonisms through contradictory or contrary antonyms and bind the electorate together by creating the illusion of the existence of equivalential demands.⁴⁸² This fictional unity results in fictional unanimity. First, a fictive consensus is established amongst the people: the slogan creates the illusion that they are part of a united community of demands or traditions. This consensus is built upon the inclusive and transformative conversion of this community into the people-electorate. Second, the fictional unanimity is the unanimity between the representatives and the represented conveyed by the defective anonymity, the familiarity and the empathy that our slogans share. It creates the illusion of a “generality of attention to personality” and gives the candidates the “legitimacy of proximity.”⁴⁸³ Slogans influence the way voters choose their representatives, and thus alter the

⁴⁸¹ Savage, “Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” 181.

⁴⁸² Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 70-71

⁴⁸³ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, 185-186

“brand essence” of the candidate whom they promote: the candidate appears both as the expert and as the neighbor.

This analysis of the campaign slogans of 2008 and 2016 evidences the relative quality of the formulae in the context of the elections. The relationship between the slogan and its brand is reciprocal: slogans are grounded in a specific brand narrative, the essence of which they have to convey. Nevertheless, they add to this brand narrative by conveying a specific idea of politics and of the candidate, and by being appropriated by the audience through repetition and memorization. Nevertheless, slogans bypass logic and create a sensation of obviousness. They undermine the debate and the communication by appealing to emotions. The appeal to passion becomes a justification in itself, and the concepts seem self-evident. Therefore, we constantly need to bring awareness to slogans, especially amongst citizens. Properly analyzed, slogans can tell us a lot more than what they were meant to conceal.

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