*Flags for Everyone: A Creative Approach to
Rethinking Flag Design*

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Gregory Padgett

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jörn Seemann

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which flag designs have impacted different communities of people on the city, county, state, and national levels. Topics of discussion include the importance of a flag to a group of people, the five design principles that go into making a well-designed flag, how different U.S. communities have already successfully changed their flag, and why a nationwide flag overhaul could be beneficial to modern American society.

This thesis also has a creative portion that takes a closer look into the designs of Indiana's city and county flags. Based upon my research into the five principles of good flag design, I rate and critique several of Indiana's existing city and county flags, design new flags for select Indiana counties and Muncie neighborhoods, and redesign the Muncie flag.

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Process Analysis Statement

As a geography student at Ball State University, I have always been fascinated by the wide scope of topics that geography covers. One topic that I have especially always had an interest in regarding cultural geography is vexillology, which is the study of flags. I knew that for my thesis I wanted to do something involving vexillology, but I was not sure at first what I specifically wanted to focus on.

Thankfully, several meetings during the 2020-21 school year with Dr. Jörn Seemann helped me narrow down what I wanted to focus on for a flag-based project. With the country having been in the midst of a divisive presidential election year filled with numerous protests and riots, Dr. Seemann suggested that I start looking into the impact, importance, and changing meanings of flag symbolism. On top of that, Dr. Seemann suggested that I look into how different geographic scales play into a flag's impact since there is a clear distinction between how many people connect with a national flag versus a city flag.

Above all, Dr. Seemann emphasized that I contemplate the What, How, Why, and For Whom of my project. The "What" asks what do I want to do, and I want to research the effects of flag design on people by specifically focusing on the impacts of geographic scale and the five principles of good flag design. The "How" asks how will I go about completing the project, and I decided that I want to do a creative project that is supplemented by a paper. The creative portion illustrates any flags that I analyze or design myself throughout the project's duration, and the paper includes all of my findings and thought processes. The "Why" asks why am I doing this project, and I am doing this project because of all the news stories in recent years that have questioned the meaning of various flags and how some flag designs have changed as a result of a controversial or insufficient meaning. Lastly, the "For Whom" asks who my target audience is

for this project, and this project is targeted to anybody who wants to feel a stronger connection to a flag that represents them and perhaps wants a better understanding on how to successfully redesign a flag.

After having those plans thought out, there was one additional topic I wanted to focus on. After having lived in Muncie for several years, I wondered if my project could take a local approach by redesigning the city flag of Muncie. When I presented this idea to Dr. Seemann, his advice was to create a spreadsheet of Indiana city and county flags so that I could visually compare how other Indiana flags looked in comparison to Muncie's flag. Ultimately, this spreadsheet became the inspiration for the project's creative portion as it focuses specifically on Indiana flags.

After having gathered new ideas throughout the spreadsheet's creation, my next step was figuring out how to display everything in a visually appealing manner. Therefore, I created an ESRI ArcGIS StoryMap. StoryMaps offers users various templates to help tell a narrative using maps combined with text, images, and videos. For this project, I used a Shortlist template, and a Shortlist allowed me to display a list of flags with their pictures on one side and a map of each flag's location on the other side. Therefore, users could learn more about a flag by either clicking on the flag's picture itself or by searching for a place on the map.

Furthermore, the StoryMap was broken up into three sections. The first section, Indiana City Flags, features most of the city flags I found for the spreadsheet, and I critique them based on the five principles of good flag design from the North American Vexillological Association. The second section, Indiana County Flags, also critiques existing flags that were found for the spreadsheet, but it adds in the extra step of designing completely new flags for various Indiana counties. The new flags were designed to practice incorporating the five principles of good flag

design into a flag, and they were designed to popularize the concept of county flags. Lastly, the Muncie Neighborhoods section fully features newly designed flags for five Muncie neighborhoods. This section was created to experiment with flag design on a small scale that does not typically have flags. Additionally, a new citywide flag was created for Muncie as a product of what I have learned from comparing and contrasting different city and county flags with Muncie's flag using the five design principles.

      Overall, throughout the process of writing my thesis, critiquing existing flag designs, and designing completely new flags, I have developed a better understanding of how flags impact people on different geographic scales and how a flag's design can influence the significance of a flag's impact on people. My hope is that my research makes people more aware about how flags can represent areas of all different sizes and how important it is to have a well-designed flag that represents all people under the jurisdiction that it represents.

What is a Flag?

When hoisted atop a pole, a flag looks simple and calm when flying in mid-air, yet flags are more complex and have a greater impact on our lives than what many might think. The different colors, shapes, and emblems on flags are all planned out to represent what is valued by a group of people that live in the location that a flag is representing. Also, flags are everywhere in the sense that flags can represent large-scale regions such as countries and states as well as small-scale regions such as counties and cities. There is even a field of study dedicated to flag design known as vexillology, which can be defined as, "The scientific study of the history, symbolism, and usage of flags or, by extension, any interest in flags in general" (NAVA, n.d.).

Despite everything that goes into the making of a flag, a flag's meaning will likely change over time, or a flag can fail at fully embodying the people that live within the region a flag is representing. For example, one flag whose meaning has changed over time is the Confederate battle flag. Ever since the American Civil War, Americans have debated whether the Confederate battle flag represents Southern heritage or racism. Studies show that in 1992, the percentage of Americans who viewed the Confederate battle flag as a symbol of Southern pride was 69 percent, and the percentage of Americans who viewed it as a symbol of racism was 22 percent. In 2015, the percentage of Americans who viewed the flag as a symbol of Southern pride decreased to 54 percent, and the percentage of Americans who viewed it as a symbol of racism increased to 34 percent (Lippard 2017, 156-157).

Several events just in the past decade show the shifting views of the Confederate battle flag. First, the Confederate battle flag was removed from the grounds of the South Carolina State Capitol Building in 2015 after flying there for 54 years. This decision came in the aftermath of a church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina that same year when a mass shooter made his way

into the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and killed nine African Americans. Photos that emerged after the shooting showed the shooter posing with the Confederate battle flag. Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley signed the bill removing the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds and later said, "No one should drive by the statehouse and feel pain. No one should drive by the statehouse and feel like they don't belong" (Izadi and McCrummen 2015). More recently, the Confederate battle flag was seen throughout the U.S. Capitol Building during the Capitol Insurrection that took place on January 6, 2021. Penn State Professor William Blair made the powerful observation that, "The Confederate flag made it deeper into Washington on January 6, 2021 than it did during the Civil War" (Cramer 2021).

While the Confederate flag often gets a bad rap, the American flag has also gone through changing meanings and fails to make some ethnic groups feel included. One point in American history when the American flag was widely celebrated and brought Americans together was in the aftermath of 9/11. Demand for American flags increased so dramatically that many American flags had to be foreign-made. In 2000, sales of foreign-made American flags were worth about $750,000, and that figure soared to $51 Million in 2001 (Marshall 2016, 19). An Vu, the son of Vietnamese immigrants, reminisced on the feeling of the American flag after 9/11 telling NPR that, "I hope that flying the flag can return to what we felt like after September 11. The sense of unity, the way we were able to grow together after that was really amazing" (Mann 2020).

The feeling of patriotism shortly after 9/11 has long faded away, and perceptions of the American flag have shifted. For example, shortly after Donald Trump won the 2016 Presidential Election, flag burnings occurred at several universities including American University, Hampshire College, and the University of Missouri at Columbia. At Occidental College, the campus Republican group had a display set up with 2,996 American flags symbolizing the lives

lost on 9/11, and those flags were later found removed and in the trash. The college's Coalition for Diversity and Equity did not take responsibility for removing and trashing the flags, but they did make a statement saying that, "This flag is a symbol of institutionalized violence (genocide, rape, slavery, colonialism, etc.) against people of color, domestically as well as globally. Additionally, if the goal of the memorial is to commemorate the lives lost during September 11, the singular nature of the American flag fails to account for the diversity of lives lost on that day" (Jaschik 2016).

Ultimately, while Americans are bitterly divided on the meanings of the Confederate and American flags, both flags have had changing meanings and fail to fairly represent people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. These two flags are widely recognizable on a national and international level, and it can be difficult to encapsulate the values of one large land area consisting of many people groups with just one flag. Therefore, it is important to consider the geographic scale that a flag represents. While national flags are widely known for the large populations and land areas they represent, flags also exist on the state, county, and city levels. Despite the changes in levels of representation, any flag can successfully and fully represent a group of people if designed right.

For example, the flag of Chicago is highly-regarding for its design and loved by many of its residents. The flag of Chicago has three white stripes to symbolize the North, West, and South sides of the city, two blue stripes to represent Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, and the canal, and four red stars to represent four major historical events: The Founding of Fort Dearborn, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and the Century of Progress Exposition of 1933–34 (Loerzel 2013). What makes Chicago's flag so popular is that it is able to pack in lots of meaning and symbolism into just a few simple shapes and colors that all

blend together well. Ted Kaye, a vexillologist with the North American Vexillological Association, even points out that, "When a police officer or a firefighter dies in Chicago, often it's not the flag of the United States on his casket. It can be the flag of the city of Chicago. That's how deeply the flag has gotten into the civic imagery of Chicago" (Vaughn 2019).

With the Chicago flag in mind, one must consider how important design and meaning are for a flag. In order for a place to have a flag that is as successful and impactful as Chicago's flag, a flag must incorporate symbolism that represents the entirety of a place and not just some of it, and a flag must also have a design that is not too bland yet not too sophisticated. For people who are interested in redesigning a flag for a place they strongly connect with and want to better unify their city, county, state, or even nation, thankfully there exists a guide of design principles that can help with designing flags.

The Guide to Making a Good Flag

In 2006, aforementioned vexillologist Ted Kaye compiled the research of many vexillologists into a short guide called "Good Flag, Bad Flag: How to Design a Great Flag." In this guide, Ted Kaye lists and discusses five principles of good flag design. These flag design principles can help create a meaningful flag that will look good in all sorts of scenarios whether it is flying from a pole, draping limp, or displayed on a lapel pin. It is important to note that these five design principles are good suggestions for flag creation rather than strict rules that need to be followed. Listed below are the five principles of good flag design along with flags that do and do not follow these principles well:

1. Keep it Simple

When a flag is hoisted to a pole and flying in mid-air, flag viewers at ground level are only able to see the largest details. Therefore, it is important that a flag uses large shapes and

only a few colors. A good rule of thumb is that the flag should be simple enough that a child can draw it from memory. Simplicity is also important in the sense that flags with less colors and shapes are easier and less expensive to reproduce than flags with numerous and complex design features.
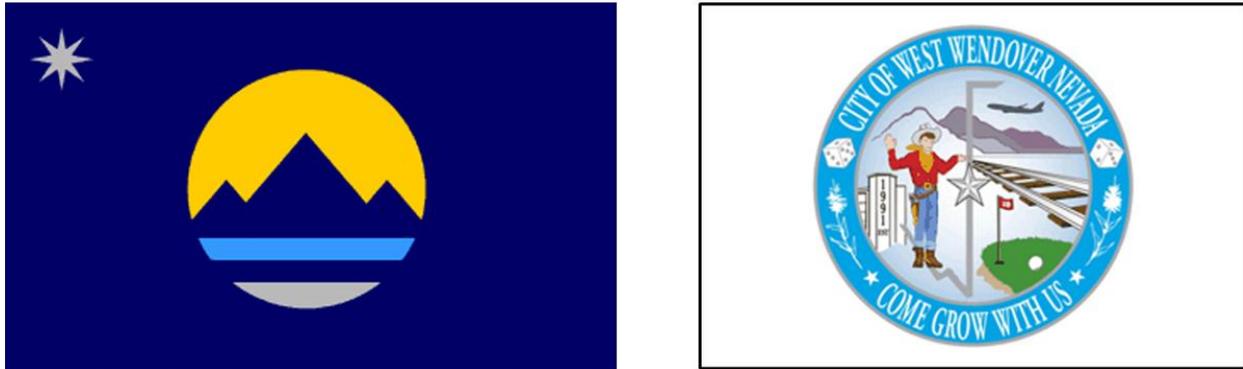

Fig. 1: Flags of Reno, Nevada (Left) and West Wendover, Nevada (Right)

In order to understand how to implement simplicity into flag design, shown above are two flags. The flag of Reno, Nevada is a good example of a simple flag design while the flag of West Wendover, Nevada is a bad example of simple flag design. Reno's flag is simple since it only uses a few colors and simple shapes. Without a doubt, Reno's flag can be easily drawn in less than a minute by anybody from memory.

On the other hand, West Wendover's flag is complex since it has far too many colors and features. If somebody were to view the flag of West Wendover on a pole at ground level, it would be nearly impossible for them to tell what some of the features are such as the building that says "1991", the dice, and the golf course.

2. Use Meaningful Symbolism

All colors and shapes on the flags should have some sort of meaning behind them that resonates with the people that are being represented by the flag. Before designing a flag, it is best to become familiar with colors and shapes that carry similar meanings in many different flags.

For example, red is often used to represent strength, power, and sacrifice, blue is often used to represent the water and sky, and stars often represent a capital city or the number of jurisdictions under a flag's control. In addition, it is important to consider how a symbol connects with history, culture, and geography. For example, a flag that represents a desert city will most likely not use blue at all since blue typically represents water, but rather it would use brown to represent sand or yellow to represent the sun.

Fig. 2: Flags of Tulsa, Oklahoma (Left) and Oldsmar, Florida (Right)

In order to understand how to implement symbolism into flag design, shown above are two flags. The flag of Tulsa, Oklahoma uses good symbolism while the flag of Oldsmar, Florida does not. All the shapes and colors in Tulsa's flag have a meaning behind them. Regarding the shapes, the shield represents Tulsa's Native American history, and the star represents Tulsa's bright future. Regarding the colors, blue represents the Arkansas River, beige represents Tulsa's warm community feeling, yellow represents the discovery of oil (black gold) in Tulsa, and red represents the bloodshed of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre.

On the other hand, Oldsmar's flag does not have any meaningful symbolism. The majority of the flag is blank white space. The text saying "Pride in Oldsmar" would be better represented with shapes such as sunrays or stars. Lastly, the city seal shows that the symbol was

just copied and pasted onto the flag and no original symbolism was thought out for the flag in particular.

3. Use 2-3 Basic Colors

Out of all the five principles, perhaps this principle is the one that can be the least strictly followed. Two to three colors are recommended for a flag to keep the flag simple and production costs low, and the end goal should be to have two to three colors. However, it is ok to have 4-5 colors in a flag as long as the extra colors add symbolic value or help with the overall look of the flag.

When choosing which colors to use, the basic flag colors to keep in mind are red, blue, green, black, yellow, and white. Both light and dark shades of these colors are often used, and it is important to separate dark colors with light colors and vice versa as doing that helps make the colors contrast better and stick out more.

Fig. 3: Flags of St. George, Utah (Left) and Clovis, New Mexico (Right)

In order to better understand color choice in flag design, shown above are two flags. The flag of St. George, Utah has good color choice while the flag of Clovis, New Mexico does not. In St. George's flag, there are only two colors, and the contrast between the yellow and dark blue helps both colors stand out better. As for the flag of Clovis, it highly disregards the 2-3 colors rule. Yellow, blue, and red are the main colors, but some colors like the green on the corn, the

purple on the wildcat, and the gray on the jet are so small and underused that they do not add to the overall quality of the flag. Having colors that small just adds to the cost of flag reproduction and they cannot even be seen well when the flag is flying from a pole.

4. No Lettering or Seals

Keeping lettering and seals off a flag is one of the simplest flag principles, yet it is one of the most often broken ones. In fact, over three-fourths of US state flags have either text, a seal, or both on their flag. Having text on a flag makes it difficult for people at ground level to read what is on the flag when it is flying in mid-air, and it is also difficult to reduce the size of text into a lapel pin. Flags are meant to serve as a graphic symbol of various historical, geographical, and cultural elements, and displaying words on a flag just defeats the purpose of having a flag to represent those elements. As for seal usage, seals cram many features and colors into a small area that again makes viewing difficult for people at ground level, and seals should only be intended for use on government paperwork. Essentially, displaying a seal on a flag shows that no original thought went into the flag's design and that the flag is only a copy-and-paste design.

Fig. 4: Flags of Columbia, South Carolina (Left) and Charleston, South Carolina (Right)

In order to visualize the comparison between how well a flag looks with and without using lettering or a seal, shown above are the flags of South Carolina's two largest cities, Columbia and Charleston. Columbia's flag is able to successfully portray its city's message

through unique shapes and good color choice without any need for lettering or seals. However, Charleston's flag is a direct copy of its city seal that is used on government documents. The seal's design is overly complex for a flag, and the lettering is so awful that it is still difficult to read close up at eye level.

5. *Be Distinctive or Be Related*

Perhaps one of the most difficult principles to understand, yet one of the most important principles, is designing a flag that stands out from every other flag. Because flags exist on so many scales, most notably on the national, state, and city levels, the symbolism of many flags will be similar. In order to create different designs for flags with similar meanings, background knowledge of other flags is highly recommended. Perhaps the most important bit of background knowledge to keep in mind when attempting to add uniqueness to a flag is to avoid copying and pasting a government seal onto a plain background. In fact, almost half of the US state flags unfortunately use this design concept as their state flag, and this makes it difficult to distinguish between different state flags when a person is viewing them on a pole from afar.
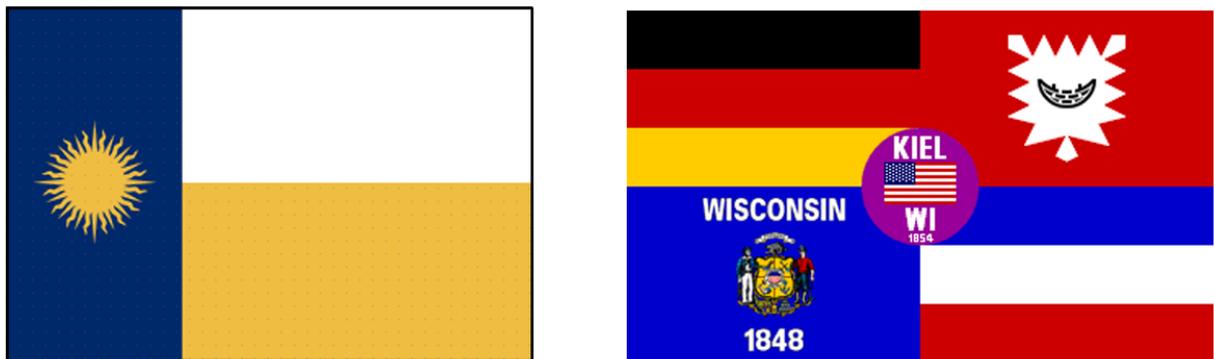

Fig. 5: Flags of Sunnyvale, Texas (Left) and Kiel, Wisconsin (Right)

This principle can be much better explained with the two flags shown above. The flag of Sunnyvale, Texas follows this rule well while the flag of Kiel, Wisconsin does not. The flag of Sunnyvale shows its relation to Texas by using the same pattern on the Texas state flag, yet it is

distinctive by swapping out the state flag's star and red color for a sun and orange color that better represent the town rather than the state.

As for Kiel's flag, it just copies five other flags and uses them as their own. Flags under any circumstance should not directly copy another flag. If a city flag like Kiel has residents who have strong connections with their European heritage, nation, or state, then different colors and shapes can be taken from those flags and edited in a way that better represents Kiel.

While this section looks at good and bad examples of flags from all over the United States regarding their usage of the five principles of good flag design, the creative portion of the project takes a specific look at flags from Indiana. One section of the creative portion that is called Indiana City Flags contains 56 city flags from various Indiana cities. Each flag is ranked on a scale from 0-10 based upon the five principles of good flag design. Each principle is worth two points, and all flags are given feedback on what it does and does not do well. While a structured grading system was put in place, it should be noted that the final score of the ratings can be debated. Flag designs are subjective, and the five principles of good flag design should be treated as a guide rather than a strict set of rules.

Additionally, there are sections in the creative portion called Indiana County Flags and Muncie Flags. While some county flags are critiqued using the same process used with the city flags, the Indiana County Flags and Muncie Flags sections add the extra step of creating new flag designs using the five principles of good flag design. Creating new flags with the five principles of good flag design in mind are touched on in the next section of the reading.

Taking a Local Approach

With these five design principles in mind, one can begin to take a critical look into flag design. To get a hands-on approach with redesigning a flag that highly disregards all five flag

design principles, I have chosen to critique and redesign the flag of Muncie, Indiana, which is the city where I attended college.

Fig. 6: Flag of Muncie, Indiana

Shown above is the flag of Muncie, Indiana. First, the flag is not simple because the coloring of the seal makes it very hard for a flag viewer to tell what is being depicted on the flag. It is almost as if the statue blends in with the trees behind it. Second, the only feature that comes close to symbolism is the picture in the seal which is a statue of a Plains Indian on horseback called *Appeal to the Great Spirit* (Muncie Visitors Bureau, n.d.). For a city with just under 70,000 people, Muncie has a lot more than just its Native American history that it can use as symbolism. The flag could incorporate symbolism about Ball State University, the arts, and industry. Third, while the flag respects the 2-3 colors rule by using black, white, and yellow, the colors in the seal do not blend well together and are unfriendly to a viewer's eyes. Fourth, lettering and a seal is used, which makes it harder for people at ground level to read what is on the flag. Lastly, the flag is not unique as it is one of many flags that displays a seal on a solid colored background.

While it is obvious that Muncie's flag is far from being the best designed flag out of all American cities, the question is why should Munsonians want a new flag? Based upon other city flag redesign efforts, many cities have experienced growing feelings of community

connectedness during and after their flag redesign processes. For example, when the North American Vexillological Association rated the old flag of Provo, Utah as the eighth worst city flag out of 150 ranked American cities in 2004, Provo city leaders took action in 2014 to have the community submit redesign ideas for the city flag. After the flag's redesign, Provo City Public Relations Coordinator Whitney Booth stated, "I think residents really got interested and involved in the whole project. We even had young kids sketching out designs and submitting them. People definitely had an opinion and wanted to be involved in this process" (Orgill 2015).
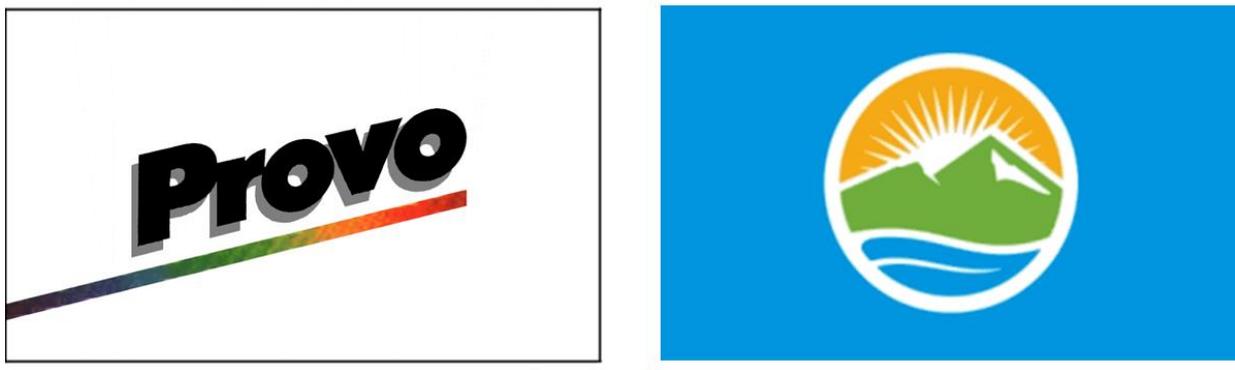

Fig. 7: The Old Provo Flag (Left) and the New Provo Flag (Right)

The impact of a city flag redesign was even more noticeable in South Bend, Indiana. Similar to Muncie, South Bend's flag was the city seal on a plain solid-color background, but that changed in 2016 when South Bend adopted a flag with a simpler design and more meaningful symbolism to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the city's incorporation. Public input in the form of more than 1,000 online and in-person comments inspired the flag's creation, and designs submitted by South Bend residents Garret Gingerich and Jeffrey Koenig and Indiana University South Bend student Jesse Villagrana ultimately went into the final flag design. Jeffrey Koenig positively reflected on the flag redesign effort by calling it a positive experience, and several South Bend businesses quickly began selling South Bend flag merchandise (Blasko 2016).
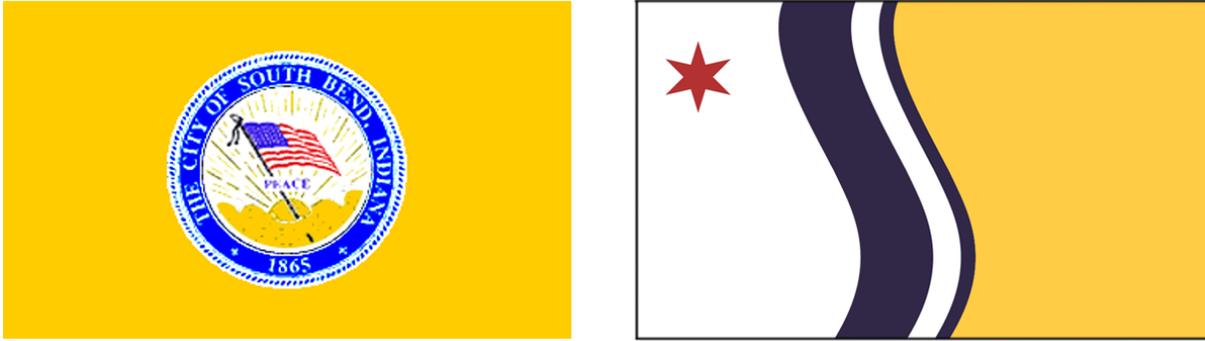
Fig. 8: The Old South Bend Flag (Left) and the New South Bend Flag (Right)

Aside from these two city flag redesign efforts, one research study shows just how impactful a regional flag can be to the people living under its jurisdiction. In this study, 120 Caucasian undergraduate students from the University of Bretagne-Sud, located in a middle-sized town in the Brittany region of France, were separated into two groups: the Bretons (born in Brittany and who had lived in Brittany all their life) and the non-Bretons (not born in Brittany and/or just arrived in Brittany). Each group was asked to taste two identical chocolate spreads presented in two identical jars, and the only difference was the jar's labeling. One jar had a label with the Brittany flag on it, while the other jar just showed vertical black and white bars. Participants were instructed to indicate which of the two products they liked better. The Non-Bretons noted no significant difference in preference between the two spreads. The chocolate spread with the flag label was preferred by 44.2% of Non-Bretons, while 55.8% of Non-Bretons preferred the chocolate spread in the jar without the flag labeling. However, Bretons strongly preferred the chocolate spread with the flag label over the chocolate spread without the flag label. The difference between the preferences of Bretons and Non-Bretons was almost 25% as 69.1% of Bretons preferred the chocolate spread with the flag label while 30.9% of Bretons preferred the chocolate spread without the flag labelling (Guéguen, Martin, and Stefan 2017, 542-543).

Based upon the recent city flag redesigns of Provo and South Bend as well as the exposure of the Brittany flag on Bretons, it can be said that flags have a significant impact on the people that live under their jurisdiction if they are designed well and easily recognizable. Therefore, some questions to consider are what makes Muncie one-of-a-kind, and how can these one-of-a-kind characteristics be represented on a flag that brings Munsonians closer together and proud to call Muncie their home? Without a doubt, Ball State University has always been closely associated with Muncie for over a century. Many people's first experiences with Muncie are at Ball State University, and the university is the driving force of the city's economy. Additionally, Muncie has a rich industrial history with its connections to the Ball Brothers, and it was once home to factories for Ball Corporation, General Motors, and Westinghouse (Ball State University, n.d.). Lastly, in the wake of several decades of deindustrialization, Muncie is beginning to go through a revitalization process. Downtown Muncie has several new small businesses, and there are several economic projects in the works such as the construction of a new manufacturing plant (McMahan 2021). With Muncie currently in the midst of a revitalization process, there has never been a better time for a new city flag that combines Muncie's history with all of its new changes.

Fig. 9: New Flag Idea for Muncie, Indiana

Therefore, I have created a new and unofficial Muncie city flag that follows the five

principles of good flag design and better represents Muncie in the past, present, and future. The

centerpiece of a new Muncie flag is a painter's palette to represent Muncie's numerous art

connections. The significance of art in Muncie is undermined, yet the city is the home of *The Joy

of Painting* by Bob Ross, the Garfield comic strip by Jim Davis, the David Owsley Museum of

Art, a plethora of painted stoplight electrical boxes, and several downtown murals and

sculptures. Together, all of this art is helping Muncie regrow, diversify, and ascend into the 21st

Century. Additionally, the five stars on the palette represent the five Ball Brothers. The stars are

black to represent their connection to industry and manufacturing. The representation of the Ball

Brothers is found on the palette to show that Muncie is a city with both a proud past and exciting

future.

Aside from the palette, the blue wavy line represents the White River. The top half of the

flag is red to symbolize Ball State University since the university is north of the White River.

The economy of Muncie's northern half heavily relies on Ball State University since that is

where most college students live and where the businesses that rely heavily on college students

are located. However, the bottom half of the flag is black to symbolize that the southern half of

Muncie has long been associated with industry and manufacturing. Despite the north-south split,

both red and black are colors of strength and power, and together they show that the city of

Muncie is working as a whole to fix the problems that came in the wake of deindustrialization in

the Late 20th Century.

A Need for a Nationwide Flag Overhaul

By now, it is clear how there is a stark contrast in the visual appeal of a flag when it

either does or does not successfully implement the five principles of good flag design.

Additionally, the overall quality of a flag's design will impact how it is perceived by the community and affects community building. Regarding the Muncie flag, Muncie is just one of many flags that does not stand out from other flags because of its design of the city seal on a solid-colored background, yet the new design that was proposed in this paper proves how there are endless possibilities when it comes to redesigning flags.

Proposing a new flag design for any jurisdiction, whether that be a city, county, or state, is always encouraged if a new design improves upon an official existing design using the five principles of good flag design. Nevertheless, a good way to tell whether or not a flag absolutely needs a redesign is either if the flag cannot be distinguished from other flags, as in Muncie's case, or if its symbolism does not rightfully represent the people it is supposed to represent. Recently, two state flags are undergoing state flag redesigns for these reasons.

In Utah, government officials are debating changing the state flag because of the flag's indistinguishable design. State Representative Ryan Wilcox described his multiple travel experiences to the U.S. Senate stating that, "I looked really hard to find Utah's flag, but I couldn't see it. There are like 35 other states with the same background. You can't see it. Right now, nobody recognizes our brand. We should make it stand out" (Schott 2021).

As for Mississippi, it redesigned its state flag because the old state flag the state used from 1894 through 2020 contained symbolism that did not rightfully represent the values of Mississippians. State Senator Juan Barnett, a retired black military veteran, was one of many critics who noted that the old state flag's Confederate symbol once divided the state that contains one of the largest percentages of black residents in the nation, but the replacement of the Confederate symbol with the magnolia flower now unites the state (Pettus 2021).

With Utah and Mississippi leading the way in recent flag redesign efforts, there has never been a better time to consider analyzing and proposing redesigns for other flags on all geographic scales. The redesign efforts of the Utah and Mississippi state flags as well as several U.S. city flags in recent years should serve as an inspiration for people to want to feel a stronger connection to their flags and analyze how their flag could be better.

In the December 2018 issue of *Vexillum*, NAVA's quarterly magazine, Ted Kaye lists several ways in which everyday citizens can begin the process of redesigning their local flag. One of the easiest ways to have a flag design become official is if a city or county does not yet have an official flag. Additionally, flag redesigns are more successful in less-populated areas as most cities adopting new flags have populations under 150,000. Proposing a flag redesign can become harder to accomplish outside of those reasons, but it is not impossible. Working with other people or organizations plus implementing the five principles of good flag design with a flag redesign always improve the chances of success.

While the process of redesigning a flag may be time-consuming, it should not discourage people from reaching out to their local government officials. In fact, over half of the U.S. city flags were adopted by city councils without a public consultation or vote (Kaye 2018, 21). It is important to keep in mind that the timeframe of proposing an area's first flag or a flag redesign will vary on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, with many flag redesigns already underway throughout the country, a better understanding of the five principles of good flag design, and several ways on how to reach out to government officials regarding flag redesign efforts, now is the best time for a nationwide flag overhaul.

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