

We Want You: A Rhetorical Analysis of Propaganda from Government Posters to Political Memes

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Abstract:

By pairing images with slogans to develop persuasive posters, the US government effectively won over the public's support during WWI and WWII. Propaganda was effective because citizens were unaware of the existence of tactics that could persuade them without their knowledge. Recently, the public has begun to use the very same propaganda tactic to disseminate their own thoughts and ideas through a communication method known as *political memes*. Like war posters, *political memes* also pair emotion-evoking images with catchy slogans to persuade the viewer to see a situation, issue or an individual in a way the author desires. *Memes* are becoming an established form of communication and began making headlines for their possible impact on voters' opinions in the 2012 US presidential election. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the rhetorical devices that wartime posters and *political memes* use and determine why those devices are effective. The other main purpose is to examine the period between 1919 and the present to determine how the shift in propaganda usage took place, going from a government-used tactic to one used by the public to effectively disseminate ideas on a mass scale.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: An Overview of Propaganda.....	4
Chapter 2: Historical Overview.....	15
Chapter 3: The Public Gains Knowledge About Propaganda.....	25
Chapter 4: World War Posters and Political Memes.....	44
Further Discussion.....	62
Works Cited.....	73

Introduction

The pairing of images and slogans was a form of communication largely used in WWI and WWII government-produced propaganda. Wartime posters using this technique were used by governments around the world to promote nationalism during war times, such as the famous US military recruitment poster of Uncle Sam with the words “I Want You.” These posters were produced and displayed nationwide to effectively influence the public as a whole. Unlike the government, the public did not have the means to disseminate information on a mass scale.

With the introduction of social media, the public has been able to share its thoughts and ideas on a much larger scale than to just friends and family. If someone posts an opinion to Facebook, Twitter, or another social media account, people can then share that post, and, whether intended for more than family and friends or not, it has the potential to reach thousands of individuals.

With the public having the power to spread its thoughts on a mass scale, there has come a resurgence of the popular propaganda technique used by the government during WWI and WWII. Individuals pair a picture with a few-word phrase that voices an opinion and post it to a social media account. These images & text groupings are referred to as a *meme*. According to knowyourmeme.com, “an Internet memes [sic] is a piece of content or an idea that's passed from person to person, changing and evolving along the way.” Some memes are created for amusement, while others are created to spread an idea or opinion. Because of the latter, voters create a multitude of Internet memes during election seasons.

Memes are, by default, a reflection of their creators' views. Memes' ability to go viral is important because the meme then has the possibility to affect public opinion.

Knowyourmeme.com, states that when a meme is shared on a large scale without any alterations it becomes *viral content*. Because of the nature of the Internet, the popularity of a meme can be questionable and difficult to quantify. A meme may appear popular when it is not, and vice versa. Because of this, the memes used for analysis have been researched by knowyourmeme.com and confirmed as viral. Knowyourmeme.com was founded in 2008 and “researches and documents Internet memes and viral phenomena” (Kim, “About”). Once a meme is considered to be *viral content*, it has reached enough people to put a dent in public opinion. Unlike government-generated war posters, meme creators “tend to be anonymous and aren’t accountable or easy targets for offended parties or concerned campaigns to contact” (Nasri, “Don’t Always Meme”). Because of this, individuals create memes with no fear of repercussion.

This paper is an examination of how US citizens have taken authorship of a propaganda technique of pairing slogans and images, once only used by their government. To do this, a brief overview of propaganda terms, and a look at why propaganda is effective will begin the paper. The second chapter will be a brief report of propaganda’s history and the role that it has played in various societies since approximately 2500 BC. This overview will focus on images and slogans to gain a better understanding of how both techniques were integrated into mainstream propaganda use by the times of WWI and WWII. The third chapter will focus on the government’s usage of propaganda in WWI and WWII and examine how the public’s perception and knowledge of propaganda changed from WWI to today. The final chapter will examine specific war posters from WWI and WWII, as well as memes produced by the public in the past few years. While war posters were used globally during WWI and WWII, this paper will focus on the US, briefly mentioning other countries

when relevant. This is to keep the paper focused. The paper will touch upon how memes have already made to impact political elections in the US and propose further research in gauging memes' level of effectiveness.

During the 2012 US presidential election, political memes became an effective way for the public to attempt to share its political opinions on a potential mass scale. The objective of this paper is to examine how propaganda transitioned from being a government tactic to develop public opinion, to a communication method used by the masses.

Chapter 1: An Overview of Propaganda

What is Propaganda?

The term *propaganda* was first recorded in 1622, when Pope Gregory XV created the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, or the *Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith*, in an attempt to propagate information to the masses and convert people to Catholicism. Propaganda was not formally developed until 1622, but its techniques can be traced back to the Mesopotamian civilization around 2500 BC.

Its original—and simplest—definition is from Latin and means “to propagate” (Jowett 2). Jowett states that this is its’ definition “in the most neutral sense,” but linguists often ask if any piece of work can be authored with a neutral stance. History books and journalistic articles are believed to be written objectively, with no bias; however, as James Paul Gee explains in his book, *Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, everything is written from a standpoint. Everyone has an opinion, and it is in the nature of language and grammatical structure to show a personal stance. Even when the author is genuinely attempting to be objective, the choice of words, their order, where the emphasis is placed in the sentence, all place a subtle spin on the information being conveyed. While language naturally lends itself to communicating the viewpoint of an author, most communication is written with a bias to convey the opinions of the author also.

To illustrate this point, Gee uses an excerpt from a textbook that discusses the Tory and Whig parties to demonstrate the concept of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding*. The last line of the passage states “Elections meant real choice among separate, contending parties and personalities.” (Gee 2). While the sentence may look objective at first, Gee argues that it shows bias on part of the author through closer examination. The three sentences leading up to this one begin with “Also secure, by 1689,” “As to the first

criterion,” and “As narrowly confined to the privileged classes” (Gee 2). The previous sentences look as if they have introductory phrases to make the piece flow better, but Gee argues that those phrases simply put that information in the background, making the information not as relevant. He glazes over the Tory and Whig parties’ societal status, stating that they were confined to the privileged classes with no other information as evidence for the claim, making it seem like fact to the reader. Whereas, Gee argues, other authors may find that as a focal point of their work and spend time explaining the social hierarchy.

The last sentence beginning with “elections” is important because it is the only sentence with the subject at the beginning. This places the emphasis on the last sentence. Since it is a book about democracy, Gee argues that it placing “elections” as the focal point of the paragraph and placing the rest of the information in the background is because the author wants to place emphasis on democracy. Gee also points out that he is not blaming the author for intentionally writing a bias piece, but is simply showing that language inherently reflects the bias of an author.

When Pope Gregory XV chose to propagate information to the masses, he had a purpose: to strengthen the faith of already practicing Catholics, and to persuade others to convert to Catholicism. While some may say it was simply the dissemination of information and therefore neutral, the Pope had a motive. Because it was associated with praising Catholicism and “opposing Protestantism, the word propaganda lost its neutrality” (Jowett 2). Information produced under the category of propaganda often has a motive—an intent to persuade the audience. Because of this, the term developed a negative connotation. When people hear the word propaganda, it often cues thoughts such as

“deceit” and “lies.” However, it could be argued that while the word propaganda has a bias spin linguistically, it is in fact truth. Pope Gregory XV was trying to convert people to what he believed was the proper faith.

Throughout history, propaganda has been used as a persuasive technique to create a collective mindset among the masses. While a general definition is simply the dissemination of information, Alfred McClung Lee states, “propaganda, to offer a more formal definition, is the use of words, symbols, ideas, events, and personalities with the intention of forwarding or attacking an interest, cause, project, institution, or person in the eyes and minds of a public” (127). Examples of propaganda, such as ancient civilizations erecting monuments to show other nations their strength, the Pope persuading the masses to practice Catholicism, Paul Revere and Thomas Paine producing leaflets to convince the settlers to revolt, or Hitler’s regime producing radio messages to persuade others to follow the Nazi Party; all show one group persuading others to develop a collective mindset.

Framing

Like many art forms, techniques and trends, propaganda had a slow start. People vaguely understood the power of words and imagery, but not until recently did a true understanding develop of how propaganda is effective through cognitive devices. George Lakoff coined the term *framing*, a cognitive concept used to persuade others. To demonstrate this, he tells people not to think about an elephant, but he has yet to find someone who can successfully not imagine one. He explains how “every word, like *elephant*, evokes a frame, which can be an image or other kinds of knowledge: Elephants are large, have floppy ears and a trunk, are associated with circuses, and so on” (Lakoff 3). This example is two-fold. One, the human brain operates through frames. When one reads “elephant,” there is no need to explain what an elephant is, because there is already a

mental frame for the word. Secondly, this example shows that by using a word, a specific frame is evoked. When asked to not think of an elephant, one cannot do so, because the word causes people to automatically generate the frame they have for the word.

Politicians use the technique of framing regularly. A recent example occurred with New Jersey's governor Chris Christie. He had a nearly spotless reputation, and his running for 2016 presidential election seemed inevitable. Once news broke that his staff was involved in a scandal that left thousands of people stuck in traffic for hours on the George Washington bridge, his opponents saw an opportunity to soil his clean image. Once the American public began associating the governor with a bridge-related scandal, the term "Bridgegate" was coined. This term then evokes a frame. The first half of the term causes people to think of the bridge scandal, but the second part is even more important. Adding "-gate" rather than "scandal" evokes the frame of Nixon's Watergate. This increases the perceived severity of the scandal. Associating Christie's scandal with Watergate could give potential voters concern for Christie's values. According to Lakoff, "framing is about getting language that fits your worldview. It is not just language. The ideas are primary—and the language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas" (Lakoff 4). In this case, if Christie chooses to run for the 2016 election, the media will simply use the term "Bridgegate" to remind the public of the scandal, rather than explaining it again. It will evoke the very thoughts that his opponents want. That is the art of framing.

Bridgegate is not just an example of framing in everyday politics but also in propaganda. Framing is what makes propaganda so effective. By creating one word, "Bridgegate," the frame of "Chris Christie's responsibility for a major scandal that left thousands of people stranded on a bridge during rush hour over several days is just as

severe as Watergate,” all in one word. Each time a piece of propaganda is created, a frame is constructed that should not only immediately evoke thoughts and emotions, but is intended to stay with those individuals every time they hear that specific word, phrase or topic. Now for any future election, an opponent of Chris Christie will simply have to say “Bridgewater” to remind people of his deceit, even though it has yet to be proven that he was aware of the scandal when it occurred.

This technique is what makes propaganda slogans and images effective. In Barack Obama’s campaign slogan and image during his 2008 presidential run, he promised the American people “hope and change.” A symbol was then crafted for the “O” in his name designed so that “the red stripes flowing the way they do and the white circle in the middle of the logo represent a sun rising over the hillside or over the horizon, signifying a new day” (Arnon, “Politics Meets Brand Design”). This way, he didn’t have to say “hope” or “change”—that symbol would conjure those words. This campaign used the popular propaganda technique of *wishful thinking*. According to Emory Bogardus, wishful thinking is a form of indoctrination and “among adults is easy if indoctrination is in line with their feelings and emotions, with their sentiments, and with their partisan relationships” (102). On April 24, 2008, a Gallup poll found “63% of Americans saying the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq” (Jones, “Opposition to Iraq”), a record high. The US also went into an economic recession in December of 2007 (“The Great Recession”). With polls showing frustration with the war and the country’s economic situation, Obama chose a slogan that caused people to follow him through their desire for change, and this campaign helped to secure a presidential victory.

Use of Pathos, Ethos and Logos in Politics and Propaganda

Techniques like wishful thinking are effective because they elicit emotion. The

theory behind propaganda's effectiveness goes hand-in-hand with Aristotle's theory of pathos, logos and ethos. In the wishful thinking case, it elicits pathos. When listening to someone passionately speak about hope for a better tomorrow and the changes that citizens can make together, that passion is transferred to the audience. Citizens feel that passion—that sense of purpose—and that purpose is to help move their nation forward. Lee points out that “in moments given to decision, vividness and emotion-arousing, symbolism frequently overrides common-sense demands for accuracy and for an opportunity to question and discuss” (126). Obama's logo on signs and bumper stickers evokes that passion to make a difference among his supporters; they become emotionally engaged. These individuals may not actually research how Obama voted on key issues. Rather, they'll vote for him because he provided a positive feeling for them through his campaigns.

Ethos is also widely used in propaganda. Bridgegate has the ability to bring Chris Christie's ratings down because it implies that he was involved in a scandal, and makes potential voters question his ethics and morals. This appeals to the voters' desire for a candidate with good values and ethics.

The appeal to logos is also widely used. The presentation of facts, figures and specifics is an excellent and persuasive method to convey a message. In 2012, Mitt Romney used the example of higher gasoline prices after one term under president Obama to illustrate his point that both the economy and American citizens were worse off by stating, “When the president took office, the price of gasoline here in Nassau County was about \$1.86 a gallon. Now, it's \$4 a gallon,” (Koch, “High Gas Prices”). Obama retorted that the gasoline prices were low when he first entered office because “the economy was on the

verge of collapse” (Koch, “Higher Gas Prices”). While Romney used numerical figures to validate his argument that the state of the economy had declined under President Obama, Obama used the same evidence to argue that the economy was in a better place.

Logical Fallacies in Propaganda

A logical fallacy is a “deductively invalid or erroneous argument with the appearance of validity or a demonstrably false conclusion from plausible reasoning” (Floridi 318). Logical fallacies can be rhetorically dangerous because they manage to do two things simultaneously: first, they persuade someone to believe false information while at the same time, giving that individual a logical explanation that can be used to defend the incorrect logic. There are an abundance of logical fallacies used on a regular basis by politicians, mass media and propaganda.

One of the most commonly used fallacies is *slippery slope*. To use this as a method of defense, someone will make the claim that if action A occurs, it will lead to B and C, with C being far more extreme and dire than A.

It is often used when disputing a claim not in line with one’s values. Instead of making a strong, logical argument opposing the claim, the slippery slope response will find something more offensive, and equate the two. When discussing the legalization of gay marriage, Louie Gohmert, a US representative from Texas, stated, “When you say it’s not a man and a woman anymore, then why not have three men and one woman, or four women and one man? Or why not, you know, somebody has a love for an animal. . . . There is no clear place to draw a line once you eliminate the traditional marriage” (Parnass, “Republicans Predict Fraud”).

Gohmert relied on the slippery slope method as a defense for his stance against gay marriage. While homosexuality is becoming more widely accepted, he knew that bestiality

is less acceptable to people. Also, by jumping straight from gay marriage to bestiality may be a stretch, and fallacies tend to be more effective when used subtly. Because of this, he eases into it, hinting to gay marriage first leading to polygamy and then eventually, to marriage between humans and animals.

Another commonly used fallacy is *ad hominem*, where one uses irrelevant information to discredit the opposing party. Emanuele Bardone summarizes the process of *ad hominem* simplistically, stating that if one follows the general order of “given person P holds belief b; unfavorable information about P is presented; Then, b is not acceptable” (374). This technique can often be found in politics. For instance, a Democrat may present a rational argument for a topic, but then a Republican may say, “Oh, don’t listen. He’s a silly liberal.” Simply stating that he is a liberal may negate his argument for anyone identifying as a conservative, regardless of if they agreed with his initial idea.

Black-and-white thinking is also employed in politics and propaganda. Here, a propagandist or politician may ignore the complexities of an issue and simplify it to be two-sided or to issue an ultimatum. For example, people disagreeing with legal abortion may say, “You’re either pro-life or you are for killing babies.” This technique is also used in pro-war propaganda with the argument that if someone is against the war, they are not supporting those who are fighting for their freedom.

Propaganda that uses slogans sometimes lends itself to black-and-white thinking because of its simplified form. As Lee explains, “Simplification refers to the reduction of propaganda materials to formulas which approach in brevity and dogmatism as nearly as possible the form of a slogan. Inaccuracy is not necessarily inherent in simplification, but the propagandist can seldom deal in shades of gray, in ‘maybes’ or ‘perhapses’” (134). To

understand politics, one must be well-informed and educated on current affairs, and both sides of policies. To simplify something and ignore its complexities can make it easier to make an illogical point seem logical. For instance, someone well-versed in climate change understands that it goes by another name, global warming, due to the overall warming of the Earth and the temperature change that is altering the climate. Global warming skeptics have recently been taking advantage of the irregularly cold winter of 2013-14 to simplify this complex issue by showing pictures of the unusual amounts of snow with captions such as: “Global Warming? Not here.”

In this example, the author has used two techniques. One is black-and-white thinking. This year, it is abnormally cold and snowing more often than in previous years, therefore global warming is a farce. Why does the black-and-white reasoning work here? It is effective because there is a frame for the word “warming” and that frame does not include deep snow and blustering, cold wind. Lee also points out that when an issue is simplified it “short-circuits the sound common sense of medical evidence, of psychiatric findings, or engineering principles” (134). When logic is not provided with an argument, how can people properly make a well-informed opinion? The solution to this can sometimes lead directly to another fallacy: *appeal to authority*.

While using black-and-white thinking, and playing on the average person’s frame for “warming” to prove that cold winters must mean climate change is a myth, other individuals are using different logical fallacies to prove that global warming is occurring. James Lawrence Powell created a pie chart in 2012, that states “13,950 peer-reviewed climate articles 1991-2012—24 reject global warming” (“One Pie Chart”). Like the skeptics, Powell also simplifies his argument to one quick statement. He doesn’t cite any

research or provide evidence for his opinion, but he gives the appearance of doing so. The pie chart looks like a black circle with a tiny red line that signifies the twenty-four dissenters to global warming studies. This uses the fallacy of appealing to authority as Powell is using the credibility of the 13,950 scientists in agreement to prove his point. Bardone finds this technique to be effective because:

People rely on information about other human beings in their reasoning. That is, they do not follow certain logical procedures that eventually lead them to correct conclusions. But they simply make use of others as social characters. Being an authority, being an expert, being part of a class, etc., becomes the substitute for more direct evidence in support of a certain claim or in order to make an argument more appealing. (Bardone 376).

Without directly saying so, Powell is making the claim that global warming must exist, because peer-reviewed scientists and scholars are in almost complete agreement, while skeptics remain in the minority.

Cognitive Dissonance

An understanding of how these techniques work is crucial to understanding their effectiveness. As demonstrated, some of the techniques go hand-in-hand and work together. The climate-change skeptics were able to evoke a frame while also utilizing black-and-white thinking to argue their stance on the climate issue. Evidence shows framing can be effective because it draws on human's preconceptions. The argument could be made that humans should be able to see through these techniques because they are considered to be "rational." However, persuasive techniques, such as logical fallacies, are effective because humans are not rational, but are rationalizing.

According to Albert Camus, humans "spend their entire lives in an attempt to

convince themselves that their lives are not absurd” (Pratkanis 32). One term that confronts the issue of humans rationalizing their behavior, as opposed to being rational, is *cognitive dissonance*. It “occurs whenever a person simultaneously holds two inconsistent cognitions” (Pratkanis 34). To cope with the conflicting ideas, a person will simply change one of those ideas until they better fit together.

Cognitive dissonance is important when discussing propaganda because it explains why people may be deceived by incorrect propaganda, even when faced with the factual information. Because humans are not always rational, Lakoff argues that another misconception is that the truth will set us free. Since humans look at the world through frames, they cannot just be presented with facts because “if the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off” (17). This is where cognitive dissonance comes into play. If an individual already has a frame from a propaganda message, and is then confronted with factual information that is not in agreement with that frame, the facts may be disregarded. If humans were rational, propaganda would be less effective as the techniques, logical loopholes and twisted rhetoric would become transparent. Because humans are rationalizing, people have learned what techniques to use to persuade people during argumentation.

Chapter 2: Historical Overview

These techniques of appealing to logos, pathos and ethos have been around for centuries, and make up the rich foundation on which today's propaganda techniques are based. To understand the propaganda technique of pairing slogans with images, and how they have reached mainstream use, there must be a basic understanding of the historical background of propaganda. This chapter will provide a brief historical overview of the origins of propaganda, and to see how people began to utilize persuasion even before there was an understanding of cognitive psychology. What techniques were used in the first recorded examples, around 2500 BC, and how did they evolve? The majority of this chapter will be devoted to the analysis of slogans and images; when did they began to make an appearance and how they were used.

Early Propaganda: Use of Imagery and Short Phrases

Between 2111-94 BC, a Mesopotamian ruler, Ur-Nammu believed "that by freeing (through his measures) the citizens of Sumer and Akkad from certain abuses and by the 'establishment of equity' he curbed public hostility" (Finkelstein 57). Over 4,000 years ago, rulers were concerned about their public image and how to prevent uprisings by keeping a positive image with the citizens. While a term for propaganda was not coined, various persuasive techniques that would now fall under that category were being utilized by ruling parties. In this case, Ur-Nammu's actions gained him public approval. He did not give any speeches, invent slogans, or create images to cultivate docility among different tribes that were under his rule; he simply had act in a certain way.

Leo Oppenheim points out that, to maintain proper power during this time, a "king had to communicate meaningfully in two directions: with his own subjects and . . . with his enemies. In both areas, the communications were either organizational, that is,

bureaucratic, or sign-producing, that is, symbolic” (111). To communicate through these methods, rulers began using persuasion tactics, such as the use of imagery, which have carried through to this day in propaganda. Imagery created to form public opinion developed at this time. Murals were painted “illustrating the king’s warlike exploits by showing battle scenes” (Oppenheim 113). Images that depicted a civilization’s leader as a strong war hero, framed him as someone that the citizens under his rule believed he had all of the right characteristics to guide and protect them. This is also a persuasion technique to maintain obedience to the ruling class, to ensure citizens would have the ruler’s protection when they needed it.

In around 600 BC, the Hindus developed sutras. Sutras are typically short phrases in verse that relate “to some aspect of the conduct of life” (“Sutra”). They were intended to be recited, at first by children during education, and then carried into adulthood to develop and maintain a common mindset. Later, other verse styles were developed, such as Dharmasutras, which referred to societal and state laws, and Grhyasutras, which were aimed toward domestic rules. The reasoning behind these “was to convey the maximum meaning through the minimum number of words” (Sharma 178). This is the same concept as slogans. Slogans are designed to fit an entire frame into one phrase that makes them memorable and is effective in developing a common mindset among large groups of people.

Around the same time as the Hindus were grasping Sutras, a Greek ruler, Solon, was also using verse to push a political agenda. “I flung my stout shield in defence of both sides and stood firm. I did not allow injustice to triumph either way” (Ferguson 291). His verse works in the same way as a slogan, as it develops a mindset among readers by

packing a lot of meaning into a small amount of text. Rumors spread that Solon lacked allegiance to Greece. To debunk these accusations, he began his verses by depicting himself fighting for his country. The verse ends by showing Solon as a man of virtue who only stands for justice. The goal is to persuade the readers and listeners to trust in his policies and his allegiance.

A few hundred years later in Rome, Julius Caesar coined the term “I came, I saw, I conquered,” or in Latin, “Veni, Vidi, Vici.” Caesar constructed this phrase with a full understanding of propaganda techniques. One theorist referred to him as “a master propagandist, equaled only by Napoleon and Hitler” (Jowett 39), because he knew how to use the subtle techniques that affect the way one frames something in his or her mind. The “Veni, Vidi, Vici” is an example of this for two reasons. One, Caesar alluded to descending from a heavenly class. Propaganda works best when it is subtle, and he knew that appearing to come from a higher class, combined with people reaching that conclusion themselves was more effective than simply stating it. Because they developed the frame on their own, they were less likely to realize that someone else developed the idea. This phrase also had multiple characteristics of an effective slogan: rhythm, alliteration, repetition, and brevity (Bogardus 155). The two-syllable words with sequential annunciations create a catchy rhythm that stays with the audience. He then paired alliteration with a repetition of the same sounds, only intensifying the memorable aspect. Finally, he retained brevity, resulting in a phrase so easy to remember, it has survived into popular culture today.

In 300 AD, a slogan was created by the Christian community that also remains today: *Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr*, which translates into English as "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour". Like “Veni, Vidi, Vici,” it has a specific rhythm that makes it easy to

remember and reiterate without hesitation. This slogan was effective for reasons that are more complicated. In Greek, the acronym for the phrase spells “ΙΧΘΥΣ (*ichthus*), which means ‘fish’” (Jowett 42). The fish image thus became the symbol for early Christians. As a reinforcement, it also had a memory device attached to it. Fish uses a frame already associated with Christ, because he referred to his apostles as “fishers of men” in the book of Matthew. Having an acronym that shared a frame furthered the use of the fish as a Christian symbol. During times of persecution, Christians would communicate by drawing the fish on “walls, trees, in the dust,” (Jowett 42) and anywhere they chose to leave a mark. When others saw the fish, their minds immediately associated it with the original slogan and knew that Christians were around.

Another powerful slogan used by the Christian religion was developed in 1095 for the crusades: God wills it! (Jowett 45). It comes from the Gaelic word “slaugh-ghairm,” meaning war cry (Bogardus 154). It was used before going into battle to justify the actions of war. If people believe they are doing something for a cause, they are more likely to conform to the situation, such as going to war in the name of their God. Unlike most slogans, “God wills it” may have been created spontaneously by the crowd after hearing the speech from Pope Urban II advocating for the crusades, as opposed to being pre-developed; however, no one really knows for sure (Jowett 45).

Up to this point, propaganda imagery was mostly in the form of murals or graffiti, but around 1500 AD, political images in illustration form began in easy-to-produce forms. Lucas Cranach protested against the Catholic Church through wood-carvings. He provided “visual embodiments” (Jowett 50) to the anti-Catholic messages that were being spread by Protestants. Cranach famously illustrated *The Donkey-Pope of Rome* in 1523, depicting

the Pope as “being a mixture of real and mythical animals such as the donkey and the gryphon” (Jowett 51). The Pope was given distinct features that criticized his character, such as the head of a donkey that typically mocks the intelligence of an individual. Cranach also placed the devil coming out of the backend of the Donkey-Pope to connect the Catholic Church with evil.

Political and social images began gaining popularity when printing efficiency increased, making it easier to spread pictures and text among larger populations. In the 1600s, it was not unusual to have someone in the streets of Europe selling propaganda leaflets with political imagery and text. (Jowett 56). Imagery played an integral part in the leaflets because it caught the attention of the public, and, like the Donkey-Pope of Rome, it developed frames about various political situations based on the features that the artists used. With imagery and slogans gaining popularity for political use, it was only natural for these propaganda techniques to play a part in the colonial fight to separate from British rule.

Political Imagery in Colonial America

The colonists struggled with division on everything from key political issues to currency. If the colonists wanted to claim their independence from the British monarchy, political leaders knew they would have to settle their differences and stand united. Benjamin Franklin authored an image of a severed snake in 1754, with the words “JOIN, or DIE” underneath the image. Each severed piece had the initials of a colony placed next to it. The image sent a powerful message to the colonists: if they wanted to live a free life, they needed to put their smaller issues aside in the name of a larger cause. If not, their stubbornness would lead to the end of freedom for the colonies.

Various aspects of Franklin’s piece made it effective. It “was based upon the

superstition that a snake that had been severed would come back to life if the pieces were put together before sunset” (Jowett 67). The mind uses theoretical concepts as building blocks. People’s perceptions are based on previous experiences and beliefs, and if a new idea fits into the current parameter that someone has, he or she is more likely to accept that idea. By using a previous frame, such as a belief or superstition, an artist creates a stronger frame than if one was created from scratch. Franklin paired his image with a slogan that caught the public’s attention. Choosing to put “JOIN” and “DIE” in all capital letters drew attention. For instance, when reading this page, a reader’s eyes may have immediately seen “JOIN” and “DIE” before reaching that section of text by reading in order. A sliced snake symbolizing the colonies captures the audience’s attention and evokes emotion. The audience form a camaraderie under a united cause for, if nothing else, self preservation.

While Paul Revere is portrayed in US history books as a hero for alerting colonists to the British troops’ movements, that was only one of his successes in the fight for the colonies’ freedom. Revere was a successful propagandist who used imagery to frame public opinion about specific events. On March 5, 1770, British soldiers fired at unarmed colonists. Four of those colonists died, and another seven were injured. Revere seized this moment to rally support against the British troops. He created an image of British soldiers shooting at colonists, depicted as helpless and panicked. Many colonists wore forlorn expressions, and two are depicted as already being lifeless in the street. A sign above a building occupied by British soldiers read “Butcher’s Hall.” This image was widely circulated in various newspapers and achieved Revere’s goal; it placed a frame in the citizens’ minds that the British soldiers were ruthless and were murdering colonists without cause. Once this frame was developed, it increased the underlying disapproval of

the British troops' occupation and provided the settlers with reason to fight. The frame was so successful that Paul Revere named his image "The Bloody Massacre," and it remains in history books to this day as the "Boston Massacre."

Revere developed this effective piece of propaganda by using a logical fallacy: the fallacy of omission. The troops were standing together when "a crowd looking for trouble started pelting snowballs, sticks of wood, and oyster shells" (Jowett 63) at the soldiers. The colonists taunted the troops and challenged them to fire their guns. Finally, the soldiers did. While the second part of the story is depicted in Revere's image, he chose to omit the first half. He could have portrayed the colonists as antagonizing, but to do so would admit fault on their part and not serve as effective a political tactic. By omitting details and only including what was relevant for his purpose, Revere was able to create a strong frame for the colonists and depict the troops as brutal and heartless.

Abolitionist Movement and American Civil War Propaganda

The use of political imagery and slogans continued during the Civil War. Although the public was previously able to purchase leaflets containing political cartoons or the prints themselves, when the Civil War began "illustrated journalism became available to the American people for the first time" (W. Thompson 21). Three established newspapers began featuring political imagery on a regular basis: *Harper's Weekly*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, and the *New York Illustrated News*.

Some of the images used pathos to evoke specific emotions among the citizens. One image depicted man, shunned by his wife, with the words "Get away! No husband of mine would be here while the country needs his help" (W. Thompson 23). The picture, paired with the wife's dialogue, imposes a feeling of guilt upon men who had not yet enlisted, or had completed their service and chose not to re-enlist. Not only did it send a

message that such men were letting their country down, but they were not worthy of their wives' love. The resolution to these feelings was for the man to enlist as their service was needed.

Other images were paired with text to attack the character of men who chose not to assist in the war effort. Newspapers ran an illustration of a man being held by his wife with the text, "He shouldn't go to the horrid war, away from his "wifey, tifey," and spoil his pretty mustache" (W. Thompson 23). This image took a black-and-white stance on recruitment necessity. It created a frame readers to view men who chose not to fight as childish and weak. This frame does not take into account any details, such as if the man had a family, sick wife, or a condition that prevented him from being an able-bodied soldier. The frame is simply, "If you enlist you are a strong man. If you do not, you are so weak that you need your wife to take care of you."

While the union developed images to increase participation in the war, abolitionists created images to stir emotion among individuals and create greater support for the Union cause. A sketch called "Persuasive Eloquence of the Sunny South" (Sasser, "Sunny South"), depicting a slave, was featured on envelopes known as patriotic covers. These covers were used to promote various causes by placing images on envelopes and thereby having everyone who would pass the letter through the postal system see the image. The slave was tethered to a pole by his arms and hands, and as he stood with his torso snug against the pole, his face had an array of emotions. He looked scared and exhausted. The artist drew the slave with his eyes looking directly at the audience with an expression of distress. When looking into his eyes, the viewer can almost hear his cries for help. There was also a whip at side of the picture ready to tear into the slave's back. Images like this

were developed to connect with people on an emotional level. Abolitionists depicted a human being in pain, in hopes of rallying support for the freeing of slaves.

While Union supporters were using pathos to gain support, the Confederacy was employing the slippery slope fallacy. In 1839, E.W. Clay produced an image titled “The Amalgamation Waltz” (“American Civil War”). Clay portrayed a formal waltz with all white women dancing with black male partners. White men looked on from above, while playing music in the balcony. This is a demonstration of the slippery slope fallacy because Clay’s message is that if the slaves are freed, they will quickly rise to power and soon the white men will be serving them, in this case playing music for them to dance. The black men will also become successful enough that they will whisk away the white women. Clay uses this fallacy in his image to make the statement that freeing slaves will open the door to their having equal rights, leading to negative lifestyle changes for white individuals.

While most political energy was spent gaining favor for the Union or Confederacy during this time, other aspects of life did not come to a standstill. There was still crime to report that was not war related, and creating political cartoons to shed light on those stories was how Thomas Nast developed a name for himself. He was a Civil War-era cartoonist credited for “creating the Democratic donkey, the Republican elephant, and the Tammany tiger” (Bogardus 54), symbols still used today. His war on New York City politician William Marcy Tweed earned Nast fame. When Tweed fled to France to avoid facing criminal charges, it was a political cartoon by Nast that led to Tweed’s arrest and extradition. Most importantly, Tweed publicly condemned political cartoons because of their effectiveness when he stated, “Stop them damn pictures. I don’t care so much about what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see

pictures” (Jowett 59).

Tweed identified one of the key reasons political pictures have been successful; they can reach a larger population because people who are illiterate or are not well-versed on the issues at hand can understand the message of the artist. Images have been used not only to create desired frames efficiently, but also to bridge a gap between those trying to disseminate information and the audience they hope to reach. Images and short phrases reach individuals who don’t want to take the time to read a pamphlet or news article and to those who don’t have the reading level to do so, even if they desired. Images also make concepts easier to understand, helping persuade individuals who may get lost in complicated logic.

For instance, Franklin could have written out a sound argument on why the colonies needed to set aside their differences of opinion and stand united. Specific details about key issues could have been addressed, followed by examples. While his argument may have been powerful, it would not have had as strong an impact as his snake image. By developing an image with a sound message, and short but strong slogan, he reached more individuals and furthered his cause far more than a written message is likely to have done.

Though propaganda had a slow start, once well-educated individuals learned how to use it, the techniques became prevalent and were often used to foster group opinions among the masses through frames that were constructed by image or slogan authors. Propaganda enabled political figures to influence public opinion. Bogardus defines public as “a large number of people, most of whom are not known to one another, but all of whom have at least one major interest in common” (7). Because of these characteristics, propaganda techniques became useful in mobilizing citizens for WWI and WWII.

Chapter 3: The Public Gains Knowledge about Propaganda

While images and slogans had been used in the past, before the end of WWI, most people had very little knowledge of propaganda or how it could be used. This was a reason that war posters displaying pictures and slogans were effective in mobilizing for the war effort during WWI. This chapter will explore the historical milestones that led to a population of people understanding and using a form of communication that they knew little about 100 years prior.

The Propaganda Monster

While propaganda tactics had been used in the past, many theorists acknowledged that the propaganda techniques used in WWI were more effective than when used previously, and entered the lives of citizens on a greater scale. Guy Stanton Ford, a member of the Minnesota Historical Society, wrote in 1919,

Behind the men and the guns, behind the great armies and navies, behind the great munition [sic] storehouses and munition factories, there has been waging another and equally important battle. . . . The thing which was at stake was to make the people in the democratic nations grasp in some way the meaning of this war for them, for they were the base and the support from which proceeded the most essential things which the soldier and the sailor must have; and by these essentials I mean not only the arms to fight with but the conviction that their cause was a just and a righteous one. The thing that had to be built up was the morale of the fighting nations. . . . In America this mobilization and inspiration of public opinion, this fight to create and sustain morale and to arouse a patriotism that could be translated into action, whether such action expressed itself in buying bonds or in saving food or in sending our sons directly to the front, was the work of the Committee on Public Information. (Ford 4).

He explained the necessity of using every medium available to mobilize the masses in support of the war effort. His tone was patriotic, as his choice of discourse was used to reaffirm a sense of purpose. He told the public that they also fought the war, but on a different front. He went on to state that “in previous wars the United States had seen no

similar organization” (Ford 4), crediting individuals such as Thomas Paine for efforts during the revolutionary war and “private societies” for spreading information during the Civil War. While Ford established a patriotic view of the propaganda usage during WWI, others viewed the government’s new-found power over information dissemination skeptically.

The use of propaganda on nations’ own citizens actually changed the connotation associated with the term after WWI. Prior to the war, it “meant simply the means which the adherent of a political or religious faith employed to convince the unconverted” (Irwin 3). While it had a neutral meaning prior to the war, the attitudes of citizens quickly changed and began to respond to the word propaganda negatively. The change of opinion was reflected in the names of government agencies. The “government press bureaus that so busily engaged in persuading neutrals or keeping their own people friendly to ‘national aims’ had at first called themselves ‘departments of propaganda.’ By 1918, they had begun changing the title to ‘Department of Counter-Propaganda’” (Irwin 3).

Some academics and theorists found the level of effectiveness of WWI propaganda on the nation’s own citizens to be unsettling. John Dewey, a political philosopher, wrote *New Paternalism: Molding Public Opinion*. In that article, he theorized that citizens’ opinions fuel a democracy, but their opinions are created through the information they receive from the media. This observation led Dewey to argue that public opinion could be easily manipulated at the will of a governing party (Combs 40).

Another political theorist, Harold Lasswell, shared Dewey’s sentiments stating, “We live among more people than ever who are puzzled, uneasy, or vexed at the unknown cunning which seems to have duped and degraded them” (Combs 41). While the public

expressed dismay and mistrust toward the government, philosophers like Dewey and Lasswell expressed their fear of propaganda's power, believing it could threaten democracy if it was effective enough to manipulate public opinion. Lasswell argued that it was powerful in persuading citizens because "individuals tend to react to emotional impulses rather than sober analytic statements" (Jowett 86). This goes back to the idea of humans being rationalizing as opposed to rational. Lasswell feared that if the government used effective persuasive techniques, such as appealing to emotion to generate public opinion, citizens could be manipulated into believing falsehoods or be persuaded to form opinions that the government wanted them to believe, as opposed to their own. Once various frames were set by propaganda, they would be difficult to challenge through factual truths.

Despite the dangers laid out by Dewey and Lasswell, other political philosophers were advocates of propaganda, such as Edward Bernays. He found propaganda to be a political necessity for a democracy and to be "indispensable to this civilization" (Combs 41). In 1923, Bernays published *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, discussing the power of propaganda. Bernays gave propagandists various terms like "invisible governors" and the "intelligent few" and argued that their work was necessary to help voters navigate the political system. Bernays theorized that these propagandists "can, and do, make the rest of us think what they please about a given subject," (Combs 64) and he agreed with these actions to form a more cohesive system. Bernays argued that voters needed some sense of direction or they would get lost in the whirlwind of politicians' arguments. Propaganda could be used to guide voters and "mold the mind of the masses that they will throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction" (Combs 64). Bernays believed that people

formed opinions through “pat words or images which stand for a whole group of ideas and experiences” (Combs 65), which lends itself to pairing slogans and images as an effective propaganda technique.

While theorists were sounding the alarm bells, the very propagandists who helped the war effort began to feel “guilt over the lies and deceptions that they had helped to spread” (Jowett 124). George Creel, who served as chairman of the Committee of Public Information, was complimented by Ford in 1919 for his “self-forgetting service and sacrifice” and “fighting spirit and leadership” (Ford 26). However, in 1920, Creel published a book, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919*. In his book he not only wrote about his work with the CPI, but also of “the congressional attempt to suppress his report of the CPI’s propaganda activities” (Jowett 124). When reflecting on the mass-manipulation effort put forth by the government, Creel joined the theorists who were fearful of what doors had been opened during WWI.

Media outlets also began to voice concern. In 1919, *The Nation* printed an editorial suggesting the possibility that the propaganda techniques used during the War “had revealed to the groups of men who govern . . . new and hitherto undreamed of ways of fortifying their control over the masses of the people” (Combs 41), while another publication also stated concern that propaganda could be used to “sway and control democratic masses” (Combs 41). In later years, newspapers eventually began including regular columns educating the public about basic propaganda techniques and how to distinguish factual news from propaganda.

Individual news personalities began to voice their concerns over the prevalence of

propaganda in citizens' daily lives as well. In 1935, Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist and news broadcaster, theorized in a short editorial, "Propaganda in the Modern World," that propaganda was a business technique that had been re-appropriated by the government. She argued that businesses "discovered that it was better to sell not the product itself, but some abstract ideal that could be associated with the product in the public mind" (D. Thompson 67). She used cosmetics as an example, making the claim that women do not buy the product, but the promise of the product. She applied this to the government, stating that the business practice of "creating demands is no longer confined to selling goods, but it is being used by parties and by governments as a means of selling personalities, leadership and ideas" (D. Thompson 67).

Thompson went a step further than most, comparing the US propaganda use to other, more tyrannical, governments. She established the stance that democracy is born through a public opinion that is developed through the free choice and personal opinions of citizens. Other governments that are not democracies also have public opinions, but for them, "truth is not something which every individual must seek for himself, and go on seeking continually, aided by reason and supported by knowledge" (D. Thompson 68). Rather, she argued that for citizens of countries like Russia, truth "is something revealed, something definitely and finally established, with which every individual must be brought into harmony" (D. Thompson 68). She listed Communist Russia, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as countries with a public opinion that is set by the governing parties and challenged Americans to question everything with an "independent, inquiring mind," because if they continued to do so, they would "not be completely governed by propaganda" (D. Thompson 68).

Also in 1935, journalist and professor O.W. Riegel made the bold claim that “if one asks a group of literate Americans whether they believe in the reliability of what they read in the newspapers, he is very likely to be answered in the negative” (201). He credited the public’s awareness of propaganda to the theorists and political science students who had begun to draw attention to it since the end of WWI. Riegel referred to the trend as the “propaganda monster,” and while he believed the American public had a right to be angry over how they were manipulated through propaganda, arguing that citizens were boiling a complex issue down to a simplistic form. He argued that the propaganda monster “is rarely comprehensible to the average man as an abstraction,” so when an individual attempts to identify it “he must reduce its vague menace to something concrete and tangible, such as the mass of reading matter offered him in the ink and newsprint of his daily newspaper” (Riegel 201).

He said that while newspapers were receiving a lot of criticism and blame for being “propaganda instruments,” the medium itself was not the issue. While he believed that newspapers did not publish propaganda intentionally, Riegel questioned whether something could ever be completely factual, and he addressed the possibility that newspapers may have always had a bias slant. When it came to propaganda, Riegel posed the idea that maybe “it is time to admit that what we call propaganda is an inescapable fact of modern life. Is it possible, or even desirable, for newspapers to cling to the belief that they are impartial repositories of truth?” (Riegel 203). Regardless of whether theorists believed propaganda was used for better or worse, they all agreed that it was now a part of modern society.

The Institute of Propaganda Analysis

In response to the public’s desire for a stronger understanding of propaganda

techniques, their use and identification, the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was created in 1937. Created by Clyde Miller, a professor at Columbia University who believed he was a victim of WWI propaganda, the IPA's role was to analyze the inner workings of propaganda in a "scholarly and disinterested" (Brown 30) manner. Academics and philosophers made up the majority of the IPA and wrote monthly bulletins to better inform the public. The IPA was not only concerned with "war propaganda, but also with such domestic propaganda issues as the Ku Klux Klan, the Communists, domestic fascism and the role of advertising, all as possible threats to the democratic way of life" (Jowett 182). A businessman from Boston, Edward Filene, who believed in the mission of the IPA, donated \$10,000 in the hope of educating the public about propaganda. By 1938, Filene increased his grant and additional grants were given from the American Jewish Committee and the Whitney Foundation (Finch 381).

In November 1937, the IPA wrote a bulletin, "How to Detect Propaganda," that included the "seven common 'devices' or 'abc's of propaganda analysis" (Jowett 182). These seven devices were: Name Calling, Glittering-Generalities, Transfer Here, Testimonial, Plain Folk, Card Stacking and Band Wagon (Sproule 135). They are still referenced when educating individuals on propaganda. On top of the monthly bulletin, the IPA encouraged an open forum among citizens. "A Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis" was an educational program that was put together by the Institute. It promoted "critical thinking and informed discussion about current issues" and "by September 1939 the IPA's materials were being used in more than 550 high schools and colleges, as well as numerous adult civic groups" (Jowett 184). The response to the IPA's educational efforts was positive enough that others began to copy their model. *The Nation*, a periodical that

began voicing concerns about propaganda in 1919, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, along with “several of the Hearst and Scripps-Howard newspaper groups, began carrying regular columns training readers in propaganda analysis techniques” (Finch 382). Despite the positive response and strong support of the IPA, a decision was made to end the bulletin and accompanying programs when the US entered WWII.

Isolationist Movement

Between involvement with WWI, feeling victimized by propaganda, and struggling through the Depression, many citizens were becoming weary of foreign affairs and pushed for the US to be less involved in foreign conflicts, particularly in Europe and Asia. Citizens began to pay more attention to domestic news and looked for ways to better their own country. This movement was fueled by the theorists who spread awareness of the dangers of propaganda along with the propagandists who were willing to explain how the Committee on Public Information managed to be so successful.

While some pushed for the US to be isolated and avoid foreign conflict, others warned of consequences from this mindset. In *American Isolation: Propaganda Pro and Con*, published in October 1939, John Crosby Brown argued that isolationism could aid in the rise of fascism around the world. Brown discussed how the fear of “insidious propaganda” led to Americans’ desire to avoid involvement in global affairs. He stated, “Scarcely a day has passed in recent years without a solemn warning from some senator, congressman, editor or business leader against that propaganda. It is alleged to have been devised abroad and fostered here by disloyal or merely credulous American ‘internationalists’ in order to enlist the American people in another ‘crusade’” (29).

Americans were leery of tricks to support another war, knowing that they may not be in favor if propaganda techniques were not used, and while Brown acknowledged that,

he also asked them to think of what propaganda meant in general. He explained that while the public looked at it as a negative form of communication, filled with lies and deceit, propaganda was neither good nor bad. Rather, it was simply a way to disseminate information in an opinionated fashion.

Further, Brown argued that if citizens believed that propaganda was only a deceitful way to mobilize for the war effort, it would play into the hands of foreign propagandists. He claimed, “It is profoundly in the interest of the Nazi and Fascist Powers, and of Japan, that isolationist sentiment in the United States should prevail. They require that they be left free to carry through their programs of conquest and aggression without opposition or protest from the United States” (Brown 32). To provide evidence for this claim, he cited the IPA’s statistics of over 800 fascist or Nazi leaning organizations existing in the US in 1939 and of Japan spending \$2,000,000 toward propaganda dissemination in the United States. Brown stated that while the isolationists were concerned with pro-war propaganda, these organizations were “deluging the country with anti-Semitic, anti-democratic and isolationist propaganda” (Brown 33). Brown encouraged the American people to play devil’s advocate when looking at propaganda and to acknowledge that political groups from all views were disseminating information meant to persuade them.

He argued that it was crucial for the public to stop believing that isolation would protect them from propaganda, because the varying mindsets were dividing the country. He addressed the terms “Peace Party” and “War Party,” arguing that they were “ridiculously exaggerated and seem to have been adopted chiefly for the purpose of attracting attention” (Brown 31). They were also prime examples of black and white

reasoning. Brown believed that individuals at one extreme or the other were causing a divide in the nation. Rather than allowing the nation to be divided, Brown challenged Americans to be “thoughtful citizens” and use the devices provided by the IPA to “scrutinize critically all propaganda both for and against isolation, and to figure out for himself how much of it is grounded in reason and sound principle, how much is out-and-out falsification, and how much consists of purely emotional appeals to prejudice, hate and fear” (Brown 39).

With the shuttering of the IPA in 1939 and a push to become more unified, citizens came together as American involvement in WWII approached. The populace remained cognizant of propaganda and continued to utilize the devices that the IPA equipped them with to identify and decipher propaganda, while also supporting the US in time of war. Public polls in 1939 showed that “the American public was increasingly becoming pro-Ally; while at the same time they remained antiwar” (Jowett 185). One of these Gallup polls found that in October 1937, only 37% of Americans would no longer buy Japanese goods, but by June, 1939 that number had risen to 66% (Brown 44). Brown argued that people would unite during war, not because of propaganda, but because of their shared values. He theorized that public opinion would often form in support of countries who upheld the same standards as those in the US Bill of Rights (Brown 44).

Despite general patriotic support, citizens were still suspicious of the government’s propaganda techniques. Some historians argue that “no one can calculate the number of Jews who died in the Second War because of the ridicule during the twenties and thirties of Allied propaganda” (Finch 382).

Propaganda Education

The IPA began the educational movement to detect and understand propaganda

techniques in the United States when it began educating the general public through its bulletin and the distribution of educational materials to schools. However, as the US entered WWII, the movement to educate individuals in analyzing and detecting propaganda slowed as citizens came together for the war effort. While propaganda played an even larger role in WWII than in WWI, citizens remained aware of propaganda using the seven techniques taught to them by the IPA.

Though the war effort slowed the educational movement, it did not come to a halt. Educators began to piggy-back the IPA's initiatives and started to develop their own curriculum to teach students about analyzing propaganda. In 1940, Arno Jewett, a professor of English who later went on to serve twenty years in the US Office of Education, published a paper called "Detecting and Analyzing Propaganda," that detailed a study on effective propaganda teaching techniques. He noted that "certain educational leaders in the United States and England have pointed out to the teachers and students the dangers which may result in a democracy from uncritical acceptance of ideas promulgated by special interest groups," (Jewett 106) leading to a number of educators advocating for propaganda education to be added to their high school curriculum.

This study looked at juniors and seniors from four Minnesota high schools, totaling 121 students, all taught a segment on propaganda. These students were then matched with students of equal education and skill levels who were not given any extra instruction on propaganda. Jewett laid out the curriculum, how the effectiveness of the lesson was measured, and the results. At the end of the lesson, all of the students were tested on propaganda and asked to give a presentation. The study found that "the Juniors and Seniors who were taught under these experimental conditions showed a highly significant

superiority over those in the control groups in ability to detect and analyze propaganda and to discriminate among articles containing different amounts of propaganda” (Jewett 114). Because of the study’s effectiveness, Jewett hoped it would serve as motivation for educators who were unsure whether or not analyzing propaganda would be worthwhile for high school students.

During the 1940s, academics continued to debate the effects of war on the school system and whether propaganda studies should be incorporated into the curriculum. Some theorists argued that citizens were still victims of misinformation and school children were especially affected. In 1945, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Thomas Woody, published “War and Education,” where he argued that there is a direct correlation between the two. According to Woody, there is a breakdown in communication during wartime and “censorship and propaganda are its indispensable auxiliaries. Suppress this, and spread that: such is the motto of nations at war” (599). He found propaganda to “act like poison-gases on the mind,” and to be particularly dangerous to students, stating that in times of war “schools become propaganda centers, praising friend, berating foe” (Woody 601). Rather than using the classroom to teach students how to protect themselves from propaganda, Woody argued the schools became a haven for it.

In 1946, C.S. Kazdan argued for the freedom of educators. While some scholars wanted a more uniform education after the war, Kazdan argued that too much government regulation was a danger and was one of the factors in Hitler’s strong influence on the Nazi youth. Kazdan theorized that “no true democratization of state and society is possible without the complete freedom and democratization of education” (353). He supported educator’s freedom of the educators to decide how to properly teach young minds to form

opinions and thus contribute to society through a democratic mindset.

Despite varying beliefs on the education of propaganda, scholars and theorists spoke using anti-fascist and pro-patriotism undertones. When discussing postwar education, Kazdan argued that “the emergence of a new man to whom every type of chauvinism, nazism, and fascism should be organically alien—all this can only result from self-education and a practical self- revaluation on the part of the nations themselves” (Kazdan 352). Woody’s article was scholarly and bi-partisan. He discussed the losses that all countries endured in the war, without focusing only on the US. However, he only used “fascist” twice in the eighteen-page document, and both times directly associated fascism with war and portrayed it in a negative light.

Until the late 1940s, the government’s primary purpose for using propaganda was to further war efforts, but that changed in 1947. Two elected officials, H. Alexander Smith and Karl Mundt, introduced the Smith-Mundt bill, which was passed by the U.S. Congress and considered the “first peacetime propaganda program” (Parry-Giles 203). Unlike previous propaganda programs, the Smith-Mundt bill would be used to spread propaganda internationally rather than domestically. Supporters of the bill hoped that a global understanding and appreciation of democracy would develop, thus causing an end to the expansion of communism. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, various attempts were made to create disapproval for communism and an international desire for democracy. The initial tactic was to share globally the luxurious lives of all US citizens. When this plan backfired and caused jealousy and resentment toward the US, the Truman administration changed tactics. By the early 1950s, propaganda focused on the negatives of communism and in “1953, policymakers had begun articulating the fear that Soviet actions

gravely threatened democratic principles” (Parry-Giles 454). While the Smith-Mundt bill was only for international propaganda, expressing the danger that communism had to democracy opened the door for the citizens’ domestic lives to be affected.

Elected officials began warning of the dangers of communism and used those dangers as reasons to implement policies. For instance, “congressional leaders such as Senator John L. McClellan (D-AR) charged that ‘books and documents’ available in overseas libraries acted as ‘sources of propaganda’ for the ‘Communists in Russia’” (Parry-Giles 454). McClellan gained enough support, and the books were removed from overseas libraries. Allowing certain books to be removed on the sole principle that they promoted communism opened the door to censorship, causing the McCarthy era to be a setback for the public school system.

By 1953, the anti-communist sentiment gained traction with the American citizens, and any individual or group could fall victim to accusations of communist loyalties. Unfortunately, the public school system fell under an unprecedented amount of scrutiny. Foster and Davis stated, “Right-wing groups and individuals used the convenience of the red scare to oppose federal aid to education, to deride campaigns for racially integrated schools, to ridicule progressive philosophy and practices in education, and, very importantly, to blunt advocacy for tax increases to support public schooling” (126).

Removing books from overseas libraries was just the beginning of book censorship. Eventually, textbooks began to be reviewed and information was either removed from the books, or they were censored entirely. It also led to the development of history books with a conservative bias. Public schools were accused of being breeding grounds for socialist values, and teachers were considered dangerous because they could

be too progressive and cause students to question democracy. A 1954 study conducted by the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy through Education in Houston Texas, found that 58% of teachers felt pressured to add a political bias to their curriculum and 40% were fearful of being fired (Foster and Davis 130).

While teachers and administrators struggled to keep their schools operating under intense scrutiny, little to no progress was made to incorporate propaganda education into the classroom curriculum, although some academics were still advocating it. In 1951, Emory Bogardus argued that “if all high-school students acquired even an elementary knowledge of how propaganda works, they could at least insist on more open methods of propaganda. They could acquire some skill in recognizing the differences between publicity, advertising, indoctrination, dissemination, teaching and education” (Bogardus 144). While there was a push by the public, scholars and the IPA to implement propaganda analysis into the curriculum—and some schools managed to do so—in the 1930s, Bogardus was still fighting the battle in the 1950s. A political witch hunt put any individual with a progressive mindset at risk of having his or her American loyalties questioned, and the movement to add propaganda into the curriculum came to an almost complete standstill.

Entering the 1960s, the public voiced their concern over government affairs and the Vietnam War, but propaganda had yet to find its way into history books. After a strong progressive movement, propaganda slowly began to be implemented into the curriculum. In 1972, two instructors, Grace Abrams and Fran Schmidt, published a curriculum aide to assist teachers planning for seventh through ninth grade social studies classes. The rationale behind teaching students about propaganda was that students were “bombarded”

with propaganda on a daily basis and “by learning the techniques of propaganda, the intent and purposes of the propagandist, and by learning to distinguish fact from opinion, bias from objectivity, students will better be able to make decisions based on critical and objective thinking rather than on emotion and prejudice” (Abrams and Schmidt 1).

In the first section of this lesson plan, Abrams and Schmidt state that one of the course objectives is to learn the “types of techniques of propaganda.” The seven terms listed under that subhead are the same seven techniques that were provided to the public by the IPA in the 1930s. For the remainder of the course, the lesson plan outlines a better understanding of the various definitions and connotations that revolve around the word propaganda. The bulk of the lesson plan relies on heavy discourse analysis. Various quotes are given, and students are asked to identify how those pieces of discourse are effectively functioning as propaganda. They analyze various types of propaganda, both political and advertising. Despite the emphasis on analyzing propaganda and learning how to recognize it through various devices, the lesson plan never mentions political war posters. As a matter of fact, the only mention of WWI and WWII propaganda analysis is the dissection of various propaganda pieces put out by Adolf Hitler, but no mention of Allied propaganda.

The renewed interest in adding propaganda analysis to classrooms continued. In 1976, graduate student Joseph Gerard Kelley wrote a dissertation, *Propaganda Analysis and Public Education: A Study of the Goal of Teaching American Youth an Awareness and an Understanding of Political Propaganda*. His dissertation looked at previous attempts to add political propaganda to the curriculum and it included proposed lesson plans that could be implemented into the classroom.

In 1984, Dan Fleming, a professor of social studies education, conducted a study

that analyzed various priorities set forth by social studies teachers, along with how those items were portrayed in textbooks. Fleming reviewed forty-five textbooks aimed at eighth through twelve grade, and focused on four main objectives, one being propaganda. He began his study by pointing out that in 1979 the National Council for the Social Studies “called for ‘social participation in a democracy’ devoted toward the ‘resolution of problems confronting society’” (Fleming 3). This showed the continued shift toward more politically-conscious students.

When looking at propaganda analysis in history books, Fleming made a few insightful observations. The first was that “propaganda and war went hand-in-hand in most of the history books” (Fleming 6). Although it was the propaganda techniques used during WWI that sparked public interest, much of the coursework until the late 1970s analyzed propaganda in advertisements and political discourse, but not necessarily specific to war. He also found that the majority of propaganda curriculum focused on WWI and WWII, and unlike the curriculum from Abrams and Schmidt, “the textbooks also provided numerous examples of anti-German slogans and posters for students to review as propaganda devices” (Fleming 6). There was a strong emphasis on discourse when analyzing propaganda, but by the mid-1980s, slogans and wartime posters were making their way into history books.

By the 1990s, lesson plans aimed at curriculum for WWI and WWII contained some element of propaganda. In 1995 the *International Journal of Social Education* published Janet Tipton’s “Teaching about World War II in Sixth Grade World History.” This article recommended various ways to teach students about WWII and highlighted “specific activities concerning propaganda, discrimination and prejudice” (Tipton). While

slogans and imagery began entering propaganda curriculum in the 1980s, they became the focal point for some lesson plans by the 1990s. In 1994, Blake Nory designed a lesson plan that was published titled “Creating Propaganda Posters: A Lesson in How Two Enemies Viewed the Vietnam War.” Nory developed this curriculum as a way for students to learn about the “power of propaganda” through hands-on learning. After learning about propaganda and how it was implemented, the students then created their own war posters with the techniques they had learned.

Since the 1990s, propaganda has continued to find a place in the curriculum. While it is not required, it is commonly taught in schools across the United States. Scholastic, a major source of K-12 academic materials, gives teachers access to multiple lesson plans that contain propaganda curriculum. The Scholastic articles not only discuss propaganda in various historical settings like WWI and WWII, but also teach younger students about what propaganda techniques are and how they are used. One lesson plan geared toward K-8 students is called “Recognizing the Rhetoric.” The lesson plan discusses techniques that have been around since democracy in Greece (Strom, “Election Fever”).

Because students are learning about propaganda techniques in grade school and then learning about how those techniques were implemented by the government in their high school history courses, teachers have focused on broadening the scope of propaganda curriculum. High school and college students are now taught how to analyze propaganda in specific settings. In 2008, Kevin E. Simpson published an article looking specifically at identifying propaganda in documentary films (Simpson 2008), while other articles suggest how to identify propaganda during current political campaigns.

While the initial push in the 1930s to add propaganda to the curriculum came to an

almost complete standstill through WWII, the McCarthy Era and Vietnam, the importance of students being able to identify propaganda was kept alive by educators, allowing the movement to resurface in the mid-1970s. Since then, propaganda has managed to become a staple in many US history courses, and some students begin learning propaganda techniques as early as grade school.

This education into the use and analysis of propaganda on a national scale has resulted in several generations savvy enough to understand and even create their own micro methods of propaganda when communicating their own ideas and opinions. As textbooks and teaching tools use war posters in the curriculum, the format of the war poster, brief text and poignant image, became easily mimicked by meme creators.

Chapter 4: World War Posters and Political Memes

World War I Posters

As Jowett and O'Donnell point out, WWI “was the first time that the populations of entire nations were actively involved in a global struggle” (122). Citizens were called upon to fight the war as a collective effort, through enlisting in the armed services, monetary donations and even food rationing. It was a time of sacrifice for many around the world, but it is difficult to persuade people to make necessary sacrifices until their support is earned. The Allied governments applied their knowledge of propaganda toward strategically earning the support of their citizens and maximizing war efforts. Imagery and slogans played a large part in the propaganda movement through the war posters issued by the government. The posters were developed to create frames, making it easier to persuade them to adhere to behavior that would help the nation win the war. The topics ranged from recruitment posters encouraging citizens to enlist in the army, to asking citizens to refrain from discussing war efforts because it could aid the enemy.

Posters quickly found a place in the war effort because “they are considered effective in arousing public opinion on behalf of various kinds of war activities” (Bogardus 103). Like propaganda used during the American Revolution and the American Civil War, many of the posters used the appeal to pathos. Persuading citizens through pathos involved them in the war effort on an emotional level and made them passionate about helping their nation. Some of the posters evoked a sense of duty among citizens, while others were created to make those who were not engaged feel guilty. Propaganda was also used to evoke feelings of hatred toward the enemy.

A poster that aroused feelings of responsibility to enlist in the armed forces, and arguably the most famous American recruitment poster, is James Flagg's Uncle Sam

poster, bearing the phrase “I Want You.” Flagg considered himself a devoted patriot and did not approve of those who would not join the war effort. Because of this, he worked with a group of individuals known as “Vigilantes,” who believed it was their duty to “arouse the youth of the nation to their duties in peace and war, and to carry on a propaganda that will thrill the country” (Lubin 803). He created the poster in 1917 and based it on the British poster featuring English war hero, Herbert Horatio Kitchener pointing at the audience with the words “Britons, ‘Wants you’ Join your country’s army! God Save the King” (Lubin 798). In Flagg’s version, Uncle Sam is pointing at the audience and the text reads, “I Want You” and on the second line, “for US Army.” The image mixed with the words elicits an emotional response from the reader because “Uncle Sam’s forceful gesture and riveting gaze signifies a nation prepared for self-sacrifice in answer to a higher calling” (Palermo 36). For young men, the poster created a sense of responsibility to their country. If feeling an obligation to serve his nation wasn’t enough, Lubin speculates that Flagg’s poster “made the viewer feel *seen* by the State and thus subject to its surveillance” (804).

The Red Cross also appealed to pathos using image and slogan pairings to gain support for their part in the war effort. One Red Cross poster featured a faint-looking soldier with a bandaged head being held by a nurse. It was a black-and-white image with only her Red Cross symbol in color. It read “In the name of mercy, give!” (Library of Congress”). The nurse stands firm, and her chin is slightly lifted as she looks into the distance. Her stoic expression portrays a woman who is willing to endure hardships to help the war. Her defined chin line symbolizes strength. As she does her part for the nation, the poster is asking the citizens to answer to their call of duty: donate blood so the many soldiers in need, like the man she is holding, do not die from something preventable. Use of

the word “mercy” appeals to the compassion of the audience and may even insinuate the responsibility that each person has to a higher power. While the United States was founded on the separation of church and state, Christian values are often found in various social constructs. Christianity teaches that since God had mercy on people, it is their responsibility to have mercy for one another. Adding religious undertones strengthens the author’s appeal to compassion.

Propaganda also framed enemies as people who citizens should hate and fear. These posters were “designed to stiffen the fighting spirit of entire nations, to create fear of defeat, and also as a more practical means to raise funds and encourage enlistment to halt these inhumane acts” (Jowett 170). While America used the tactic of promoting compassion, Britain also used the Red Cross in pro-Allied propaganda, but stirred hatred against the enemy. An image of a British soldier, too weak to stand, and a smug looking nurse laughing as she poured a glass of drinking water in front of him; the poster read, “Red Cross or Iron Cross?” (Jowett 174). Behind the nurse stood two men in German uniforms laughing at the suffering soldier. Below the image, the text on the poster described the event, “Wounded and a prisoner, our soldier cries for water. The German ‘sister’ pours it on the ground before his eyes. There is no woman in Britain who would do it. There is no woman in Britain who will forget it” (Jowett 174).

Portraying the Germans as people who will not help those in need, frames them as a group of heartless people, evoking hatred among Britain’s citizens. Using the word “our” when referring to the wounded soldier emotionally connects the audience to him through a sense of camaraderie, intensifying the feeling of hatred toward the Germans. The Germans had an Iron Cross medal that was awarded to soldiers. By placing “Red Cross or Iron

Cross?” at the top of the poster, the artist removes the honorable connotation of receiving that medal and replaces it with negative feelings evoked by the poster. The last two lines of the poster serve two purposes. Claiming that no British woman is ruthless enough to ignore a soldier in need, even an enemy prisoner, sends a message: you are better than them. This instills pride in the citizens because it compliments their character and self worth, while also increasing their dislike for anyone who would not help a fallen man. By stating that no woman will forget it, it solidifies the frame in the minds of the viewers, much like someone saying “remind me to . . .” often the reminder is unnecessary.

Propaganda artists also relied heavily on logical fallacies when developing persuasive works of art. A frequently used fallacy was black-and-white thinking. One poster (Library of Congress), developed by an art student, Laura Brey, in 1917 shows a well-dressed man standing with his back to a window, with his head turned sideways as he watches the troops march together in solidarity. Above all hangs a large American flag, flowing through the wind with the word “enlist” appeared in large, all capitalized letters. Only the man and the happenings outside the window are visible. Other detail of his surroundings re shaded into darkness, but in the lower right hand corner reads the question, “On which side of the window are you?”

The artist places the man’s back to the window to imply that because he is not fighting with the troops, he does not support them or the war effort. Here, the artist employs black-and-white thinking by saying that if a man enlists, he supports his country, and if he chooses not to, he is unpatriotic. Once this frame is created for the viewer, the question is then thrust upon the citizens. If a man does not enlist, he should consider himself unpatriotic. Also, by juxtaposing a vibrant image of men united for a cause with a

man standing in solitude, there is a second instance of the fallacy. If a man serves, he will be surrounded by other men with strong values and will live a life worthy of pride.

However, when choosing not to enlist, he is deciding to live an unaccomplished life of loneliness. The action of looking out of the window hints at his regrettable decision to stay behind, and he “appears riddled with longing to burst through the suffocating silence of his isolation and merge with the marching men and their transcendent purpose” (Lubin 808).

This fallacy was also used in slogans, such as one that read “To dress extravagantly in wartime is worse than bad form. It is unpatriotic” (Library of Congress).

Black-and-white thinking is once again used to argue that no matter how much people may be doing for the war effort, if they can dress nicely, they are not sacrificing enough. While this slogan was not accompanied with an image, the typographical characteristics emphasized certain parts of the phrase to increase its effectiveness. “Is worse than” and “it is” were both designed in a typeface that was half of the point-size as the rest of the poster. Because of this, at a distance or quick glance, the viewer read, “To dress extravagantly in wartime . . . bad form . . . unpatriotic.” The curtness of the message returns to the method of giving slogans a constant rhythm. Also, making the important information stand out makes it easier for the viewer to retain, since the brain remembers information in sections.

World War II Posters

While propaganda played a large role in mobilizing the masses in WWI, its importance increased during WWII for the Allies. In WWI, Germany did not utilize propaganda to its advantage to win support of the nation’s citizenry. Because of this, Adolf Hitler “stridently believed that the British secured military victory *primarily* because of the effective propaganda campaigns the government launched on their own citizens throughout the war” (Finch 373). Hitler studied the propaganda techniques of the Allies

and launched a military unit devoted to propaganda and the cognitive science behind it. With enemy forces following suit in propaganda techniques, the Allies remained focused on issuing effective propaganda to the public.

During WWII, an emphasis was placed on secrecy. Citizens were encouraged not to discuss military information because it could aid the enemy if the information was intercepted. To persuade citizens to not discuss military details, Uncle Sam reappeared. This time, his forefinger moved from pointing at the viewer to his lips, making the well-known gesture to be quiet. Above him read the phrase “I’m counting on you!” (National Archives). In the recruitment poster, his expression was strong and he had a stern look in his eyes. This time, his facial features softened. His eyes gave a trusting look to the viewer, letting them know that he was relying on them. Below, the poster gave citizens specific examples of things to keep private such as, “troop movements, ship sailings, war equipment.” Again, there is an appeal to pathos. The viewer feels relied upon, and thus feels the same sense of responsibility that was used in WWI.

However, this Uncle Sam poster has an added element: an appeal to ethos. Shared confidence results in an unspoken ethical code. To betray that trust is ethically inexcusable. By giving Uncle Sam a trusting look, the artist evokes the feeling that an individual receives when someone confides in them, and the person feels ethically bound to an agreement of secrecy.

Other posters put a call out for citizens to keep military movements secret, but in a blunt fashion. One realistically drawn image of sailors, rowing away from a large sinking ship covered in flames, uses the phrase “A careless word, a needless sinking.” (“Unifying a Nation”). As the viewer sees the sailors, some with torn shirts and visible wounds, it brings

the war to the home front. When citizens do not physically experience the war, there is sometimes a sense of detachment. Witnessing first-hand what the sailors are experiencing on the open seas causes citizens to respond emotionally. This is why activists often use photographs when persuading individuals to support their cause. Once the viewer is emotionally engaged, the phrase pins the responsibility onto that individual. It shows citizens what could happen if they discuss military movements. If they had in the past, it could evoke guilt and prevent them from speaking about secrets in the future.

A second slogan was created around this concept: “Loose lips sink ships.” It was often featured by itself or with a less graphic and more stylized ship. While it may not have elicited feelings that were as strong as the realistic poster, the phrase was equally effective. Like Caesar’s “Veni. Vidi. Vici,” it contained multiple characteristics that Bogardus deemed important for slogans. The alliteration, rhyming, and constant rhythm of the phrase made it memorable. It is also brief, allowing it to be easily remembered by citizens and reiterated to others.

The government may have anticipated some citizens adhering to secrecy when conversing through postal mail or over the phone, but finding it harmless to gossip among friends. In 1944, Victor Keppler created a “wanted poster.” It had the standard “WANTED!” above the photograph and listed the crime as “for murder” (National Archives). Rather than a stereotypical looking criminal, the National Archives describes the woman on the poster as, “someone who could resemble the viewer’s neighbor, sister, wife, or daughter” (National Archives). At the very bottom, the poster reads, “Her careless talk cost lives.” This played on the same emotions as the poster displaying a sinking ship, but targeted a different audience.

When a fuel shortage occurred during the war, citizens were called upon to do their part by using less fuel. Many of the posters addressing the shortage employed black-and-white thinking. In 1943, Weimer Pursell developed a poster featuring a middle-class man driving by himself. Next to him was a white outline of Hitler's figure. The text read, "If you ride ALONE, you ride with Hitler!" (National Archives). Pursell's poster sent the message that if someone didn't carpool, he was aiding the enemy. To strengthen the argument, he symbolically placed Hitler in the passenger seat of the car because physically seeing a concept is more powerful than words alone.

While an emphasis was placed on fuel, citizens were also asked to be mindful of reducing their waste during a time when their country needed all resources possible. One poster read "Waste helps the enemy," at the top, and at the bottom it stated "CONSERVE MATERIALS" (National Archives). The image was of a piece of paper with random odds and ends such as rubber bands, paperclips, razor blades and a pencil. At first glance, it seems as though the message is that throwing away anything that can still be used is wasteful, even something as small as a rubber band. While that may be the message, the artist added a subtle element as well.

The razor blade points downward over a washer, appearing to be an eye of an angry or menacing individual. A paperclip and round eraser attached to a brush form a nose with a mustache that is as short as it is wide. A rubber band forms a smile while a few nails lay scattered across the page. Hitler is staring at citizens through the very items that they waste. The subtlety of it makes it effective. It gives the viewer an ominous feeling—the feeling one gets when someone is watching them—persuading them to abide by the poster and manage their waste.

While citizens as a collective were asked to do their part, and men were asked to enlist, women were also encouraged to put their best foot forward. Before WWII, women were not often portrayed as strong and capable. That was until Rosie the Riveter stepped onto the scene. When gaps developed in the workforce due to the large number of men fighting overseas, the government encouraged women to enter the workforce and help with the manufacturing needed to provide the armed forces with the goods they needed. Propaganda starring Rosie the Riveter was developed to convince women that they had what it takes to be a laborer. During the campaign “the strong, bandanna-clad Rosie became one of the most successful recruitment tools in American history, and the most iconic image of working women in the World War II era” (history.com, “Rosie the Riveter”). When creating her, J. Howard Miller portrayed her as strong by having her flex her arm, while her other hand was in the process of rolling her sleeve up to begin work. While her feminine qualities remained, such as the small button nose, long eyelashes, and plump lips, her expression remained unyielding and determined.

During the later years of WWII, the intensity of fear increased in the war posters. The government conducted a study and “found that images of women and children in danger were effective emotional devices” (National Archives). With this in mind, Lawrence B. Smith created a war poster in 1942 of three siblings playing together in the grass. They all have patriotic and classic American toys: a model airplane, an American flag and a doll. They epitomize an ideal American family. As the two younger ones play innocently, the oldest brother, who appears to be around ten years old, stands protectively while looking up at the sky. On closer observation, the viewer can see a shadow in the shape of a swastika around the children. The text below reads “Don’t let that shadow touch

them. Buy War Bonds.” (National Archives). The thought of having children harmed creates fear, but something else is also at play. Here the artist is also using the slippery slope fallacy. Juxtaposing American values with a recognizable Nazi symbol—encircling the siblings in a swastika—it symbolizes German fascism infiltrating the American way of life. This not only insinuates that the war will eventually move to the home front if not ended soon, but that it could also lead to the destruction of the American dream. Increasing the fear to include both of these outcomes was designed to mobilize the citizens to work harder and sacrifice more in an effort to end the war.

One poster campaign, titled the “Four Freedoms,” was launched in 1943 and featured the artwork of all-American artist, Norman Rockwell (National Archives). The posters were designed to remind the citizens of the freedoms they risked losing if the war was lost. The freedoms showcased were speech, worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. While they all alluded to the loss of freedoms if the war was not won, one poster stands out because it used a propaganda technique that the others did not. Rockwell showcases a Thanksgiving scene with a family gathered around a formal dining table. Everyone is smiling and talking as a large turkey is placed on the table. On the surface, it represents an America where citizens can provide decent meals for their families, particularly during the holidays. By placing “Ours . . . to fight for” at the top, it is insinuated that this freedom could be in danger if the Allies lose the war, but it is more complex than that. The public had just endured rationing and sacrificing during WWI. The economy seemed to get back on track throughout the 1920s, but then the Great Depression occurred, and now the public was once again sacrificing for WWII. The technique of wishful thinking is at play in this piece. When citizens look at the poster they see an image

that they long for. The poster is designed to incite a desire for the end of the war through increased efforts, so that a return can be made to a lifestyle of good eating and fine china.

Public use of propaganda through political memes

The war did end, but the techniques remained. Nearly seven decades after WWII, Americans are now creating memes using the image and slogan pairing technique. With social media becoming a regular form of communication, the citizens have now taken to creating emotionally charged messages, shifting the dynamic of information spreading to the masses. The public has employed the old propaganda strategy of the government with political memes. While a meme is “an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture” (Merriam Webster, “Meme”), the current style takes well-known photos and uses the “Impact” typeface to write a catchy phrase on the image. Like war posters, the images often illicit an emotion among the audience and the accompanying slogan.

War posters and propaganda were issued to the public as a collective through mailings and posts in storefront windows, partly due to the citizens sharing a common interest: to win the war. The public’s distribution method of memes differs and begins on a small scale. Social media websites, like Facebook or Twitter, connect people through social circles, such as connecting to friends or belonging to common interest groups. Social networks are “made up of the following: opinion leaders who may influence an audience because of their position within the social network; small groups of people that may include opinion leaders and/or propaganda agents; and people who facilitate rumors innocently or deliberately throughout a social network” (Jowett 269).

Facebook has well-known public figures who become opinion leaders online and are followed because of their role in society. Stephan Colbert and Jon Stewart are examples

of these leaders. They have a following and their political opinions influence the public because they discuss politics in a relatable fashion. If Colbert were to post a meme pertaining to a current political event, it would have a high potential of going viral because followers who agree with his stance repost it for their friends. Opponents may also post it with a retaliatory argument. The next tier of a social network is common interest groups. These groups have an agent who administers the interest group, therefore deciding what propaganda is posted. Rather than identifying with an individual, they often identify with an identity, such as the Facebook page “Left Action,” which promotes a liberal leaning agenda.

The third tier is the Facebook users themselves. When individuals see memes posted by various groups, they will often repost the image if they feel a connection to it. While the government issued propaganda to the masses through a top-down method, memes go viral using a bottom up approach. Memes begin at a personal level and may reach mass communication if they become viral. In as late as March 2014, CNN featured a story on “10 Classic Memes that Owned the Internet” (Huh).

While politicians have always proceeded with caution when speaking, social networking sites granting the ability for any individual to voice his or her opinion has only heightened the necessity for caution. During a 2012 presidential debate, “an undecided voter by the name of Katherine Fenton asked both candidates about pay inequality for women” (Kim, “Binders”). When presidential candidate Mitt Romney mentioned that he had “binders full of women” as an anecdote to express the large number of women who were considered for jobs in his administration, someone “created a simple Facebook Page dedicated to the reference. Within an hour, the page had some 90,000 fans” (Nasri, “Don’t Always Meme”).

Through this common interest group, individuals went to work developing memes

to frame Romney's quote in a satirical manner. One thing that the majority of these memes had in common was their use of the fallacy of omission. By removing a quote from its original context and pairing it with various images to alter its meaning, the meme creator is omitting Romney's intention for the quote, enabling the creator to frame the phrase in an individualistic manner. One meme featured Romney holding three binders, each a different primary color and with a woman's face taped to it. The meme's text read "Ermahgerd wormern" (Kim, "Binders"). The term 'ermahgerd' is a popular deviation of "Oh my God" on the Internet. Phonetically, it is created to be read with a lisp. Also, it is often used in situations where speaker it is highly excited, adding a slight obnoxious tone to the phrase. The binders shown in the photo invoke the memory of back-to-school shopping as a grade school student because of their bright colors. By pairing a poor-sounding phrase with an image alluding to grade school, the meme generator discredits Romney's character by associating him with obnoxious and immature behavior—both characteristics that are frowned upon for a world leader.

Propaganda is effective when it is highly relatable to the audience, such as featuring an average woman in the "Wanted Poster" used during WWII. With this in mind, some "binders full of women" memes used well-known pop culture allusions. One featured Patrick Swayze and said "No one puts Baby in a binder" (Kim, "Binders"), an allusion to a popular quote from the film *Dirty Dancing*. Unlike many war posters and memes, this one does not appeal to pathos. Rather, pop culture memes are created to do two things. First, they use the catchy nature of a famous movie quote or scene to make the meme more memorable. Second, the likelihood for the image to go viral increases because people may find it amusing simply because of its context, even if they aren't typically involved with

politics.

Meme creators capitalize on using elements that will make the memes relatable to the public. In 1951, when discussing the emotional appeals used in propaganda, Bogardus made the observation that “somewhat strangely, the humorous poster has not made a wide appeal” (102). While encouraging citizens to be part of a war effort may have not been the right time and place for humor, it is used often in memes. It is why viewers tune into political shows hosted by Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart. Sharing humor creates a connection between individuals and helps people to relate to one another.

Mitt Romney inspired a second meme during the same presidential debate: Fired Big Bird. When debating with Barack Obama on how to lower the deficit, Romney stated, “I’m sorry Jim, I’m gonna stop the subsidy to PBS. I like PBS. I love Big Bird. I actually like you too, but I am not going to keep spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for” (Kim, “Fired Big Bird”). While it can be assumed that Romney probably name-dropped Big Bird as an attempt to relate to the audience, it backfired, and once again individuals took the quote and ran with it. Through certain images, meme creators appealed to humor, adding a level of absurdity to Romney’s plan to reduce the deficit. One image placed Barack Obama next to Osama Bin Laden and below it were Mitt Romney and Big Bird. The text next to Obama read “Takes out Bin Laden,” and next to Romney: “Takes out Big Bird.” (Kim, “Fired Big Bird”). The creator uses Americans’ strong dislike of a national enemy and their love of a childhood television character. By doing so, he aligns Obama’s interests with that of the people, while portraying Romney as a candidate who does not value the same issues as voters. Secondly, it sets a frame that Romney has poor priorities and his actions are on a much smaller scale than those of Obama. When looking

at the image, one may think, “Obama managed to rid the world of a terrorist we’ve spent years searching for, and Romney is focusing on children’s television shows.”

Another meme portrayed Big Bird as homeless, holding the recognizable piece of cardboard with “Will work for food” scrawled on it. Big Bird became a speaking role in the memes, such as one that read: “I just want to teach kids shapes. Fuck me, Right?” (Kim, “Fired Big Bird”). While it is a meme that may make the viewer laugh, like effective propaganda, it has an underlying, more subtle message. It makes Big Bird an average citizen just trying to do his job, yet Romney wants to take his job away. As both candidates set out to prove to potential voters that under their administration there would be job growth, Romney’s frame becomes one that marks workers as dispensable. Big Bird is not only aligned with the average worker; in this case, he belongs to the educational community. He wants to teach America’s youth, but he is the first thing to get cut from the national budget. This frame could be invoked by the reader without even realizing it because Republicans are often framed in the media as the candidates who want to cut the education budget.

The appeal to humor was also used in the popular tumblr blog, “Texts from Hillary,” featuring Hillary Clinton wearing sunglasses and texting, as she sits in an office chair behind a desk. The meme creators, Adam Smith and Stacy Lambe created it as a joke, but it unintentionally went viral when people found it comical. Individuals began sending in their own memes to be featured on the tumblr blog. Many of the memes combine the image with other well-known individuals to create a meme that will make people laugh. While some only served a comic purpose, others commented on political situations. One featured Hillary saying, “Baby in the room next to me at the hotel wouldn’t stop crying last

night. Thought of you. LMAO.” Below it was an image of Speaker of the House, John Boehner looking at his phone. Below his image it said “WTF!” (Smith and Lambe, “Texts From Hillary”). The use of “text speak,” like “lmao” and “wtf,” form a connection with the audience because the discourse style fits the meme. The meme then frames Boehner as a politician who is as weak as a baby and whines when he does not get his way. This meme was created during a time when the US government had to reach an agreement about a debt ceiling, and Boehner was portrayed by the media as a politician unwilling to compromise for the good of the country. Memes such as this one appeal to individuals who many not stay completely up-to-date on politics and the news, but relate to pop culture.

Mememes are also created to discredit individuals or specific causes through the use of fallacies. The Obama administration enacted the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, which made it mandatory to have health insurance but also placed regulations on insurance companies to create a better healthcare system. While some viewed the bill positively, others viewed being “forced” to purchase health insurance as unconstitutional.

One meme, featuring a grinning Obama, stated “Insists Obamacare is a good idea. Exempts himself [Page 114 Line 22]” (Kim, “Government Shutdown”). There is a societal construct that says “the camera cannot lie,” but some argue that “candid camera shots can distort” (Bogardus 55). The image depicts Obama in a multitude of ways. He is depicted as an overly happy individual without a care in the world. This frames him as being detached from the average citizen’s reality and unable to relate to the monetary struggles that many have. It also suggests that the American people were hoodwinked. The author frames Obama as knowing that the Affordable Care Act is not effective, but laughing because he managed to get voters to agree to it. To make matters worse, he does not have to abide by

the very bill he enacted. The image also insinuates that the president is a liar and this meme is valid proof. However, the citation is completely false. It is placed there to elicit anger among voters, because he put an exemption on himself. Here the propagandist used false information to mislead the public and elicit strong emotions opposing Obamacare. If one were to read the twenty-second line on page 114 of the Affordable Care Act, the reader would see that it has nothing to do with exempting the president. The text achieves the goal of discrediting the Act and the president, although does so through falsehoods.

Effectiveness of War Posters and Memes

One way images are effective is through creating emotion in the reader. Fear and anger are powerful pathos techniques because of the intensity of the emotions. While war posters and memes both use this technique, they do so differently. The government evoked fear among citizens through various posters, and in the study conducted in 1943, they aimed that fear toward the possibility of having American children harmed by the enemy. By generating fear, the government aimed to have citizens be willing to sacrifice more toward the war effort. The citizens felt the need to do their part in return for their government keeping them safe. This cognitive philosophy stems back as far as to 2000 BC when rulers would paint murals with the leader as a hero. If the citizens believe their government will protect them from the enemies they fear, they will remain obedient to their government and abide by the regulations established.

Memes on the other hand, appeal more to angering the citizens. Historically, revolt is brought on through anger and dissatisfaction rather than fear. Because of this, partisan memes appeal to anger to motivate the citizenry. By evoking anger in a voter, the propaganda is effective because it may cause someone to vote differently, vote if they do not already, or even call a representative to voice a concern.

Logical fallacies also play a large role in both war posters and memes, but in different ways. The government placed a heavy emphasis on black-and-white thinking. This is effective during wartime because it places people in two categories: for or against the war. The fallacy then continues—supporting the war shows patriotism and not sacrificing for the war effort is unpatriotic. Because citizens do not want to be considered “unpatriotic” they “do their part” for their country.

For memes, creators were more likely to utilize the omission of information. By placing candidates’ quotes out of context and pairing them with various images, the creators are able to frame the candidate in a way that achieves the creator’s political or social goals. The viewer only has the image and text to judge the situation. Not including all of the information also allows the meme creator to develop memes that are memorable—to add all of the background information would defeat this purpose.

Through appealing to emotion and using logical fallacies, war posters and memes create frames that stay with the individuals who read them. By utilizing the various propaganda techniques and subtly creating mindsets among their audiences, authors of both posters and memes develop a mindset in their readers that is difficult to change. Cognitive dissonance comes into play here, because if an individual receives information that does not match his or her frame, that new material may be dismissed. If the new information is factual and the frame developed by the propagandist was not completely truthful, the propaganda was effective. This is particularly important when viewing memes. They are often spread through social media, so people who do not typically seek political activities are exposed to memes. If the first exposure to an issue is an effective meme, it may be difficult to explain facts to an individual if that frame already exists.

Further Discussion

Memes Impact on Elections and Politics

Previous research has found that social media makes an impact on politics and political opinion. In a 2013 study by Jacob Groshek and Ahmed Al-Rawi, they reported that previous research had found that Social Networking Sites (SNS) “cannot only follow and repeat official agenda items and media frames, but also reciprocally enter the mainstream media agenda and lead to framing of certain items and issues” (2). In 2012, a study completed by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found “25% of SNS users in the Pew sample self-reported that they became more active in discussing politics after viewing political posts on SNS, while 16% claimed to have altered their opinion about a political issue after engaging with the topic on SNS” (Groshek and Al-Rawi 3).

Social media users began using memes as a form of communication, and the genre quickly found its niche and began to make a social impact. Memes began gaining popularity with the rise of Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites. In 2008, knowyourmeme.com was developed and began tracking memes by researching their original source and how they spread and were altered by the users during their dissemination. Knowyourmeme.com claims to be “considered the most authoritative source on news, history and origins of viral phenomena and Internet memes.”

People engage in the world around them through social media. Everyone has something to say and feels that his or her opinions are important. Because of this, forums and comment sections of blogs and news sites have gained popularity. Memes are more effective than a long-winded entry in the comment section of a website.

There is another aspect to using memes with social media that also makes them effective: the real-time aspect. With political memes, people can hear something that a

politician said during a debate, form an opinion about it, create an image displaying that view, and have that image reach thousands of individuals before the politician steps from stage. For this reason, political memes played a role in shaping the 2012 US presidential election. Paul Brewer, an associate director for research at the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication, credited this phenomenon to voters using their smart phones and tablets while watching debates. Because of this, he said “By the time the debate is halfway over, there's already a Tumblr site full of memes.” (Neuman, “Political Memes”).

During an interview for NPR, Vincent Harris, a consultant for the Republican Party speculated that memes are popular and effective because they “have a whole lot of resonance with voters, and they are very successful at branding the candidates, mostly in a negative way. And, they are virtually cost-free” (Neuman, “Political Memes”). They resonate with voters because they are created by fellow voters. While the information citizens receive about their prospective leaders is vetted through campaign committees of the candidates or the media, memes allow users to participate in what Brewer referred to as a “participatory form of campaigning” (Neuman, “Political Memes”). One GOP consultant agreed, saying, “We are entering a post-pundit era, where people don't care so much what these talking heads are saying. A lot more is being decided by the online chatter” (Neuman, “Political Memes”).

While memes resonate with voters, they are also successful at branding because they share the very techniques used in WWI and WWII posters that helped stimulate frames among the citizens, which led to the formation of public opinion. When interviewed, the anonymous creator of the “Binders Full of Women” Facebook page, said

“The page was created as a reaction to a phrase that not only didn’t sound right, but quite easily encompassed Gov. Romney’s overall ignorance of women’s rights” (Nasri, “Don’t Always Meme”). Here, the creator acknowledged using propaganda techniques. In this case, he took Romney’s quote out of context and used it to discredit him by showing his “ignorance” about a subject that many voters find to be of importance: women’s rights. When the “Binders Full of Women” Facebook page was created, the “Republican National Committee created its own meme featuring a photo of a binder filled with blank pages, captioned ‘Obama's Second-Term Agenda’” (Neuman, “Political Memes”) as a response. Social media users disseminate their own ideas, and memes allow them to do so in a memorable way, which could possibly change or reaffirm the frame that a voter had for that candidate.

An editor from knowyourmeme.com, Brad Kim, explained how small moments that may otherwise go unnoticed are sometimes memes’ driving force during an interview in October of 2012 when he said, “Internet memes can turn some of the most trivial moments and gossips about the candidates into central talking points of the campaigns, which I think poses an interesting challenge for many sides that are involved” (Nasri, “Don’t Always Meme”). Meme creators take politicians’ words out of context and pair those phrases with images to convey the point that they want to get across. Kim speculates that this leads to the effectiveness of memes because “even though these memes may have little or nothing to do with the candidates’ policy stances or professional merits, their power to define the candidates’ character and public image alone could be significant enough to sway the outcome of the election” (Nasri, “Don’t Always Meme”).

Taking the phrases out of context allows for meme creators to situate the text in a

way that will create a frame of the candidate that fits how the creator wants the politician to be portrayed to potential voters. Because of this, candidates have to be more careful of their word usage. Jefferson Spurlock focused on Todd Akin and Richard Mourdock in a 2013 article, “Loose Lips: Broadcast and Socially Mediated Political Rhetoric and the Sinking of the 2012 Senatorial Campaigns of Todd Akin and Richard Mourdock,” where he looked at how one phrase can completely ruin a candidate’s chances of winning an election. Akin and Mourdock both ran for senatorial positions of their respective states, Missouri and Indiana. He mentioned that while they were both the frontrunners to win their general elections, their remarks on rape led to a quick change of events. Akin said, “If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down” while Mourdock said “I came to realize that life is that gift from God. And, I think, even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen” (Spurlock 273). Spurlock explained that since the majority of Americans “are exposed to news and information that includes audio and/or video sound bites,” (Spurlock 279) candidates need to be careful because anything they say can be used against them.

While Spurlock only mentioned how mainstream media outlets tend to use the sound bites, these quotes can be used in memes as well. Akin’s “legitimate rape” comment went viral. Knowyourmeme.com posted multiple memes that twisted the quote, such as a picture of Akin with the words “You say you got pregnant from a rape. That just means you enjoyed it.” Another meme featured Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka. This picture has become a staple in memes to portray something in a skeptical tone and undermine the argument by lowering the credibility of the lampooned individual. The meme creator paired it with the words “Victims of legitimate rape don’t get pregnant? Tell me more

about the female reproduction system, Todd Akin” (Kim, “Todd Akin”). Another item that is not mentioned on knowyourmeme.com, but found its way onto countless blogs and Facebook pages was “The Republican Party Rape Advisory Chart” (“GOP Rape Advisory Chart”). While this chart did not contain pictures, the creator used the same techniques of meme creators. It was visually stimulating because it color coded the various “types of rape” and the categories were stacked, similarly to a weather advisory chart. The creator developed various “types of rape” for the chart: gift-from-god, legitimate, honest, emergency, easy, forcible and a “bonus” from 1990, enjoyable rape.

Under each of these titles, the author placed the quotes from Republican politicians referring to rape to frame them in a negative light. Mourdock’s quote went under the “gift-from-god” category, while Akin’s fell under “legitimate.” As with memes, the creator took the quotes out of context and situated them in a way that undermined the credibility of the politicians. Many of the quotes portray the politicians as being ignorant of rape victims’ plights. With abortion and birth control being highly discussed topics during the 2012 election, the author of this chart portrayed the politicians as being detached from the issue of women’s health and unable to understand it, yet alone able to make decisions regarding it. Between the sound bites on television and radio and political meme creators weighing in on the topic, both Akin and Mourdock lost their elections.

Political memes are not only making an impact with potential voters through social media sites, but are legitimized by coverage from the mainstream media as well. Knowyourmeme.com states that their “research and reporting has appeared in major news publications and outlets, including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, NPR, PBS, CNN, MSNBC, *Wired*, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *The Atlantic*, *The*

Guardian, *The Telegraph*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* and *The Estadão* among others” (Kim, “About”). The “Texts from Hillary” memes mentioned earlier became viral through both social media and new websites. Once the blog was featured on a popular website, *Buzzfeed.com*, the memes were “followed by same-day coverage on several news sites including the *International Business Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Huffington Post*, and *Yahoo! News* as well as on web culture site *Uproxx*” (Kim, “About”). Major news sites are recognizing the impact that memes have in the Internet realm.

Because memes are making an impact on public opinion in politics, they have begun to gain attention from politicians. Once “Texts from Hillary” gained enough publicity, the creators were contacted by Clinton and they met for a photo-op. Clinton, then the Secretary of State, invited the two meme creators to meet with her, and she created her own meme for them to add to their Tumblr site (Poeter, “Clinton Dives”). Other politicians have instituted memes as a strategy during their campaign. When working on Governor Rick Perry’s campaign, Vincent Harris used \$10,000 won during a bet to generate memes that he said “worked in our favor,” when telling the story during an NPR interview (Neuman, “Political Memes”).

The more ingrained a frame is, the more likely it is to stay with the recipient. This increases the effectiveness of memes because they often use imagery that individuals already have a frame for. Big Bird is an icon that most people have positive feelings toward. A lot of people remember him either from childhood or from educating their children or grandchildren. He is a sweet educational tool. Because there is a positive frame around Big Bird, if someone wants to get rid of Big Bird, that person may be viewed in a

negative light. The memes directed toward Akin and Mourdock were not just effective because of how their quotes were situated in the memes, but also because they reaffirmed the frame that the Republican Party was waging a war on women.

Finally, memes may be effective not only because they establish new frames and reaffirm existing ones, but also of because they are widely available to their audience. The NPR story that discussed the role of memes during the election began with “Even if you didn't watch any of the three presidential debates, chances are you're familiar with Big Bird, binders and bayonets” (Neuman, “Political Memes”). This headline insinuates that even those who are not politically informed will still know of the main topics that spawn memes. People who may not read the news or actively seek information regarding politics may still be exposed to political memes through social media. If some individuals’ main exposure to politics is through memes, then those slogans and images have a chance to impact them. The memes may serve as a foundation for some potential voters’ frames if they are the first or primary source of information.

Cognitive dissonance could attribute to the effectiveness of memes. When observing the comments sections of blogs, news sites or Facebook pages, one will notice that many social media users stand by their original argument, even if the argument is flawed. Even if the argument is flawed and a change of opinion would seem rational when confronted with facts, cognitive dissonance often prevents a change of opinion. Even though an individual has a flawed argument, he or she will defend that stance because it fits his or her frame. If the frame is strong enough, even a well-articulated argument with factual information may not be enough to persuade someone to give up their position.

Political memes have had an impact on recent elections. Citizens have found a way

to develop catchy memes, and then use social media to disseminate the information. Memes have found their way into mainstream media and have even gained attention from politicians and campaign consultants. While political memes are only a few years old, they are quickly establishing themselves as a communication genre that is having a social impact, especially in politics.

Discussion and Conclusions

The war posters issued by the government during WWI were effective because the citizens were unaware of propaganda. Yet, less than a century later, citizens are now utilizing the very techniques that were once used to sway their opinions. An understanding of how this transition between users took place can be seen by looking at the historical shifts.

This shift began in the 1920s and 1930s when theorists and scholars grew alarmed at the effectiveness of propaganda. They observed that a form of communication could be effectively used on citizens by their own government and determined that it could threaten democracy. They voiced their concern through academic journals, amongst themselves, and through news articles and periodicals to the public. Next, public awareness of propaganda led to an outcry for change among the citizens. There was increased support for propaganda being added to the curriculum and a desire among the adults to also gain a better understanding of techniques and how to identify them.

However, the progress of educating the public and students about propaganda as a form of communication was hindered due to socio-political conflicts internationally and domestically. The public agreed to unite for the war effort and put the propaganda curriculum debate aside. Post-WWII, the debate did not resurface due to political unrest in domestic affairs during the McCarthy Era and then during protests during the Vietnam

War. Once socio-political conflicts eased and academics were once again able to focus on changing the curriculum, the debate to add propaganda to the curriculum resurfaced. Educators began to propose and publish lesson plans including propaganda analysis. By the 1980s, students began learning about propaganda techniques through discourse analysis and from political war posters. Currently, propaganda in the curriculum is a staple in US history courses.

War posters are one of the main examples used when teaching students about propaganda. Some history books contain images of WWI and WWII posters and ask the students to analyze them, while various lesson plans actually have the students utilize their understanding of propaganda to develop their own posters. The popularity of using war posters as symbols of propaganda lends itself to memes design: they mimic the war poster technique of pairing slogans and emotion-evoking imagery. Once social media gave the public the power to spread their ideas and opinions—it would make sense for citizens to choose a propaganda technique they are familiar with to do so. Humans learn through imitation and model their work accordingly. Memes mimic the main propaganda technique that is used as a model of propaganda in school curriculum.

Further Research

This paper acknowledged the rise of and importance of memes as a form of communication among citizens. However, because the main point of this paper was to look at the similarities between war posters and memes and the historical shift that led to citizens effectively applying the same propaganda techniques used on them less than a century before, there was not much emphasis on how memes could impact political elections or why. Previous research looks at how many potential voters use social media, where those voters get their political information, and how an interaction on social media

may sway an opinion. Groshek's and Al-Rawi's study examined the relationships between specific words on Facebook and Twitter to account for a gap in discourse analysis when looking at the impact of social media and politics. While memes have received news coverage and receive credit for swaying public opinion, there is little scholarly research on memes and their potential impact.

The idea that memes could be effective because they are able to establish frames in individuals who may only come across political discourse on their social media websites is speculative based on the research completed for this paper. It would be beneficial to complete a case study and investigate this further. Participants who identify as being politically neutral and not having a lot of knowledge about contemporary politics could be shown memes that deal with several topics. Questioning them before and after looking at the memes would show whether the memes had an effect on their political viewpoint. They could also be given factual information that contradicts the memes to see if cognitive dissonance would play a role and if they would actually keep the frames established from the memes.

Further research could be completed to see if the implementation of memes to campaigns becomes a political norm and if the memes generated by campaigns are effective in gaining voters.

Groshek and Al-Rawi reported on previous research that looked at a "bottom-up" approach and found that the "bottom up, or emergent, conceptualization is important to consider because it changes the focus of framing studies from traditional media and hierarchical gatekeepers to ordinary, everyday citizens" (2). War posters used the top down approach. The posters were developed by various government-controlled committees and

dispersed to the public. Campaigns are also often a top down approach. The candidates develop an image through set values and public actions and develop a frame of how they desire to be portrayed. Yet, social media is enabling ordinary citizens to develop items such as memes and affect politics through a bottom up approach.

A second research method into the use of memes by politicians during campaigns, would be to measure their effectiveness. Are memes more effective when used by citizens in a bottom up approach or will political consultants find a way to develop top down political memes that are equally as effective as their citizen-created counterparts?

While research has been conducted on the how social media could influence political elections, there is a gap in the research specific to memes. Political memes are establishing themselves as a form of communication mainly used by citizens to communicate a point in a relatable manner. On a larger scale, however, they are gaining national attention from news sites, campaign consultants and politicians due to their effectiveness. Memes have been acknowledged for swaying public opinion during election periods, but further research needs to be completed to gauge their level of effectiveness.

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