Propaganda as Public Relations Antecedent:
The Complex Legacy of the Creel Committee

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Wars are not won on battlefields alone. Logistics, strategy, resources, force strength, and technology have all played critical roles in determining outcomes in major conflicts throughout history. Yet, there are still two related factors that have much to say about the outcome of major conflicts: propaganda efforts to sell the war effort to the nation states that are a part of the conflict and its impact on public opinion around the participation of those nation states among its citizenry. History offers us some prominent examples that reinforce this point, and they consistently revolve around the ability of parties involved in the conflict to effectively leverage contemporary communication outlets to effective ends in order to shape and manage public opinion.

Walter Lippmann's iconic *Public Opinion* (1922) provides his perspective as a newsman and as a member of Woodrow Wilson's collection of journalists, advertisers, early public relations practitioners, and education philosophers who worked from the United States' involvement in World War I in April of 1917 through the effort to promote the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. He warns of the potential for manipulation of information to cultivate and maintain support for military and political action, and the need for objectivity in journalism and a refined study of public opinion to counter its effects.

The father of modern public relations, Edward Bernays, offered two texts on the subject of propaganda and its effectiveness in shaping public opinion on behalf of organizations. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), Bernays establishes his understanding of public relations counsel, public opinion, its formation, how one shapes it, and its necessity for achieving public action. In *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays offers some perspective on the practice, its role in public relations, and its value to many facets of society. Many found Bernays to offer a manipulative perspective on the discipline, and a reading of both texts leaves this author sympathetic to their perspective. Bernays opens *Propaganda* with the following Machiavellian perspective in reference to democracy in propaganda:

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ...We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ...In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons...who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind. Bernays, 1928, p. 1.

While much of both texts give a reader a window into the modern intellectual evolution of the practice of public relations, it is segments like this that left Bernays with a dubious reputation among prominent members of society, and further damaged the initial reputation around the professional practice of public relations. While it is clear that the work of the Creel Committee and its membership helped solidify and advance the practice of public relations past its early publicist origins into matters of shaping public opinion and behavior to establishing and managing relationships, what is not clear is how early we see the elements of modern best practices in public relations practice in play. The purpose of this study is to examine the execution of the Four Minute Men Speech campaign, using the ROPES PR model (Kelly, 1998) to determine the overall adherence of the campaign to modern best practices. In the examination of the Four Minute Men, the author will draw parallels to specific strategies and tactics, content choices, and selection of speakers to illustrate how much of the work of the CPI set early precedents for modern public relations practice. Further, the paper will demonstrate how the actions of the Creel Committee established a baseline for scholarship that developed theories of practice that would achieve effective, ethical approaches to public relations practice.

Context

American War, Public Opinion, and Communication

In the case of American conflicts throughout its first 242 years, we see a country that wins or loses its battles through effective management of the public mindset, often through the communication modes of the day. During the American Revolution, the colonists made the most of the early postal service and the printing press to shape and manage public opinion during a challenging conflict with a British force superior in size and early strategy, providing enough public support to enable colonists to outlast Britain's patience and budget to earn independence. The American Civil War illustrated the power of the telegraph and modern photography to permit war correspondents to bring the horrors of the battlefield into the American home (Lewinski, 1980). The Spanish-American War was the product of Yellow Journalism's sensational efforts to cultivate support among the American citizenry to support a conflict between the nations, exemplified by William Randolph Hearst's infamous remarks about providing war if his staff provided the pictures (Wilkerson, 1967). Newsreels first utilized during the Great War (Creel, 1920), were perfected during World War II as a means of bringing news around the world and about conflict home. Radio, still in its adolescence, took on an essential role for political leaders and broadcast correspondents like Edward R. Murrow in bringing news from the front home, and in shaping the public's perspective on the actions of Axis powers, as well as in sharing the struggles and triumphs of Allied forces (Cozma, 2010). Propaganda in film also found its stride during the second world, as Leni Reifenstahl and Frank Capra both elevated the art form to shape public opinion and mobilize support for their respective countries, Germany and the United States (Kelman, 1973; Xifra & Girona, 2012). The Vietnam War brought network news to the forefront as correspondents brought the quagmire into American homes and elevated the reputation of CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite to be able to decry the efforts of the Johnson and Nixon administrations, ultimately undermining the war efforts (Gitlin, 1980).

In modern conflicts, the Department of Defense has effectively managed modern communication to create the public images that generate support for military efforts, with a helping hand from lessons learned from cable television. Cable News Network's (CNN's) Bernard Shaw, John

Holliman, and Peter Arnett made the decision to stay in Baghdad the night of January 16, 1991 and captured U.S. airstrike coverage on the scene, in spite of every other news organization's decision to leave under the threat of the attack issued from the U.S. embassy. The coverage earned critical acclaim for then upstart CNN, as well as for 24-hour cable news, while also sanitizing modern warfare for the American public, often drawing comparisons to watching video games.

Always apt to learn from innovation in communication, on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Pentagon announced it would embed journalists with military units to provide access to the invasion. What was not a part of the dialog was the strategic placement of journalists away from the most severe aspects of the action in order to control the narrative of the conflict. Journalists themselves came away with the impression that they did well, but acknowledged they had a much narrower view of the conflict than if they had a wider access to the invasion (Fahmy & Johnson, 2005).

The impact of mass communication to shape public opinion and the outcome of warfare in American history is clear. It is unsurprising then that Woodrow Wilson would seek to leverage mass communication strategically to shape public opinion and align public thinking with the shifting perspective of the United States' involvement in World War I. This becomes essential when considering where public opinion was on the War, and how Wilson had positioned himself during his first term in office and successfully earned re-election.

"He Kept Us Out of War"

In the summer of 1914, the United States had no interest in the conflict brewing across Europe. Aside from the geographic barrier of the Atlantic, the United States held none of the binding treaties that drove 11 nations into the fight by September of 1914, and would have maintained that distance if the country had been left to do so (Axelrod, 2009). Over the first two years of war, submarine attacks on American shipping and civilian vessels (most notably the deaths of 128 Americans on the British Lusitania), pleas from allied nations, and rumors of German spies and plots to attack the United States created a growing pressure to join the fight and support the allied effort. This was balanced against a pacifist movement from Jane Addams and the American Union Against Militarism (Badertscher, 2014), the National Women's Party, along with a consistent public outcry from the then popular Socialist Party of America's Eugene V. Debs, as well as progressive Republicans in Congress, among them Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follete. This was reinforced by general anti-war sentiments from German-Americans, Jewish-Americans, Irish-Americans, Wilson's own base of southern whites, who feared unrest among immigrants in border states like Missouri, and prominent American industrialist Henry Ford. Wilson even saw pressure and criticism from his own party as his Secretary of State and fellow progressive Democrat William Jennings Bryant stood in opposition to war and resigned in protest over Wilson's use of a warning against the German government if they persisted in submarine warfare against American civilian vessels following the attack on the HMS Lusitania (May, 1966). These competing pressures were set against the backdrop of Wilson's campaign for re-election.

In 1916, Wilson faced a challenge from popular Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes, who ran on the Republican ticket with heavy support from former President Theodore Roosevelt (Pietrusza, 2018). The Democrats built their campaign around the slogan, "He Kept Us Out of War," saying a Republican victory would mean war with both Mexico and Germany. Wilson's

position was probably critical in winning the Western states (Cooper, 2009). Charles Evans Hughes insisted on downplaying the war issue, while advocating a program of greater mobilization and preparedness. Wilson had successfully pressured the Germans to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare, making it difficult for Hughes to attack Wilson's peace platform. Hughes, instead, criticized Wilson's military interventions in Mexico, where the U.S. was supporting various factions in the Mexican civil war, and his progressive positions on labor. His criticisms gained little traction, however, especially among factory workers who supported such laws. Hughes was helped by the vigorous support of popular former President Theodore Roosevelt, and by the fact that the Republicans were still the nation's majority party at the time.

Wilson's campaign advanced the idea that entrance in the war created the potential for a conflict on two fronts with Mexico's relationship with Germany still in question, as well as the native presence of immigrants from both sides of the conflict living throughout the continental United States. These concerns in no small part led much of the electorate in the western United States to support Wilson, bringing the previously Republican stronghold of California into question. Hughes made a key mistake in California. Just before the election, Hughes made a campaign swing through the state, but he never met with the powerful Republican Governor Hiram Johnson to seek his support. Johnson, in turn, never gave Hughes his full support. Wilson carried California by 3,420 votes (0.3%) and with it the presidency. With his re-election campaign won, Wilson would now have to put his focus back on America's position on World War I.

A White Hot Mass of Support

A confluence of factors finally led Wilson to determine it was necessary to enter the war in support of the allies. Over the course of the first two years of war, America's neutrality was grounded in staying off the battlefields, but maintaining open business practices with nations willing to pay for goods and resources. Due to the heavy blockades, which limited commerce with the central powers, this led to a heavy bias in commerce with Great Britain and France.

In 1917, Germany decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare against any vessel approaching British waters in an attempt to starve Britain into surrender. Their desperation to gain a strategic advantage came with the knowledge that it would almost certainly bring the United States into the war. Germany also worked through diplomatic backchannels to bring Mexico and Japan into the fight. Germany offered to help Mexico regain territories lost in the Mexican–American War in an encoded telegram known as the Zimmermann Telegram, which was intercepted by British Intelligence. British intelligence, showing strategic prudence, held this intelligence for the right time to get the desired response from Wilson. Publication of the telegram outraged Americans just as German U-boats started sinking American merchant ships in the North Atlantic. Wilson then asked Congress for "a war to end all wars" that would "make the world safe for democracy," and Congress voted to declare war on Germany on April 6, 1917 (Link, 1972).

While it was clear Wilson's decision to take the United States into war came with a split public perspective on the decision, there were indicators among members of the public that there was sound support behind the decision. In 1914, there was a healthy base of support for the war among Americans who sympathized with France, Great Britain, and Belgium. Progressive politics had also brought much of its support base to the idea of being "citizens of the world." Civic organizations had cropped up all over the United States with the expressed mission to support the war effort.

The Committee for Relief in Belgium negotiated relief efforts for civilians on both sides of the fighting in Belgium. The committee also sowed the seeds for national concern by advancing the principle of America generosity. African-Americans open outrage with the central powers' actions in the Congo prompted them to push to volunteer in opposition to the Germans and Austrian-Hungarian governments. The Jewish community in the United States worked actively with other Jewish relief groups around the world to support those in the faith in peril in the region (Axelrod, 2009). In short, there were pockets of support to be leveraged in the same way Wilson leveraged pacifists to win election in November of 1916 as he came to address foreign policy in April of 1917.

Former political opponents became a resource as focus turned from neutrality to mobilization. Teddy Roosevelt's preparedness movement opened the door for Wilson to more easily bring in early volunteers prior to pushes for the draft. When it was clear war was imminent, and Wilson needed to have a moral argument for shifting his position, he leveraged the Progressive drive for preparedness and these pockets of support to achieve the change in opinion he sought. His argument: Democracy needed to be the model for benevolent world citizenship to avoid future wars, and America needed to drive this change through action to preserve freedom for the world (Axelrod, 2009).

Popular forms of modern mass communication had already begun influencing public opinion in advance of the turn to the CPI to drive the action, demonstrating the power of mass communication in contributing to shaping public opinion. Filmmakers had begun telling the story of the German assault on Belgium. Editorials had called for American support. Artists and political cartoonists had driven the dialog around American support for the war since 1914. Finally, sheet music and early recordings from Tin Pan Alley had been a forum for dialog from both camps on matters of American involvement and neutrality, respectively (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).

Knowing that he had made the request and gathered solid support for entry into war, Wilson was keenly aware that he would have to change public perceptions of the war and the United States' participation in it. Given the split in American public opinion, Wilson understood that he needed to get a unified public position that would support his push into the war effort. To achieve this, he reached out to his supporter, political operative, and former journalist George Creel. Wilson issued Executive Order 2594 mobilizing the Committee of Public Information (also known as the Creel Committee) on April 13, 1917. Creel was a true believer in Wilson's doctrine, and had been so since meeting him as a Governor in New Jersey. In his conversations with Wilson, Creel stated that they needed to achieve a monolithic, "white hot mass of support" (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).

The committee consisted of George Creel (chairman) and as *ex officio* members the Secretaries of State (Robert Lansing), War (Newton D. Baker), and the Navy (Josephus Daniels). The CPI was the first state bureau covering propaganda in the history of the United States. Creel urged Wilson to create a government agency to coordinate "not propaganda as the Germans defined it, but propaganda in the true sense of the word, meaning the 'propagation of faith.'" He was a journalist with years of experience on the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* before accepting Wilson's appointment to the CPI. He had a contentious relationship with Secretary Lansing (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).

Wilson established the first modern propaganda office (Creel, 1920). Creel set out to systematically reach every person in the United States multiple times with patriotic information about how the individual could contribute to the war effort. The Committee also worked with the post office to censor seditious counter-propaganda. Creel set up divisions in his new agency to produce and distribute innumerable copies of pamphlets, newspaper releases, magazine advertisements, films, school campaigns, and the speeches of the Four Minute Men. CPI created colorful posters that appeared in every store window, catching the attention of the passersby for a few seconds (Adams, 1999). Historians were assigned to write pamphlets and in-depth histories of the causes of the European war (Blakey, 1970; Committee on Public Information, 1920).

In spite of the tensions, a rapid growth in the CPI illustrated the priority on influencing American public opinion, and Creel's ability to recruit and attract talent to the effort. From the original handful of cabinet members and Creel, the CPI grew to a staffing population of over 100,000 members. The large membership included a diverse population of artists, journalists, advertising executives, political scientists, the famous educational philosopher John Dewey, and some of the early forefathers of modern public relations, including Carl Byoir and Edward Bernays (Axelrod, 1920; Creel, 1920). In putting the committee together, Creel married the most innovative journalists, public relations practitioners, advertising professionals, and other key social scientists to achieve the aim of the organization. In the process, they set a foundation for modern practices in public communication and public relations.

The CPI used material based on fact, but spun it to present an upbeat picture of the American war effort. Creel claimed that the CPI routinely denied false or undocumented atrocity reports, fighting the crude propaganda efforts of "patriotic organizations" like the National Security League and the American Defense Society that preferred "general thundering" and wanted the CPI to "preach a gospel of hate" (Committee on Public Information, 1920).

The CPI staged events designed for many different ethnic groups, in their languages. For instance, Irish-American tenor John McCormack sang at Mount Vernon before an audience representing Irish-American organizations (Fleming, 2003). The Committee also targeted the American worker and, endorsed by Samuel Gompers, filled factories and offices with posters designed to promote the critical role of American labor in the success of the war effort (Axelrod, 2009; Fleming, 2003).

The CPI's activities were so thorough that historians later stated, using the example of a typical midwestern American farm family, that every item of war news they saw—in the country weekly, in magazines, or in the city daily picked up occasionally in the general store—was not merely officially approved information but precisely the same kind that millions of their fellow citizens were getting at the same moment. Every war story had been censored somewhere along the line—at the source, in transit, or in the newspaper offices in accordance with 'voluntary' rules established by the CPI.

The CPI could not escape charges of censorship and presenting a false presentation of the war effort. The most common example was the critique of the organization's perceived role in censorship. While it is well established that they influenced news coverage through promoting self-censorship with news organizations as a function or patriotism, and by issuing press releases that presented Wilson's perspective on the war (Axelrod, 2009), Creel took offense that his agency was responsible for censorship. Creel said of the critique in his memoir:

> In no degree was the Committee an agency of censorship, a machinery of concealment or repression. Its emphasis throughout was on the open and the positive. At no point did it seek or exercise authorities under those war laws that limited the freedom of speech and press. In all things, from first to last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventures in advertising.... *We did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with deceit and corruption. Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of the facts*. Creel, 1920; emphasis added.

It was clear the public criticism was taking its toll on the efforts of the CPI. By 1917, the term propaganda had already become toxic enough that Creel himself worked actively to distance CPI work from the characterization. With a background on the development of the broader set of tools and practitioners employed to re-shape public opinion around the Great War, the attention now shifts to the strategy that is the focus of this study, the Four Minute Men Campaign.

Speaking Tours For the People, Of the People

The Four Minute Men were a group of volunteers authorized by United States President Woodrow Wilson, to give four-minute speeches on topics given to them by The Committee on Public Information (CPI). In 1917-1918, around 7,555,190 speeches were given in 5,200 communities (Creel, 1920). The effort began when William McCormick Blair approached Creel with an idea about how to make one more point of contact with American citizens to generate support for the war effort. Blair recognized that there was an opening during the four minutes between reels changing in movie theaters across the country, where films and news reels in support of the war were already playing. In time, the four-minute speeches allowed for presentation at town meetings, restaurants, and other places that had an audience. This is an instance of "viral marketing" before its time (Mastrangelo, 2009).

For his idea, Blair was appointed as director of the Four Minute Men by the CPI. Blair appointed state chairmen of the Four Minute Men, who then would appoint a city or community chairman. Each of these appointments needed to be approved in Washington. The local chairman would then appoint a number of speakers to cover the theaters in the city or community for which he was responsible (Creel, 1920).

With many millions of German-Americans in the United States, as well as Irish-Americans and Scandinavian-Americans and poor rural Southerners, with strong isolationist feelings, there was a strong need for a propaganda campaign to stir support for the war. This effort had many unique challenges to meet to address the existing political climate. Wilson needed to speak directly to the fragmented and spread-out audience in the United States. He had to address the country's self-perception to generate support for the war. The Four Minute Men provided an answer to these challenges (Mastrangelo, 2009).

In addition, the Four Minute Men urged citizens to purchase Liberty Bonds and Thrift Stamps. The CPI trained thousands of volunteer speakers to make patriotic appeals during the four-minute breaks needed to change reels. They also spoke at churches, lodges, fraternal organizations, labor unions, and even logging camps. Speeches were mostly in English, but ethnic groups were reached in their own languages. Creel boasted that in 18 months his 75,000 volunteers delivered over 7.5

million four-minute orations to over 300 million listeners, in a nation of 103 million people (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920). The work of the Four Minute Men continued beyond the Armistice, as the speeches turned towards generating support for the Treaty of Versailles at the community level in an effort to gain support for Congressional endorsement (Axelrod, 2009).

The Four Minute Men idea became a useful tool in the propaganda campaign because it addressed a specific rhetorical situation. One of the challenges of the effort was the fragmented audience of the United States. Many different heritages were represented in the countrty, and the president needed their support for the war. To address each group's specific needs, the Director of the Four Minute Men, William McCormick Blair, delegated the duty of speaking to local men. Well-known and respected community figures often volunteered for the Four Minute Men program. This gave the speeches a local voice. Further, the Four Minute Men brought in movie celebrities of the day like Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks. Even Woodrow Wilson engaged in the campaign.

The Four Minute Men were also given general topics and talking points to follow and rotated among theaters to help the speeches seem fresh, instead of generic propaganda speeches. They were encouraged to improvise and be extemporaneous, within the bounds the strategic aims of the campaign. These speeches usually celebrated Woodrow Wilson as a larger than life character and the Germans as less-than-human huns. The speakers attended training sessions through local universities, and were given pamphlets and speaking tips on a wide variety of topics, such as buying Liberty Bonds, registering for the draft, rationing food, recruiting unskilled workers for munitions jobs, and supporting Red Cross programs (Mastrangelo, 2009). It becomes clear to modern practitioners on first blush that some essential elements of public relations work come through in the discussion of Wilson's management of public perception before and after the United States entering the war, reflected in the operations of the CPI and the Four Minute Men. This raises a key question: To what extent does the Four Minute Men campaign adhere to the steps of modern public relations practice?

Learning the ROPES

Initially conceived of as a viable model for conducting public relations work focused on fundraising and development, Kelly (1998) devised the ROPES model as a means of refining the long-established RACE (Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation) model of public relations campaigns. The ROPES model consists of the following steps: Research, Objectives, Programming, Evaluation, and Stewardship. The following presents Kelly's advice to the practitioner.

Before beginning a campaign, Kelly urged practitioners to understand the background behind it. The research stage of ROPES has three elements to help a practitioner do this. First, you identify the opportunity or problem that forms the basis for your campaign. Then, you ensure that you have a solid knowledge of the organization you represent, understanding its history, current position and future objectives. Finally, you should research the company's audiences, taking time to investigate past public relations initiatives and the way that external stakeholders, such as customers, feel about the organization.

In the second stage of the ROPES formula, you set one or more clear goals, which you can assess through establishing measurable objectives for your campaign based on the opportunity or problem

identified in the research stage. Typically, objectives are outputs, outtakes or outcomes. For example, an output objective might focus on achieving media coverage, an outtake on changing audience awareness and an outcome on an action, such as an increase in sales or web traffic. Your client may not be specific about what he wants from the campaign, but you should be. Over time, ROPES scholarship has improved, and scholars have adopted a principle of best practice from management literature to suggest public relations objectives should be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-based, or follow the SMARTS model (Doran, 1981).

Once you understand where your campaign should go, you must plan how to get it there and launch it. In the programming stage, you decide which public relations communication tools to use to meet your objectives, taking into account the messages you need to convey, the audience you are targeting and the media you need to use to reach this audience. During this stage, you also set your budget. It is important that as you engage in programming and execution, you have chosen strateg(ies) and tactics that align with your stated goals and objectives. Your preliminary research should inform your goals, objectives, and strategic approaches.

Stewardship (Kelly, 2001) has become a trending practice for public relations professionals because it allows them to establish and maintain relationship-building efforts with stakeholders who should be included in everyday communication. Practicing relationship cultivation strategies is important to solidify ongoing relationships with your organization's publics in order to maintain a strong and trusted brand. Since it is important for public relations practitioners to foster relationships with clients, partners, journalists and key audiences, scholars posit four dimensions of stewardship: reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing.

> **Reciprocity.** Recognizing stakeholders and demonstrating gratitude for their involvement with the organization is always important. Treat stakeholders to dinner or send them a company newsletter. Reciprocity will create the ultimate "win-win" situation for both stakeholders and your company.

> **Responsibility.** Being responsible means keeping promises to stakeholders while achieving high standards of organizational management and decision making. In order to ensure a trusted brand, company representatives need to make sure they meet client deadlines and put client needs first – that way there is no discernible gap between promise and delivery.

> **Reporting.** Organizations should communicate internal developments to their publics when they can. For instance, in a crisis communication, it is extremely important to report to publics what is actually happening. A more in-depth explanation about the crisis and how the organization will address it is better than an unclear response.

> **Relationship Nurturing.** Organizations will be most successful when they focus on both taking care of existing stakeholders and fostering relationships with new stakeholders. Customer appreciation events are a great way to show existing stakeholders that an organization cares. By employing these four elements in interactions with current clients, partners, reporters and key audiences, organizations not only build a trustworthy business, but also find management valuing strong relationships with those people who work for the company.

These five dimensions are one common form of assessment for an organization's adherence to best practices in public relations practice. While this author is aware the modern public relations

was still in its infancy or adolescence, it is of value to see how the practices adopted in this early stage of public relations may have ultimately shaped modern practices and set the foundation for how public relations are now practiced a century later. With the theoretical basis for assessing public relations practices in the Four Minute Men campaign identified, the method by which the Four Minute Men Campaign will be assessed.

Method

Method of Study

To answer the two questions posited in this study, the author performed a case analysis of scholarship and reporting on the work of the CPI's Four Minute Men Bureaus to document the daily operations, decision making, and execution of the campaign process. This is particularly valuable for determining organizational commitment to each step in the ROPES model (Kelly, 1998). In addition, the author reviewed electronic archives of the Four Minute Men Bulletins from 1917-1919. They are housed as part of the University of Colorado Boulder's Department of Archives World War I Pamphlets Collection and open to the public. The author used the bulletins to ascertain what evaluation was in place for the Four Minute Men membership and how they may have used that evaluation to adapt practices throughout the 18 months of work to shape public opinion. While the author would have liked to also review existing copies of Four Minute Men speeches as part of his analysis, it quickly became clear how fundamentally committed to extemporaneous speech the organization was, as only a few sample speeches appear to have survived.

Method of Analysis

The researcher employed a hybridization of Berkowitz's (1997b) approach to qualitative data analysis, facilitated with NVivo 9 qualitative analysis software. Using Nvivo, the researcher loaded the pool of data into the software and performed the coding process using Berkowitz's (1997b) approach: each piece data file was read twice carefully, audio recordings were played while reading through each of the transcripts, and a broad initial coding of emergent themes was performed. NVivo expedites the process by permitting consolidation of large bodies of diverse text-rich research data into one central location where the researcher can more efficiently classify, sort and arrange information; examine relationships within the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling (Nvivo 9, 2011).

Result

In this review of the documented practices of the Four Minute Men, the results present a mix of practices that reflect an early interpretation of public relations work. The following will provide analysis of each step in the ROPES model of public relations practices (Kelly, 1998) to facilitate a clear breakdown of practice.

Research Stage: Kelly (1998) advocates the use of research to better understand the organization, to identify publics, opportunities, and stakeholders associated with the organization and the opportunities associated with the campaign. What is clear about the approach of the CPI and its Four Minute Men is an absence of primary research prior to action. Decisions were largely based on inferential logic and the collective wisdom of journalists, advertisers, public relations practitioners, politicians, and social scientists (Axelrod, 2009). That said, the team working to

develop the plan for the Four Minute Man campaign made sound decisions on audience based on what they knew about the American public. This is not inconsistent with many modern practitioners who have to engage in strategy and tactics with minimal research due to a lack of resources (Kelly, 1998). In short, there is limited evidence of advanced research in practice, which doesn't reflect the modern definition of best practices in public relations.

Objectives Stage: As is the case in examining research, there is limited data suggesting a clear set of goals and objectives that reflect best practices in public relations. While there is a broad goal or objective behind the Four Minute Men campaign, there is no clear articulation of a particular goal, followed by the use of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, and sufficient (SMARTS) objectives (Ledingham, 2006). This poses problems later when we get to the evaluation step in the process. While there is clearly a logic to the strategic approach, and the desired end is clear, the approach of the Four Minute Men and the CPI is one that remained largely inferential.

Programming Stage: A consistent theme in the foundation of the CPI is the cooptation of good ideas that can be of potential service to the war effort. It is apparent in how George Creel gets support from Wilson to establish his committee, how Creel adds new areas of focus to his propaganda effort, and in how Creel embraces the Four Minute Men campaign as part of the CPI's function (Axelron, 2009; Creel, 1920). While a reflection of the desperation to shape public opinion, it is clearly not a decision couched in research. It is clearly not a plan devised of a body of research devoted to the war effort. In this regard, WWI practices are not in keeping with the modern definition of programming in public relations (Kelly, 1998).

This step does, however, help modern practitioners see a targeted approach to connecting with necessary audiences, to tailor messages to those audiences, to utilize community leaders and celebrities to deliver the message, and to see a more effective impact than other approaches. Inasmuch as the decision-making and actions of the Four Minute Men lack the research to drive the decision, the antecedent provided an effective example that set the tone for modern best practices in programming, with the benefit of time and additional scholarship. In fact, the approach of the Four Minute Men was a clear example of opinion leader theory and the two-step flow of communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) at work in influencing opinion and behavior.

Evaluation Stage: Kelly (1998) identifies multiple means of evaluation in public relations work. Summative evaluation offers an examination of the effectiveness of the campaign after the work is complete. In reviewing the work of the Four Minute Men campaign, it is clear that nothing summative was planned or conducted to allow for a review of outcomes. The possible exceptions to this are Creel's (1920) reflections on the work of the CPI and the Four Minute Men campaign, and the direct report of the Committee on Public Information (1920). It is clear in reflection that Bernays (1923; 1928) offered his own anecdotal evidence of the successes of the CPI, as well.

Kelly (1998) is also clear that effective evaluation should be aligned with a clear set of measurable objectives. As noted previously, the work of the Four Minute Men campaign lacked objectives that met this standard, so it falls short of best practices in modern public relations.

An interesting element of the Four Minute Men campaign that points to a clear precursor to incremental evaluation (Watson & Noble, 2007) are the Four Minute Men Bulletins published and distributed throughout the life of the campaign. The updates on achievements provided early justification of effectiveness of the campaign process. The bulletins also offered examples of

rhetorical approaches from members that both succeeded and failed. In the process of offering these examples, the bulletins also offered advice on how to adapt messages and approaches to leverage those successes and avoid the failures. In this way, as in incremental evaluation, the Four Minute Man worked to help practitioners improve and adapt messages to each public effectively over the life of the campaign. In addition, the bulletins provided notice of emerging concerns, akin to boundary scanning (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

Stewardship: In this final regard, it is clear that stewardship is not the focus of the campaign. This is understandable given public relation's relative infancy. The work of the CPI reflected a top-down, one-way approach to communication that emphasized pushing out messages and information in an effort to influence the public without regard to the interests of audience. In many respects, this is largely due to the fact that modern public relations did not think in terms of relationships until the work of Ferguson (1984), Grunig & Hunt (1984), and Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), which emphasizes enduring, mutually beneficial relationships in public relations work. Interestingly, given the volume of Four Minute Men campaign messages around Liberty Loan drives, rationing, donor drives, and other philanthropic efforts, the campaign could have benefitted from Kelly's (2001) emphasis on effective development strategies and its added dimensions of stewardship.

Discussion

Literature already tells us that the CPI was an engine for modernization of practices and a better understanding of the potential influence of journalism, advertising, and public relations on the individual mindset and actions of citizens (Axelrod, 2009; Mastrangelo, 2009). While the present paper draws connections to practices adopted by the CPI and Four Minute Men that helped set the foundation for modern public relations practices, it is clear that the evolution of best practices is the result of study of adopted practices during public relations infancy and adolescence. Additionally, reflecting on modern campaigns has ensured the continued progression of modern professionalism.

The need for this approach to study the discipline and refine practice becomes clear when one considers the darkest consequences of the writings of one CPI member: Edward Bernays. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) and *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays offered a callous picture of the public and the ability of mass communication and persuasion to manipulate public opinion to meet a government's needs. These texts proved to be the stars of Joseph Goebbels personal library, and he leveraged the lessons learned to instigate a shift in public opinion that gave rise to fascism in Germany, dehumanization of ethnic groups and minorities, and the impetus for the Holocaust (Bernays, 1965).

Deep reflection on this led Bernays to work to professionalize the discipline and push for greater rigor in education and practice. His efforts in the discipline and in the classroom also helped give rise to the Public Relations Society of America and the Public Relations Student Society of America. His commitment to professionalization set in motion the fields of study in best practices, ethics, and philosophy that strive to make perceptions of the field more positive.

While the Four Minute Men campaign offers an example of a clear public relations antecedent, like most antecedents, it offers glimpses of best practices to be institutionalized, but not the whole picture (Cutlip, 2013). This could only come from the continual self-reflection on practice that

enables modern practitioners to better themselves and the practice as individuals and as part of the larger discipline. Without this self-reflection, the practice of public relations runs the risk of future grave consequences. As such, it is worth looking back at these examples and at current work to assess not only effectiveness of practice, but the integrity of each action.

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