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ABSTRACT

Propaganda Powers Social Reform: The Visual Rhetoric of
Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell

by

Shelly Stock Halling, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2015

Major Professor: Dr. Steven B. Shively
Department: English

This thesis is a study of the visual rhetoric of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell. The claim is Hine, Lange, and Rockwell's artwork is propaganda because it is posed, contrived, and emotionally manipulative. The three artists used their propaganda art to bring awareness to the plight of exploited children, impoverished migrant workers, and racial segregation. The thesis concludes that Hine, Lange, and Rockwell were advocates for social reform, and their art instigated change for various enclaves of the American populace. The initial chapter reviews the theoretical components of propaganda, visual rhetoric, and advocacy, and explains how these overlap to create a framework to examine the photographs of Hine and Lange, and the paintings of Rockwell. Subsequent chapters delve into the individual lives, motives, and art of the artists, placing each artist in an historical context. Selected pieces of art that are exemplary of both propaganda and advocacy are chosen for close reading.

(107 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Propaganda Powers Social Reform: The Visual Rhetoric of

Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell

Shelly Stock Halling

The scope of this thesis is an examination of visual rhetoric and its societal impacts. The framework is an historical timeline from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. The thesis is an interdisciplinary activity that embeds Art History in American Studies. It is beneficial to scholars in a variety of fields, including, but not limited to: English, American Studies, Art History, Photography, Sociology, Anthropology, and History. It braids together the theoretical perspectives of propaganda, visual rhetoric, and advocacy. The thesis is based on library research with no outside funding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I launched into this adventure known as graduate school, I knew it would be a challenge, but I didn't completely comprehend how far I'd be stretched. Returning to graduate school at this point in my life has been *the* hardest thing I've ever endeavored. I would not have been able to get to this point without the support of a cadre of people. This laundry list of "thank yous" doesn't do justice to the enormous feelings of gratitude I have for the many people who have helped me earn a master's degree in English.

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Along with Dr. Shively, Dr. Evelyn Funda and Dr. Lynne McNeill completed my graduate committee. Thank you for a positive and energetic thesis defense. Thank you for being supportive. I appreciate your feedback and guidance.

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Thanks to my fourth floor graduate school colleagues. You are the best. Thanks for accepting me as one of your own. Thanks for letting me share in your experience. I am a better person because of your influence. I really could not have done this without you. A special shout out to Aiya Sakr; I have enjoyed our conversations about visual poetry, culture, religion, lesson plans, frustration over students, and a litany of other things. Thank you my friend. You will always hold a special place in my heart. Also, to Eric Stephens, you are wise beyond your years. Thanks for being both friend and therapist. I wish you the best of luck, and look forward to hearing about your many successes. Bonnie Moore, you understand the balancing act of a nontraditional student. I admire and respect you. My life is better with you in my circle of friends. When I grow up I want to be Bonnie Moore.

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The greatest blessings in my life call me, “mom.” Returning to school has required an adjustment for my family. We have eaten a lot more pizza, and our home is less tidy. My time has been subdivided, and my kids have rolled with the change. Meredith and Dave, Chelsea, Alexis, Andrea and Ben, Brock, Mariah, Joe, and Luke. I love you more than mere words can express. You are my pride, joy, and greatest accomplishments. You are remarkable people. I am incredibly fortunate to get to be your mom.

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CHAPTER 1

PROPAGANDA, VISUAL RHETORIC, ADVOCACY:

A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW



Fig. 1.1.
Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. “Rhodes Mfg. Co. Spinner. A moment’s glimpse of the outer world. Said she was 11 years old. Been working over a year. Lincolnton, N.C., 11/11/1908.”

Historically, photographers and painters have possessed the power to drag their audiences from complacent, comfortable, and conservative spheres, and drop them into disturbing, difficult, and even distressing domains. By pushing the audience from comfortable to uncomfortable, the artists force their viewers to look literally at the image, and then figuratively at themselves. Consider two photographs and a painting that exemplify how images send a poignant, profound, and powerful message. In the first, a little girl looks out the factory window (fig. 1.1). The massive machinery behind her



Fig. 1.2.
Dorothea Lange. *Child and Her Mother*. August 1939 (Davis 51).

accentuates her tininess. The viewers sense a feeling of longing in the child as she peers out the window. She is like a bird in a cage that needs to escape, to frolic, and to be free, but in 1908 this was not a childhood privilege. In the second image (fig. 1.2), a little girl, maybe ten or eleven years old, leans against the barbed-wire fence and stares at the ground in front of her. Although she is outside, her desire to escape is palpable. Her cage is poverty and hunger created by the Depression in 1939. The final image captures the courage and resolve of a six-year-old girl on her way to first grade (fig. 1.3). Like the other girls, she is in a cage. Her cage, made of federal marshals, moves along the sidewalk with her as it passes a wall filled with the racial slurs of 1964.



Fig. 1.3.

Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With* 1964. Oil on canvas, 36”x58”.
The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. *Look* illustration,
14 January 1964 (Schick 202).

Three very real little girls in three different eras of American history, each represented by a different artist. All three artists have the same objective: to use their art as advocacy propaganda to support social reform. Lewis Hine (1874-1940) photographed children working in factories and coal mines at the turn of the twentieth century, Dorothea Lange (1895-1965) crisscrossed America capturing the poverty and starvation prevalent during the Dust-Bowl years, and Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), after decades of painting satirical Americana, captured the raw anger of the civil rights years.

Hine, Lange, and Rockwell are renowned and prolific artists. People recognize their art without knowing the artist or the backstory behind the image, and often refer to their images as *icons*. Many people consider them great documentary artists, but few recognize these artists as advocates for change, and even fewer people recognize them as shrewd rhetoricians and masters of propaganda. Through a comparative study of the lives

and art of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell, this thesis dispels the usually negative paradigm of propaganda, and presents the artists as advocates and rhetoricians for social reform. Volumes of scholarship have been written on these artists individually (**Lewis Hine**: Freedman, Hindman, Hine, Kaplan, Offiong, Sampsell-Willmann, Trachtenberg; **Dorothea Lange**: Cannon, Cohen, Davis, Goggans, Gordon, Lange, Partridge, Spirn, Steichen, Street, Taylor; **Norman Rockwell**: Gallagher & Zagacki, Marling, Rockwell, Schick, Solomon), but, after conducting an exhaustive literature review, I cannot find any scholarly research that presents a collective comparison of the three artists. Analyzing their art against the backdrop of advocacy, propaganda, and rhetorical theory will bring new insight to their work, and open a scholarly conversation. These artists used their art (photography and painting) to expose the world to national atrocities: Lewis Hine revealed the exploitation of child labor at the turn of the twentieth century; Dorothea Lange chronicled the plight of the sharecropper, tenant farmer, and migrant farm worker during the Depression and Dust Bowl years; and Norman Rockwell put a face on racism in the midst of the civil rights movement. Each artist, in his or her own sphere, was a vanguard for change and the benefactor to a segment of the American population that needed a champion. All used their talents to manipulate emotions and reverse mindsets. Their images presented the not-so-hidden ugliness of the country and made Americans squirm and then demand a change. Their images are propaganda, which had a hand in improving America.

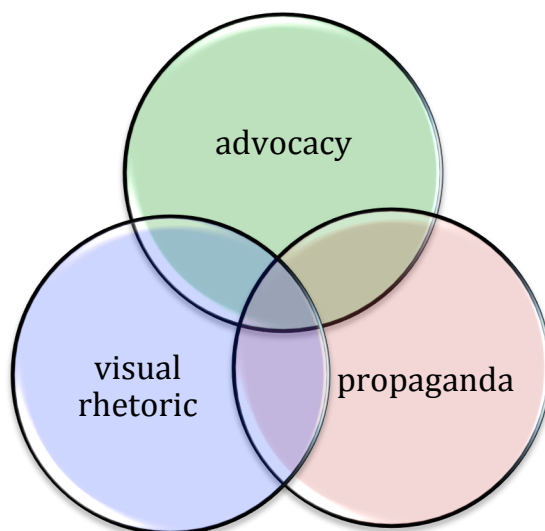


Fig. 1.4. Venn diagram.

Before exploring the lives of the artists and explicating the images, it is apropos to examine a theoretical framework of propaganda, visual rhetoric, and advocacy. Each of these areas has stimulated expansive scholarly dialogue. I will examine each theoretical area independently, but ultimately, I place the theories on a Venn diagram (fig. 1.4). The space where the three theories overlap is where I place Hine, Lange, and Rockwell and the effectiveness of their images.

Propaganda

An over-arching paradigm for this thesis is the artwork of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell as propaganda. Prior to labeling these artists as propagandists, I will chisel out a working definition of propaganda. Substantial scholarly discussion has been devoted to propaganda: Chomsky, Herman and Chomsky, Pratkanis and Aronson, Ellul, Bernays, Jackall, Combs and Nimmo, Walton This literature often focuses on how political factions use propaganda. Much of the literature on propaganda was written in the early to mid twentieth century with an emphasis on the 1940s (World War II era), and reflects the

influence of and fear toward Nazi Germany. My goal is to reignite a discussion around propaganda and reexamine it under a 21st-century lens. War, unfortunately, is still a venue for propaganda, but there are many other venues that are much more innocuous, and the ubiquity of propaganda makes it a field ripe for harvest.

The foundation of the word propaganda is to propagate. Both the Merriam-Webster and Oxford English Dictionaries provide similar definitions for the word propagate. According to Webster-Merriam, to propagate is “to make something such as a belief or idea known to many people; or to foster a growing knowledge of, familiarity with or acceptance of an idea or belief.” The OED explains that propagate means: “to cause to grow in numbers, to increase or multiply, to spread from person to person or from place to place.” Both dictionaries include synonyms such as “grow, cultivate, spread, promote, disseminate, communicate, or publicize”; all of these action words imply a sense of progression, change, or growth. A crucial aspect in any discussion of the works of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell is to explore how their work—and the message behind their work—are disseminated to the populace.

Shifting from *propagate* to *propaganda*, we not only change from a verb to a noun, but we change from a conventionally neutral word in *propagate* to an emotionally charged word in *propaganda* that immediately receives a negative response and is generally considered in a pejorative light. This pejorative reaction becomes evident when English 2010 students are asked to engage in a word association exercise with the word *propaganda* as the prompt. The students’ knee-jerk responses include Nazis, Hitler, war, manipulation, government mind-control, Orwell, conspiracy, and political agenda. In his book, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion*, David Welch, director of the Centre for the

Study of War, Propaganda, and Society at the University of Kent, adds the words “lies, deceit and brainwashing” to the list of synonyms generally associated with propaganda (3), and he remarks how historically people have felt “anything defined as ‘propaganda’ must, inevitably, be departing from a truthful reflection of events” (2). In 1997, while a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Oregon Humanities Center (University of Oregon), Douglas Walton wrote about the prevalent negative language surrounding propaganda. Walton projects how the “strong negative connotations attached to [propaganda] . . . imply intentional deception . . . untrustworthy [ness] . . . duplicity . . . [and] pretense” (384-385). John Long points out that propaganda in the twentieth century “came to mean lying for the purpose of advancing an agenda” (14). Haavard Koppang, a researcher from the Norwegian School of Management, also claims propaganda traditionally assumes a “hidden agenda” (121). Unfortunately, lying, deceit, and evil agendas are recurring themes when defining propaganda. Of course, the most notorious master of lies and hidden agendas is Hitler and his Nazi Third Reich. Their lies include lying about how they used propaganda. In what could arguably be the greatest irony ever spoken, Joseph Goebbels, Nazi mastermind and Hitler henchman, claims, “propaganda is a much maligned and often misunderstood word” (Welch 2). Goebbels’s and his work for the Nazi regime is one of the foremost reasons the term *propaganda* has a disparaging reputation.

The purpose of this thesis, however, is to dispel or redirect this relatively ubiquitous mindset and propose a more neutral, even positive, perspective of propaganda. I suggest propaganda, depending on its usage, falls along a continuum with *dangerous and socially destructive* at one end and *beneficial and socially constructive* at the other

end. The common denominator along the entire continuum is persuasion. This continuum stretches the parameters of propaganda from the usual derogatory and inflammatory definition to include a more benign and useful purpose. I acknowledge and accept that in the wrong hands propaganda has historically been used to accomplish sinister objectives; however, this is not the sole trademark of propaganda. When used in a more judicious manner, propaganda falls on the other end of the continuum, thus becoming the catalyst for social reform.

Swinging the pendulum from the negative through the neutral to the positive end of the continuum is not necessarily a novel idea. Several scholars use more neutral or positive language when defining propaganda. Returning to the idea of advancing an agenda, Marguerite Helmers, author of *The Elements of Visual Analysis*, doesn't attach the adjective *hidden* when she discusses the significance of advancing an agenda. She claims propaganda is "a specific type of visual or verbal message designed to promote a particular agenda" (117). Promoting an agenda is not necessarily an evil activity. Helmers's definition starts to move propaganda along the continuum to a more neutral and less inflammatory meaning.

I align myself with scholars David Welch and Brett Silverstein, a Psychology Faculty member at the City College of New York, who propose that "propaganda is not necessarily—and was often not, historically—a practice motivated by evil intent" (Welch 4), and that "propaganda . . . is not [always] the result of some vast conspiracy masterminded by a central bureau of propaganda" (Silverstein 52). Haavard Koppang summarizes the work of E. L. Bernays by saying, "propaganda becomes vicious and reprehensible *only* when its authors deliberately disseminate lies, or when they aim to

damage the common good.” Koppang’s definition alludes to another side of propaganda. He starts with propaganda as positive and claims that it “*becomes* vicious and reprehensible” (118, emphasis added). I venture to rephrase Koppang’s statement and propose that if the authors of propaganda are educating society and their aim is to improve the “common good,” then their propaganda *remains* beneficial. Using psychologist Daniel Lerner’s framework, Jacques Ellul, one of the foremost scholars on propaganda and its use, claims “propaganda is the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately . . . to influenc[e] the opinions or actions of other [people]” (xi). Brian J. Altenhofen defines propaganda as “other’s attempts to persuade people to behave, believe, and act in a particular manner” (156). Altenhofen goes on to suggest, “What propaganda principally wants to achieve is to persuade people to change their behavior” (159). This definition is benign enough that it includes the motives of every parent of two-year olds or teenagers.

Some scholarship uses propaganda and persuasion interchangeably. I find this confusing and counterproductive. While persuasion is integral to the success of propaganda, they are separate entities and should be regarded as such. I adopt Altenhofen’s proposals that propaganda and persuasion are interrelated and interdependent, but separate entities. I interject an approach to clarify the difference between the two terms. Propaganda [a noun] is the tool or medium—i.e. photography, painting, public speeches, music, film, posters, and etc. to name a few—used to embody a message. The goal or intent of the propagandist’s message is to persuade [a verb] an audience to take action. In other words, propaganda is the tool and persuasion is the goal. Persuasion, alone, however, is not enough. The propaganda needs to persuade the

audience to take action, not simply to think differently. Douglas Walton claims the goal of propaganda extends beyond persuasion but includes eliciting an action from the audience. He expresses that the “aim of propaganda is to get the respondent to act . . . adopt . . . go along . . . [or] assist . . . in a particular” message, policy, or proposal (394). He expounds that the “fundamental goal . . . is to move the masses to action” (398). Altenhofen, Ellul, and Walton’s definitions appeal to me because they focus on the outcome of persuasion as a positive and progressive goal rather than the dark and dishonest motives and techniques often associated with the use of propaganda.

In conjunction with defining propaganda as a tool used to persuade, it is important to discuss how the tool is used. Propaganda has an implied and assumed component of manipulation. The sender intentionally manipulates the message, and thereby attempts to manipulate society. This is where the artists I analyze and their techniques of manipulation come into play. I use the word *manipulation* intentionally because this is another word that notoriously gets a bad rap. Manipulation and propaganda often go hand in hand; likewise, manipulation generally stirs negative mental images. One OED definition proposes that manipulation is the ability “to manage, control, or influence in a subtle, devious, or under hand way,” but this is not the only definition offered. Other definitions, again from both OED and Merriam-Webster, offer less negative themes, such as “to handle with skill; to turn, to reshape or reposition” (OED), and “to command, direct, guide or steer” (Merriam-Webster). Fusing Ellul, Altenhofen, and Walton’s definitions of propaganda (“persuade people to change”) with the dictionary definitions of manipulation (“to reshape or reposition”) allows a working definition to germinate, and supports my Venn diagram approach (see fig. 1.4) to the interrelationships of terms.

Manipulation is an integral part of propaganda. How propaganda manipulates the audience's thinking and how the artist manipulates the content of his or her art, plays a crucial role in the success and persuasiveness of the propaganda. Manipulation occurs in two ways: the artist manipulates the content of the artwork, which then emotionally manipulates the audience. The emotionality of the content of the message is a significant factor. Walton lists several characteristics of propaganda, which include that propaganda is indifferent to logical reasoning and utilizes "emotively charged words or phrases," and I interject, *emotively charged images* (398-399). Images can manipulate the emotions with greater intensity than words or phrases. This, of course, begs the questions: What about the integrity of the image or the artist? Is manipulation fair? Every parent, teacher, journalist, writer, artist, and photographer has wrestled with this dilemma. Instead, the questions we should ask are "Does the manipulation advance a malicious or altruistic agenda? Is the agenda open to public scrutiny? And, who are the beneficiaries?"

As the definitions begin to grow and bloom, it seems the words *art* and *propaganda* are starting to intertwine to the point that they are interchangeable. I am sure, there are artists who will take exception to this and claim their art is not propaganda, but artists use their medium with the intent of leaving an emotional mark. There is no neutral art. All images are designed to persuade.

Where to draw the line between propaganda and art has been the catalyst for many academic discussions. If the goal of art is to persuade, which I propose it is, then there is no line, and art can then be declared propaganda. William Lewis discusses the difference between art and propaganda by drawing a line and putting art on one side and propaganda on the other. Lewis, however, concedes the line between the two can be

blurred, which makes “distinguishing between that which is art and that which is propaganda . . . troublingly difficult” (42). I do not think we have to take an either/or stance. The images of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell straddle the border and prove that art and propaganda can coexist in the same moment; this coexistence results in persuading society to social reform. The images of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell are indeed propaganda. The artists intentionally manipulated their art to send specific messages, reshape the social conscience of America, and persuade the American government to make changes in laws regarding child labor, migrant workers, and civil rights. Their propaganda was timely and beneficial, not deceitful or malicious.

Distilling the various discussions and definitions of propaganda into a working definition is not a simple task, but for the purposes of my thesis, I suggest two distinct elements that define propaganda: 1—it is a tool used to deliver a persuasive message, and 2—it incorporates manipulation on some level; either the content of the image is manipulated or the message manipulates the audience in some emotional or logical way.

Visual Rhetoric

The second topic to define and refine is visual rhetoric. If persuasion is a key element of propaganda, it is the linchpin of visual rhetoric. I have already made the claim that art and propaganda have a symbiotic relationship. Their interrelationship is more powerful, effective, and immediate than written or spoken messages. Although I should resist the cliché “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the truth is, pictures have a powerful story to tell, and ignoring the visual or disregarding it as merely a complement to the text is naïve. Images not only strengthen text, but in many cases they transcend the text, becoming more powerful than written or spoken communication. Marguerite

Helmets, professor of rhetoric and author of *The Elements of Visual Analysis*, emphasizes the importance of studying and understanding the visual that surrounds us. She proposes, “Visual elements are more than just decoration; they are integral structural ideas” (viii). No longer does the image take a supporting role. It can carry the message as strongly and often stronger than writing. Along with Helmets, I also align myself with J. Anthony Blair, professor at the University of Windsor in Canada, and board member of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, who proposes that “one can communicate visually with much more force and immediacy than [either written or] verbal communication allows” (53). The artists featured in this thesis—Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell—understood the power of their visual media. Referring to Lewis Hine, biographer Kate Sampsell-Willmann comments, “The camera allowed him to tell the story . . . more clearly and with more authority and immediacy than by writing alone” (56). I agree. Their images do more than complete the story; in regards to Hine, Lange, and Rockwell, the pictures *are* the story. But before I launch into the specific examination of the oeuvre of these artists, I will lay a theoretical foundation and carve out a working definition for visual rhetoric.

The study of visual rhetoric is an intriguing and tantalizing direction for an American Studies student. It is situated at the intersection of a vast thoroughfare of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities. In their book, *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, editors Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmets point out how an academic discussion of visual rhetoric brings together “a wide variety of disciplines including art theory, anthropology, rhetoric, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies,” and I will add political science and marketing (19). Hill and Helmets point out how each

discipline contributes theoretical language to help define visual rhetoric. Their book is a compilation of scholarship that clarifies, defines, and explains the nuances of the field called *visual rhetoric*. The fact that each contributor, fourteen in all, is asked to provide his or her unique definition of visual rhetoric illustrates how interdisciplinary and complex this topic is. Even the use of *visual rhetoric* as a title for this field of study is dynamic and still developing. Hill and Helmers explain how the “study of visual phenomenon . . . [is] variously labeled visual rhetoric, visual cultural studies, or ‘image studies’” (19). I prefer the term *visual rhetoric* because it combines the examination of images with the study of their persuasive appeals.

I start with a relatively simple definition of *visual*: an image, which has power and substance beyond merely complementing and accompanying text and is presented through a variety of media such as photography, painting, film, fashion, graphic design, and even architecture. But it is more complex than we may initially think. *Visual* is more than what we see, but rather, how we see it, its implicit and explicit messages, and the emotional and persuasive impact the image has on us. This is where we marry the term *visual* with the term *rhetoric*.

Aristotle, defining rhetoric as the “the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject” (6), focused on the ability to use language effectively to persuade an audience. He was specifically referring to the spoken words used by orators to make arguments before a court of judges. Eventually, the written word took on the cloak of rhetoric, and skillful, persuasive writers became known as rhetoricians. Now, images are being studied under the umbrella of rhetoric. The connective tissue between spoken, written, and visual rhetoric, is persuasiveness. J. Anthony Blair’s concise

definition, “rhetoric . . . is the use of the best means available to make . . . [an] argument persuasive to its audience” (59), implies that while spoken and written communication can be effective tools, images should be seriously considered when choosing the “best means available” to present a powerful persuasive message. If we buy into the Aristotelian connotation that rhetoric is the effective use of language to persuade, then we must assume *visual rhetoric* is the study of images and their persuasive effect. I concur with Marguerite Helmers, who proposes, “visual rhetoric refers to the way images persuade viewers to adopt attitudes or perform certain actions” (2). Referring to the persuasiveness of a visual image, Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers ask the important question: “How do images act rhetorically upon viewers?” (1). In other words, it is valid to study and understand the persuasive appeal and ability of images. Blair compares spoken, written, and visual arguments, and concludes:

The spoken word can be far more dramatic and compelling than the written word, but the visual brings to arguments another dimension entirely. It adds drama and force of a much greater order . . . The visual has an immediacy, a verisimilitude, and concreteness . . . that are not available to the verbal. (59)

Blair’s elements of immediacy, verisimilitude, and concreteness reflect the Aristotelian pedagogy of appealing to pathos (being passionate, relevant, and timely), ethos (establishing credibility and authenticity), and logos (the importance of logic and facts). Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle is as relevant and applicable to the study of images in 2014 as it was in 342 B C when he laid it out for orators of the Greek court.

Beginning English composition students learn about the rhetorical triangle and the power of ethos, pathos, and logos in their writing. Students learn to recognize and understand how each side of the triangle is integral to the persuasive success of their writing. Those same rhetorical elements—audience, writer/artist, and the message—

apply to art as well as to literature. Malcom Collier expounds on the relevance and applicability of the rhetorical triangle in analyzing images. Collier, an anthropologist who specializes in visual anthropology, explains:

When we use the camera to make a visual record, we make choices influenced by our identities and intentions, choices that are also affected by our relationship with the subject. People are rarely simply the passive subjects [of the image] . . . they, too, participate directly, not infrequently manipulating it for their own ends. (35)

The biases, agendas, and techniques of the artists are the main focus of this paper, but we cannot ignore the fact that the subjects of Hine and Lange knew they were being photographed, and they also brought a rhetorical element to the event. The agenda of the people being photographed contributes to the outcome of the image and its subsequent message. The subjects chose a particular countenance, disposition, or demeanor to be projected in the image, and those choices influence the rhetoric. What the subject brings to the image is a crucial side of the relationship. As we analyze these images, we need to ask ourselves: What does the subject know that the photographer must discover and that the audience needs to understand?

The artists' and subjects' agendas, and how those agendas sway the message are two sides of the triangle. The audience's interpretation of the image and reaction to the message complete the triangulation. I recognize that there are two different audiences involved in the interpretation of the images. There is the original audience the artists were directly appealing to during their era, and there is the audience now. Audiences bring different experiences and biases to their interpretation because, as Collier expresses, "the cultural lenses through which we operate inevitably shape our analysis, especially as we seek conclusions" (58). I am looking at the images through an historical lens. From my

perspective, the images of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell have achieved a sense of renown, and some are societal icons. I understand the good these images have already accomplished. However, the impact these images had on their original audiences is the main purpose of this paper. Eliciting the desired response from the audience is the goal of both the artist and the subject. Ultimately, the reaction of the original audiences is the most crucial side of this particular rhetorical triangle.

In conjunction with the rhetorical triangle, beginning writers are taught to “show don’t tell.” Images *show* and then invite us to explore, to interpret, to feel, and to respond to their messages. Art, like literature, captures and preserves a moment. Images, like words, pass from person to person and from generation to generation impacting, moving, and teaching each new person. The messages inherent in images are implicit, subtle, and open to the interpretation of individual viewers, but ultimately the goal of images is to persuade. Susan Sontag, revered scholar, historian, and photography theorist, claims “photographs furnish evidence” (4), provide an “interpretation of the world” (6), are “voyeuristic” (11), and they “shock” the audience (19). Like literature, photographs, paintings, and other visual images “are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (Sontag, *On Photography* 23). Even the “invitation” Sontag alludes to is an exercise in persuasion. Not only do images invite an emotional reaction, but they also invite the viewer to do, think or be something different. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell extended invitations to the American government and citizenry to step into the factory, the field, and the school to witness, recoil, and restructure segments of the American culture. Their images burrowed their way into the American psyche, blasted the clarion call, and led a movement for reform. The persuasive power of the images is a

direct result of their staying in the memory. In the 21st century we refer to the images produced by these artist as “iconic.” Many people recognize the photograph or the painting without knowing either the artist or the background of the image. The ability to stay in the memory longer is one of the key elements that increase the persuasive strength of images. In her article “The Power of Visual Material: Persuasion, Emotion, and Identification,” Professor Hélène Joffe, of the University College London, discusses the importance of images that stay in the memory, and she asserts, “visual material appears to be especially memorable and the salience that this confers may make it particularly forceful” (85). It is hard to shake an image that is exceptionally alarming and leaves us emotionally drained. Too often those images return to haunt us, sometimes when we least expect it. Likewise, images that make us chortle with glee or move us to emotional patriotism are equally stored away and later returned to when we allow our minds to wonder. The fact that images produced by Hine, Lange, and Rockwell several decades ago are still recognized now speaks to the staying power of images.

Not only have the images resided in our collective memories for decades, but also the message and purpose behind the images continue to be salient decades later. The images of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell are a reminder of how the culture and ideology of the United States has changed, grown, and advanced. The same themes the artists espoused then continue to be salient today. In the introduction of their book *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, editors Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt point out the importance of being able to articulate and investigate “the visual representation of significant social issues” (1). Hine, Lange, and Rockwell spent their lives providing visual representations and evidence of the significant social issues surrounding them.

While these artists worked many decades, even centuries, ago, their work impacts our modern era. The message of their work reverberates today in the importance we as a society place on safe and humane working conditions and the equality of all American citizens.

Visual rhetoricians understand the power of images. In an age of freeway billboards, IMAX theaters, 72-inch-home-theater systems, high definition video games, global news feeds, graphic-novels, webpages, and the iPhone selfie, our 21st-century lives are inundated with images. In 1977, artist and author John Berger declared, “In no other . . . society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages” (129); thirty-seven years later the ubiquity of images and their subsequent rhetoric have expanded exponentially. The upsurge in visual rhetoric studies creates a natural outgrowth of scholarly critical analysis and commentary on the subject. Joffe’s philosophy in her essay on the persuasive appeal of “health, safety, and charity campaigns” (86) supplements my thesis with the claim, “text-rich . . . [campaigns] have been superseded by visual-rich social marketing. This shift reflects a body of evidence that information alone does not attract people’s attention sufficiently . . . rather, they have to be lured in and, to this end, visual material is called upon” (86). Hine, Lange, and Rockwell were ahead of their times and had an innate sense of the power their images wielded to “lure in” their audience.

In comparing the persuasive impact of writing versus that of images, the immediacy and urgency of the “lure in” Berger suggests is heightened by images. Images are more efficacious in bringing about immediate responses than written or spoken word. One example of this is Norman Rockwell’s *A Problem We All Live With*, which has a

direct tie to John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*. Steinbeck witnessed and wrote of the account of six-year-old Ruby Bridges integrating William Frantz Elementary on 14 November 1960. Four years later, Norman Rockwell's rendition of that event was published in *LOOK* magazine. Rockwell's artistic depiction of the scene published in *LOOK* likely reached and impacted more people than Steinbeck's memoir. This is also evident with Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*. The *San Francisco News* ran the photo on 11 March 1936, the day after the original story on the plight of the migrant worker ran, but it is the photo that made the impact. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, authors of *No Caption Needed* relate how "Roy Stryker, the head of the . . . [Farm Security Administration,] dubbed Lange's photo the symbol for the whole [New Deal] project" (55). Both Rockwell and Lange's images had more impact and were more persuasive than written accounts of the same event. This is where the overlap between propaganda and visual rhetoric become evident. As we look more deeply at each individual artist, we will recognize how the artists manipulated the elements of their images to deliver the most persuasive and effective message for social reform.

A discussion of visual rhetoric is not complete without exploring the elements of style and composition and how photographers and painters manipulate these elements to persuade their audiences. I rely heavily on Marguerite Helmers's *The Elements of Visual Analysis*, which provides a concise, yet thorough, approach for analyzing visual images. Helmers points out how seeing the different elements of an image helps us to understand the whole image. She explains the importance of analyzing the elements and principles of design which include color, value, line, shape, form, texture, arrangement, perspective, angle, point of view, framing, dominance, balance, proportion pattern, contrast, and grid

(34-36). Each of these elements plays a significant role in advancing the visual story. When the artist accentuates one element over another, the visual story changes. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell made deliberate choices in constructing their images to visually articulate their story of social reform.

Norman Rockwell's *A Problem We All Live With* provides an example of how important the elements of design work to deliver a message. In our U.S. culture we read from left to right, the natural flow of western written language. Whether we realize it or not, when we look at a picture, this is also our natural flow: from left to right and from top to bottom. When the characters in the picture are positioned or posed counter to this flow, it registers in our minds as incongruous. This incongruity is exemplified in Rockwell's *The Problem We All Live With*. Rockwell positions the main character, Ruby Bridges, facing left and in the left half of the picture (see fig. 1.3). The forward movement of the child and accompanying federal marshals is from right to left. The characters and action in the painting are going against the normal flow of how we "read" an image. Rockwell has done this intentionally. Ruby Bridges was the icon of black integration into white schools in the American South. She was going against the norm, she was changing the way people pictured racism, and she made people uncomfortable. By facing Bridges left, Rockwell accentuates these societal feelings of discord and discomfort. Also, going against the flow was salient to Rockwell personally at this time in his life, and that important biographical context is important to keep in mind when explicating *Problem*. After decades as a cover artist for *The Saturday Evening Post* and painting America in a whimsical fashion, Rockwell changed directions. He took a position with the more liberal *LOOK* magazine, and championed the cause of civil rights,

an ideology many of his followers found incongruous. *The Problem We All Live With* is his first published piece of art after making this life change. Just as posing the character to face left creates dissonance for the viewer, Rockwell's composition choices reflect what was going on in society as well as what was going on in his personal life at the time. Helmers refers to these different layers of meaning as latent and manifest content (116). She explains that "latent content focuses on the elements of an artist's unconscious that are reflected in his or her works . . . conversely manifest content . . . show us what the creators wanted us to see" (116). Rockwell wanted us to see a little black girl going against the grain of accepted societal ideology, and simultaneously, Rockwell's change from *The Saturday Evening Post* to *LOOK* is latently projected in *The Problem We All Live With*.

Rockwell's *Problem* illustrates how elements of design in conjunction with biographical and historical context help the viewer recognize the significance of the image's message. Along with biographical and historical context, Helmers also emphasizes the importance evaluating images by placing them in a theoretical context (53). She offers a brief overview of several theories including structuralism; deconstruction; feminism, gender and queer; psychoanalysis; Marxism; and finally cultural studies (53-54), which is the theoretical foundation I am building on. The work and lives of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell span 104 years collectively. Those years include eras of significant growth and change (geographically, economically, and ideologically) in the United States. These artists captured the growing pains that are inherent in the dynamic maturing of the country. Studying these artists through a cultural lens allows us to look at different eras and different areas of the country. We are able to investigate the

country from the inner city streets of New York to the acres of grapevines in California, and from the depths of coal mines in Pennsylvania to the racially segregated suburbs of Mississippi. We not only get to cover the geographic expanse of the United States, but culture studies lead us through and help explain the shifting paradigms across the decades. Each era and area of the United States tells a unique and intriguing story. Whether the stories are about success and pride or about failure and shame, uniting cultural studies with visual rhetoric is an ideal way to tell the story. The stories of success and pride are material for a different project. This discussion pivots on the bleak moments in our nation's history when change was needed, and when the people involved couldn't complete the change themselves. They needed an advocate to take up their cause. Through their art, Hine, Lange, and Rockwell became that advocate. They had the talent, power, and platform to hold up a mirror and let America see its reflected ugliness. They were able to initiate change.

Advocacy

I, again, rely on the Oxford English Dictionary as a springboard for the discussion of advocacy. The OED defines advocate as “a person who pleads for, speaks on behalf of, or protects the rights and needs of a vulnerable adult or child.” While it is valid to wonder if the vulnerable adult, child, or segment of society wants an advocate, or if the advocate will adequately represent their chosen beneficiary, I opt to adhere to the importance of advocacy as defined in the OED. Advocacy is a complicated concept. Who has the right to declare himself or herself an advocate for someone who is a member of a different demographic? How does an “outsider” understand the needs, culture, or concerns of a different group? Using one of the artists as an example, we can begin to understand the

complexities of advocacy. Dorothea Lange, the government photographer from the big city, enters a migrant farmer's canvas lean-to, which is replete with hunger and dirt.

Lange takes pictures, and then returns to her comfortable home with food on the table and clean sheets on the bed. Does she really understand? Can she really empathize? Can she adequately tell the migrant worker's story? Should she be the one to tell the story from an outsider's point of view? *If* the migrant farmers were taking the pictures, would they take the same pictures? Would they tell the same story? Probably not. But the key point is, they *weren't* in a situation to tell their story, and the story needed telling. It is better for Dorothea Lange—an outsider—to tell the story than to not have the story told at all. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell saw a problem, and they, along with their employers, went about rectifying the problem.

Referring to images like the ones produced by Hine, Lange and Rockwell, Marguerite Helmers declared these images are “persuasive document[s] . . . that can make a difference in the lives of many people” (10). Making a difference in people's lives was the sole objective of the advocacy driven images these artists produced. Linda Gordon, Lange biographer, documents “Lange's commitment to making her photography speak to matters of injustice” (“Agricultural Sociologist” 698). Furthermore, John Louis Lucaites and Robert Hariman discuss how Dorothea Lange's iconic *Migrant Mother* gives a face to victimization or the victimized segment of society and “allows one to acknowledge paralyzing fear at the same time that it triggers an impulse to do something about it” (38). Lucaites and Hariman's commentary is equally applicable to the images of Hine and Rockwell. Deborah L. Smith-Shank, Professor at Northern Illinois University School of Art, acknowledges that Hine's sole purpose while employed by the National

Child Labor Committee was to produce photographs that would be a catalyst for social reform. Dr. Smith-Shank writes, “In 1906, the N.C.L.C hired Lewis Hine to help them in their struggle to implement laws prohibiting child labor . . . Hine took pictures of children in their workspaces to suit his reform purposes, and his photo stories were used as propaganda for a good cause” (35). Smith-Shanks commentary helps us to see the overlap between propaganda and advocacy and brings our discussion full circle.

Hine, Lange, and Rockwell were keenly aware of what they were doing and how they were doing it. Their intent is clear: to be a champion for social reform. Norman Rockwell, a white, upper-middle class New Englander, may not be the most obvious voice for the black population of the South. Similarly, Dorothea Lange, originally from New Jersey, started out a long way from the pea-fields of California. Even more, Lewis Hine, a well-educated city boy originally from Chicago, seems an unlikely candidate to represent the child coal-miners of Pennsylvania. However, regardless of the artists’ lack of membership in the groups they advocated for, they made a significant difference in the lives of those people, and the complexion of the United States. The visual rhetoric and propaganda implicit in their art allowed Hine, Lange, and Rockwell to be the vanguard of social reform in their era. I like the language Ivana Markova, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at University of Stirling, uses when she explains that propaganda is a tool of “a revolutionary character” (39). To ignite and fuel social reform is, in essence, a revolution. The tools of some revolutionaries are the rifle, machine gun, or grenade, but the tools of other revolutionaries are the camera and the paintbrush.

The subsequent chapters will explore and analyze the life and images of each individual artist. I will compare and contrast the styles and techniques of Hine, Lange,

and Rockwell as well as explicate the content of their images as visual rhetoric and propaganda used for social reform.

CHAPTER 2

LEWIS HINE: THE CHILD'S ADVOCATE



Fig. 2.1.

Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. “Rhodes Mfg. Co. spinner. A moment’s glimpse of the outer world. Said she was 11 years old. Been working over a year. Lincolnton, N.C., 11/11/1908.”

She takes “a moment’s glimpse of the outer world” (“Hine “Rhodes Mfg.”). Is she contemplating freedom? Is her expression one of longing or resignation? Does she wonder what it is like to skip and play outside? She says she is eleven-years-old, but the photographer is incredulous. The children are told to give ages older than they actually are. She has looked out this window for a year—well, she has worked in the factory for a year, but she spends little time looking out the window. The machine behind her stretches and blurs into infinity, as if there is no end to the work or the workday. She looks out the window like a prisoner longing for freedom (see fig. 2.1). Based on my research, a reasonable conclusion is the photographer asked her to turn and look out the window to

send that exact message, and in that moment of manipulation the photograph becomes propaganda and the photographer becomes the child's advocate. Lewis Hine is the photographer, and the image of the eleven-year-old girl is one of thousands Hine will record and use to "put a face on child labor that was impossible for the United States to ignore" (DelRosso 489).

Lewis W. Hine brought to light the incomprehensible working conditions of children at the turn of the twentieth century. He did not shy away from pictures that made his audience recoil. Hine's photographs were painfully truthful and emotionally manipulative, and I argue that these elements make his photographs effective propaganda. At the turn of the twentieth century, child labor became a national travesty, and there was need for drastic reform. In 1904, the National Child Labor Committee was founded, and three years later Lewis Hine was recruited to be the photographer who took "gritty images of the human condition" (Kaplan xvii). Up to this point, Hine had been a schoolteacher. In 1907, Lewis Hine left his job *teaching* children to become an advocate *for* children.

Lewis Hine's role as an advocate is no secret. When he joined forces with Felix Adler and the National Child Labor Committee in 1907, he knew his would be an unpopular, unappreciated, but hugely crucial job. By his own account his work "brought to light, in a visual way, the horrors of child labor" (qtd. in Kaplan 179). He knew being an advocate meant ruffling feathers and making people angry. In the case of a photographer, it means forcing people to look at things they don't want to look at, and to see things they would rather not see. It involves manipulating feelings—not twisting the truth, but making the truth become a catalyst for change.

Hine's own statements support the conclusion that his work is propaganda. In a job resume, he described how his "photostudies formed the backbone of much of the publicity and *propaganda* that" brought needed attention to child labor (qtd. in Kaplan 179 emphasis added). This chapter examines the critical dimensions of Lewis Hine's work as an advocate for children and defines his artwork as proactive propaganda that was the catalyst for reform in the early twentieth century. The structure of this chapter will include a biographical overview of Hine's life and his work with the National Child Labor Committee, historical insights about child labor, how his images fits into the framework of propaganda, and a close analysis of a sampling of Hine's Child Labor photography.

Lewis Hine and the National Child Labor Committee

Lewis Hine didn't aspire to be a photographer. It came about as one of those serendipitous life-changing situations. He was thirty years old and a teacher at the Ethical Culture School in New York City. The Ethical Cultural School, originally called the Workingman's School, chartered by Felix Adler, was founded on the ideology of social justice, racial and sexual equality, and intellectual freedom. The school's objective was to educate children from poor families and welcomed boys and girls as well as all races, a revolutionary concept in the late 1800s. Hine's employment at the Ethical Cultural School ignited his flame of advocacy.

In the fall of 1901, Hine's boss and superintendent of the school, Frank A. Manny, decided the school needed a visual record of its activities. Manny selected Hine for the job of "school photographer" (Kaplan 178), and his career as a photographer was launched. His newly discovered passion for photography and his sense of social justice

melded to create an artist that brought America through the front door of the factory and coal mine during the height of the child labor movement in the early 1900's. After seven years of being a full-time teacher and a part-time photographer, he left his job at the Ethical Cultural School and became a full-time photographer for the National Child Labor Committee. This allowed him to devote his full attention to what he called “the visual side of public education” (Kaplan 178). He no longer educated children; instead, his objective was to educate bureaucrats, policy makers, and the American public about the reprehensible conditions of child labor. Ever the teacher, Hine responded to questions about his career move as “merely changing the educational efforts from the school-room to the world” (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photography* 193). His art rang the school bell for labor reform. Daile Kaplan, who compiled and edited Hine’s correspondence, provides an historical synopsis of his first years with the National Child Labor Committee:

His social documentary work took him all around the country: even without the benefit of air transportation, he traveled as much as 30,000 miles a year . . . Hine’s photographs appeared regularly in newspapers, N.C.L.C and other progressive publications . . . By 1913, when he was promoted to director of the N.C.L.C.’s exhibits department, Hine was considered the most successful photographer of social welfare work in the country. (5)

Hine’s ability to capture the overworked, undercompensated, and even life-threatening circumstances of children was likely bolstered by his own youthful experience in the workforce. Hine understood what it was like to be young and working. While his was not the plight of a ten-year-old in a coal mine, he was familiar with long workdays. When Hine was seventeen years old, his father died, leaving a wife and two children. To support his mother and sister, Hine “took a series of sweatshop-type jobs” (Kaplan xxiv). The first job was in a furniture upholstery factory where he worked

“thirteen hours a day, six days a week . . . [and brought home] four dollars a week” (Freedman 7). The weak economy of the late 1800s took its toll on businesses, and Hine moved from one job to another. Along with working in the upholstery factory, he spent time selling water filters and doing custodial work. Because of these early work experiences, Hine developed empathy and sympathy that allowed him to look at, understand, and capture the feelings and experiences of those involved with blue-collar and physically demanding jobs. Eventually he met Frank A. Manny, who made arrangements for Hine to attend school. Hine followed Manny to New York and became a teacher. His devotion to the “human spirit” (qtd. in Kaplan 49) made him a quality teacher, and eventually drove him to be the “most successful photographer of social welfare work in the country” (Kaplan 5).

The seventeen years he spent with the N.C.L.C are arguably his most notorious and brought to Hine the most resounding praise. Owen R. Lovejoy, former director of the N.C.L.C, wrote to Hine in 1938:

In my judgment the work you did under my direction for the National Child Labor Committee was more responsible than any or all other efforts to bring the facts and conditions of child employment to public attention. The evils inherent in the system were intellectually but not emotionally recognized until your skill, earnestness, devotion, vision and artistic finesse focused the camera intelligently, sympathetically and effectively on social problems involved in American industry. (qtd. in Kaplan 110)

Hine left the N.C.L.C. to document the Red Cross efforts in Europe during World War I. Historian Tom Beck outlines Hine’s photographic life after World War I. Upon returning to the United States after his sojourn in Europe, Hine free-lanced for various “consumer groups, unions, and government agencies” (494). In 1930, he had the opportunity to “show workers as heroes rather than slaves” when he was hired to be the

official photographer during the construction of the Empire State Building (495). His Red Cross and Empire State Building work is filled with intrigue, but his most renowned art will be the child labor photographs he took while working for the National Child Labor Committee. Hine's investigative and documentary photography opened the door and paved the path for future photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee of the Farm Security Administration, who shared Hine's passion for social awareness.

Child Labor

Children are expected to grow up and become contributing members of society. As part of the preparation, parents are expected to teach their children the value of hard work. Indeed, it is beneficial for children to have household chores and for teenagers to have part-time or seasonal employment. Expecting a child to take out the trash or encouraging a teenager to find a summer job is one thing, but requiring a ten-year-old to endure a twelve-hour day of as Peter Roberts puts it, "hard labor in unsanitary surroundings" (qtd. in Hindman 102) "hard labor in unsanitary surroundings" (Hindman qtd. Peter Roberts 102), in the depths of a dangerous coal mine with inadequate food or clothing is reprehensible. As the Industrial Age gained momentum in the late 1800s, factory owners found child labor to be a great commodity because children could be intimidated into working long hours for little pay, and they did not threaten to strike or unionize. Also, child labor kept the wages low. The foreman hired several children in place of one adult and paid them collectively less. This created a vicious cycle because the fathers would be out of work, and families desperate for income lied about their children's ages so they could find them a job. At the turn of the 20th century, "more than two million American children under sixteen years of age were a regular part of the work

force” (Freedman 1). According to Julie E. Offiong, “In Pennsylvania alone, in 1902, The Department of Mines estimated that 27, 393 boys under sixteen years of age worked in the [coal] mines, and as many as 13,000 worked” as breaker boys who were as young as ten (466). Destitute families, eager for any source of income, allowed their children to work as newsies, glassworkers, textile workers, coal miners, and farm hands, to list a few.

Adult unemployment and scanty child wages were not the only aspects of child labor. Another facet of child labor was the lack of recourse the families had when their children were maimed or killed. Parents provided falsified work documentation that declared the children were older than their actual age. When the children were injured or killed, the foreman and factory owners denied responsibility, claiming the documentation was false. Historian Hugh D. Hindman explains that many of these families were immigrants who were taken advantage of because they didn’t speak English. They didn’t understand the alleged law requiring their children to be sixteen; this detail was allowed to slip through the communication gaps. Many parents “raised their right hand, swore a solemn oath, and made their mark that they had duly applied for [an authentic] work permit for their child” when, due to their inability to speak English, they didn’t completely understand the ramifications involved. When their child was injured, they had no recourse because they had “sworn under oath” that their child was old enough to work (108).

The coal mine industry of the early 1900s was the most egregious offender of child labor, mostly due to the extreme danger of the industry. According to Hindman the ten, eleven, and twelve-year-old breaker boys, whose main job was to remove slate and other debris from the coal, “endured . . . the most grueling conditions among child

workers anywhere,” and boy coal miners under the age of sixteen were “approximately three times more likely than men to incur accident or injury” (Hindman 90, 100). Lewis Hine, who not only took photographs, but kept meticulous notes on the people, places, and problems, corroborates Hindman. Hine recorded, “The Coroner’s Docket showed more deaths to breaker boys than to” older boys and adult workers deeper in the mine (qtd. in Hindman 91). If the boys managed to escape injury or death, the coal dust permeated their bodies and left them with asthma, rheumatism, and lung diseases.

Hindman, Alan Derickson, Roy Andrew, and other historians have produced considerable scholarship on the coal mine industry and its propagation of child labor. While child labor in the coal mine is arguably the worst-case scenario, mining was not the only offending industry, and none of them had any redeeming qualities. The regretful consequences of child labor ran rampant.

Hine collected over 5100 photographs for the National Child Labor Committee. The photographs came from coal mines, glass factories, textile mills, food packing-plants, street trades such as newsies or night messengers, and farms. The ages of children in mines and factories started at eight or nine, but children working in “agriculture and food processing” started so young Hindman suggests “the term ‘infant labor’” is appropriate (5). Agricultural labor was viewed in a slightly different light. Children as young as two or three years old worked alongside their parents and older siblings. At first blush, there is nothing wrong with this. Families are together, and children are learning the value of work. Even Hine differentiates between “child work” and “child labor,” the former being “that which gives training and educates,” and the latter being “negative and harmful” (qtd. in Kaplan 106). Agricultural labor was viewed through a different lens,

and “school authorities, inspectors, and [even] reformers . . . [saw agricultural child labor] as more benign” and justifiable (Hindman 249). Hindman, however, feels this justification was an oversight, and agricultural child labor was “the sector where American policy on child labor . . . failed” (249). Child labor in agriculture continued long after industrial reformation had eliminated child labor from the factory and mine. A brief example of this appendage of child labor comes from Hine’s notes about the berry fields of Delaware:

Alberta McNadd, 5 years old, said she had been working at 5 a.m. in morning [sic] and it was 4 p.m. in the afternoon when the investigators found her still at work picking berries. Mrs. McNadd, the mother of 4 children—5, 7, 8, and 11 respectively—volunteers the information that her children worked steadily from sun-up to sun-down [sic]. (qtd. in Hindman 255)

Child labor in agriculture is evident in America now. It still lies in the gray area between family farms teaching the value of hard work and the exploitation of migrant and immigrant labor.

Whether the child labor was in the darkest depths of the earth or under the bright heat of the sun, the day was long, the work was hard, the pay was scant, and the children were too young. The United States was experiencing growing pains, and the demographic that suffered the most was under the age of sixteen.

The Power of Hine’s Visual Rhetoric

Hine assumed the task and responsibility of documenting the workforce of teen, preteen, and child with an energy and ambition previously unknown. Hine understood the power of the camera. In a 1926 article entitled “He Who Interprets Big Labor,” which appeared in *The Mentor*, Hine wrote about sending persuasive messages:

I try to do with the camera what the writer does with words. People can be stirred to a realization of the values of life by writing. Unfortunately many persons don't comprehend good writing. On the other hand, a picture makes its appeal to everyone. Put into the picture an idea and, if properly used, it may be transferred to the brain . . . Interpretive photography, properly used, will do that, I know, for it has been done. (qtd. in Kaplan xxxi)

The “idea” he wanted to put into people’s brain was the paramount importance of removing toddlers and children from the work force. As a former teacher, education was obviously close to his heart. He understood if children were spending thirteen hours a day at work, they were not in school. The need for the children to receive an education was one message sent through Hine’s images. He also wanted to send a message to the factory workers—both adult and child. He felt his photography would “find its real fruition . . . if it helps the workers to realize that they themselves can use it as a lever” (qtd. in Kaplan 6). Another message Hine’s art sent was the horrendous working conditions. The images coupled with his meticulous notes told America of the danger these children faced everyday. Whether it was sharp knives in the food packing plants, unprotected gears at the mill, runaway coal cars and smothering coal dust in the mines, searing temperatures in the glass factories, or hundred pound bags of cotton in the fields, the environment, not to mention the length of the work day, was dangerous and debilitating.

The emotional appeal of Hine’s work is the greatest evidence of propaganda. Pictures of children’s faces blackened with coal dust or little boys sleeping on steam grates to get warm or teenagers with lost fingers, arms, and legs leave a lasting memory. These children looking straight into the camera, demanding an explanation, are hard to ignore.

Asking the subject to stand in a particular place or look a certain direction is not twisting the truth; rather, it presents the truth in the most powerful way. Hine didn’t

change the environment or import grime; it was already there. He didn't bring in models and have them pose by machinery they had never encountered. The environment is authentic, the children are authentic, and their expressions are painfully authentic.

Hine knew the value of the photographs he was taking, and he knew their potential impact. The foreman and the factory owners also knew the power of the camera. After Hine's initial images were published, his access to the workplace became more and more restricted. The owners didn't want their workers' pictures taken. This is when Hine became more covert with his methods. He would assume false identities such as "Bible salesman, postcard salesman, and industrial photographer" (Kaplan xxvi) to gain entrance into the workplaces. If he couldn't get in, he would wait around outside for the shift change or a meal break. The owners and foremen cried "foul" claiming the photos were faked. Hine was aware of these accusations and countered them with careful documentation. In a letter to Elizabeth McCausland he wrote:

More significant . . . was one thing that made me extra careful about getting data 100% pure when possible. Because the proponents of the use of children for work sought to discredit the data, and *especially* the photographer . . . I was compelled to use—the utmost care in making them fireproof. One argument they did use, 'Hine used deception to get his child-labor photos; naturally he would not be relied upon to tell the truth about what he found,' so the committee had to assure them & the public that they, in turn, always checked up on Hine to make sure he could be relied upon. (qtd. in Kaplan 128 emphasis original)

Were Hine's photographs faked? No. Were they posed? Yes, many of them. Were they manipulative? Absolutely. Could they be considered propaganda? Yes. His photographs were both manipulated and manipulative, and they made Lewis Hine the vanguard for social reform at the close of the 1800s.

Putting it All Together

A description of Hine's photographic equipment along with a close analysis of a sampling of Hine's photographs will substantiate my argument that Hine engaged in purposeful manipulation of the content and setting of his photographs. In this letter addressed to Elizabeth McCausland, Hine narrates the process of taking a picture. The letter is left in its original language, grammar, and punctuation. Hine's description of the bulkiness of the equipment is leading evidence that supports my claim that Hine's pictures were posed. (I extrapolate that the equipment Hine used in 1938, is similar to the equipment Dorothea Lange used a few years later in the mid 1940s when she was a photographer for the Farm Security Administration.)

October 23, 1938

Dear E.M.C.

From some newly found fossil fragments of early memories (mine and other eyewitnesses), I can now reconstruct more of those early struggles in documentation. The camera was a modified box type with no swingback and when one wanted to make a vertical composition after doing a horizontal he had to unscrew the box and turn it down onto its side. It had a rapid rectilinear lens with an old type shutter that used a plunger. Films were being used by most persons but, for some reason, I used plates very early in the game and I dunno just why unless it was because one of our sources of information was a photo-supply dealer who retailed suggestions with his supplies. Anyway, they were terribly slow and color-blind and with the plate holders and other apparatus totaled up to a heavy load for a featherweight to tote around. The tripod had to be light even tho flimsy and unreliable in a pinch.

The flashlight was a compound of magnesium and an accelerator, the latter being increased in proportion to speed desired as the former was very slow. Also, it was rather deadly when it decided to go off prematurely or became caked up and showered sparks over everybody.

Now, suppose we are elbowing our way thro the mob at Ellis (Island) trying to stop the surge of bewildered beings oozing through the corridors, up the stairs and all over the place, eager to get it all over and be on their way. Here is a small group that seems to have possibilities so we stop 'em and explain in pantomime that it would be lovely if they would only stick around just a moment. The rest of the human tide swirls around, often not too considerate of either the camera or us. We get the focus, on the ground glass, of course, then hoping they will stay put, get the flash lamp ready. A horizontal pan on a vertical hollow rod

with a plunger into which a small paper cap was inserted and then the powder was poured across the pan in what seemed, at the time, to be enough to cover the situation. Meantime, the group had strayed around a little and you had to give a quick focal adjustment, while someone held the lamp. The shutter was closed, of course, plate holder inserted and cover slide remove, usually, the lamp retrieved and then the real work began. By the time most of the group were either silly or stony or weeping with hysteria because the bystanders had been busy pelting them with advice and comments, and the climax came when you raised the flash pan aloft over them and they waited, rigidly, for the pitcher to prepare them to play the game and then to outguess them so most were not either wincing or shutting eyes when the time came to shoot. Naturally, everyone shut his eyes when the flash went off but the fact that their reactions were a little slower than the optics of the flash saved the day, usually.

Other kinds of flash lamps were brought out from time to time—one system used paper cartridges filled with powder and operated by an electric spark. Another used sparks bussed off a metal into the pan of powder. If it didn't buss just right, you lost the exposure—to *bad*. Later, some bright man brought out a flash bag that held the terrible smoke and a large part of the light. The smoke, by the way, was a big drawback if you wanted to take a second exposure or if you had any regard for the people who had to stay in the room after you left.

I think that's all just now.

Cordially

lewhine (qtd. in Kaplan 126-127)

Narrowing 5100 photographs down to a handful is a daunting task. All of his photographs are compelling examples of “humanistic photography” that tell a heart wrenching “photo story” (Kaplan xxvii, xx, respectively). Hine kept meticulous notes about the subjects, settings, and circumstances involved in each photograph. I will couple his notes with my analysis to support my declaration that Hine's photography is propaganda. In the captions of each photograph, I maintain Hine's language, punctuation, and grammar.

Child labor was rampant in the close of the nineteenth century, and Hine documented this workforce from Maine to Texas. Industries that relied on child labor included coal mines, textiles, mills, factories, food processing, glass factories, agriculture and street trades. Boys were the dominant gender in the street trades. Hugh D. Hindman

describes how these “children provided services driving delivery wagons, working as bootblacks, messengers, and organ grinders. They sold all manner of goods such as flowers, fruit, candy bars, and most commonly, newspapers. They seemed to be everywhere” (214). Newsies, like most children ensnared in child labor, started their day in the predawn hours and were still be peddling their papers long after dark, fourteen to sixteen hours later. Many couldn’t read the papers they were pushing because they were too young to read, but mostly because they were not able to go to school to learn to read. Hindman points out that unlike children working in factories, the newsies and other street trades children were out in plain view, and this “is a testament to the fact that consumer opinion had not yet coalesced on the question of children [working] in the street” (214).



Fig. 2.2.

Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. “7 year old Ferris. Tiny newsie who did not know enough to make change for investigator. There are still too many of these little ones in the larger cities. Mobile, Alabama. October 1914.”

Where child labor in factories and mines started to wane, the child laborers of the streets increased in number. The N.C.L.C, and Lewis Hine focused much of their efforts on educating the consumer and the government about the insidious nature of the life of the newsies. At first blush, the newsie in figure 2.2 doesn't seem in dire straits. Although he is bare-foot, he otherwise appears decently dressed; however, Hine records in the caption for the picture that the boy is seven years old and that he "did not know enough to make change for investigator" (Hine, "7 year old Ferris"). The *investigator* Hine refers to is himself, which lets us know that he had an interchange with this lad. We can conjecture that Hine asked the boy's permission to photograph him. The way the boy is holding the paper, may or may not be his regular posture when carrying the papers, but the fact the paper covers the boy's torso speaks to both the literal size of the boy in comparison to the paper, and to the symbolical way the newspaper industry overwhelmed the life of this boy and many others like him. I argue that Hine positioned the boy and newspaper specifically to send that very message.

The plight of the newsboys is further exemplified in figure 2.3. This picture was taken at 2 a.m. in February in New York City. (That Hine was taking pictures at 2 a.m. is a testament to his devotion to this work.) The boys are not wearing gloves; also, their coats and hats are not appropriate for temperatures at that time of day and year. Only a couple of boys are looking at the camera; keeping in mind the obtrusive nature of his camera equipment, it is extremely unlikely the boys did not notice Hine, which insinuates that he told all the other boys to intentionally look another direction. The direction of their gaze is counter to the direction they are holding their papers, and it is obvious they are holding their newspapers directly toward the camera. It is not a coincidence that the



Fig 2.3.

Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. "2 a.m. February 12, 1908. Papers just out. Boys starting out on morning round. Ages 13 years and upward. At the side door of Journal Building near Brooklyn Bridge. New York, New York. 12 February 1908."

paper at the front and center of the photograph has the headline "CRUSHED" on it. The boys are crushed by the societal demands on them, and their lives are restricted by poverty, hunger, the fact they had to work to support their families, and that they could not attend school. Hine intentionally manipulates the framing, setting, and message of this photograph.



Fig. 2.4.

Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. “A view of Ewen Breaker of the Pa. Coal Co. The dust was so dense at times as to obscure the view. This dust penetrates the utmost recesses of the boy’s lungs. A kind of slave driver sometimes stands over the boys, prodding or kicking them into obedience. South Pittston, Pennsylvania. January 1911.”

The word CRUSHED is representative of not only the newsies, but of all child laborers, especially the boys working in the coal mines. The open venue of the streets was a sharp contrast to the dark, compact, and acrid depths of the coal mines. Coal mines were the most dangerous and difficult places to work. The breaker boys, who were between nine and twelve years old, would sit for twelve hours a day picking the shale out of the coal. Their backs here hunched over as they watched the coal tumble by on the conveyor belt that ran under their feet. Their hands were often smashed and cut from the

coal and shale. They sat on ladders suspended over the conveyor belt, and to slip off the ladder assured death. In figure 2.4, Hine was careful to include the bosses with their sticks. This drives home the message of man's inhumanity to man, or, in this case, boy's inhumanity to boy. The *little* boys are not the only victims in this picture. The *older* boys, put in the position of slave driver, are also victims. How reprehensible to expect thirteen or fourteen-year-old boys to abuse younger boys. There is the distinct possibility an older brother is standing over a younger brother. None of the boys are looking at the camera. To be distracted and turn away from the coal could be a lethal mistake. The angle of the shot emphasizes the facelessness of the boys. To the owners of the mines, the boys have no faces, no names, and no identities. They are treated no differently than the chunks of coal that tumble under their feet. And if one is injured or killed there were plenty to take his place.

Injuries were a regular part of the child labor world. Neil Gallagher was eighteen-years old when Hine captured this picture (fig. 2.5). Ironically, by the time he was at an appropriate age to work, he was no longer a viable candidate because of injuries he had received working as a child. Hine's choice to place Neil at the bottom of the stairs is striking and disturbing propaganda. Neil has a single crutch. This photograph was taken long before handicap accessibility was a consideration. Imagine, for a moment, how difficult it is for Neil to go up the stairs. Also, the stub of his leg is propped on the fork of the crutch. Is this a natural resting position for Neil, or did Hine ask him to take that position to accentuate the lost leg? The pedestrian striding into the frame from the left cannot be accidental. Again, the obtrusive nature of Hine's camera negates the notion that



Fig. 2.5.

Lewis Hine photograph and original caption. "1-legged boy. Neil Gallagher, born January 4, 1891. Went to work at about 9 years. Worted about two years in breaker. Went inside at about 11 years. "Tripper," tending door. 83 cents [a] day. Injured May 2, 1904. Leg crushed between cars. Amputated at Mercy Hospital, Wilkes Barre, PA. "Baltimore Tunnel" – "Black Diamond" D. & H. Co. Thomas Lewellin Superintendent (inside boys); Samuel Morgan, company. "Was riding between cars and we aren't supposed to ride between them." No written rules, but they tell you not to. Mule driver 9 who was on for first day) had taken his lamp and he tried to reach across car to get it. Slipped between bumpers. Been working in breakers since. Same \$1.10 a day. Work only about ½ time. Work about 6 hour day. Left 3 months ago. Been in N.Y. – no work Nov 1, 1909. Father living, (Mother dead.) Miner same place. Hurt month ago Rock fall. 2 brothers 25, 27. Home 15 Pennsylvania St. Location: Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. November 1909."

the pedestrian was unaware of the photo shoot. The extended leg and forward motion of the pedestrian's stride underscores the amputation and lack of mobility of the teenager.

Whether we are looking at a seven-year-old newsie, a faceless breaker boy, or an eighteen-year-old amputee, the intent of these images is to make the audience angry and to push them to action. The compositions are simple and straightforward. Hine allows the expressions on the faces of the children to tell the story. These photographs blur the line

between art and propaganda by sending emotional messages meant to rally those with power to make the requisite changes. The working children of the Industrial Age needed an advocate, and Lewis Hine filled that spot. These children needed a voice and a witness, and Hine's photographic propaganda provided a voice for a voiceless population.

Hine's advocacy propaganda resulted in legislation and lifestyle changes that benefited hundreds of children in the early 1900s. Thirty-five years later, when the United State economy plummeted, the country was again in need of someone to document the pathetic conditions of children and adults. Dorothea Lange became the photographer to shoulder the responsibility of advocate. Like Hine, Lange told the story of a group of people who were neglected and ignored. And like Hine, her methods were equally manipulative.

CHAPTER 3

DOROTHEA LANGE: ADVOCACY PHOTOGRAPHER

As a child, Dorothea Lange was strong willed and forward thinking. She made goals and set out to achieve them. Born in 1895 to a comfortable middle-class family in Hoboken, New Jersey, she learned early that life throws curve balls. Lange contracted polio at age seven, and for the remainder of her life she worked to conceal her permanently twisted and shriveled right leg and foot. Her limp and subsequent self-consciousness were an impetus for her empathy and sympathy for others who struggled. According to Lange's biographer, Linda Gordon, Lange "considered her disability the most formative piece of her identity, [and believed it eventually] . . . increased her sensitivity to and empathy for the disadvantaged" ("Oregon Photography" 572-3). Five years after her battle with polio, at the vulnerable age of twelve, Lange's world once again shifted when her father abandoned his family, leaving Dorothea, her younger brother, and their mother to face life on their own. In her future years, Lange's empathy compelled her to create photography that told the story of the disadvantaged and downtrodden. She knew how to photographically articulate the concerns of the jobless, fatherless, and homeless. She overcame life's challenges and was determined to contribute to the reformation of other people's lives. Her photographs told the story of depravation, and they demanded a response.

Keenly observant, Lange found beauty and form in the mundane and common. Watching laundry flutter on the line, Lange remarked about its beauty only to be surprised by her friend's response: "To you, everything is beautiful" (qtd. in Partridge 10). In later years, as the Dust Bowl choked America, her photographer's eye would see

the poignant and tragic beauty in an overworked field, a dilapidated farmhouse, a sallow-faced mother, and a despondent father. Upon graduating from high school, Lange knew she must find a way to support herself. Fascinated with photography, but without formal training or equipment, she found employment in a New York photo studio as a receptionist. Her natural curiosity and determined work ethic impressed her employer who increased Lange's responsibilities in the studio. Along with learning the skills and techniques of photography, she also had a natural sense for business. Elizabeth Partridge, family friend and Lange biographer, narrates how Dorothea learned how to "change the large glass plates in the cumbersome studio camera, to retouch the negatives, and to mount the prints [as well as] . . . put together a darkroom, run a business, and please wealthy clients" (Partridge 10-11). She accomplished this by the time she was twenty-two years old.

Along with being creative, observant, and ambitious, Lange also possessed the photographer's characteristic of wanderlust. There was a huge world beckoning her to photograph it. Lange and a friend set out on what was intended to be a trip around the world, but pickpockets in San Francisco stymied their plans, and their world travels ended up being a transcontinental relocation. As with many adventures, serendipity turned misfortune into opportunity. Lange quickly realized the San Francisco bohemian lifestyle appealed to her. Within a year of her move, she established herself as a portrait photographer for San Francisco's elite and wealthy. Her marriage to Maynard Dixon, a painter with panache for southwestern art, soon followed in 1920.

In October 1929, the Stock Market crashed, and the country whirled into an economic (and psychological) depression. When the effects of the Great Depression

became apparent in the streets outside her studio, Lange knew she could no longer justify photographing society's comfortable, when people were lined up waiting to get something to eat. She hauled her camera into the streets to document real life. James C. Curtis, a professor of history at University of Delaware, Newark, comments on Lange leaving the pretense of the portrait studio to document the reality of the street. Curtis observes, "When [Lange] decided to take her camera into the streets, [she] assumed a new set of obligations. [It became imperative for Lange] to succeed as an advocate of the downtrodden" (2). She recognized in herself the need to tell the story of the people in the street.

The move from the studio to the street changed Lange's professional trajectory. Her street photos came to the attention of Paul Taylor, professor of economics at the University of California, who had a disdain for large-scale agriculture businesses that relied on migrant farm workers. Taylor researched and documented the plight of itinerate farm workers, especially Mexican field hands. Taylor recognized in Lange's street savvy photography the depth, intimacy, and pain of the demoralized, and he knew her photography would add strength and validity to the message he was selling to bureaucrats and politicians in California. Lange's pictures were more rhetorically powerful than Taylor's written words, and he wanted her photographs to supplement his writing. What he initially did not realize is her photographs would be more than supplemental; they would become the main storyteller. Lange accompanied Taylor on his next excursion of fieldwork. Lange's demeanor allowed her to connect with and gain the trust of the people she intended to photograph. While she had discovered her talent in the portrait studio of San Francisco, she unleashed her passion in the streets, fields, and vineyards of America.

Together, Lange and Taylor documented the fallout of the great depression; a responsibility they took seriously, and approached with devotion, dedication, and determination. Initially, Taylor and Lange were colleagues working for a common goal and sharing a common vision, but ultimately their united purpose ignited a passion between them, and they become lovers. In 1935, Lange and Taylor received quick and amiable divorces from their respective spouses and embarked on a love affair that lasted thirty years until her death on 11 October 1965. Their marriage was the rare composite of both spouse and colleague. They crisscrossed the country together logging thousands of miles—he as a consultant and she as a key photographer for President Roosevelt’s Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA was commissioned to document the plight of rural Americans during the Great Depression. One of the most ambitious and far-reaching accomplishments of the FSA was the collection of thousands of photographs that documented the rural poor from the Deep South to the Pacific North West. As Lange’s work with the FSA gained traction, her photography pulled back the curtain and reveal the ignored, overlooked, and discarded segment of America’s rural poor. With the FSA, Lange found the mission and purpose of her life as a photographer.

Lange, Farm Security Administration, and Propaganda

Lange’s talent and her resolve to expose the plight of exploited farmworkers fused to produce photographic propaganda as powerful as that of Lewis Hine. Dorothea Lange and her colleagues, under the direction of Roy Stryker, head of the FSA photographic department, used photography to elicit emotion, tell a powerful story, and campaign for reform. These objectives were not subtle, and the photographs amassed by the FSA are illustrative of efficient, effective, and productive propaganda. In his book *The Likes of*

Us, Stu Cohen concedes that the FSA “photographs were meant to be, and were, used as propaganda for Resettlement Administration and Farm Security Administration programs” (xxv). Aligning myself with Cohen validates my philosophy that the word propaganda is, as he says, “neutral,” and he defines it as “any use of the media designed to create specific feelings in the viewers of those media” (xxv). Not only does Cohen espouse the neutrality of propaganda, he links propaganda and advocacy. He reiterates that “propaganda serves an educative function, but it is advocacy education” (xxv). Cohen’s point of view dumps the usually pejorative connotation of propaganda on its head and makes it not only neutral, but also beneficial to society because the propagandist takes on the role of advocate and educator.

In retrospect, the photography of the FSA is labeled *art*, but at the time, the photographers, and the government agency funding their photography projects, shied away from referring to their work as art. They were documenting a national crisis, and preferred to work under the moniker of documentary photographers. This, perhaps, is because the American citizenry didn’t smile on financing a government-led art project. It was easier to sell the taxpayers and bureaucrats on the idea of funding a sociological documentary. John Long, chair of National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) Ethics Committee, outlines a continuum of photography, which includes photojournalism, documentary photojournalism, social documentary photography, and advocacy journalism (14). He defines advocacy journalism as “the use of documentary photographs to bring about social awareness and change” (14). These different titles are a mixture of shades of gray, with the lines in between so hazy they are almost nonexistent. Long claims the FSA photographers practiced “social documentary photography” (14).

Building on Long's definition, I propose the images of Dorothea Lange and her FSA colleagues be identified as *advocacy photography*.

An integral goal of the FSA's advocacy photographers was to compose a photograph that seared its way into the psyche of the American population as well as that of government decision-makers. No one should be so naive or gullible as to believe the subjects and messages of the FSA photography were accidental, candid, or free from manipulation. In his introductory essay of *Life and Land: The Farm Security Administration Photographers in Utah, 1936-1941*, Brian Q. Cannon acknowledges that the FSA "harbored a propagandistic agenda [because] the images were to be used to publicize and legitimize agency programs" (3). According to Cannon, FSA photographer Russell Lee was instructed to generate "upbeat photos of FSA-sponsored projects in order to counter congressional criticism of them. In a letter [from Stryker, Lee was advised] to pose his subjects, if necessary, in order to create favorable publicity. Lee complied [and] furnish[ed] unctuous shots" (7). Because manipulation is a defining element of propaganda, these FSA photographs are indeed examples of propaganda. Marion Post Wolcott, a colleague of Lange at FSA, affirms that Lange's work is propaganda. She relates, "I don't know of anyone there (at the FSA) who was not interested in [the plight of human beings], and in this propaganda point of view. [The FSA] was one of the few places [we] could go where [we] felt that [our] pictures would be used and seen . . . any exhibits that they produced were definitely propaganda, but [we] believed in them" (qtd. in Cohen xxv). Roy Stryker claimed his "photographs functioned as evidence, [and was] building a case for federal policy" (Gordon, *Dorothea Lange* 420). If propaganda shakes a nation and its government out of a stupor of blindness and inactivity, then it is for good.

If it gives the voiceless a platform to be heard, it has merit. The photographs of the FSA generally, and Dorothea Lange specifically, were propaganda that did not have a hidden agenda, but a blatant one, and that agenda was to allow the voiceless to speak and be heard in a broad national forum.

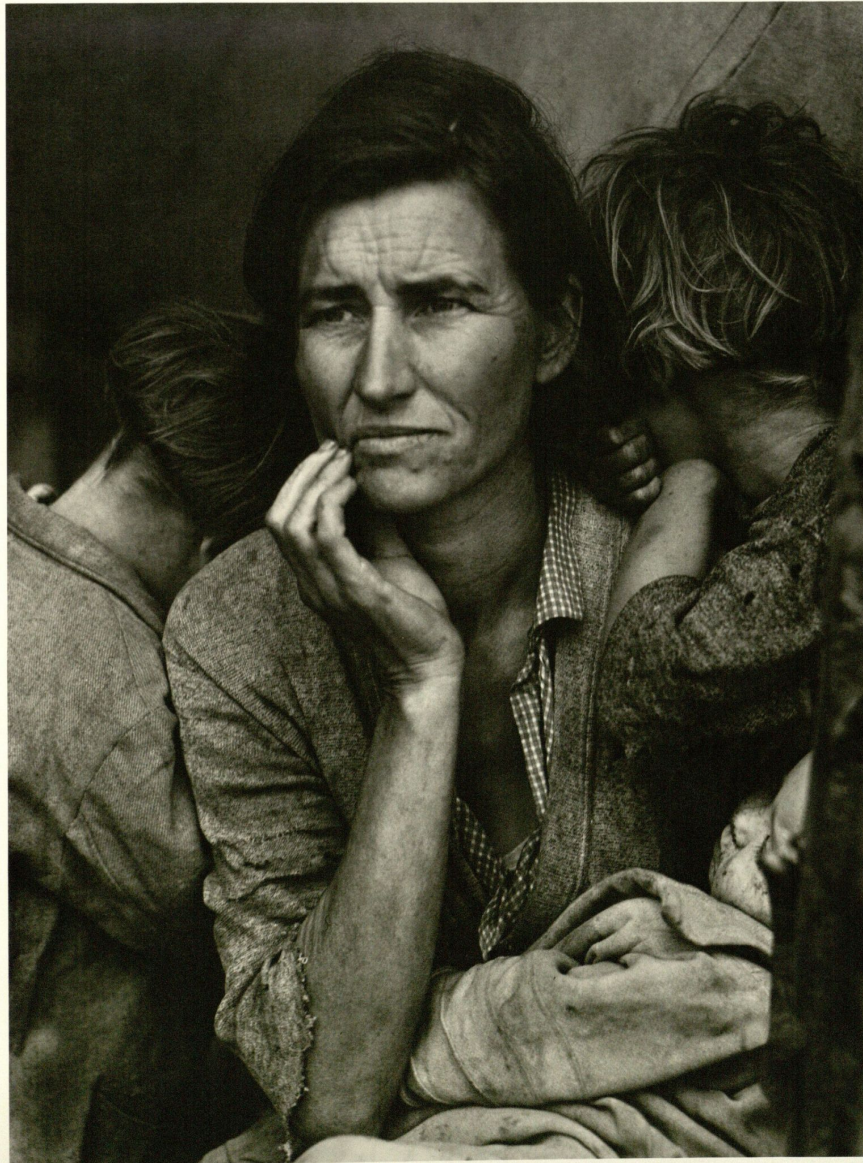
Lange's methods of composition give her photography power and pathos and are the main reasons her images are propaganda. Keith F. Davis, who compiled a selection of Lange's photographs, opens his photo journal with a paradoxical quote by Lange: "For me documentary photography is less a matter of subject and more a matter of approach. The important thing is not *what's* photographed, but *how* . . . My own approach is . . . hands off! Whatever I photograph, I do not molest or tamper with or arrange" (11). This is noble rhetoric, but it is incongruous with how she worked, especially in the photographs she amassed for the FSA. Many biographers and critics of

Lange's work, including Richard Steven Street, Anne Whiston Spirn, Elizabeth Partridge, Stu Cohen, James C. Curtis, and Linda Gordon, comment on Lange's methods of approaching people and gaining their trust and confidence before she started photographing, and they also explain how she composed her photographs by posing her subjects, moving her camera, and cropping her photos to send the exact message she wanted to deliver. Brilliant composition is a photographer's lifeblood, and this is where Lange's talent and experience as a portrait photographer blend with her mission as a documentary photographer. Anne Whiston Spirn described how Lange "point[ed] her camera up toward the faces [of her subjects], not to look down on them; that perspective made her subjects seem monumental" (21). Lange's biographer, Linda Gordon, reveals, "By using people as her subjects, [Lange] believed, she could better communicate . . .

conditions and relations, and by moving them into the kind of classic composition and revealing postures that she liked, she made them more expressive” (*Dorothea Lange* 240). In other words, Lange knew how to strategically position her subjects so as to tap into the emotional, religious, or psychological currents of her audience. One of the most classic compositions throughout the history of art is that of the Madonna with the Christ Child. An image of a mother protecting, nurturing, or grieving over her children sends a profound message that is difficult to ignore or walk away from. Like artists before her, Lange drew on the power of this mother-child bond in many of her photographs, not the least of which is her iconic photograph *Migrant Mother*, also referred to as the “*Migrant Madonna*” (Curtis 9).

Lange’s most famous photograph *Migrant Mother* (fig. 3.1) is an example of how she posed and worked her subjects to elicit the precise image she wanted transmitted to America and the government. Both Linda Gordon and Richard Steven Street devote an entire chapter on *Migrant Mother* in their books.¹ They describe the near miss and almost impulsive nature of this particular photo shoot. Lange was at the end of a very long month of traversing California from north to south and documenting life in the vineyards and fields. She was seven hours away from home when she passed a sign that read, “pea-pickers camp” which she promptly dismissed, justifying to herself that she had “plenty of negatives already on this subject” (Street 212; Gordon 236). Lange carried on a conversation with herself for twenty miles until “her photographic discipline took over: a sense of responsibility—to document conditions and seize visual opportunity. She turned

¹ *Migrant Mother* is the photograph most frequently associated with Dorothea Lange. It is published in nearly every document, book, and article about Lange. Because of the ubiquitous nature of the photograph, it is impractical to cite every reference and publishing organization. I have cited the book I used in the caption of the image.



Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California, March 1936

Fig 3.1.
Migrant Mother. March 1936. (Davis 45).

around and drove back—like a ‘homing pigeon,’ she recalled” (Gordon 236). Gordon narrates Lange’s process of posing, manipulating, and photographing Florence Thompson and her children, to create what became Lange’s most famous image. Gordon chronicles:

[Lange took a] series of six or seven photographs, and from their variety, it is clear that Lange asked the mother and children to move into several different positions [taking shots from different distances and angles, and eventually] sidelining the teenage daughter . . . altogether . . . Then this master photographer of children made the unusual decision to ask the two youngsters leaning on their mother to turn their faces away from the camera. She was building the drama and impact of the photograph by forcing the viewer to focus entirely on [the mother] . . . by letting the children's bodies, rather than their faces, express their dependence on their mother. (237)

As Lange's biographer, Gordon is sympathetic toward and leans in favor of portraying Lange in the best possible light. Gordon claims Lange was "so sure that she [Lange] was doing good" (*Dorothea Lange* 243) that there was little concern over the ethics involved in posing her subjects.

James C. Curtis also offers a thorough narrative about *Migrant Mother*, which corroborates Gordon's description of how Lange posed and reposed the mother and her children. However, Curtis is not as generous as Gordon when it comes to Lange's naiveté. Curtis explains how Lange "knew the image that she wanted, what to feature and what to leave out" (9), and she knew exactly how to go about getting it, even if it meant leaving out segments of the whole story. Understanding how the mother's multiple children would raise questions of reproductive irresponsibility and as a result lower sympathy for the cause, Lange systematically eliminated the older children. Where Gordon implies that having the children turn their faces away and lean on the mother was a composition choice that illustrated dependence, Curtis proposes that Lange didn't want to take the chance the children would smile and ruin the desired mood of the picture. Curtis's account is evidence to the incongruity of Lange's statement that she did "not molest or tamper with or arrange" her subjects. Gordon and Curtis' separate accounts validate my premise that *Migrant Mother* is completely lacking in candidness.

This level of manipulation certainly draws on her years of portrait experience, but *Migrant Mother* is even more contrived than the material she produced in the studio. Her clients in San Francisco sought her out and commissioned Lange to photograph them. The clients had at least a vague idea of what the final product would look like, and it can be supposed that the clients gave input on what they wanted in the photo. Also, the final audience of the portrait studio photograph would be family and friends of the client. In contrast, Florence Thompson (the subject of *Migrant Mother*) had never met Dorothea Lange prior to that cold day in March, nor was she aware of Lange's reputation. Neither Thompson nor any of her close associates were the intended recipients of the photographs. Lange knew she had to convince people who were far removed from the setting of the photograph, even those very clients in San Francisco who had hired her to take their expensive portraits. She was perceptive enough to know the images had to be beautiful if they were to appeal to the people who could make a difference. She had to meld the urgency and desperation of the starving field hands with "images of technical distinction and aesthetic merit" (Curtis 2). Lange's task was an ambitious balancing act. She knew she had to portray this woman as destitute enough to raise awareness and sympathy, but simultaneously not be repulsive and irreparable. Potential benefactors had to be assured their financial support could make a difference in the lives of this woman and others like her. By misrepresenting the actual number of children in the family, Lange twists the truth to present Thompson's circumstances as more manageable. Lange's astute ability to balance her portrait knowledge with the objectives of an advocate photographer is further evidenced by Lange asking Thompson to bring her hand

to her face. The resulting pose depicts Thompson as philosophical and even infuses her with a sense of resolve. Lange's manipulation produced the desired outcome.

The effect of this one photo shoot was immediately realized. Lange sent the pictures to *The San Francisco News*, which published two of them on 10 March 1936. As a result, "\$200,000 dollars poured in for the destitute farmworkers stuck in Nipomo, [California]" (Gordon, *Dorothea Lange* 237). *Migrant Mother* became the face and representation of the Dust Bowl era. Roy Stryker, Lange's boss, recognized immediately "that picture . . . was the ultimate." Stryker declared, "To me, it was the picture of Farm Security" (qtd. in Curtis 1). Although *Migrant Mother* became, in essence, the poster child for the Great Depression, Lange, as an employee of the federal government, did not receive any financial windfall from *Migrant Mother* in its original form or from any of the myriad of ways it has been redistributed. Her objective was not to receive fame or fortune, but to champion the cause the unfortunate.

Gordon referred to Lange as "the master photographer of children" (*Dorothea Lange* 237), and children are a recurring theme in much of Lange's FSA work. She collected evidence of children working in the field, walking along the road, and waiting by the side of their truck. Waiting. Waiting to be rescued. The common thread in these pictures of the children is a look of forlorn longing. Lange's genius is evident in her ability to capture the feelings of hunger, helplessness, and a haunting hopelessness. This is exactly the message she wanted the bureaucrats in Washington to see when they examined her work. The composition of her work is blatantly intended to stir emotion. Countering her own claim that she was "hands off" (Davis 11), she, in fact, suggested positions, posed her subjects, manipulated the situation, touched up or cropped the

negatives to create a moment or image that would be particularly poignant although not completely genuine.

Images of children represent the most vulnerable and voiceless in society, and Lange provided them with a venue to cry for help. In *Migrant Mother*, Lange leaves out older children and has the younger children turn away from the camera, completely silencing them and underscoring their abject vulnerability. In a photograph dated 8 August 1939 (fig. 3.2), Lange reverses the situation by eliminating the mother altogether,



Fig. 3.2.
August 8, 1939. Yakima Valley, Washington (Spirn 165).

and presenting two young children who seem to be taking care of themselves. The contrast of the large truck behind the children emphasizes how very small and defenseless they are. The truck behind the children, along with the boxes and crates to their sides, enclose the children. What appears to be a rolled tarp dissects the scene from top to bottom and adds to the children's boundary. While the little sister shies away from the camera and seeks refuge within her brother's protective embrace, the boy confronts the camera. The boy's resolve cracks through the viewer's apathy, urging the viewer to join the cause of reform. By using children, Lange shook her audiences' emotional foundations.

Caging children behind barbed wire fences (figs. 3.3 & 3.4) is another framing technique Lange employed to increase the urgency of their situations, and perpetuate the feeling of being a prisoner to their circumstances. In *Child and Her Mother* (fig. 3.3)



Fig. 3.3.
Child and her Mother. August 1939 (Davis 51).

Lange again flips the mother child positioning of *Migrant Mother*. The girl, rather than the mother, is in the foreground and is the focal point of the shot. Leaning against the barbed wire fence with her hands clutching the top wire, the girl is unconcerned about the



Fig. 3.4.
The Arnold Children and Mother. August 14, 1939. Michigan Hill, Washington (Spirn 203).

potential danger of the barbs. Freedom seems more important to her than the imminent effect of the barbs. Her downward gaze and obvious melancholy confirms a desire to escape, not necessarily from her mother but from her circumstances of poverty and hunger. Another example of mothers and children in barbed wire cages is *The Arnold Children and Mother* (fig. 3.4), which depicts a family looking out of their wired world. The vertical lines of the crops oppose the horizontal lines of the fence, and the family is caught between the two. Lange forces the viewer to ponder if the Arnold family owns this farm. The likely answer is they are migrant workers who, after working to harvest the crop, will receive less than enough money to feed the family. As a result, they are caught. While they make barely enough to survive, they very likely are the fortunate ones who have at least a small income.

Children were not the only demographic that was voiceless during Lange's sojourn with the FSA. Adults as well needed an advocate to tell their tale. Lange often represented this part of society by literally removing mouths and faces from her images, creating another recurring theme in her documentation and emphasizing how her subjects were without a voice. Hands covering mouths, heads down or turned away from the camera, or framing the subject to completely eliminate the head provide powerful images of the voiceless (figs. 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, & 3.8).

In *Exodus* (fig. 3.5), Lange continues to play on the pathos of the mother-child relationship. In this photo, the mother, perhaps out of embarrassment, has turned her head and covered her face. The quality of the woman's clothing implies she was accustomed to a more comfortable life, and this is the beginning of her trek across the country, which would explain her discomfort with being photographed. Like the children in figure 3.2,



Fig. 3.5.
Exodus (Steichen 22).

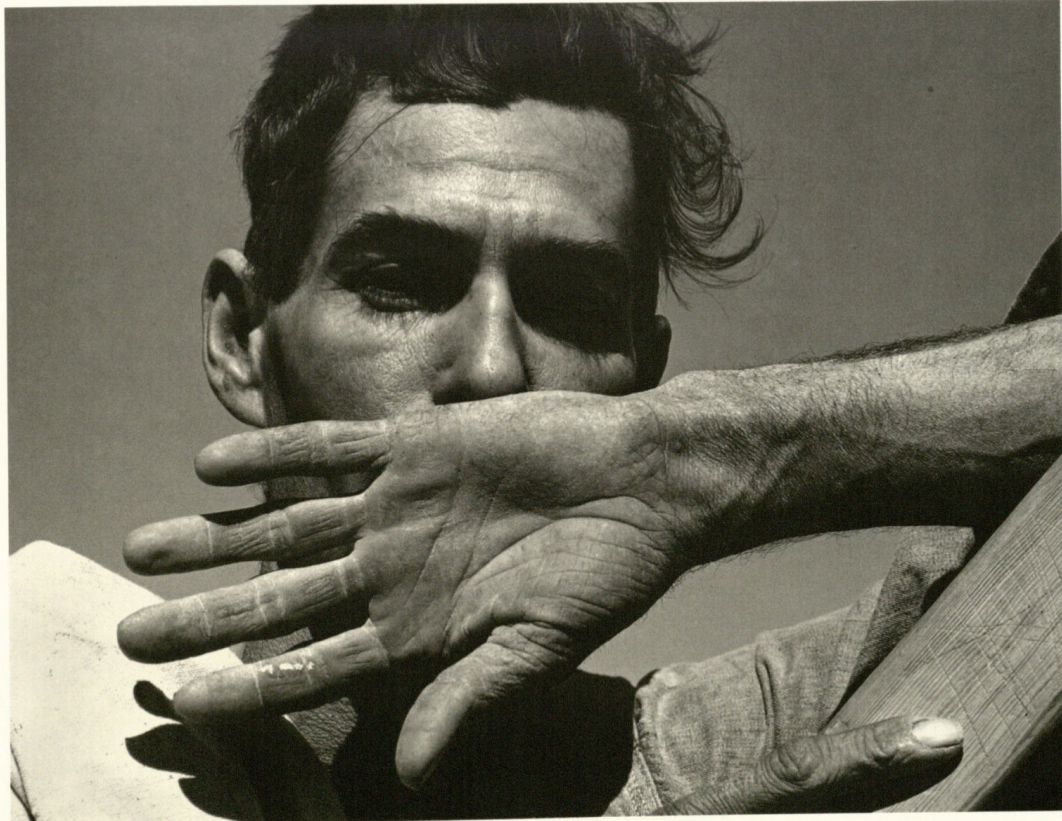
she is dwarfed by the truck, which is loaded with all the household belongings. The dominance of the truck reiterates the instability of her life. Also, both the mother and child are wearing coats and hats that indicate the weather has turned cooler. The woman is waiting and watching. Maybe she is waiting for help, maybe she is wondering how long until the next job, or meal, or home. Whatever her feelings, we will not know because her face is hidden. We are left to suppositions.



Fig. 3.6.
No title. No date (Lange 37).

Continuing with mysteries, the focal point of figure 3.6, which is untitled and undated, is hands. Not a face. Not an expression. Not an identity. Not a voice. This picture represents the hundreds of field workers who were needed only for their hands to harvest the crop. They were anonymous, and in essence invisible. Lange's mission was to break through

their anonymity and make the farm workers and their circumstances very visible to the rest of the country. Remaining with the theme of hands and voicelessness, *Migratory Cotton Picker* (fig. 3.7) is another example of eliminating the mouth while emphasizing the hand. The angle of the photo makes the size of the man's hand equal in proportion to the upper half of his face, which again emphasizes the need for hands. The owners of the agriculture businesses were not interested in hearing the desires, concerns, or opinions of the workers; all they wanted was the workers' hands and backs.



Migratory Cotton Picker, Eloy, Arizona, November 1940

Fig. 3.7.
Migratory Cotton Picker, November 1940. Eloy, Arizona (Davis 55).

Lange's photographs of field hands and migrant families portray agonizing realities of life during the Great Depression. One final example, *Man Beside Wheelbarrow* (fig. 3.8) is particularly moving and punctuates the theme of removing



Fig. 3.8.
Man Beside Wheelbarrow. 1934 (Partridge 53).

faces. Lange's own words are the best narrative for both the image and her maturation as an advocate photographer:

“This photograph of the man with his head on his arms—five years earlier I would have thought it enough to take a picture of a man, no more. But now, I wanted to take a picture of a man as he stood in his world—in this case, a man with his head down, with his back against the wall, with his livelihood, like the wheelbarrow, overturned” (qtd. in Partridge 52).

Did Lange tip the wheelbarrow over to add depth to this man's story? It's a distinct possibility, but even if she didn't, she knew the impact the scenario would have on her audience. She knew a picture of this nameless and faceless man would be the catalyst for conversation and change.

Dorothea Lange didn't just take photographs; she captured the souls and essences of her subjects, their surroundings, and the situation. Photography was her calling, and she followed that calling for 52 years. The range of her life's work includes photographing wealthy clients in her portrait studio, desperate and starving migrant farm workers, Japanese-Americans in WWII interment camps, as well as hundreds more around the world. She logged thousands of miles from the Deep South to the Pacific Coast of the United States, and across Europe, Asia, and into South America. During her tenure with the FSA, she executed her most powerful work, chronicled the lowest time in our country's history, and sounded the trumpet of warning for change. She was a genius behind the camera and in the darkroom. She manipulated, staged, positioned, and cropped her subjects to create the most powerful message. Lange took the uncomfortable pictures of the 1940s that exposed the hunger and homelessness of the migrant farmworker during the Great Depression.

Just as the United States started to rally financially from the devastating years of the Great Depression, the southern states tumbled in a boiling cauldron of civil unrest. Like Hine and Lange before him, Norman Rockwell became the artist to champion the cause of civil rights. Although his chosen medium differs from Hine and Lange, his work is still propaganda, and his goal is to generate change.

CHAPTER 4

NORMAN ROCKWELL: CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Norman Rockwell is likely the most well known of the three chosen artists. Including Rockwell in the pool with Hine and Lange may seem incongruous, but he is actually a complementary fit. Rockwell was not only an advocate for civil rights, but of the three artists, his work is the most posed and manipulated. Moreover, the best, and perhaps most surprising connection to the other artists is Rockwell's use of photography. By the time Rockwell reached his civil rights period, he had been using the benefits of photography for several years. Rockwell explains in his autobiography, *My Adventures as an Illustrator*, how photographs simplified his painting sessions and allowed him a greater degree of creativity. He shares:

Photographs cleared up all my difficulties, [because] I could get the new, weird angles . . . There were details, accidents of light, which I'd missed when I'd been able to make only quick sketches of a setting. . . . A photograph catches all that. . . . And expression. . . . when the smile has widened and the eyebrows are way up and the eyes are sparkling, the photographer snaps the pictures and I have it. [When I was painting from models], as the hours passed, the expression would sag or freeze . . . There was a limit to the number of sketches I could make . . . But now, with photographs, I can try endless variations. (289-293)

Photography liberated Rockwell and opened more efficient and effective avenues for his paintings. As civil unrest escalated in the United States, Rockwell took advantage of photography to produce paintings that were a stark contrast to his earlier Americana style, and he whiplashed his audience into the realization the United States had serious issues to contend with. As with Hine and Lange, Rockwell's art is manipulated and manipulative propaganda used to propel social reform.

Ron Schick, author of *Norman Rockwell Behind the Camera*, chronicles Rockwell's use of photography and discusses his transition from an illustrator for *The*



Fig. 4.1.
Norman Rockwell. *The Problem We All Live With*. 1964. Oil on canvas, 36"x58". The Norman Rockwell Museum of Stock Bridge, Massachusetts. *Look* illustration, 14 January 1964 (Schick 202).

Saturday Evening Post to civil rights advocate at *LOOK* magazine. Schick relates how “Rockwell longed to satisfy his desire to ‘paint the BIG picture, something serious and colossal which will change the world’” (200). By the benefits of photography, Rockwell was able to paint “serious and colossal” moments of the civil rights movement. While the main focus of this chapter is to analyze the paintings of Rockwell, I will also include the photographic process that led to the paintings.

Historically, Rockwell's paintings are powered by pathos. Childhood surprise, mischievousness, young love, traditions, humor, patriotism, family, religious and human

rights are recurring themes in Rockwell's work. When he ventured into the civil rights movement, the pathos became darker. The paintings no longer extract a wry smile, but instead become an emotional kick in the gut.

Norman Rockwell's *The Problem We All Live With* (fig. 4.1), is his first piece commissioned by *LOOK* magazine. Rockwell had broached the subject of racism in early paintings, but *Problem* is the first time his paintings reenacted a crucial moment in U.S. history, and it is the first time he turned his spotlight on the issue of civil rights. This painting represented a real-life event, which told a poignant story, and through it, Rockwell demonstrates his capacity for propaganda. *Problem* tells the story of Ruby Bridges, who bravely entered a newly desegregated school in New Orleans on November 14, 1960. The face of a six-year-old girl captivates the audience, and her tininess is emphasized by the larger-than-normal men surrounding her. The details of the painting cause the audience to recoil at the racial epithet scrawled on the wall above her, flinch at the near miss of the tomato splatted on the wall, and recognize the imminent danger the child faces. Rockwell captures the moment with validity and authenticity.

Rockwell's work is generally received with an understanding giggle at his whimsical and satirical interpretation of everyday Americana, but the message in *Problem* is neither whimsical nor everyday, and the reaction is certainly not a giggle. Rockwell's *Problem* forces the American populace to look: literally at the art, and figuratively at itself, and in that moment of soul searching, *A Problem We All Live With* resonates with a message that can't ignore. A message steeped in propaganda. It forces the questions: How can a person do this to a fellow human being? How can anyone begin to believe this is acceptable behavior? Rockwell's *Problem* compels the viewer to choose

a side. There is no room for a fence sitter. The viewer is either part of the crowd throwing tomatoes or is an activist determined and courageous enough to sound the clarion call for change.

After, and because of, a 50-year career, Norman Rockwell became that activist. Rockwell's flag-waving, whimsical, Americana art style laid the foundation, gathered a following, and established the reputation that gave him the power to become the voice for change. Rockwell is a prolific artist, and his life's work is extensive, but I propose his paintings depicting the darkest moments of our country's history, while slight in number, are his most profound and powerful works. And because of their blatant manipulation and appeal to emotion, they are propaganda. These works, executed later in Rockwell's life, after his nearly five decades as an illustrator, relied on his national notoriety. His notoriety sold magazines and created an audience that embraced everything that came off his easel. It is this notoriety that gave him the power to hold a mirror up and let America see her reflected ugliness. He wielded this power to tell the story of racism in America, and he championed the civil rights cause in a way the black community could not do for themselves because black artists did not have the national audience.

The scope of this chapter will focus on the four main works (and the precursory photographs Rockwell used to compose the paintings) that represent Rockwell as a civil rights activist. There is no candidness in Rockwell's civil rights art. He fastidiously posed and positioned a variety of models; he employed a photographer to take pictures from various angles and positions; and he chose with exactness the messages he wanted to send. The four pieces specifically addressed are *The Problem We All Live With* (1964), *Murder in Mississippi (Southern Justice)* (1965), *Blood Brothers* 1965-68), and *The New*

Kids in the Neighborhood (1967). Two are depictions of actual events and real people, the third is inspired by real events, although the people depicted are a representation and composite of any number of people who were involved, and the fourth is a return to his earlier style of creating a scenario through satirical visual rhetoric. Each of these works of art will be presented with a brief analysis, literature review, and historical overview. A synopsis of Rockwell's life and influence will weave through the analysis of the pieces.

Rockwell's Civil Rights Era Art

The 1960s was a decade of change for the country and for Rockwell himself. The country was boiling with racial tension. On 17 May 1954, The Supreme Court handed down the ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared public school segregation unconstitutional. Three years later the "Little Rock Nine" successfully integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas (Engelbert xvi). It took three more years before a courageous, black, six-year-old girl named Ruby Bridges walked into William Frantz, an all white elementary school, to start first grade on 14 November 1960.

Simultaneously, Rockwell went through a metamorphosis. In 1963, at 69, an age when most people are considering retirement, Rockwell started a new job. After 47 years as an illustrator for *The Saturday Evening Post*, Rockwell terminated his job with *The Post* and took a position with the more liberal magazine *LOOK*. Rockwell historian Karal Ann Marling refers to this change in his life as "The 'new' Norman Rockwell" (135). According to Marling, Rockwell's move to *LOOK* changed him from a "cover artist" to an "inside-the-book man . . . concerned with social problems. . . [who] painted the 'big' pictures . . . , [and] tackled important themes with passion and urgency. Instead of



Fig. 4.2.
 Ruby Bridges escorted by Federal Marshals into William Frantz Elementary. 15
 November 1960. (*Times-Picayune NOLA.com*)

grandmothers at prayer, his subject was the civil rights movement” (135). Rockwell’s first painting to appear in *LOOK* was *The Problem We All Live With*. It was published as a foldout on 14 January 1964 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the *Brown v. The Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling about desegregation. It was a smacking reminder to the country that there had been little or at least slow progress in the preceding ten years regarding the issue of black civil rights, and Rockwell was more than willing to deliver the blow. Rockwell’s son Tom relates how “his apolitical father was deeply committed to only two causes . . . the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and civil rights for black Americans” (qtd. in Marling 140).

This is Rockwell's first attempt at reproducing an historically chronicled event. Rockwell's research in preparation for painting *Problem* included studying wire service photos of Ruby Bridges being escorted into the New Orleans' elementary school (see figs. 4.2 and 4.3) and John Steinbeck's personal description of the event: "The crowd seemed to hold its breath. Four big marshals got out [of their] cars, [and] . . . extracted the littlest Negro girl your ever saw, dressed in shining starchy white, with new white shoes . . . The men turned her around like a doll, and then the strange procession moved up the broad walk . . . the child was even more a mite because the men were so big" (256-257). Steinbeck goes on to narrate the scene and describes the language used by members of the crowd as "indelicate," "obscene," "bestial and filthy" to the point "no newspaper . . . printed the words . . . [and the] television sound track was made to blur" out the expletives (257).



Fig. 4.3.
Ruby Bridges escorted by Federal Marshalls out of William Frantz
Elementary 15 November 1960 (*Times-Picayune NOLA.com*).

In Rockwell's rendition of the event, he writes the hate filled words the crowd was saying. The word "nigger" is juxtaposed immediately about Bridges' head representing the danger that is hovering over and around this child. Also, the positioning of the word barely above her head indicates its placement on the wall is relatively low, implying that perhaps another child who is only a few inches taller than Bridges wrote the word. Accepting the premise of a child as the perpetrator of the racial slur gives more poignancy to the title *The Problem We All Live With*. Hatred, bigotry, and racism are perpetuated from one generation to the next. The problems of the parents become the problems of the children. The blood red tomato contrasts sharply with the purity and cleanliness of the white dress. The near miss of the tomato reminds the viewer that Bridges is more fortunate than other children who were the target of violence. Three years after Ruby Bridges integrated William Frantz, and four months before *Problem* appeared in *LOOK* magazine, four black girls were killed in Birmingham, Alabama when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed on 15 September 1963. Certainly Rockwell was aware of that event.

Along with the racial slurs and the tomato weapons, Rockwell infused his painting with a myriad of details reminding us of the "old Rockwell" who was a master observer. The pencils, ruler, and books Bridges carries are evidence that her mother is trying to bring some manner of normalcy to this very abnormal day. These details are changed from the photographs Rockwell had taken. In the original photographs, Rockwell had his models hold a lunchbox (see figure 4.4), which is covered with white, male athletes. By replacing the lunchbox with a ruler, Rockwell exposes more of the child, thus making her more vulnerable. The tight grip Bridges has on her school supplies

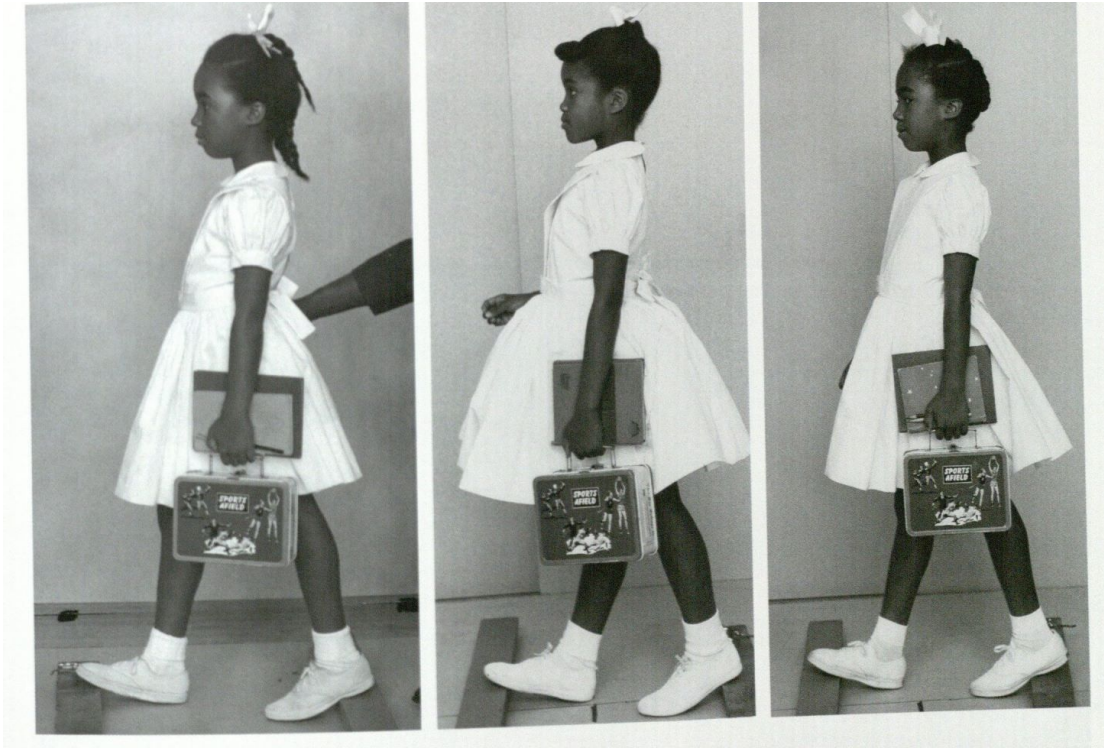


Fig. 4.4.
 Photograph for *The Problem We All Live With*. Taken in Rockwell's studio circa 1964 (Schick 203).

is her only outward indicator of fear. Marling points out other details such as “the paper in the marshal’s pocket marked with an official seal, [and] the badges [and armbands which] are almost clear enough for the viewer to read the words and numbers” (142), which add to the richness and validity of the painting.

Another effective composition choice that Rockwell makes is to render the federal marshals as headless and faceless. Not only is the identity of the marshals not important to the message of the painting, but also their lack of identity allows viewers to superimpose themselves in the picture. I hope I would have been an escort and not a member of the jeering crowd. The facelessness of the marshals leaves the viewer wondering how the marshals felt about the child. Did they believe in the rights they were

enforcing, or had they drawn the short straw at work and were just doing their job? Did they try to block the tomato, or did they secretly wish it had found its intended target? Victoria Gallagher and Kenneth S. Zagacki, associate professors at North Carolina State University, point out that the distance of the marshals behind her “suggest that, despite being charged with the mission of protecting her, they did not want to get too close to [her] and [possibly] become targets themselves” (187). Because we are not given faces to read or expressions to interpret, the viewer is left making assumptions and filling in the blanks.

My analysis and interpretations of *Problem* contrast with those of art historian and critic Richard Halpern. Where I see energy and emotion, Halpern sees stiffness, detachment, and dispassion (125). Halpern insists that *Problem* has problems. He writes *Problem* off as a well-intended effort that is “overworked” and “heavy handed” (124). I do not share Halpern’s observations that the painting is “unconvincing and . . . lacks any sense of movement” (124). Bridge’s forward motion practically moves her through the marshals who are in front of her. This child is not fearless, but I think in her six-year-old world she is a mixed bag of emotions that are equal amounts of excitement and anxiety. Halpern proposes that Rockwell’s style and technique are not equal to the “momentous social issue” he is depicting (125). I propose his style and technique are exactly what give this painting its power because it is the style that America expected from Norman Rockwell. To change venues—going from *The Post* to *LOOK*—and messages—whimsical to serious—while maintaining something familiar—his style—was a brilliant strategy for Rockwell. He knew his art reached a demographic that either perpetuated racism or had the ability to thwart it. By making changes in incremental steps, Rockwell

manipulated his audience and subtly pulled them along with him. According to Jack Doyle, Rockwell's "'new' work on civil rights subjects [caused his fans from *The Post*]



Southern Justice

Fig. 4.5.
Murder in Mississippi or Southern Justice. Unpublished version of *Look* illustration, 29 June 1965. Oil on canvas. 53"x 42". The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, Massachusetts (Schick 206).

to think twice about America's racial problem, [and helped] them face up to racism" (n.p.). As Rockwell transitioned and refocused his message, his audience transitioned with him.

Coupling his familiar style with his new message, *The Problem We All Live With* bridged Rockwell's life at *The Post* to his life at *LOOK*, and his move from illustrator to activist gained momentum. As Rockwell found his activist voice, his style and technique eventually changed as well. His paintings grew bolder and more manipulative as he continued to depict actual accounts of racial violence. The next civil rights painting he executed for *LOOK* was inspired by the murder of three young-adult males who were murdered in Mississippi in 1964. *Murder in Mississippi* (published under the title *Southern Justice* which corresponded with the article of the same name that ran with the painting) (fig. 4.5) is a graphic rendition of the murders of "James Chaney, a twenty-one-year-old black man; Andrew Goodman, a twenty-year-old Jewish white man; and twenty-four-year-old Michael Schwerner, another Jewish white man" (Doyle n.p.).

It is evident that Rockwell's style and technique in *Murder in Mississippi* are considerably different from his days at *The Post* and have completed the transition he started in *Problem*. The audience's gut reaction to *Murder* is abject fear, which I claim is further evidence of propaganda and is exactly the emotion Rockwell wanted to tap into. Rockwell takes his viewers to the last moments of these men's lives, and offers no rescue. There are no federal marshals to save these men from the advancing mob. There is only the hopeless sense of the inevitable. The central figure stares down their murderers with a combination of defiance and resignation. Rockwell portrays their

assailants in an alien-beings-not-from-this-world way that suggests his own disbelief that this sort of thing could happen in Rockwell's world. Rockwell made significant choices in how to display the men (fig 4.6 and 4.7). He could have chosen any combination of these men in any of the positions. By placing a white man in the central location with the black man on his knees clinging to him, Rockwell is again sending a message to his audience. He is pleading with his predominately white audience to champion the cause of civil rights. Gallagher and Zagacki point out that Rockwell's rhetorical choice drew



Fig. 4.6.
Photograph for *Murder in Mississippi* or *Southern Justice*. Taken in Rockwell's studio circa 1964 (Schick 205).



Fig. 4.7.
Photograph for *Murder in Mississippi* or *Southern Justice*. Taken in Rockwell's studio circa 1964 (Schick 207).

criticism from critics who saw the positioning of the men as demeaning to the black man. Gallagher and Zagacki balance the critics' opinions by pointing out that "neither man is safe: the standing white worker can no more protect his black fellow activist . . . than he can [protect] himself" (188). Ron Schick points out that during the photo shoot in preparation for this painting, Rockwell "obtained a sample of human blood to guarantee the faithful appearance of the victims' blood-stained shirts" (204). The message Rockwell is heralding is the equality their impending deaths bring. Death is the great equalizer. This message is evident in *Murder in Mississippi*, and Rockwell repeats it again in *Blood Brothers* (figs 4.8 and 4.9).



Fig. 4.8.
Blood Brothers. 1968 (Schick 210).



Fig. 4.9.
Photograph for *Blood Brothers*. Taken in
Rockwell's studio circa 1968 (Schick 211).

Rockwell started *Blood Brothers* in 1968 when the country was reeling from the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Unlike *Problem* and *Murder*, *Blood Brothers* does not depict an actual event; rather, it is Rockwell's visual composite of the riots that ensued after King's death "in more than 100 U.S. cities, with a number of people killed and injured" (Doyle n.p.). The image of a dead white man and a dead black man lying side by side with their blood running together in the street is intended to provoke a gut reaction that sears the evil of racism deep into the viewer's soul. Jack Doyle emphasizes, "Rockwell hoped to show the superficiality of racial differences—that the blood of all men was the same" (Doyle n.p.). Rockwell was disappointed when *LOOK* rejected *Blood Brothers* as too graphic, even for their more liberal audience. He donated this piece to the Congress on Racial Equality, a civil rights group active in issues involving desegregation. *Blood Brothers* had been a work in progress for approximately two and half years



Fig. 4.10.
 The New Kids In the Neighborhood, Moving In, or The Negro In the Suburbs. 1967. Oil on canvas, 26½" x 57½". The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. *Look* illustration 16 May 1967 (Schick 208).

coinciding and overlapping with several other projects, not the least of which was *New Kids in the Neighborhood* (figs. 4.10 and 4.11).

New Kids is a return to Rockwell's earlier style of visual story telling. It doesn't represent a specific event or person, but it is a rendition of the overarching events occurring in the country. It is also a return to his favorite subject matter: children and discovery. The feeling incorporated in *New Kids* is guarded optimism. The 1960s were coming to a close and the country was looking forward to moving into a new decade, and Rockwell made the most of that optimism. The theme of new starts gave hope to the future. Rockwell infused *New Kids* with this guarded hopefulness in the images of the children sizing each other up. There is more curiosity than animosity between the children. The differences between the children are obvious, but more importantly are the commonalities. One significant commonality is the boys' shared love for baseball—the



Fig. 4.11.
Photograph for *New Kids in the Neighborhood*. Taken in Rockwell's studio circa 1967 (Schick 209).

all American pastime. The audience can assume that both the black boy and the white boy had Hank Aaron, Jackie Robinson, Willy Mays, and Mickey Mantle baseball cards. As angry and fearful as *Problem* and *Murder* make the audience feel, *New Kids* creates equally levels of hope. Rockwell manipulated emotions that ran the gambit from hate, anger, and fear to hope, trust, and rebuilding.

Using children to sell this message of hopefulness speaks to Rockwell's experience and wisdom. Jack Doyle explains, "He often used kids in his illustrations . . . as a means of reaching out to mainstream audiences to prod, send a needed message . . . or raise a pointed question" (n.p.). Remember the mainstream audiences, the masses he controlled with his brush and palate, the audience that revered and followed Norman Rockwell the illustrator and then rallied behind Norman Rockwell the activist? These are they who are loyal to Rockwell and susceptible to his propaganda. The same audience that gasped when Ruby Bridges was a target in New Orleans and trembled in fear as they became witnesses to a murder in Mississippi is the same audience that holds out hope that children in the suburbs will conquer racism. This is the audience Rockwell captivated and captured through art that makes them cringe, cry, and connect with the subject. This is how to wield power and produce change. This is propaganda at it best.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Advocacy. Propaganda. Visual Rhetoric. A powerful trifecta. Determining which of the three is most important or deserves first billing is a complex academic endeavor. Each topic has received hours of scholarly airtime. While each is individually intriguing, examining them collectively and looking specifically at where they intersect is the impetus for a captivating conversation. A conversation this thesis has initiated.

Advocacy, propaganda, and visual rhetoric are interdependent and conjoined. Each strengthens and validates the others. Using these three filters, I have examined the artwork of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell. Like the topics of advocacy, propaganda, and visual rhetoric, each artist is unique, yet they are conjoined. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell represent different eras of American history and each recorded different struggles within those eras. Their lives overlapped, and although they did not know each other personally, they were aware of and influenced by each other, and they shared similar methods, motives, and messages.

One of several similarities that connect Hine, Lange, and Rockwell is their need to tell a story, and particularly the story of children. Even though adults are represented in their images, children are favored subjects of each artist. Furthermore, the pathos in featuring children gives power to their political arm-twisting. Hine devoted years of his life to telling the child's story. During his sojourn with the National Child Labor Committee, Hine focused his camera primarily at children. His images show the blackened faces of nine-year-old coal miners, the bare-feet of the seven-year old newsboys, and the missing limbs of twelve-year-old factory workers. Hine's audience of

the early 1900s was confronted with, and forced to be accountable for, the life of the working-class child: vulnerable, exploited, over-worked, and underpaid. One cannot spend time with Hine's images and remain unaffected.

Likewise, Lange's images leave the viewer wrestling with emotions. She, too, framed many of her shots to include the plight of the child. She was shrewd enough to balance the dire circumstances of the children with just the right amount of childhood resolve. She revealed hunger and homelessness while tiptoeing along the edge of hopelessness. After viewing Lange's images, the audience is left to wonder and declare, "What can I do to help? Something has to change."

Finally, Rockwell, always the master at isolating the childlike and childish moment, also tapped into the power of the child by bookending his civil rights years with paintings about children. Although he advocated for children, he recognized that children—the next generation—shouldered the responsibility for long-term change. His child subjects were equal parts courage and curiosity. Rockwell, as well as Hine and Lange, empowered children and all of their subjects, which is the ultimate obligation of an advocate.

Propaganda is the next feature that links Hine, Lange, and Rockwell. I have restructured the parameters of propaganda and claim it is more nuanced than the generally negative application that surrounds it. I use the work of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell to illustrate this more complicated approach to propaganda. All three artists produced images that are posed, staged, contrived, manipulated, and manipulative. These techniques are defining elements of propaganda. This is where advocacy, propaganda, and visual rhetoric intersect. Using images steeped in propaganda to deliver a message

for social reform is effective and productive. The artists highlighted in this thesis used propaganda with the intent to kindle emotions that would lead to awareness, legislation, fundraising, and improvement. When combined with advocacy, propaganda lifts, strengthens, and reforms society.

Future Areas of Analysis

This thesis is a comparative study of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell, and their respective artwork. I have focused my analysis on the commonalities of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell, and how they fit on the Venn diagram of advocacy, propaganda, and visual rhetoric. However, where there is comparison and commonality, there is also contrast and difference. Understanding the differences between the artists helps us to more fully appreciate their unique strengths. A brief mention of their differences can be the springboard for future research and conversation.

Reputation and notoriety are significant traits for an advocate to possess. In the case of Hine and Lange, their reputations grew out of their advocacy. They both were a part of government-funded teams. Hine was the main photographer for the National Child Labor Committee, and Lange was a part of a cadre of photographers funded by the Farm Security Administration. Each photographer amassed thousands of photographs. Their acclaim grew as their photographs were published and circulated. Although they produced iconic photographs, the photographers themselves still remain obscure. The reputation of their photographs precedes the identity of the photographer. The majority of the American populace recognizes *Migrant Mother*, but they are not able to provide the name of the photographer.

Rockwell, on the other hand, had built a substantial reputation and following from his decades of work at *The Saturday Evening Post*. His legendary work at *The Post* laid a foundation that allowed him to venture into the more dangerous venue of civil rights bringing his already established audience along with him. His notoriety and celebrity as an artist preceded his work as an advocate. Also, where Hine and Lange worked with teams of photographers, Rockwell worked independently. Rockwell's notoriety brings with it immediate name recognition. Before Rockwell was painting images of civil unrest, his name was a household word. While name recognition and reputation precede Rockwell, public awareness of his civil rights paintings is very limited. The dichotomy of a study of Hine, Lange and Rockwell is evident in the different levels of audience recognition. The audience recognizes the photograph *Migrant Mother*, but needs to be reminded the photographer is Dorothea Lange; conversely, the audience recognizes Norman Rockwell's name and has a preconceived idea of his art, but is unacquainted with and surprised by his painting *Southern Justice* and his other civil rights works.

The juxtaposition of text and images is another prompt for further analysis and conversation. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell used captions in considerably different ways. Even though Hine claimed his images told a story that words could not, he relied heavily on notes, captions, and written text. He provided us with rich and detailed captions that added to the significance and emotion of the image. Not only do we see a boy with an amputated leg, but also we know his name, age, hometown, and background. In contrast, Lange's notes were relatively sparse: generally a date and location. Finally, Rockwell was as the other extreme. He titled his paintings but did not offer any more story. He left it to the audience to fill in the blanks with their own interpretations and explication.

Applying Hine, Lange, and Rockwell to the 21st Century

People may not be familiar with Lewis Hine and his work specifically, but they are very aware of the consequences of his work. The drafting and implementation of child labor laws is a direct result of Hine's work. Although children working agricultural jobs on family farms is still an accepted practice, the days of elementary-school-aged children working in mills and mines for fourteen hours a day have been eradicated from the tapestry of American society. However, there are still children's stories to tell, and Hine opened the door for the telling. Today, photojournalists brave personal danger to capture the images of children in war-torn African countries, or those left homeless due to devastating natural disasters. The stories these photographers are telling are as equally important as the child labor stories of Hine.

Likewise, Dorothea Lange's influence is felt years after her days of photographing migrant farm workers. Her iconic *Migrant Mother* had immediate financial results for her cause, but her work also had far reaching effects. Lange prepared the way for future advocates such as César Chávez who instigated and powered the United Farmworkers Union. Unfortunately, the United States still has pockets of hunger, poverty, and subpar working conditions that need the focus of a skilled photographer.

Unlike Hine, who can be given credit for much of the change in child labor laws, Rockwell did not single handedly change the course of the civil rights movement in the United States. However, Rockwell put a face on racial tension, school integration, riots, and murder that was seen as a southern-states' problem. Rockwell let his white-middle-class-New England audience know they could either be a part of the problem or they could be part of the solution. There are artists today who use their medium to personify

racial injustice. When Rockwell was painting *The Problem We All Live With* in 1964, he could not predict a 2015 Academy Award-winning motion picture documenting the civil rights marches of 1965. Did Rockwell's art directly impact the producers and directors of the film *Selma*? Could artwork representing the grim circumstances of Ferguson, Missouri be in the near future? These may be compelling topics for future essays.

One hundred fifteen years after Hine took his first pictures of children in factories, his mission, as well as Lange's and Rockwell's, is still relevant. We have become a global community. Our world is smaller than that of Hine, Lange, and Rockwell. Images can circumnavigate the globe in the amount of time it takes to push the send button. Hine, Lange, and Rockwell slid open a door, and invited subsequent generations of advocate photojournalists and artists to follow. The need for visual storytellers is as profound now as it was in their day, maybe even more so. There are still exploited children, impoverished families, and oppressed ethnic groups who need someone to tell their tale, champion their cause, and expose the sociological dirt.

Beyond the societal implications, blending advocacy, propaganda, and visual rhetoric opens new avenues of scholarly discourse within the field of American Studies. We live in an ever-increasing visual world. The events of a battlefield in Iraq or an Ebola clinic in Sierra Leone are immediately available to the entire world within minutes. This could be considered both propaganda and advocacy. Examining 21st century images, their messages, how they are produced, and their impact on society through the lenses of advocacy and propaganda is an exhilarating academic adventure, and one ripe for future discourse.

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