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Teaching about Propaganda: An Examination of the Historical Roots of Media Literacy

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Abstract

Contemporary propaganda is ubiquitous in our culture today as public relations and marketing efforts have become core dimensions of the contemporary communication system, affecting all forms of personal, social and public expression. To examine the origins of teaching and learning about propaganda, we examine some instructional materials produced in the 1930s by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), which popularized an early form of media literacy that promoted critical analysis in responding to propaganda in mass communication, including in radio, film and newspapers. They developed study guides and distributed them widely, popularizing concepts from classical rhetoric and expressing them in an easy-to-remember way. In this paper, we compare the popular list of seven propaganda techniques (with terms like “glittering generalities” and “bandwagon”) to a less well-known list, the ABC’s of Propaganda Analysis. While the seven propaganda techniques, rooted in ancient rhetoric, have endured as the dominant approach to explore persuasion and propaganda in secondary English education, the ABC’s of Propaganda Analysis, with its focus on the practice of personal reflection and life history analysis, anticipates some of the core concepts and instructional practices of media literacy in the 21st century. Following from this insight, we see evidence of the value of *social reflection practices* for exploring propaganda in the context of formal and informal learning. Crowdsourcing may help create increased informational clarity for consumers because ambiguous, incomplete, blurry and biased information actually inspires us to have conversations, share ideas, and listen to each other as a means to find truth.

Keywords: *media, education, media literacy, propaganda, history, persuasion, public relations, advertising, English, education, curriculum, instruction*

Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio News. At twenty minutes before eight, Central Time, Professor Farrell of the Mount Jennings Observatory, Chicago, Illinois, reports observing several explosions of incandescent gas, occurring at regular intervals on the planet Mars

“The War of the Worlds” radio broadcast,
 Oct. 30, 1938

Listeners may or may not have heard those first words when they turned on their radios on that Sunday night during the height of radio's Golden Age when Welles presented his now famous radio program, “The

War of the Worlds.” In the 1930s, radio was not just a source of entertainment for millions; it also had become a way for people to stay informed. When the Hindenburg airship exploded just a year earlier, news of the explosion spread over radio waves. The radio message was far-reaching and capable of reaching millions of Americans, much like the Internet today. By 1939, an estimated 28 million American households would own a radio. When audiences heard of an alien invasion on Oct. 30, 1938, many listeners believed it – and panicked, becoming a textbook example of mass hysteria (Cruz, 2008). Newspapers published stories of the hysteria caused by the radio broadcast for days after. Some told stories of deserted New York streets and terror caused by the alien invasion story.

Today, some scholars believe that newspapers

greatly sensationalized the panic to discredit radio broadcasts (Pooley & Socolow, 2013). Whether or not Welles' radio broadcast about an alien invasion caused mass panic, the fictional radio story taught those in education a powerful lesson. The broadcast raised questions about the American public lacking "general habits of analysis, attitudes of skepticism, and many similar qualities" (Cummings, 1939, p. 394). The possibility of believing an alien invasion – even one fabricated in newspapers – showed a need to teach people how to recognize the difference between fiction and nonfiction, and to analyze and evaluate 'truth' in media messages. By the 75th anniversary of Welles' broadcast, hoaxes more plausible than an alien invasion appear rampant across the current mass media form - the Internet.

The Internet has become a key medium for disseminating propaganda in all forms and flavors and, like radio, it routinely conflates entertainment, information and persuasion. Rampant Internet-advertising scams proliferated during the 2000s (Clark, 2013) and in 2013, CNN named it "The Year of the Online Hoax," describing some of the many ways that Internet users were fooled by news hoaxes, including the story of Diane, the rude airplane passenger in 7A; a homophobic comment written to a waitress; and even the death of famous celebrities (Gross, 2013). However, none of these hoaxes caused as much panic as TV show host Jimmy Kimmel's "girl on fire" video. The YouTube video depicts a young woman dancing or 'twerking,' and later falling onto a glass table covered in lit candles; therefore, catching on fire. The video had attracted more than 15 million views as of Jan. 16, 2014 and was shown on mainstream media, including MSNBC, Fox News and The View TV show. Kimmel later revealed the video to be a hoax, saying to the stuntwoman who appeared in the video, "Thank-you for helping us deceive the world" (Lombardi, 2013). This statement is both chilling and disturbing; Kimmel thanks a woman for complying in a joke about someone being physically harmed.

The pleasure and power associated with the ability to 'deceive the world' is ever more evident as easy access to the tools of communication enable everyone to be a propagandist, manipulating messages and meanings for fun and profit. But today, some may consider the study of propaganda to be a little old-fashioned, with its focus on avoiding the risks and harms of being duped or misled by persuaders who may appear to be friends, entertainers or even experts. Jenkins and colleagues (2006) prefer an approach to media literacy education that positions people as actively engaged in

interpretation and empowered to create meaning, with a focus on participation, play and performance, not critical analysis and skepticism. But we maintain that the need for people to develop sense of 'crap detection' is ever more essential as a result of the rise of Internet culture; as Rheinhold (2009, para. 2) explains, "Unless a great many people learn the basics of online crap detection and begin applying their critical faculties en masse and very soon, I fear for the future of the Internet as a useful source of credible news, medical advice, financial information, educational resources, scholarly and scientific research."

One early form of 'crap detection' occurred in the first half of the 20th century when a combination of journalists, educators and business leaders worked to raise awareness about the role of propaganda in contemporary culture. In this paper, we look at the practice of teaching about propaganda and consider the legacy of Edward Filene and Clyde Miller, two people who were instrumental to the creation of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), an independent organization that included journalists, college faculty and secondary teachers that functioned as a proto-media literacy group of its time. After examining the rise of propaganda as culture, we offer a brief look at the origins of this organization. Then, we compare the IPA's more popular list of seven propaganda techniques (with clever terms like "glittering generalities" and "bandwagon") to the less well-known list, the ABC's of Propaganda Analysis, which emphasizes the importance of personal reflection and examination of how one's family and cultural values shape message interpretation. While the seven propaganda techniques, rooted in ancient rhetoric, have endured as the dominant approach to explore persuasion and propaganda in secondary English education, the ABC's of Propaganda Analysis, with its focus on the practice of personal reflection and life history analysis, anticipates some of the core concepts and instructional practices of media literacy in the 21st century.

Propaganda as Culture

Propaganda involves the intentional sharing of facts, opinions, and ideas designed to change behavior or motivate action. Although we generally think of propaganda as a historical term, scholars from both the social sciences and the humanities acknowledge it is simultaneously a philosophical, psychological, rhetorical and sociological concept (Cunningham, 2002). Some definitions of propaganda focus on the concept of intentionality and motive on the part of the author, impact on the receiver's actions and behaviors as well as

receiver's level of free will in accepting or rejecting the message (Cunningham, 2002). During the Great War at the beginning of the 20th century, the governments of Germany, Britain and the United States began the systematic use of the power of public communication to shape public opinion through propaganda. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson needed to motivate American support for the war, so he established the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Under the directorship of George Creel and with a nearly \$10 million budget, the CPI became the nation's first "propaganda ministry." The CPI drafted news stories for media and monitored media, using newspapers, films and influential community leaders, known as the "Four-Minute Men," a group of 75,000 public speakers who delivered war updates at theaters and other public gatherings throughout the country. The CPI also delivered their governmental policy objectives in schools through the distribution of curricular materials, which included more than 75 million pieces of literature in a two-year span (Glander, 2000).

Edward Bernays, often called the father of public relations, was among the earliest to define propaganda as "a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of a public to an enterprise, idea, or group" (1923, p. 25).

While many scholars distinguish between public relations, advertising and propaganda, Bernays treated public relations and propaganda as equivalent, noting that propaganda may be either beneficial or harmful to the public, depending on the context and point of view of the interpreter.¹ It may help individuals decide what to think about or alter their opinions in ways that could be beneficial to them both as individuals and to society's functioning as a whole. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), Bernays acknowledged the relationship between propaganda and education, explaining, "the only difference between propaganda and education, really, is the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don't believe in is propaganda" (p. 212).

This perspective on propaganda was challenged by those who emphasized the negative connotation of the term and suspected that propaganda could be hindering democracy. Could the appeal of propaganda lead people to be swayed to hold opinions that would

work against their actual self-interest? Was true self-governance even possible in light of the public's partial, selective and incomplete understanding of public events as Walter Lippmann (1921) had suggested? The British and U.S. propaganda used during the Great War was a direct source of inspiration to Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, who were able to make skillful use of propaganda, first, as a political tool to promote a new leader in an emerging, democratic Germany; then as a means to emotionally engage, inspire and unify the German people during wartime; and finally as a weapon to silence dissent, define and marginalize enemies, and cause an unimaginable and unprecedented scale of destruction against Jews and others during the Holocaust (U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum, 2009).

The term propaganda itself had such negative valance in the minds of many that during the 1920s the term 'public relations' was used as a substitute. But whatever the label used, propaganda was inescapable in 1930s America, from radio advertising to pro-government or anti-fascist messages in entertainment films, to newspaper columnists, political figures, religious leaders and celebrities including Father Charles Coughlin, Senator Huey Long and Charles Lindbergh. Lasswell's landmark content analysis of wartime propaganda techniques, published in 1938, revealed the effectiveness of mobilizing constituencies or sub-groups to disseminate opinions and ideas on behalf of a propaganda effort in order to create a variety of concurring messages from multiple sources, creating an illusion of diverse perspectives. At Columbia University, sociologist Robert S. Lynd joined discussions with the Rockefeller Foundation Group on Mass Communication Research along with George Gallup, a leader of public opinion polling, Frank Stanton, future president of CBS, and Paul Lazarsfeld, a social scientist who became a leader in communication research. They all recognized the need for research in communication to address the nature of mass communication, the rise of public relations and advertising, and its impact on the political process (Glander, 2000).

During this time period, American public education was in a state of crisis brought on, in part, by rapid changes in cultural norms and values and declining school budgets as a result of The Great Depression. Although the early 20th century was replete with ambitious experiments to modernize the curriculum to address the needs of the increasingly diverse population, by 1932, school budgets had been slashed. Educators were concerned about the loss of health education, music, art and home economics and school libraries, worried that the back-to-basics movement was negatively impacting children and young people.

¹ The first author had the opportunity to meet Edward Bernays in 1986 at the home of Professor Frank Genovese, a labor economist who taught at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Bernays, then in his 80s, maintained his belief in the positive value of propaganda and acknowledged the value of educational efforts to analyze and evaluate propaganda's design, implementation and effectiveness.

Table 1: **Seven Propaganda Devices**

| Name | Definition | Example |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Name Calling | Trick to make us accept a conclusion without full consideration of essential facts in the case. | Father Coughlin calls President Franklin D. Roosevelt "a liar." |
| 2. Band Wagon | A trick used to seize our emotions, to make us follow the political Pied Pipers and bring others along with us. | Everybody's doing it. |
| 3. Glittering Generalities | An attempt to sway emotions through the use of shining ideals or virtues, such as freedom, justice, truth, education, democracy in a large, general way. | "What America needs," says Roosevelt, "is economic security for all." |
| 4. Flag Waving | A trick in which the propagandist holds up a symbol, such a flag, that we recognized and respect. | Roosevelt made a symbol of the horse and buggy when he spoke of an anti-New Deal Supreme Court decision. |
| 5. "Plain Folks" | A trick in which the propagandist demonstrates they are like the rest of us or just plain folk. | It is proverbial that political candidates always kiss babies. |
| 6. Testimonial | Best represented by the straw vote, this trick involves getting not only good, plain, solid citizens, but also social and business leaders to endorse the party or the candidate. | If large numbers of individuals can be seen voting for Roosevelt or for Landon, it is likely to cause many additional votes for them. |
| 7. Stacking the Cards | A trick in which the propagandist intentionally or unintentionally stacks the cards against the facts. | In 1936, with unemployment still the serious issue in America, the Republican propagandists blames the Democrats for not ending it. |

SOURCE: Clyde Miller & Violet Edwards (1936, October). The intelligent teacher's guide through campaign propaganda. *The Clearing House*, 11(2), 69-77.

High school teachers were also gaining more awareness of the power of radio broadcasting in the lives of young people, as it was then a rising new technology that was free to all. While recognizing radio as a key source of the dreams, ideals and inclinations of adolescents, educators also experimented with educating with and about radio (Tyler, 1939) and debated the role of advertising in reshaping cultural values towards sensationalism (DeWitt, 1934). Despite or perhaps as a result of The Great Depression, it was important, it

seemed then, for education to be more directly relevant to the real-world experience of growing up in "new times."

Fighting Propaganda with Education

Education is a powerful antidote to propaganda. During the 1930s, while university scholars were studying the influence of radio on listeners and documenting the rise of propaganda through research activities, a group of journalists, college faculty and high

school teachers, working with business and civic leaders, were involved in designing and delivering resources to help educators introduce propaganda analysis into the classroom. By the time of Welles' broadcast in 1938, a team had already been working for more than a year to develop curricular resources for teaching the process of analyzing propaganda in the classroom. Founded in 1937 in New York City, NY, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) helped the public detect, recognize and analyze propaganda. Among the most enduring works of this organization is the list of propaganda techniques, borrowed from classical rhetoric, that are designed to help people recognize and resist propaganda. Table 1 shows the list of propaganda devices from a 1936 publication.

It's important to note that the list of rhetorical devices is explicitly presented as knowledge needed to avoid being victimized by a presumably powerful and manipulative persuader. IPA documents describe these seven propaganda devices as of "folk origin," but "tremendously powerful weapons for the swaying of popular opinions and actions." It is argued that awareness of these devices "keeps us from having our thought processes blocked by a trick," keeping people from being fooled or manipulated (Miller & Edwards, 1936, p. 24). The repeated use of the word 'trick' in the formulation of the seven propaganda devices suggests that the rhetorical tools themselves are somehow inherently immoral or unethical practices of communication. Given the rise of Fascism, this approach is not surprising but it does seem inconsistent with earlier articulations of propaganda as potentially either "good" or "bad" depending on the motives of the communicator.

Philanthropic Support for Propaganda Education

The 1930s' propaganda education received an enormous boost from philanthropists with interests in civic education. In understanding the work of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis and their still-famous list of propaganda techniques, it's important to acknowledge the role of Edward Filene (1860-1937), the business leader and philanthropist who owned Filene's department store in Boston. In 1937, Filene worked with journalist and educator Clyde Miller to financially establish the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) for the sole purpose of creating teaching methods and curricular material for combatting propaganda. Defining propaganda in broad terms, they included all forms of persuasion designed to change attitudes or behaviors (Glander, 2000). Filene spent more than \$1 million to

support the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in creating and distributing educational materials helping teachers engage students in critically analyzing propaganda.²

Filene's motivations for investing in propaganda education may have been personal. Filene's father, originally named Wilhelm Katz, emigrated from Prussia in the late 1840s along with other Jewish immigrants. Many Jewish families had fled Europe in the late 1800s due to persecution and abuse. According to a story told by Edward Bernays, who once worked for Edward Filene, Katz intended to change his name to "Feline," but a misspelling at the Boston customs' office resulted in the name being recorded as "Filene." In 1908, Edward Filene became president of his father's business, which was then called Filene's Sons Co. Filene was innovative as a Jewish social reformer and capitalist. He helped form one of the earliest employee unions in America; helped pass the Workmen's Compensation Law; and favored a "buying wage" for workers instead of a "living wage." He is also credited with launching the credit union movement in the United States (Stillman, 2004).

Clyde Miller, who oversaw the IPA's editorial operations and helped published the first five Propaganda Analysis issues, was a progressive journalist who had worked on a commission formed by the American Association of School Administrators to study the relation of education to public welfare. He was also a faculty member at the Columbia University Teachers College where he had taught a course entitled, "Public Opinion and Education" and served as a publicist for the university (Teachers College, Columbia University, n.d., para. 1).

To help teachers, the IPA developed short informational articles in a magazine format with titles including "How to Detect Propaganda," "How to Analyze Newspapers" and "The Public Relations Counsel and Propaganda," just to name a few (Glander, 2000, p. 23). With generous financial backing from Filene, these publications were mailed to thousands of high schools, colleges and public libraries throughout the United States.

² Exactly how Filene and Miller became associated with each other remains unclear. Miller, once a reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, was mocked by his colleagues in the press for attracting such an important financial backer. On The Miami Daily News' editorial page for April 4, 1938, in an opinion section entitled "New York Day By Day," columnist Charles B. Driscoll mocks Miller as a "short, stooped, middle-age man with a sardonic smile that's graven in his features." Driscoll continues, "Jokingly, he (Miller) talked about defeating propaganda by analyzing it, and wrote a spoofing piece about it. Edward A. Filene, late Boston merchant, took him seriously and supported the Propaganda Analysis institute, which is now one of Miller's serious activities."

Teaching about Propaganda

During the first half of the 20th century, many educators has strong feelings about the importance of teaching critical thinking skills as a way to respond to the barrage of information and entertainment available. In 1939, teacher Helen I. Davis, a high school English teacher at De Witt Clinton High School in New York City, undertook an experiment using the IPA study guides, which included the list of seven propaganda devices. Davis encouraged her students to analyze newspaper content, as well as editorial letters. Davis wrote about her efforts as a member of the IPA's Study Program Committee, believed it to be “exciting days” and challenging to teach “changing pupils in a changing world” (Davis, 1939, p.26). The IPA's curriculum material made Davis' role as an English teacher more efficient, as she explains:

The need to vitalize the teaching of composition, especially exposition; the need to stimulate our students to read decent magazines and newspapers; the responsibility of the teacher of English to bring his students closer to the life and problems of our difficult and confusing 1938 world - these demands upon my knowledge and courage were satisfyingly met with peculiar efficacy by the institute studies. (p. 27).

One of the assignments asked students to analyze a student-written letter in Scholastic magazine entitled “In Defense of Hitler,” published on May 28, 1938. Davis' class checked the letter for factual errors and prejudice claims. The students then responded to this pro-Nazi letter, voted on the best letters, and sent them to the Scholastic magazine. The letters had a powerful impact on the magazine editors, who eventually published their own analysis and crafted an editorial policy toward fascism (p. 29).

However, once the United States entered World War II, there was some critical backlash against teaching about propaganda and, in particular, the use of the seven propaganda devices. Some critics even found these teaching methods to be dangerous because they omitted an examination of the social context as a whole. For example, one educator claimed that “concentration on propaganda as verbal and psychological tricks and grammatical constructions, ignoring the study of the total context which permits their use, results in forgetting that Fascist methods are appropriate to a Fascist setting” (Garber, 1942, p. 244). Educators who taught about propaganda also discovered that the

framing of propaganda as a merely set of rhetorical “tricks” designed to “fool people” seemed to contribute to a significant increase in the level of student cynicism. Indeed, even the term ‘tricks’ is itself a manipulative phrase designed to diminish the value of expressive rhetorical techniques.

Then as now, educators worry that increasing critical thinking skills and increased transparency in a media culture may contribute to levels of cynicism and alienation. One educator noted, “The objection most frequently voiced by teachers who have used propaganda analysis in their classes is that the students tend to become cynical and 'smarty” (Cummings, 1939, p. 398). Another educator critical of the IPA’s curriculum wondered if the methods of teaching propaganda promote democracy or “simply promote an attitude of generalized cynicism, a feeling that you can't trust any newspaper, any radio commentator, any political speaker?” (Smith, 1941, p. 250).

Indeed, while in some schools, the analysis of propaganda was likely a powerful and even transformative learning experience for young people, in other classrooms, lessons may have consisted on listening to a teacher talk (either approvingly or disparagingly) about Father Coughlin or Senator Huey Long, two of the most famous political propagandists of their day. Other students may simply have been required to memorize a list of propaganda devices and write them out for a test. In responding to this criticism, Miller distinguished between merely resisting propaganda and understanding it. He didn’t want teachers to simply urge students to respond negatively to propaganda – he wanted them to analyze it carefully. While noting that perhaps as many as two in 50 students may experience a temporary condition of “defeatism, fatalism or cynicism,” the vast majority of students find that learning to understand propaganda strengthens their belief in democracy, deepening their appreciation for political, economic and social freedom (1941, p. 662). Today’s students may find that sharing ideas through informal digital networks activates similar levels of optimism about the power of democratic action in addressing social, cultural, economic, environmental and political issues.

Personal Reflection as Pedagogy

Early media literacy educators who were fighting propaganda realized the power of storytelling and personal narrative. While education may be a powerful antidote to propaganda, it was not sufficient to merely understand the techniques of the propagandist.

Analyzing propaganda also requires personal reflection. A careful reading of the IPA materials reveals significantly more complexity beyond the list of seven rhetorical techniques. In an article published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1941, Miller notes that “merely to detect propaganda and go no further may be worse than useless,” emphasizing that the practice of reflecting on one’s own biases and world view is an essential dimension of analyzing propaganda (p. 662).

One instructional practice suggested by the IPA includes the “life history technique,” where students are asked what life values they hold now, how these differ from what they have held in the past, what influences in home, church or neighborhood, or economic status or political teaching have created the differences between what they believe now and what they have believed in the past (Miller, 1941). Princeton psychology professor Hadley Cantril, a distinguished scholar who served for a time as the head of the IPA, similarly pointed out that we must “understand our own biases, the forces in the environment that have given us our particular status and our particular opinions” (1938, p. 220). Although, it is perhaps inevitable that we will accept propaganda that suits our personal interests and reinforces our identity, the processes of selecting, filtering and assessing propaganda can be made more intentional and mindful through personal reflection.

Now, we will show how these less well-known instructional practices developed by the IPA actually anticipate key concepts and instructional methods of media literacy as practiced today. Table 2 shows the ABC’s of Propaganda Analysis, which emphasizes the importance of examining contemporary (not just historical) examples of propaganda in the fields of business, health, education, work, religion and politics. We don’t know who authored the ABC’s of Propaganda Analysis, because the work has no byline, but given the nature of the IPA’s work functioning, this document is likely to have had the active involvement and editorial oversight of Clyde Miller.

The ABC’s recommend that after identifying conflict elements in propaganda, learners “behold your own reaction” and examine personal opinions while recognizing how they are shaped by “inheritance and environment.” The ABC’s point out the difficulty of really evaluating our own propagandas, noting that

“[o]nly drastic changes in our life conditions, with new and different experiences, associations, and influences, can offset or cancel out the effect of inheritance and long years of environment.”

This nicely compares to the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE, 2007), which explain that media literacy teaches students “how they can arrive at informed choices that are most consistent with their own values” and how to “become aware of and reflect on the meaning that they make of media messages, including how the meaning they make relates to their own values.”

The list of questions offered in the ABC’s of Analyzing Propaganda also anticipates the practice of inquiry that is articulated in the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education, which emphasizes learning specific questions “that will allow them to gain a deeper or more sophisticated understanding of media messages.” The questions, as shown in Table 2, primarily cluster around recognizing the author and purpose of the message, identifying the use of language techniques (words and symbols), and the relationship between the author’s motives and the larger social and cultural context.

Indeed, the 1936 ABC’s of Analyzing Propaganda anticipates all five of the key concepts of media literacy as articulate in NAMLE’s Core Principles: (1) All media messages are constructed; (2) Each medium has different characteristics, strengths and a unique ‘language’; (3) media messages are produced for particular purposes; (4) people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meaning from media messages; and (5) media can influence the beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors and the democratic process. Educators and activists in the 1930s viewed education as a means of civic engagement. But it’s worth pointing out that this kind of “advice” about understanding propaganda was delivered with the kind of crisp, bold journalistic prose that stood in striking contrast to the more bland and scientific discourse of academic scholars like Harold Lasswell and others. This led us to wonder why the seven rhetorical devices became the dominant approach to teaching about propaganda while the ABC’s of Propaganda Analysis faded into obscurity.

Table 2: **The ABC's of Propaganda Analysis**

ASCERTAIN the conflict element in the propaganda you are analyzing. All propaganda contains a conflict element in some form or other-either as cause, or as effect, or as both cause and effect.

BEHOLD your own reaction to this conflict element. It is always necessary to know and to take into consideration our own opinions with regard to a conflict situation about which we feel strongly, on which we are prone to take sides. This information permits us to become more objective in our analysis.

CONCERN yourself with today's propagandas associated with today's conflicts. These are the ones that affect directly our income, business, working conditions, health, education, and religious, political, and social responsibilities. It is all too easy to analyze some old example of propaganda, now having little relation to vital issues.

DOUBT that your opinions are "your very own." They usually aren't. Our opinions, even with respect to today's propagandas, have been largely determined for us by inheritance and environment. We are born white or black, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or 'pagan'; rich or poor; in the North or East, South or West; on a farm or in a city. Our beliefs and actions mirror the conditioning influences of home and neighborhood, church and school, vocation and political party, friends and associates. We resemble others with similar inheritance and environment and are bound to them by ties of common experience. We tend to respond favorably to their opinions and propagandas because they are "our kind of people." We tend to distrust the opinions of those who differ from us in inheritance and environment. Only drastic changes in our life conditions, with new and different experiences, associations, and influences, can offset or cancel out the effect of inheritance and long years of environment.

EVALUATE, therefore, with the greatest care, your own propagandas. We must learn clearly why we act and believe as we do with respect to various conflicts and issues-political, economic, social, and religious. Do we believe and act as we do because our fathers were strong Republicans or lifelong Democrats, because our fathers were members of labor unions or were employers who fought labor unions; because we are Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics, or Jews? This is very important.

FIND THE FACTS before you come to any conclusion. There is usually plenty of time to form a conclusion and believe in it later on. Once we learn how to recognize propaganda, we can most effectively deal with it by suspending our judgment until we have time to learn the facts and the logic or trickery involved in the propaganda in question. We must ask:

- Who is this propagandist?
- How is he trying to influence our thoughts and actions?
- For what purpose does he use the common propaganda devices?
- Do we like his purposes?
- How does he use words and symbols?
- What are the exact meanings of his words and symbols?
- What does the propagandist try to make these words and symbols appear to mean?
- What are the basic interests of this propagandist?
- Do his interests coincide with the interests of most citizens, of our society as we see it?

GUARD always, finally, against omnibus words. They are the words that make us the easy dupes of propagandists. Omnibus or carryall words are words that are extraordinarily difficult to define. They carry all sorts of meanings to the various sorts of men. Therefore, the best test for the truth or falsity of propaganda lies in specific and concrete definitions of the words and symbols used by the propagandist. Moreover, sharp definition is the best antidote against words and symbols that carry a high charge of emotion.

SOURCE: Alfred McClung Lee & Elizabeth Briant Lee (1939). *The Fine Art Of Propaganda; A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches*. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York

We also wonder why the IPA did not survive as a non-profit organization, think tank or even within the context of higher education. Such questions, while important, are beyond the limited scope of this paper. Future research should examine the institutional history of the IPA as an organization and trace the articulation of propaganda analysis curricula through English education textbooks and curriculum materials immediately after World War II and into the second half of the 20th century. We can only speculate that the ABC's of Propaganda Analysis, with its explicit invitation urging students to critically analyze the immediate family and extended kinship clan as a source of propaganda, may have been controversial to local religious and political leaders. It's also possible that the strident and simplistic tone of the seven propaganda devices, presented as 'tricks,' fitted well with the ideological values of American teachers immediately after World War II, as characterized by Barzun's (1945, p. 19) description of American public education with its "various forms of deceit" including social promotion and minimum competency tests.

Why did the ABC's get forgotten while the list of propaganda techniques had staying power? It's possible that the ABC's of Propaganda Analysis was controversial because it made no effort to hide or mask its explicitly anti-racist perspective at a time when racial attitudes were still highly polarized. In 1942, Miller wrote that in order to combat the unscientific theories of racism "which Hitler and Goebbels have utilized so effectively to create mass hatreds," propaganda analysis was essential. Miller proudly claimed that:

No student, once he has gone through the recommended educational program of the Institute, is likely to succumb to propaganda causing him to hate Jews as Jews and Negroes as Negroes. This approach does immunize students against propagandas inciting to hatred based on racial and religious differences (p. 664).

The inevitable provincialism of American public education, with its local control of schools, may have contributed to the disappearance of the ABC's of Propaganda Analysis. But some teachers continued to use the ABC's and other resources as a tool for civic learning and civic engagement. For example, Miller describes the work of Lois G. Sinnigen, a teacher in the public schools of Hackensack, N.J. whose seventh grade boys and girls "formulate in their own language the minimum essentials of democratic living" (1941, p. 663), learning to reject violence as a solution for resolving conflict. After World War II, educators with interests in propaganda analysis may have been attracted

to the social movement called general semantics, with its focus on how language shapes reality, its inspirational leader Alfred Korzybski, and featuring the young Neil Postman who served as editor for their journal, *E.T.C.*

Propaganda: Past, Present and Future

It's fair to say that today, "everything is coercive," as Rushkoff (1999, p. 18) has put it. Marketing, advertising and public relations drive technology and culture forward with efforts to discover ever more creative approaches to shape attitudes and control behavior. Growing up in a world where current events, ideas and opinions are spread through both entertainment and information, and through social media, children and young people are learning from an early age how to get noticed in an attention economy. By posting to Facebook, they shape messages about their own lives in order to construct a representation of identity, and accomplish their social and personal goals. In representing themselves online, children learn to make rhetorical choices to get results. In a very real sense, by becoming active media creators, children learn the practice of propaganda, which, essentially is a matter of creating highly attention-getting, effective communication that leads people to some form of action: "it simplifies complicated issues through the use of evocative symbols, whether in written, musical, visual or digital forms, in order to help channel complex human emotions and shape attitudes and behaviors" (Hobbs, 2013, p. 626).

A look at the history of teaching propaganda reminds us that reflective and metacognitive thinking is a key dimension of media literacy and that this practice continues to be essential today. But reflective thinking is not purely personal. Reflective thinking is fundamentally social. Just as Clyde Miller and Edward Filene forged a strategic alliance using the publication of a magazine and curricular materials to help nurture a discourse community of people dedicated to understand, evaluate and critique the propaganda that surrounded them, media literacy educators today continue to deepen reflective thinking about media and technology through collaboration, conferences, webinars, publications, professional development programs, and the development and sharing of curricular materials. The rise of participatory culture has actually heightened our awareness of how fundamentally social the practice of developing critical thinking really is. As we see it, reflection in response to the "wisdom of the crowds" may be a fresh new format for exploring propaganda in the context of formal and informal learning. Perhaps we need to engage with a wide variety of interpretations of

messages – including our own and those of people who are different from us -- in order to recognize and resist propaganda. Crowdsourcing may help create increased informational clarity for consumers, as Hobbs (2013) notes that ambiguous, incomplete, blurry and biased information actually “inspires us to have conversations, share ideas, and listen to each other as a means to find truth” (p. 637). The complex interplay of entertainment, advocacy and information, which once was novel, now seems familiar, routine and ‘natural’ as we are enmeshed in a sign system that quickly becomes invisible to us.

Crowdsourcing can help reveal dimensions of the communicative context that help support critical analysis. In this paper, we have learned about history in order to reflect on propaganda education – past, present and future. In the future, we will begin to consider how these concepts may be recovered for the 21st century. The creative work of media literacy is designed to refresh our vision and re-vision ourselves and our communities, inspired by the spirit of communication and democratic problem-solving that activates mutual respect, shared social discourse and critical inquiry.

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