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From Party to Publicity: The Transitional Role of Three Publicity Experts on the Road to Modern Campaigning

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FROM PARTY TO PUBLICITY:
THE TRANSITIONAL ROLE OF THREE PUBLICITY EXPERTS
ON THE ROAD TO MODERN CAMPAIGNING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

The School of Mass Communication

by
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ABSTRACT

During an election cycle, social media newsfeeds and TV screens are overrun with political advertisements and celebrity politics. Publicity has become a critical component of presidential elections. While many argue that a reliance on publicity developed with the popularization of the television, I argue that a dependency on publicity occurred in the early-to-mid 1900's with three publicity experts who paved the way for future elections. Robert Woolley in Woodrow Wilson's 1916 campaign exercised unprecedented management over his publicity bureau and used new techniques catering to new mediums of the time; Albert Lasker in Warren Harding's 1920 campaign merged the business of advertising into the world of politics and sold Harding like he would sell a product; and Charles Michelson in Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 campaign conducted one of the biggest mudslinging campaigns to date, demonstrating the foundations for the smear-style campaign that is all too common in modern elections. These three men played transitional roles in the origination of modern political publicity as campaigns evolved into candidate-centric contests of showmanship and personality. Their contributions to the field are still present today.

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century political culture in America consisted of unwavering party loyalty and backroom deals. Presidential campaigns were a vessel for strong partisan display, as voters would gather in rallies and parades with fireworks, full of excitement. The results of the presidential elections in the 1800's were "undemocratic" as major decisions were made privately by political elites, but candidates still required "the visible endorsement of the people" through rich partisan celebration.¹ These public demonstrations of support provided a sense of belonging for Americans, and this period was a political "golden age" with interest among voters and voter participation at a high.² While presidential elections throughout the nineteenth century were, in essence, a proud "ritual of partisan display," the candidates themselves remained seemingly absent and unknown throughout the campaign process.³

Two-hundred years later in the twenty-first century a much different political culture exists. The recent 2016 presidential election exemplified how much personality matters in a desirable candidate. Publicity tactics and showmanship are key determinants for victory in modern elections. The winning candidate received overwhelming media coverage as he took to social media to smear his opponents and directly appeal to the voters.⁴ Presidential candidates and their campaign teams have mastered the art of appealing to voters through publicity. The evolution from nineteenth-century campaigning with an absent candidate and strong party ties to twenty-first century campaigning with an active candidate and celebrity politics has been gradual but constant.

¹ Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.

² Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of the Party* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 3.

³ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 37.

⁴ Allan Smith, "Stunning Chart Shows How Donald Trump Has Dominated Media Coverage of the 2016 Race," *Business Insider* (2016), <http://www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-media-coverage-chart-2016-3>.

With the beginning of the twentieth century came a decrease in voter turnout.⁵ Party ties loosened and people no longer felt as though political parties provided the sense of community they had in the past. Admirable candidates of the people turned into power-seeking politicians, and there was a growing sense of political apathy among Americans. Between 1880-1930 America developed into a consumer-based capitalist “land of desire” driven by profit, aesthetics and tangible commodities.⁶ From 1860-1910 the urban population in America multiplied by seven.⁷ Improved communications linked cities into modern, centralized networks. Political parties and the press underwent liberal reforms, and the partisan-community mindset was abandoned. Political managers sensed a growing need for something new to grab people’s attention. Thus, the early stages of modern political publicity began to take form.

With the new era of political campaigning came the critical role of publicity experts to shape the candidate’s image so to appear as the ideal candidate for the American people. Public relations became a profession in the early 1900’s, and publicity became less about full disclosure of facts and more about selective, bias persuasion.⁸ Further, Americans developed “extravagant expectations” that can be filled only by extravagant images and gestures.⁹ Politics without flare was considered a bore. Technological advancements brought the radio and motion picture films providing new mediums by which candidates would campaign as they were now able to be seen and heard by the masses.

⁵ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 7.

⁶ William R. Leach, *Land of Desire* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1993).

⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 174.

⁸ David Greenberg, *Republic of Spin* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2016), 20.

⁹ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 181.

Three publicity experts working on separate presidential campaigns were transitional figures in laying the foundations for the modern publicity show that is a presidential campaign today. Robert Woolley on the 1916 Wilson campaign, Albert Lasker on the 1920 Harding campaign and Charles Michelson on the 1932 Roosevelt campaign all had lasting impacts on the campaigning process.

Robert Woolley ushered in a new era of political campaigning when he ran the publicity for the Democratic National Committee during Woodrow Wilson's 1916 presidential campaign. Woolley had an entire publicity bureau on hand and exercised unprecedented press management. He knew how to appeal to the mass voting audiences using new techniques and was an excellent strategist who practiced extensive planning.

Albert Lasker brought professional advertising to the world of politics. He played a major role in shaping modern advertising before being recruited by the Harding campaign for the 1920 election. He demonstrated how advertising techniques could be used to sell a candidate as he appealed for votes in newsreels, billboards, advertisements and moving picture films. Lasker used every medium at his disposal to humanize Harding and sell him as president of the United States.

Charles Michelson was an editor, journalist and political publicist. In 1929, the Democratic National Committee hired him as the first full-time publicity director, and in 1932 he led Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) to victory. He was a ghost writer for hundreds of press releases attacking Herbert Hoover's campaign and perfected the art of political mudslinging. Michelson was a yellow journalist who took demonizing one's opponent to the next level in presidential campaigns.

Few academics recognize the early twentieth century as the time when publicity became essential to campaigns. Instead, a great deal of literature focuses on the later twentieth century when television became popular. I dispute this. The elections of 1916, 1920 and 1932 show the origination of publicity in candidate-centric campaigns that would manifest in future campaigns as later decades saw new technological developments and opportunities. Further, within research on presidential elections focus is less often given to the impact that behind-the-scenes publicity experts had during this transitional time. Woolley, Lasker and Michelson were geniuses in their field. They helped shaped campaigns during a critical time of loosened party ties and extravagant expectations. Woolley, Lasker and Michelson all had individual contributions still visible in campaigns today, and their efforts and legacy should not be overlooked.

CHAPTER 1: PUBLICITY'S EVOLVING ROLE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

There is interposed between the voter and his final judgment the whole
mechanism of publicity
- *The New Republic*, 1920

Strong affiliation to political parties in the nineteenth century spurred voter turnout and public participation. Party loyalty for Americans was a part of their identity, a “natural lens through which to view the world,” Michael McGerr wrote in his literature on the declining role of political parties.¹⁰ McGerr noted that this was a very subjective manner of perception, as fact and opinion blended to where there was little distinction between the two.¹¹ This intense partisanship was transferred into what was known as spectacular campaigning involving torchlight parades, street rallies, decorative banners and campaign buttons to support the candidate of one’s party. These party loyalists “seldom compared party platforms” and rarely “weighed the relative merits of candidates before casting their ballots.”¹² Newspapers in the early nineteenth century were communication vessels for the political parties who “funded and operated” most of the national newspapers.¹³

Penny papers, papers sold daily for one penny on street corners, entered American society in 1833 causing a “revolution in American journalism.”¹⁴ Penny papers were the first challenger to party-run papers. These penny papers created a “growing emphasis on news and a growing intolerance for blind party loyalty” that continued to build throughout the nineteenth

¹⁰ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹² Richard Franklin Bense, *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), viii.

¹³ Jeffrey Rutenbeck, “Toward a history of the ideologies of partisanship and independence in American journalism,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 130.

¹⁴ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 14.

century.¹⁵ By the end of the Civil War, the press had gained more influence among the American public. While newspapers originally served as mouthpieces for the political parties, “growing circulation” led the newspaper business to become “less dependant” on the parties.¹⁶ This did not mean that the press was absent of partisan displays, only that they were not under the direct control of political parties. The press still took strong political stances and received funding from the parties. Newspapers and political leaders entered a new era of co-dependence, an age of partisan journalism.

Partisan papers became an excellent medium for mass political promotion. Republican-leaning papers would criticize Democratic candidates, if they even mentioned them at all which they often neglected to do and vice versa.¹⁷ Days leading up to polling, Republican papers described Republican rallies as “monster meetings” while not even covering the Democratic rallies.¹⁸ The Democratic papers did the same. At this point in time, presidential candidates were still fairly unknown to the public.

Newspapers as a medium continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth century. With the growing demand for news came pressures for “new ways for papers to address the public.”¹⁹ Many journalists and papers underwent liberal reform and began to challenge partisan journalism. Additionally, advertising became more important for businesses as the consumer-based capitalist culture continued to develop in America. A popular place for advertisements were newspapers, the key mass medium of the time. As more businesses continued to buy advertisement space, the less newspapers had to rely on political parties for funding.²⁰ With

¹⁵ Rutenbeck, “Toward a history of the ideologies,” 131.

¹⁶ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 189.

¹⁷ Michael Schudson, “Objectivity norm in American journalism,” *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (August 2001): 149-170.

¹⁸ Schudson, “Objectivity norm,” 155.

¹⁹ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 107.

²⁰ Maria Petrova, “Newspapers and Parties: How Advertising Revenues Created an Independent Press,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 4 (November 2011): 790-808.

challenges to the partisan-style press and a growing advertising revenue as an alternate source of funding, the press became more independent. An independent press created a more complex political world for voters as they now lacked the roadmap that the previous partisan press had offered. Politics was, to some degree, “less accessible” as Americans now had to think about political decisions on their own.²¹ Campaigns needed a more public candidate as well as original methods to persuade the free-thinking American people.

Party Reform

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, liberal reform groups gained influence in America limiting the parties’ role in political change. Liberal groups promoted reform for a number of issues such as tariff, municipal, ballot legislation and probably the best known, civil service reform. Civil service reform groups advocated that government positions be appointed based on merit rather than political affiliation. By advocating for government reform, liberal groups influenced Americans to reject “unquestioning partisanship.”²² McGerr noted that while most liberal groups were unsuccessful in their attempts, their reform efforts “helped to transform the political style” at the end of the nineteenth century, as they represented attempts to “transcend partisan politics.”²³ At the same time, newspapers were becoming more independent and distancing from their previous role as mouthpieces of the parties.

For the majority of the nineteenth century, political parties had provided the “only feasible means” for organizing campaigns and elections.²⁴ By the end of the century, party ties had loosened but the need for parties remained, and a change in the function of the party relative to

²¹ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 122.

²² McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁴ John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5.

the people occurred. While in the golden age of political parties, the party was “more important than the people in it,” reforms led to the more modern idea that the party *is* the people in it.²⁵

The Election of 1896

In the 1896 presidential election, currency was the primary topic of debate as America was just getting over the Panic of 1893, which had depleted America’s gold reserves and bankrupted over 15,000 businesses.²⁶ The Democratic party nominated former Nebraska Congressman William Jennings Bryan as their candidate, and the Republican Party nominated Ohio Governor William McKinley. While Bryan advocated the platform of the “Bimetallic Democrats” who wanted “free silver” and gold, McKinley and the Republican party proposed an economy based on a gold standard.²⁷ The election was promoted as the “battle of the standards.”²⁸ Currency was a new political issue, and framing the election around this topic “placed unprecedented demands on party managers.”²⁹ The candidates were campaigning in more states than ever before, and the number of people that needed to be “reached, educated and convinced” was unprecedented.³⁰ However, as the parties had lost the partisan loyalty of newspapers, candidates and their teams could no longer rely on the press to promote their campaigns. Party organizations worked tirelessly to distribute content created by the national committees as material was needed at a never-before-seen rate. Further, the 1896 election marked a new trend toward “greater public activity by the presidential candidates.”³¹ For the first time, both major candidates had to play an active role in their campaigns.

²⁵ Ibid., 292.

²⁶ Gil Troy, *See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 102.

²⁷ Karl Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2015), 206.

²⁸ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 139.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 143

Bryan became a national figure almost overnight with his appeals for, and defense of, the common man. While he was not particularly organized with his campaign and had little funding, he had a magnetic presence and “immeasurable energy.”³² Bryan was able to draw continuous press coverage and he attracted constant attention from the public. His approach had an “appealing and unprecedented directness” of communicating directly with the people.³³ By the end of his campaign, Bryan had traveled 18,000 miles by train and delivered over 600 speeches.³⁴ William McKinley on the other hand provided a sharp contrast to the ambitious, bold Bryan. McKinley was traditional and safe. He ran a more low-key front-porch campaign from his home in Canton, Ohio. Despite the low-key nature of his campaign style, McKinley’s team sent out millions of pamphlets and deployed hundreds of speakers; the amount of money spent on these efforts would be unmatched by either party until the election of 1920.³⁵

Bryan’s campaign started off quick and powerful while McKinley’s front-porch campaign took more of a slow start. “Despite McKinley’s desire to be a traditional candidate who waited in silence for the nation’s decision,” people had been exposed to Bryan, a candidate who broadcasted his personality, and now expected no less from McKinley.³⁶ People showed up to his home in Ohio, and McKinley was forced to show his face and directly appeal to the masses. With the help of his campaign manager, Mark Hanna, who understood the importance of actively campaigning, McKinley won the election.

Prior to the election of 1896, it was customary for candidates to stay for the most part out of sight and let “surrogates” campaign on their behalf.³⁷ The 1896 election was the beginning of

³² Troy, *See How They Ran*, 103.

³³ *Ibid.*, 105

³⁴ Paul F. Boller, Jr., *Presidential Campaigns: From George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 170.

³⁵ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 105

³⁶ Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley*, 288

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Americans feeling like they could really relate to the candidates and connect with them. Historian Gil Troy wrote that candidates were no longer distant national icons, but a familiar face about whom the public would know everything “from his shoe size to his world view.”³⁸ With this election, presidential candidates were now “capitulated into the campaign.”³⁹ Directly appealing to the voters and actively communicating with them collapsed the divide between candidate and voter, and America entered the twentieth century with a new norm of candidates playing a proactive role in their campaigns.

Turn of the Century and Teddy Roosevelt

The 1900 election brought a rematch between McKinley and Bryan, although this time Theodore Roosevelt was the vice-presidential candidate. Teddy Roosevelt loved the spotlight and was “as energetic a campaigner” as Bryan had been in the pivotal 1896 election.⁴⁰ He traveled across the country giving speeches and mesmerizing audiences. Roosevelt “propelled the presidential campaign” into the twentieth century as he was both a politician and a celebrity, always loving his time in front of a crowd.⁴¹

After President McKinley was assassinated just six months into his second term, America had “its first full-fledged celebrity” as president.⁴² Teddy Roosevelt was “the twentieth century’s first great publicist.”⁴³ Fittingly, he became known as the “Publicity President.”⁴⁴ Roosevelt was ambitious, strong-willed and transparent, making him a constant attraction for the press. He made his presidency about a direct relationship between the president and the people, and made the role of president an active and public position. Roosevelt commanded public attention “by

³⁸ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 106.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Boller, *Presidential Campaigns*, 180.

⁴¹ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 108.

⁴² Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 16.

⁴³ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 119.

⁴⁴ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 11.

mastering the tools and techniques of persuasion and image craft.”⁴⁵ In 1902, Teddy Roosevelt gave his aide, George Cortelyou, the role of heading up all executive branch communications. By doing so, Roosevelt established the beginnings of the White House press secretary position as Cortelyou disseminated messages on Roosevelt’s behalf.⁴⁶ The job of a publicity expert was becoming a more concrete profession in the world of politics.

In the 1904 election, Teddy Roosevelt ran for president against Alton B. Parker, Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals. At the turn of the century, sensational journalism was at an all-time high and Roosevelt knew that a candidate was now a publicity figure who “had to entertain as well as educate.”⁴⁷ The public was intrigued with details of both candidates’ personal lives, and sensational newspapers attempted to feed their audience’s desires. Parker at one point spoke out against the media-following that constantly surrounded him after photographs were taken of him skinny dipping. The *New York Sun* in response to Parker claimed that “in this new age of publicity,” a presidential candidate does not have the luxury of privacy.⁴⁸ The *Sun* went on to consider presidential candidates “public property,” therefore eliminating all barriers that had previously limited journalists regarding a candidate’s personal life.⁴⁹

Roosevelt decided not to run for reelection in 1908. Instead, Roosevelt did everything in his power to secure the nomination of someone he had worked closely with during his second term, William Howard Taft. Taft was facing William Jennings Bryan, who was once again the Democrat nominee. Taft was not fond of the spotlight and therefore began a quiet front-porch campaign, as had been popular prior to the turn of the century. After multiple elections with an

⁴⁵ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁷ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 114.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

active and personable candidate, however, Taft's front-porch campaign was not enough. Taft had no choice but to begin an 18,000 mile, 400-speech tour across the United States.⁵⁰

Roosevelt remained by Taft's side throughout the campaign. He was in Taft's ear constantly advising on how to showcase personality and cater to newspapers. Taft triumphed over Bryan, but may not have without Roosevelt's expertise. Further, Taft had tried to resort back to a more private and secluded way of campaigning, but publicity and personality had become too important by 1908. To be an absent candidate would have led to being a losing candidate. During the first decade of the 1900's, Teddy Roosevelt formed strong relationships with reporters, and "developed practices to shape his messages and his image" that, once implemented, became a critical part of campaigning.⁵¹

The Election of 1912

By the 1912 election, people "demanded excitement," leaving "unrealistic" expectations of the candidates who now dealt with an overwhelming amount of media coverage and publicity.⁵² While four candidates ran for office in the election of 1912, former president Theodore Roosevelt, current president William Howard Taft, and New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson were the three frontrunners in an unprecedented three-way battle for the presidency.

America was torn between Taft, the beloved incumbent Republican; Roosevelt, the political celebrity of the last decade; and Wilson, the more quiet and unfamiliar yet appealing Democratic governor. Taft and Roosevelt, fighting for the Republican nomination, spent as much time attacking each other as they did campaigning on their own behalf. Taft eventually won the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 121.

⁵¹ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 47.

⁵² Troy, *See How They Ran*, 125.

Republican nomination leading Roosevelt to found his own Progressive Party, and the three-party race for the White House began.

The 1912 election was transitional for multiple reasons and exemplified “significant alterations in how voters were now being wooed.”⁵³ Leading up to the 1912 election, a few Western states had begun to adopt primaries, meaning greater demands on the candidates to travel around the country and more speeches required to win over delegates. Newspapers reached wider audiences “in a time before movies and radio had attained mass penetration,” and their mass dissemination of election news was “the first signs” of how media innovations would “affect national politics.”⁵⁴

Wilson was a talented orator but did not like publicity and was “overwhelmed by the demands of the press.”⁵⁵ Taft was used to publicity and Roosevelt craved it. While Roosevelt dominated the campaign scene in the beginning of the election, Woodrow Wilson realized the strong influence that the media had, and that “personalities mattered.”⁵⁶ He adopted a more active and personable approach to campaigning and attained increasing popularity to eventually win the election. Victorious, President Wilson’s “emergence as an active candidate exemplified the transformation” of a candidate.⁵⁷ While in the beginning of his campaign he was “aloof and obsessed with dignity,” he soon realized what he needed to win and “learned how to appeal to the people.”⁵⁸

⁵³ Lewis L. Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring: The 1912 Election and the Birth of Modern American Politics* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 152.

⁵⁴ Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring*, 152.

⁵⁵ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 128.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The new age of media influence required candidates to “not only articulate” their ideas, but “dramatize them.”⁵⁹ Candidates who opted for a more quiet and passive approach to campaigning learned quickly that this would not win them the White House. Power to elect a candidate had transitioned away from party bosses and towards the people, who were now able to participate in primaries. The transition from reliance on party to a mass people craving personality and publicity came at the same time that public relations and publicity began to take form as a legitimate profession. Strict party loyalty was a thing of the past, and the electorate was now susceptible to persuasion based on mass appeals and publicity tactics.

The Role of the Publicity Expert

The start of the twentieth century saw the development of publicity experts who made a business out of publicizing their candidate and persuading voters. As campaigns began placing a “greater emphasis” on the candidates and their personalities, communication experts began crafting messages using new technologies and mediums available to them.⁶⁰ Adam Sheingate identified the turn of the century and Progressive Era reforms to be the time of transition when politicians “embraced the idea of publicity” as an orchestrated “campaign of persuasion,” dependent on “appeals to individual opinion” instead of partisan alignment.⁶¹

Progressive reforms, a growing independent press, as well as advertising revenues weakening ties between newspapers and the parties led to an increase in the value of newspapers “as a source of information.”⁶² Newspaper reach was unprecedented, but the parties no longer controlled the information. What existed was an information void that needed to be filled by

⁵⁹ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 89.

⁶⁰ Adam D. Sheingate, *Building a Business of Politics: The Rise of Political Consulting and the Transformation of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

publicity agents. As media reach grew and technologies of the period continued to advance, new methods for persuasion became available to campaign teams. With the newfound openness to the idea of publicity to sell a presidential candidate, publicity experts of the early twentieth century, starting with Robert Woolley, were able to create a foundation as the forerunners for political publicity.

CHAPTER 2: “YES OR NO, MR. HUGHES?”

May I say, too, that your publicity campaign is running circles around any political publicity campaign that I have observed?

- Stillman H. Bingham to Robert Woolley, 1916⁶³

It is November 7, 1916. President Woodrow Wilson’s campaign team waits, exhausted and anxious, for the results of the 33rd presidential election between Democratic incumbent, Woodrow Wilson, and Republican candidate, Charles Evan Hughes. Well into the hours of the night, Wilson’s men finally get word of their victory. Surrounded by cheers and screams, some of the men grab the legs of Democratic National Committee Chairman Vance McCormick to hoist him up in celebration. He stops them, points to the man across the room and says, “Grab Bob Woolley! He is the man who won this election!”⁶⁴

The necessity for publicity in campaigns had been solidified in the first decade of the twentieth century. The role of the publicity expert, however, one who could manipulate this publicity in favor of their respective candidate, was still developing in response to the strong demand for publicity. The 1912 election saw the first use of the motion picture for a campaign advertisement. However, the use of this medium was still so new, and the election itself was chaotic with four candidates running. Publicity was inconsistent and did not involve strategic persuasion and manipulation of information as candidates simply did whatever they could to stand out among the other three contenders. Woodrow Wilson did not even start actively

⁶³ Letter from Stillman H. Bingham, editor of *The Duluth Herald*, to Woolley, October 9, 1916. Located in the Robert Wickliffe Woolley papers at the Library of Congress, box 28. Cites from the Robert Wickliffe Woolley papers at the Library of Congress will henceforth be labeled as “RWW.”

⁶⁴ Robert W. Woolley, in his unpublished autobiography, “Politics is Hell,” in the chapter “My Boyhood and Early Manhood” in Woolley’s papers. The author citation will henceforth be referred to as “Woolley,” followed by the chapter title as there are no consistent page numbers in the autobiography draft.

campaigning until later in the election as he hated the idea of broadcasting oneself and public speaking. By 1916, new mediums were more familiar in America and the candidates ready, knowing the importance of good publicity. America was entering the phase of candidate-centric campaigning, and Wilson needed an expert to pave the way.

The 1916 presidential election was between Democratic presidential incumbent Woodrow Wilson and Republican Supreme Court Justice Charles Evan Hughes. Theodore Roosevelt was also running for the Progressive Party, but he had lost traction since the 1912 election. “Bold innovations” to showcase their personalities were not only “acceptable” of the candidates, “but necessary” in 1916.⁶⁵ After Republicans split their votes in the 1912 election leading to an easy Democratic victory, re-election for Wilson was not guaranteed in 1916. The 1916 election happened in the midst of World War I. The United States was still neutral, and the war was a major election issue as majority of Americans wanted to remain neutral. A large part of Wilson’s image was his past record of, and intention to continue, keeping America out of the war.

Robert Woolley was born in April 1871 in Lexington, Kentucky. He early on developed a love for journalism and politics, both of which he would later learn to manipulate in his career. His mother was an “earnest christian,” his father a newspaper correspondent turned farmer.⁶⁶ He had three siblings: Charles, who became the news editor of the Wall Street Journal; Cicely, with whom he had “ever been devoted and inseparable;” and his youngest sister Lucy.⁶⁷ In 1879, the Woolley family moved to a six-bedroom home with a three-acre garden along the Harrodsburg

⁶⁵ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 133.

⁶⁶ Woolley, “My Boyhood and Early Manhood,” RWW.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Turnpike in Kentucky, and in 1880 he started at Miss Totten's private school. As a boy he was "keenly interested" in birds and woodcraft until around the age of five when his politics sparked his interest.⁶⁸

In 1876, when Robert Woolley was five years old, he helped collect material to start bonfires in the street celebrating Samuel J. Tilden's projected victory in the presidential election. Tilden actually lost that election and, although at five years old Woolley "hadn't the slightest idea of what it was all about," he recalled, "that incident marked the beginning of my interest in politics."⁶⁹ Woolley's interest continued to grow throughout his childhood. He would read political news of the day in publications such as *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and *The Louisville Courier-Journal*. His parents could not afford to send him away to college, so he took Latin and Greek lessons under a college professor who was a friend of his father at what is now the University of Kentucky. Soon after, Woolley's grand aunt offered to send him to get an education at Harvard University, but his aunt, a "devout Roman Catholic," requested that he allow her to pay for his education at St. John's College instead, now known as Fordham University.⁷⁰ He finished third in his class in 1888 before having to return home to Kentucky for poor health later that year. He then helped his father with farming their land until his father died in 1891.

In 1895, Kentucky elected a Republican Governor for the first time in history. With this, Woolley decided that "the time had come for me to move on."⁷¹ Woolley left Kentucky for good and went to Cleveland to be the editor for *American Sportsman*, a position he obtained after the magazine noticed his reporting on harness races in Lexington and Nashville in the previous year.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Woolley, "Bid Kentucky Adieu," RWW.

Two months before he turned twenty-five, Woolley became the sporting editor of *The Chicago Tribune*, a job he kept for one year. Woolley did not like Chicago, but his year in Chicago was the year of his “political metamorphosis” as that is when he “became a liberal.”⁷² He went to the Democratic National Committee Convention held in Chicago in 1896 and “if there was anything wrong with the Democratic Party,” he admitted, “I didn’t want to know it.”⁷³ He then left for New York City where he had a new job at *The Evening Journal*, before leaving soon after to work for the sports department of *The Morning World* for a time. Around the turn of the century, he moved to Washington D.C. to cover the House of Representatives for the *World*. Over the course of the next decade, between the early 1900’s to 1911, Woolley worked for magazines, papers and as a freelance journalist. In 1911, he became the chief investigator for the Stanley Committee, a congressional committee that looked into the affairs of the U.S. Steel Corporation.

“The first time I saw Woodrow Wilson,” Woolley recalled, “he made the greatest political speech I ever heard.”⁷⁴ Woolley had attended the Democratic Convention in Baltimore as a freelance journalist following his work on the Stanley Committee. His work as a special investigator for the Stanley Committee had deemed him as a trustworthy in Washington and so, when Democratic National Committee publicity leader Frank B. Lord left the Democratic Party National Headquarters to go run the Western Headquarters in 1912, Democratic leaders sought out Woolley to be second-in-command for the Bureau of Publicity at the Democratic National Committee.⁷⁵ Woolley gained valuable experience working in the publicity bureau during the 1912 presidential election. Woolley’s boss, Chief of Publicity Josephus Daniels, would go home to North Carolina often to be with his sick wife and son. In this time, Woolley would become the

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Woolley, “Working with Woodrow Wilson,” RWW.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

acting director of publicity for the Democratic National Committee. He was in charge of editing the Democratic text book and condensed some of Wilson's speeches so that Wilson could deliver them in just six minutes.⁷⁶ He left the Bureau of Publicity to serve as director for the Mint from 1915-1916 before returning to the Democratic National Committee just in time for Wilson's reelection bid in 1916, this time running the show as director of publicity.

Literature on Robert Woolley is minimal. Gil Troy, in his book covering presidential elections in American history with an emphasis on the growing need for publicity, marked the 1916 presidential election as when presidential campaigns fully took the form of spectacles to please the "emerging leisure society" of consumers.⁷⁷ Troy noted that the 1916 election is when publicity experts took a more definite role in the world of politics. "To harness modern culture's new technologies and rational techniques," he wrote, candidates "turned to experts."⁷⁸ Troy mentioned Robert Woolley in his research on the 1916 election, stating that Woolley "recognized that the new leisure-oriented society required a different kind of campaign."⁷⁹ Troy credited Woolley with being the brains behind a lot of the publicity that the Democratic National Committee put out, a role that is often overlooked in campaign literature.

Lewis L. Gould wrote a comprehensive book on the 1916 election calling it the first modern clash of power in America.⁸⁰ Gould recalled how the Democratic Party had to prevail over negative notions existing in America about Wilson going into the election. He wrote that Wilson's victory was a surprise that left Hughes "bewildered."⁸¹ Gould's focus was on the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 133.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁰ Lewis L. Gould, *The First Modern Clash Over Federal Power: Wilson versus Hughes in the Presidential Election of 1916* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

⁸¹ Ibid., 126.

“ideological consequences” that the 1916 election caused, as the two parties split down a “class-based” line.⁸² Robert Woolley is briefly mentioned in a paragraph, in which Gould considered the publicity bureau, ran by Woolley, to have been a “particularly effective aspect of the Democratic campaign.”⁸³

As the above shows, there is little mention of Robert Woolley in literature on the 1916 election. Further, as stated in the introduction of this thesis, few works credit the early twentieth century with being the time period in which publicity became a necessity. Existing literature does not give Woolley the credit he deserves for the role he not only played in the 1916 election, but the role he played as a key player in political publicity as it began to take modern form. Woolley’s organization and construction of Wilson’s publicity in the 1916 presidential election was unmatched by any campaign in American history.

Many people thought that if the Republican Party had not split in the 1912 election they would have won since the Democrats were still the minority. So, Woolley viewed the 1916 election as the true test to see whether the Republican Party would prevail. In Woolley’s unpublished autobiography, he wrote on the preparation for the 1916 campaign that “emotionalism may prove to be a good political sprinter” but that organization was what is needed “for the long pull.”⁸⁴ He ran the Bureau of Publicity as if it were “the news department of a metropolitan daily,” with organization being the epitome of his method and his tactical management unprecedented.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid., preface.

⁸³ Ibid., 92.

⁸⁴ Woolley, “Ploughing the Ground for 1916,” RWW.

⁸⁵ Democratic National Committee Bureau of Publicity guidelines written by Woolley, box 34, RWW.

Woolley's ability to manage and direct was unparalleled. He knew what tasks he needed to delegate within his newspaper-like bureau and so created and oversaw many sub-departments. The literary department prepared material such as Sunday newspaper features, plate matter and "all special mail matter for the daily, weekly and monthly press" to be sent out.⁸⁶ There was a department to create the Democratic text book for 1916 which included a managing editor. One department created and distributed moving picture film advertisements. A business department managed bids and contracts for circular and printed matter, while a shipping department was in charge of distributing all of the printed pro-Wilson matter out from the campaign headquarters. Woolley also established an advertising department, which he supervised directly as he wanted to approve all advertising material that the bureau sent out.

Woolley surrounded himself with familiar and experienced news correspondents, continuing to strategically run the bureau as if he were running a newspaper. He employed Earl Harding of the *New York World* to be chief assistant in the literary department. He had known Harding from Wilson's 1912 campaign and wrote in a letter to Democratic National Committee Chairman Vance McCormick, "I know his qualifications for the work to be exceptional."⁸⁷ Woolley hired D. Hastings MacAdam to supervise the preparation of the Democratic campaign text book. MacAdam was a Washington newspaper correspondent "with a wide reputation and known ability."⁸⁸ Every hire was either a well-known journalist or someone who Woolley had worked with personally on the 1912 campaign. As the need for more copy editors grew in the literary department, Woolley continued to hire correspondents one by one. Only when "the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

campaign warmed up” did he feel that he needed more men to look after the daily newspaper work.⁸⁹

Woolley acknowledged early on in the campaign that a “most important branch of the publicity work was to be that of looking after the agricultural publications,” as agriculture was a big issue in the election.⁹⁰ He then hired a member of the Federal Farm Loan Board, Frank G. Odell, for the post. Odell had previously been the editor of a leading farm paper in the West. Odell worked with Harding of the literary department “in the preparation of the Farmers’ Pamphlet” and “revised all proofs of the text book articles pertaining to the farmer.”⁹¹ Within Woolley’s tightly managed, well-organized publicity department, he never brought on an unneeded man or created an unnecessary position.

Having experience as a newspaper correspondent as well as experience on the 1912 Wilson campaign, Woolley knew what publications and advertisements to send out and when. For example, Woolley knew that editors of newspapers and periodicals “generally were glad to use signed matter, whereas frequently unsigned articles, though highly informative, went into the waste basket.”⁹² Thus, Woolley hired George Creel to “get every writer of note” to “prepare one or more statements as to why he or she was for the re-election of President Wilson.”⁹³ These statements, written as articles and signed, were then “eagerly taken” by the Newspaper Enterprise Association and the United Press and then “given the widest publicity.”⁹⁴ Woolley and his team prepared editorials and articles in newspaper format making it easy for the papers to

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

take the material and add it to the daily papers. He had dozens of business cards and while some were government-related, most of them were press contacts to whom he would send bureau-created material.

As the director of publicity, Woolley had the task of creating new ways to appeal to the public using every available medium in the leisure-oriented, consumer-based America. He began a weekly bulletin newspaper, *The Bulletin*, with editorials, statistics and pro-Wilson advertisements. Woolley issued *The Bulletin* every week until the week of the election. It was sent to 8,500 newspapers around the country, as well as all Washington correspondents.⁹⁵

According to Robert Woolley, the “cartoon was never used to better advantage” than it was in the 1916 campaign.⁹⁶ His bureau distributed six or seven cartoons to over a thousand major national newspapers weekly, until six weeks before the campaign when Woolley hired cartoonist A.W. Scarborough to draw cartoons to send out daily.⁹⁷ The moving picture’s role in the campaign came “second only to the newspapers.”⁹⁸ One motion picture film titled, “The President and His Cabinet in Action” was “so informative” and “its propaganda features were so insidious” that Woolley and his publicity bureau were able to “have it distributed, without extra cost, through the independent houses and through at least one of the great exchanges.”⁹⁹ Exchanges were the “middle men” for film distribution during this time. “Where Do You Go from Here?” was a comedic film about Hughes and, while proved to be effective in certain parts of the country, Woolley decided to pull the film from Connecticut and “use it sparingly” in the

⁹⁵ Woolley to Vance McCormick, March 1, 1917, box 13, RWW.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

East as these states traditionally voted Republican, and he knew it would be less effective in this area.¹⁰⁰

Woolley consulted two advertising agencies to assist in the placement of advertisements. Taylor Critchfield Clague Co. of Chicago and Detroit assisted Woolley specifically in farm paper advertisements. Hanff Metzger Company of New York helped with all other advertisements in newspapers and in regular weekly and monthly periodicals. While the publicity bureau distributed advertisements consistently throughout the campaign, Woolley believed they should save their “heavy guns” until the end of the election, as this would provide a “strategical advantage” in discrediting Hughes through paid matter while he toured across the country making speeches.¹⁰¹ This strategy resulted in the well-known Woolley-produced advertisement, “Yes or No, Mr. Hughes?” With regard to both of Wilson’s opponents, Roosevelt and Hughes, Woolley wrote that one of his immediate jobs was to “keep the two gentleman agitated, also agitating each other.”¹⁰² Hughes ranked high among constituents, and Woolley knew that a “partisan attack which impugned his political integrity, possibly even questioned the purity of his patriotism” from Roosevelt was necessary.¹⁰³ With the help of George Creel who wrote the letter “Yes or No, Mr. Hughes?” Woolley rounded up thirty-six of “the country’s foremost publicists and literary men” and they signed the open letter to Mr. Hughes.¹⁰⁴ The letter contained ten questions dealing with the main issues of the 1916 election, in particular Hughes’s stance on foreign policy. The criticism for Hughes that followed came from all sides, especially from

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Woolley, “He Kept Us Out of War,” RWW.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Roosevelt. Having Hughes and Roosevelt antagonize each other undermined the credibility of the Republican Party as well as steered negative attacks away from Wilson.

A telegraph written to Woolley by friend Joseph J. Scott, a prominent attorney, read, “Publication of letter signed by writers and asking questions of Hughes having wonderful effect, whole country out here commenting on his failure to answer.”¹⁰⁵ Scott went on to call the letter Woolley created “the finest piece of publicity I have ever seen,” and claimed that, due to the response to the letter, “Hughes campaign here a frost.”¹⁰⁶ Woolley responded assuring Scott that the letter was being published everywhere that Hughes spoke. Woolley also had an announcement published in local newspapers on the day before Hughes arrived to the respective city, urging citizens to “Make Mr. Hughes Answer!”¹⁰⁷ This move on Woolley’s part guaranteed that people who had already seen the original “Yes or No, Mr. Hughes?” publication would be reminded of it in a second publication the day before Hughes arrived to their town.

Woolley went way over the Bureau of Publicity’s budget. He would send eight pages of plate matter to 4,000 newspapers every ten days. This cost \$1.25 per page per paper. Woolley considered this “money well expended” as the plates were “most liberally used” by the newspapers.¹⁰⁸ Woolley knew that pushing publications regularly in national newspapers was worth the great sum.

Going into the 1916 campaign, Woolley had hoped to allot the money that had previously been spent on printed matter to new advertising efforts. This was a forward-thinking mindset, but the demand was too high and in the end “a greater amount of printed matter than was ever used

¹⁰⁵ Joseph J. Scott to Woolley, no date, box 28, RWW.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Woolley, “He Kept Us Out of War,” RWW.

¹⁰⁸ Woolley to McCormick, March 1, 1917, box 13, RWW.

by the Democrats in any previous campaign [...] was distributed.”¹⁰⁹ The Republicans had “practically unlimited funds” and Woolley was determined to keep up and not let the Republican publicity efforts overshadow the efficient work being done by the Democrats.¹¹⁰ In the final weeks of the campaign, Woolley could see that the mass amount of Republican advertising was proving to be effective, so he spent \$200,000 on advertising placements coast to coast.¹¹¹ Woolley created advertising content for the streetcar, billboard and electric signs, continuing to take full advantage of new mediums available to him.

All of the pamphlets and publications that the Democratic Party publicity bureau released were patriotic, appealing to one of the important issues of the day, and some created a sense of guilt for any readers of the opposition. “Stand by the president” was a pamphlet published that made it seem unpatriotic to not support the incumbent in the upcoming election.¹¹² On July 3, 1916, the front page headline for the Democratic National Committee-produced *Bulletin* read, “Wilson has kept party pledges in letter and spirit,” with front page articles titled: “Facts refute republican prophecies of calamity: Prosperity under democracy overthrows Leader Mann’s dire forecasts,” “Platform of democracy is written into statute law: Detailed analysis shows unrivalled record of promises redeemed in four years of president’s administration- farmer and laborer get action instead of empty G.O.P phrases,” and “Real reforms in people’s interest.”¹¹³ Woolley’s work as a journalist aided in his ability to create attention-grabbing headlines that could appeal to any American.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² 1916 campaign pamphlet created by Woolley and his team and issued by the Democratic National Committee, box 27, RWW.

¹¹³ *The Bulletin*, Woolley’s campaign newsletter that he sent out, issued by the Democratic National Committee, July 3, 1916, box 27, RWW.

The Democratic Party's campaign propaganda elevated Wilson to a new status of peace and prosperity, a champion of the American citizen and human rights. Wilson's campaign slogan was "Place Human Rights Above Property Rights." One of the more creative pieces Woolley's publicity bureau sent out was a mailing card to the nonpartisan league saying, "Citizenship above partisanship" continuing to portray Wilson as simply a champion of the people, and alluding that any good American citizen would vote for Wilson, putting their role as an American above their partisan obligations.¹¹⁴ Woolley's staff released pamphlets on every issue that was relevant to the 1916 presidential election including but not limiting to the tariff, child labor, Mexico, agriculture and the war ensuring that there was no topic left unpublicized.¹¹⁵

While Woolley and his publicity bureau were crafty in their ability to frame Wilson as the president who had accomplished so much, they also took part in the more negative side of candidate-centric campaigning. A newspaper clipping created by the Democratic National Committee Bureau of Publicity and sent to editors had in big bolded letters, "War Obstruction By Republicans Proved: Record of Votes in Congress Shows Opposition to Essential War Measures."¹¹⁶ Without even reading the article Woolley was able to make readers doubt the Republican Party in the war effort. One editorial published in the *Charles Johnson Post* read, "Republicans have made a political science of hatred and of the lofty achievements of President Wilson a creed of contempt."¹¹⁷ Key phrases that follow in the editorial included "groped for lie and slander," and "lied in an evil blindness." One propaganda piece titled, "Women's Billionaire Train," portrayed Hughes's female supporters as being privileged billionaires while Wilson's

¹¹⁴ Mailing card, issued by the Democratic National Committee, box 35, RWW.

¹¹⁵ 1916 campaign pamphlets issued by the Democratic National Committee, box 35, RWW.

¹¹⁶ 1916 newspaper article created by the Democratic National Committee and sent to newspaper editors, box 27, RWW.

¹¹⁷ Editorial created by the Democratic National Committee and published in *Charles Johnson Post*, no date, box 34, RWW.

female supporters placed humanity and human rights above all else.¹¹⁸ Another anti-Hughes propaganda piece titled, “Why Justice Hughes should not be a candidate,” listed the author of the publication as Justice Charles E. Hughes, portraying Hughes as amateur and incapable.¹¹⁹

Robert Woolley’s expertise went beyond simply publishing periodicals and advertisements. In 1916, women in a number of western states were able to vote. Woolley wrote that these women were using their ability to vote “intelligently and to good effect.”¹²⁰ He knew they were proud of their successful suffrage movement. On the other side of the country were “voteless Eastern women with wealthy husbands.”¹²¹ These women, as Woolley recalled, “thought it would be a grand idea to go forth into the country, to instruct the remote and benighted of the great open spaces and ocean-bordered territory beyond as to why our fair land was doomed to come a cropper if Wilson should be reelected.”¹²² Simply, an anti-Wilson march of wealthy women who were unable to vote was about to take place across the country. Woolley sarcastically commented in his unpublished autobiography that Republican National Committee Chairman William Russell Wilcox “and his master strategists, also his experts on female psychology” agreed and sixty-six women signed up for the march.¹²³

Woolley had no intention of interfering with the march that was to start in New York. He planned for only one story to be released for publication in the morning newspapers on the day that the women were to start their march in New York. With the help of Harding who wrote the story, they created a “wholly factual” story on the women of the march.¹²⁴ One had a famous

¹¹⁸ 1916 campaign propaganda poster issued by the Democratic National Committee, box 34, RWW.

¹¹⁹ 1916 campaign propaganda poster issued by the Democratic National Committee, box 35, RWW.

¹²⁰ Woolley, “Women’s Special and the Whirlwind,” RWW.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

diamond dog collar that cost more than \$10,000. Another woman made a statement to a reporter saying it was shame that the husbands could not attend as there was too much activity on Wall Street. After Woolley released this story, he believed nature would take its course. “Reminiscent Republican veterans,” he wrote, “will tell you that Nature did.”¹²⁵

And so, the protests and heckling began. Crowds taunted them. Working girls followed the march holding banners that read, “Go Back to Wall Street; We Want Wilson!”¹²⁶ With each new city the marching women visited, newspapers “revamped, often with embellishments” the original story that the Democratic National Committee had published. This was “just as our publicity group predicted they would do,” Woolley said.¹²⁷ The march began to dwindle. Woolley was able to successfully frame these Hughes-supporting women as privileged elitists, out of touch with the everyday American reality. “And so it went,” Woolley wrote, “The writer divulges no secret when he states that from the hour the so-called Golden Special left Buffalo—especially following the humiliating fiasco at Chicago— the Republican managers in New York devoutly wished they had never heard of it.”¹²⁸

Woolley’s publicity bureau only published the one story. The story was immensely effective, thanks to Woolley’s predictive expertise, and led to the response Woolley hoped it would. Woolley knew when to publish the story, and, with the help of Harding, he knew exactly how to frame the women to tarnish the march before it had even begun. He knew that as the women made their way west papers across the country would pick up the story and sensationalize it. “A king’s ransom would they [Republicans] have cheerfully given to have been

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

rid of it-unnoticed,” Woolley wrote, “But they had a bear by the tail!”¹²⁹ Throughout the election, Woolley remained one step ahead of the Republican publicity efforts.

“He kept us out of war” is one of the most famous slogans in campaign history. This slogan, the brainchild of Robert Woolley, is slightly misleading and yet had serious impact for Wilson’s campaign. Martin H. Glynn, governor of New York, gave a keynote address and used the phrase “he kept us out of war” in his speech when he re-nominated Wilson at the Democratic National Convention in 1916. The speech read, “In particular we commend to the American people the splendid diplomatic victories of our great president, who has preserved the vital interests of our government and its citizens and kept us out of war.” Woolley claimed that people were supposed to infer the word “has” before the phrase “kept us out of war.”¹³⁰ If Glynn had repeated “has,” “endless misunderstandings and needless worry for the director of publicity would have been avoided,” Woolley said.¹³¹ At the time of the campaign, Woolley denied all ties between him and the slogan.

In the forward of his unpublished autobiography, he called the slogan “controversial,” but “winning.”¹³² He went on to say how this controversial and winning slogan originated, “with which it was my good fortune” had much to do with the Director of Publicity, Woolley, and a member of the executive committee for the Democratic National Committee.¹³³ Later on in his autobiography, Woolley referred to the slogan as “a half-truth and frowned upon officially,” but claimed it was doing “a wonderful job.”¹³⁴ Woolley was wise and did distance himself away

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Woolley, “He Kept Us Out of War,” RWW.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Woolley, “Forward,” RWW.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Woolley, “Making the Mare Go and Maine Elections,” RWW.

from this “half-truth” slogan. He would caution campaign orators to include “has” when they used the slogan in their speeches promoting Wilson, knowing very well they would not as “they were gaining votes; not taking advice.”¹³⁵ But at least he made the attempt to correct them, and thus “tried” to stop the half-truth.

The phrase stuck. Wilson’s campaign team painted him as the candidate who would maintain peace in America, which left Hughes as the candidate who would lead America to war. Woolley and his publicity team rode the peace theme created from this slogan all the way through until the election, drilling the fact that Wilson had, thus far, kept America out of war. Wilson declared war in April 1917, just six months after winning the election.

The night of November 7, 1916 Wilson’s campaign team was pacing as news trickled in of which states went blue and which went red. No one knew how the election was going to turn out. Woolley remembered that on election night in 1876, the Democratic chairman “committed the fatal blunder” of asking the managing editor of *The New York Times* for the latest news from three southern states.¹³⁶ “I recalled,” Woolley said, “that his inquiry betrayed the fact that the Democrats had not heard that the return from these states favored their candidates.”¹³⁷ Woolley feared that by exhibiting this lack of confidence Wilson would lose votes in the West. He urged Chairman McCormick on “the necessity of aggressively claiming--and continuing to claim--that we had won.”¹³⁸ When McCormick and Woolley pulled up outside of the Democratic headquarters building as results were streaming in, McCormick insisted that Woolley do the talking to the reporters swarming outside. So for Woolley’s last strategic move in the 1916

¹³⁵ Woolley, “He Kept Us Out of War,” RWW.

¹³⁶ Woolley, “Photofinish,” RWW.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

election, he bluffed his way to victory. Reporters hounded him as he walked to the door and he simply turned to them said, “We have won.”¹³⁹

One reporter asked Woolley how many electoral votes Wilson had won. “Three hundred and six,” Woolley responded. “Name the states,” demanded the reporter. “I haven’t time. I’ll do that later,” Woolley said, “Just say we claim three hundred and six electoral votes.”¹⁴⁰ The press went on to project 306 current electoral votes for Wilson. Wilson went on the win 277 electoral votes, and a very narrow victory over Charles E. Hughes who won 254. Later that night, as celebration erupted, Woolley saw McCormick, hoisted up by the legs, point to him and say, “Grab Bob Woolley! He is the man who won this election!”

Following the election, Robert Woolley received mass amounts of telegrams from Democratic leaders across the country thanking him for the critical work that he did. His accomplishments did not go unnoticed. *The Atlanta Journal* referred to Woolley as “the sensation of the campaign.”¹⁴¹ One acquaintance, Dick Jones, wrote to Woolley, “I have watched National Campaign press stuff for twenty years and never saw anything to compare with the service you put out.”¹⁴² Everyone who sent Woolley telegrams congratulating and thanking him acknowledged that Wilson’s success likely would not have happened without him. No one could deny that Woolley played a critical role in the campaign or that his work was a “big factor” in the “ultimate successful outcome.”¹⁴³ Even Woolley knew of the successful work he had done. In

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Clipping from *The Atlanta Journal*, Nov. 8, 1916, box 27, RWW.

¹⁴² Dick Jones to Woolley, no date, box 28, RWW.

¹⁴³ Hollister Jamieson to Woolley, no date, box 28, RWW.

his letter to Vance McCormick recapping his work on the campaign, he concludes his letter saying “the publicity played rather an important part in a successful Party.”¹⁴⁴

He masterfully ran his press bureau like a metropolitan daily and properly delegated work to experts whom he trusted and respected such as Creel and Harding. In the guidelines for the Bureau of Publicity, Woolley established that “the quantity of matter sent out should depend entirely upon the quality of the material from which it is prepared.”¹⁴⁵ Woolley’s concern was not getting the most publicity out, but instead, the best and most persuasive publicity. Further, he strategically used all available mediums methodically in a way that had not been seen before to conduct a new style of candidate-centric campaigning with widespread and constant publicity. The idea of publicity for presidential candidates was not new in this election. The expertise by someone to manipulate the information and control the message in such a way as to persuade the American people on a national scale that your candidate is the right candidate as Robert Woolley did, however, had never been seen before.

Robert Woolley could predict what would be a mishap for Hughes and a success for Wilson. Woolley’s methodical quality-over-quantity approach and his ability to always be one step ahead brought Wilson the victory in 1916 and brought on a new era of behind-the-scenes publicity experts running the show. The 1916 election had a solidified, definitive and necessary aspect of modern publicity, and with Robert Woolley came the era of publicity experts who created the foundations for later publicity leaders to come.

¹⁴⁴ Woolley to McCormick, March 1, 1917, box 13, RWW.

¹⁴⁵ Democratic National Committee Bureau of Publicity guidelines, box 34, RWW.

CHAPTER 3: “Wiggle and Wobble”

It was a great privilege to have spent the day with the Senator, and to have known him. When the country knows him, his election will be certain. He surely rounded out our poster in just the way that was needed.

- Albert Lasker to George Christian, 1920¹⁴⁶

On September 21, 1920, Republican National Committee Chairman Will Hays wrote to Republican presidential nominee, Ohio Senator Warren G. Harding, “Thanks for your letter with the reproduction of the Democratic advertising in 1916. We are going to do some business with this.”¹⁴⁷ Robert Woolley had conducted arguably the best publicity campaign in history for Wilson in 1916, raising the bar for future campaigns. In 1920, the United States was facing the aftermath of World War I. Public satisfaction for Woodrow Wilson was at an all-time low, so the 1920 election was the Republicans’ to lose. The Democrats nominated Ohio Governor James M. Cox and the Republicans confidently nominated Senator Warren G. Harding. Both men were self-established newspaper publishers from Ohio. While the Republican Party felt confident going into the election, a well-executed campaign strategy was necessary as Democratic candidate Cox was a vibrant crowd-pleaser whereas Harding was rather mediocre.

The Republican Party sensed Americans wanted a “return to a conservative philosophy of government.”¹⁴⁸ Trying to go back to a more conservative presidency, Will Hays, Republican National Committee chairman and Harding’s campaign manager, designed a front-porch campaign patterned after McKinley’s successful approach in 1896. Harding’s team decided that

¹⁴⁶ Albert Lasker to George Christian, Harding’s secretary, on July 28, 1920. Letter found in Warren G. Harding papers located at the Ohio Historical Society, microform reel 39, box 120. Cites from the Warren Harding papers at the Ohio Historical Society, which were all obtained by microform, will henceforth be labeled as “WGH.”

¹⁴⁷ Will Hays letter to Warren Harding, September 21, 1920, microform reel 32, box 97. WGH.

¹⁴⁸ Robert J. Brake, “The Porch and the Stump: Campaign Strategies in the 1920 Presidential Election,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55, no. 3 (October 1969): 256.

the less Harding said the better in order to reconnect with Americans via the slow-paced campaigning style of the past.¹⁴⁹ Knowing that publicity was going to be a crucial factor in the 1920 presidential campaign, Hays hired advertising expert Albert Lasker of Lord & Thomas advertising firm in Chicago. Since the Republican Party did not want Harding to say too much about the issues during his campaign, Lasker was left with the important task with what scholars considered to “motivate, but not necessarily inform,” in the developing candidate-centric era of American campaigning.¹⁵⁰ The election was a landslide, and Harding beat Cox with the second largest popular vote percentage in history after James Monroe in 1820.¹⁵¹

Albert Davis Lasker, born in May 1880 to a German-Jewish family from Galveston, Texas, was exposed to the workings of business and advertising at a very young age. His father Morris, a man of “liberal views,” ran a milling business and was the president of “no fewer than three banks” including a national bank, a state savings bank and a trust company.¹⁵² The Lasker family lived in a four-story Victorian home with two bathrooms, an “unprecedented number for the Galveston of the day.”¹⁵³ The Lasker children had an unusual upbringing as they were “neglected one day” and “spoiled the next.”¹⁵⁴ In his biography of Albert Lasker, John Gunther considered Morris Lasker to have been a “dictator” and “tyrant” within their household.¹⁵⁵ Throughout Albert Lasker’s childhood he never felt loved enough and always felt that he had to prove himself worthy to his father. This would later come to influence Lasker’s constant desire

¹⁴⁹ Brake, “The Porch and the Stump,” 257.

¹⁵⁰ Jeffrey L. Cruikshank & Arthur W. Shultz, *The Man Who Sold America: The Amazing (but True!) Story of Albert D. Lasker and the Creation of the Advertising Century* (Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010), 190.

¹⁵¹ David Leip, “1920 Presidential General Election Results,” *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*, www.uselectionatlas.org.

¹⁵² Gunther, *Taken At the Flood*, 20.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

for success in life and potentially contributed to his mental instability that he developed as a young adult.

Albert Lasker was a generous man throughout his life and a philanthropist.¹⁵⁶ He “remade” the American Cancer Society and “did much to awaken the federal government” regarding the need for medical research.¹⁵⁷ Lasker’s mind worked faster than his tongue would talk. He often had to pause during a conversation before getting ahead of himself and tongue-tied. Those close to him described Lasker as having a radiant sense of humor as well as a bubbling temper.

At the age of twelve, Lasker singlehandedly wrote, edited and published a four-page weekly newspaper titled *The Galveston Press*. Gunther called it “remarkable.”¹⁵⁸ It was with this newspaper that Lasker had his first encounter with advertising, as he would solicit the advertisements for the paper himself. When Lasker was in high school he became the editor of the school magazine, but gave up the position after a year because he thought it “undemocratic” to be editor for more than one term.¹⁵⁹ Around the age of thirteen he was hired at the *Galveston Morning News* where he covered sports, crime, theater, business and politics. “At that time,” Lasker believed he was “definitely headed toward a newspaper career.”¹⁶⁰ When he graduated from high school in 1896, he became a regular member of the *Morning News* staff just in time for the 1896 election year. The *Morning News* assigned Lasker to cover the campaign of Galveston’s R. B. Hawley, a Republican running for Congress. While his family members were “ardent Democrats,” he studied Republican campaign pamphlets, “inspected Republican

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 10

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 30

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 32

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

horizons on a national level” and accompanied Hawley throughout the district.¹⁶¹ Taken with Lasker, Hawley hired him as his secretary and ghostwriter, and Lasker “gave all his energies into the campaign.”¹⁶² After Hawley’s victory, he offered Lasker a job in Washington but Lasker refused as he believed he was too young. Regardless, this was a major turning point for Lasker because at this point he became an “avowed Republican.”¹⁶³

Lasker’s father did not want him to become a newspaper man. In 1898, Morris wrote to Lord & Thomas of Chicago, a firm with whom he had worked with in the past, to try to get Lasker a job in advertising, a “kindred field,” as his father considered it.¹⁶⁴ Lord & Thomas agreed to let Lasker come work for a trial period of three months and then would decide whether or not to keep him on. Lasker was certain he would not last the three-month test period. He had full intentions to simply enjoy being in a big city for the first time on a “semi-vacation” before heading to New York to start his career in journalism.¹⁶⁵

While Lasker was in Chicago he lost in a crap game and owed a gambler several hundred dollars that he did not have. He went to Mr. Thomas of Lord & Thomas not knowing what else to do. Lasker convinced Thomas to settle his \$500 debt and in return, Lasker would stay with Lord & Thomas to pay off the \$500. “I had never before sold anything to anybody,” Lasker recalled, “but I did a salesmanship job that day.”¹⁶⁶ Lasker never went back to reporting and began to take his job at Lord & Thomas seriously, teaching himself everything he could about

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Albert Lasker, “The Personal Reminiscences of Albert Lasker,” *American Heritage* 6 (December 1954), <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/personal-reminiscences-albert-lasker>

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

advertising. Lasker claimed that in that office “modern advertising was subsequently born” as a result of a crap game.¹⁶⁷

Lasker worked his way up the ladder quickly at Lord & Thomas. When Lord retired in 1904, just five years after Lasker’s arrival, Lasker became a partner of the firm and in 1912 became the sole owner. Some of Lasker’s notable clients included Lucky Strike, Quaker, Sunkist, Goodyear and Van Camp. Lasker gave advertising “motive force” and “motive power.”¹⁶⁸ In the spring of 1904 a stranger by the name of John E. Kennedy came to visit Lasker at work telling him that he knew what advertising was. Lasker met with him, and Kennedy explained to him that advertising was salesmanship in print and all revolved around one concept: you have to give the consumer a “reason why” they should purchase your product.¹⁶⁹ Gunther pointed out that while this may seem obvious in modern times, advertising had never been described so simply and definitively. Lasker hired Kennedy and in very little time “every agency in the world adopted the ‘Salesmanship in Print’ and ‘Reason Why’ formulae” practiced by Lasker.¹⁷⁰ By 1917, Lord & Thomas was the most “celebrated and prosperous” ad agency in the world with Lasker at the forefront of their success.¹⁷¹

In June 1918, Albert Lasker met Will H. Hays. Hays had just been elected as chairman of the Republican National Committee and sought out Lasker to help in the 1918 midterm elections. Lasker worked closely with Hays and helped lead the Republican Party to victory in 1918. He then went back to Chicago until he was approached again a little over a year later to come on board for the 1920 presidential campaign.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Gunther, *Taken at the Flood*, 88.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 90.

With the exception of one piece, majority of the literature on Albert Lasker extensively discusses his work at Lord & Thomas. His work on Harding's 1920 campaign receives a chapter at most. Focus is given to how naturally-occurring Harding's campaign seemed to the American public because of Lasker's behind-the-scenes work. While this is an important quality in any publicity director, Lasker was particularly skillful at crafting everything to look unplanned. What really makes Lasker stand out, however, was how he not only merged the fields of advertising and politics in the new candidate-centric era, but planned it so thoroughly as he would an advertising campaign: perfectly synchronized with strong coordination, catchy phrasing and punctual dissemination in a time where many advertising mediums were still new. Albert Lasker was first and foremost an advertising genius, and Harding was the next big commodity. Robert Woolley had utilized new mediums and methods of dissemination to construct a well-managed campaign in 1916 and now, in 1920, Lasker would build upon this foundation with new persuasion methods of his own.

Robert J. Brake in his research on the 1920 election wrote, "The Republican campaign was so thoroughly planned and executed that it stands as a model of smoothness and efficiency."¹⁷² Brake mentioned Albert Lasker as the "adman" who "was hired to direct a massive publicity program" which included "parades, billboards, magazine advertisements, motion pictures, newspaper statements, phonograph appeals, posters, telephone conferences, Girl Scout babysitters, and motor corps to carry voters to the polls."¹⁷³ Further, Brake credited Lasker

¹⁷² Brake, "The Porch and the Stump," 257.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

with creating the campaign to “humanize” Harding.¹⁷⁴ The idea of humanizing Harding to the American people was the foundation for Harding’s image throughout the campaign.

By this election, “advertising was well on its way to enveloping America in slogans and images.”¹⁷⁵ Gil Troy claimed that while the Republicans wanted a “mediocre” candidate in 1920 as the “antidote” to current President Wilson, they still acknowledged the need for great publicity.¹⁷⁶ An important aspect of Lasker’s work, noted by Troy, is how Lasker “kept his fingerprints off his handiwork.”¹⁷⁷ As previously stated, Albert Lasker was particularly good at making sure that nothing looked like a prepared spectacle, but appeared as natural and on-the-spot, as if created by Harding himself in that moment.

David Greenberg in his exceptional history of publicity and spin identified Albert Lasker as being one of the key players in why advertising became important techniques in the world of politics. With Lasker, Greenberg wrote, for the first time an “advertising man, not a career journalist, was in charge of promoting a candidate for the White House.”¹⁷⁸ Further, with the growth of advertising and new mediums in the 1920’s, the public was more “manipulable” with publicity messages.¹⁷⁹ Greenberg concluded that shaping voter opinion now required “an adman” like Lasker, as opposed to “a professor” like Wilson had been.¹⁸⁰ Lasker had at his disposal countless advertising techniques in the new “visual age.”¹⁸¹ Similar to Troy, Greenberg noted that Lasker kept his role on Harding’s campaign silent from the press. Greenberg made a valuable point in his chapter discussing Albert Lasker; Lasker with his advertising and publicity

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 135.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 130.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 132.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

tactics did not win the election for Harding, as perhaps Woolley did with Wilson. Lasker's efforts are not memorable because he determined the election outcome, his efforts are memorable because they were unprecedented as America saw the intertwining of the advertising industry and political campaigns for the first time.

The goal for Lasker and Harding's publicity team was to make Harding appear old-fashioned and human to the American public. However, "in order to manipulate what on the surface seemed to be an innocent, old-fashioned front-porch campaign," John Morello wrote, "a very modern campaign management structure" was necessary.¹⁸² Albert Lasker's strongest technique, according to Morello, was his ability to blend the old and the new, the "old" being the front-porch style campaign, the "new" being Lasker's modern advertising ideas such as "reason why" advertising and his use of mediums for advertisements.¹⁸³ While Lasker was able to run a seemingly casual, old-fashioned campaign, Morello wrote that he was incorporating the "new" by establishing good press relations and "spoonfeeding" the media with preplanned stories and photo-ops. "The dependence on people such as Albert Lasker to influence the outcome of elections," said Morello, "seems to have been part of an evolutionary stage in the American political process."¹⁸⁴ The American political process had evolved from the party bosses making all of the decisions to merchandising, advertising, and expert showmanship.

In May 1920, just months before the election, Richard Boeckel, reporter for *The Independent*, wrote that the number of people who would vote for a candidate based on party would be "smaller than ever."¹⁸⁵ Instead, "the overwhelming majority," he predicted, would vote

¹⁸² John Morello, *Selling the President: Albert D. Lasker, Advertising, and the Election of Warren G. Harding* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 51.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, *President*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Boeckel, "The Man With the Best Story Wins," *The Independent* 102 (May 1920): 244.

based on “what they know about the candidate... about his principles and his personality.”¹⁸⁶ Boeckel went on to make the powerful assertion: “The man with the best story wins.”¹⁸⁷ With this phrase, Boeckel was able to describe modern politics in 1920’s America. Boeckel stressed the importance of the publicity agent when he said that by 1920 the publicity agent had become the “president maker.”¹⁸⁸

Lasker had a knack for sloganeering and accurately identified what would stick. He conducted a candidate-focused advertising campaign to sell Harding as the relatable, all-American candidate who would bring a return to normalcy in America. This involved a lot of planning and work on behalf of Harding’s campaign team, because they had to create an entire appearance around a man who’s biggest weakness was that he “revealed his whole character” up front, as Lasker put it.¹⁸⁹ So, from the front-porch of Marion, Ohio, Lasker implemented his “reason why” tactics from Lord & Thomas and set out to give Americans the reasons why they should elect Warren Harding. This was campaigning in the 1920’s: advertising to move the crowd and persuade a manipulable consumer-based culture. Albert Lasker had limited political background and yet, merging advertising into the world of politics, conducted one of the best publicity campaigns in history.

Lasker’s correspondence shows that he used every advertising medium available to him during the campaign. Examples include publishing content in magazines and newspapers, creating animated busts of Senator Harding, printing posters, sending footage to movie theaters and printing advertisements on billboards. Advertising material such as campaign buttons,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Gunther quoting Columbia University, *Taken at the Flood*, 102

lithographs and literature were sent all over to state headquarters and supportive newspapers.¹⁹⁰ Further, he worked very closely with the press to make sure that they were receiving the information that Lasker wanted them to receive, guaranteeing favorable coverage from Marion.

As people flocked to Marion to see and meet Harding, Lasker was in charge of arranging all of the spectacles, hiring the welcome band, assigning photographers to capture snapshots at the right moments as well as organizing speakers on Harding's behalf. On October 19, 1920, the *New York Times* reported that Harding saw more than 25,000 visitors come to Marion, Ohio in honor of "First Voters Day," which celebrated citizens who were going to cast their first ballot in the upcoming election.¹⁹¹ The local *South-Bend News-Times* wrote that the event was created so Harding could speak on the "duties and opportunities" for the new voters in 1920.¹⁹² Naturally, there were huge processions and parades throughout Marion all day to welcome the visitors as Lasker orchestrated a grand, nationally-covered event to celebrate the patriotism of new voters.

Lasker even used people as advertising mediums. He made it a priority in the campaign to have "distinguished visitors" visit Marion.¹⁹³ In a pioneering move in the world of politics, Lasker invited celebrities to campaign on Harding's behalf who traditionally had never publicly taken partisan stances. He established the Harding-Coolidge Theatrical League, a group of actors and actresses who campaigned nationally for Harding and made appearances in Marion where they were greeted by gestures of grandeur and awestruck fans. In modern elections, celebrity endorsements for a candidate are common as celebrities have credibility and serve as role models for many Americans. Lasker was one of the first to recognize the potential influence that a

¹⁹⁰ List of advertising content sent out by Harding's campaign, reel 32, box 97, WGH.

¹⁹¹ "New Voters Throng to Harding Porch," *New York Times*, October 19, 1920, 2.

¹⁹² "Harding Will Resume 'Front Porch' Drive," *South Bend News-Times*, October 18, 1920, 2.

¹⁹³ Lasker to Scott C. Bone, director of publicity for the Republican National Committee, July 28, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

celebrity endorsement could have, and he used this influence to the campaign's full advantage organizing celebrity appearances across the nation to promote Harding.

In August, when the campaign really took off, Lasker was in frequent contact with his campaign associates to make sure that invitations to potential visitors were sent out in a timely manner. He was adamant that there be no delay in sending out the invitations as he believed "it is the crux of our publicity that these parties begin calling as soon as possible."¹⁹⁴ While it was primarily Lasker's job in the beginning to oversee the coordination of visitors, he passed the duty on to Judson Welliver, one of Harding's close publicity aids, later in the campaign when he had more pressing responsibilities. Nonetheless, Lasker still stayed in close contact with Welliver throughout the campaign to ensure everything was running smoothly with his "distinguished visitors."

Lasker not only worked to bring well-known and influential supporters to Marion, but also planned what they should say on Harding's behalf. For example, Lasker and Hays worked on getting Italian singer Enrico Caruso to the front porch in Marion, and Lasker viewed this as a prime opportunity to stress Harding's stance on staying out of European affairs.¹⁹⁵ What better way to sell Harding's stance on European affairs than by having a European affirm it? Everyone and everything was a medium that could sell for Lasker, and Harding was the product. He never missed an opportunity to solidify Harding's credibility via endorsements and testaments by people who would have influence.

Harding was a good-looking man and Lasker saw this as a key to his popularity. He assigned photographers to take frequent close-up shots of Harding highlighting his features. Lasker also took advantage of Harding's front-porch campaign style for photo-ops. He instructed

¹⁹⁴ Lasker to Christian, August 24, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

¹⁹⁵ Lasker to Judson Welliver, August 21, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

photographers to snap shots of Harding and his wife at home, engaged in routine activities a normal, average American could relate to. It was Lasker's intention to make Harding appear to be an "old-fashioned, sage, honest-to-the-core Middle Westerner who could be trusted never to rock the boat."¹⁹⁶ Lasker made sure that camera crews were always available to capture Harding behaving like the everyday American that was running for president.

In July 1920, footage was released that showed Harding playing golf. The public's reaction was not what was expected. Lasker wrote to his friend, Walter Friedlander, an owner of the Cincinnati Reds, that the footage "has drawn a perfectly surprising amount of unfavorable reaction," as many considered golf to be an elitist sport.¹⁹⁷ Lasker went on to say that the campaign received hundreds of letters from people calling it a "rich man's game."¹⁹⁸ After receiving all of the negative backlash, Lasker orchestrated one of his biggest advertising campaigns yet by attempting to persuade America that Harding was a lover of America's favorite past time, baseball. Lasker's original intention was to bring two major league teams to Marion, allowing Harding to "come out in the wholehearted way he feels" in connection with baseball, which Lasker believed would be "favorably received by the country."¹⁹⁹ When writing to a friend, Lasker reiterated how much Harding liked baseball and how great it would be for him to demonstrate his affection for the sport. When writing to other members of the campaign, he spoke more bluntly about the publicity benefits, claiming that they could "work it up in such a way as to do a great deal of good."²⁰⁰ Lasker was very close friends with William Wrigley Jr.

¹⁹⁶ Gunther, *Taken at the Flood*, 103.

¹⁹⁷ Lasker to Walter Friedlander, August 7, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Lasker letter to Christian, July 28, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

and as they were both co-owners of the Chicago Cubs, the two made great, luckily successful, efforts to bring the Cubs to Marion.

Lasker struggled to find a date that worked for two major league teams to play in Marion, and worked without great success for a time but was “determined to put it through.”²⁰¹ He knew that it was impossible to sell Harding as a relatable, everyday candidate when people associated him with an elitist sport. Lasker was finally able to arrange for the Chicago Cubs to come to Marion and play a local baseball team. For the newspaper announcement that would publicize the game, Lasker wrote in his suggestion draft to Christian:

Some time ago William Wrigley and A.D. Lasker- two of the most main owners of the Cubs, and who are active in Senator Harding’s campaign- were in Marion. At that time the Senator, who is a great baseball fan, second only to Mrs. Harding, spoke of his love for the game and how, because of his stay at Marion, he missed that diversion. [...] Wrigley and Lasker President of the Cubs, the latter arranged for the team to stop-off to play at Marion on its next trip East, etc. etc.²⁰²

Lasker told Christian that he should present the announcement as if the team casually stopped by to play the game because the Harding’s, devoted lovers of baseball, had been without the sport for too long.

In preparation for the game, Lasker widely advertised the game around Marion to draw in as many spectators as possible. He also made arrangements for film crews to capture footage of Harding at the game for distribution to the theaters. In a letter to Welliver, Lasker wrote that a big turnout of supporters was important “for the publicity value in the papers,” as well as “for what it would mean to the Movies.”²⁰³ After the game, Lasker ensured that every member of the Cubs was enrolled in his Harding-Coolidge Theatrical League that he had started for

²⁰¹ Lasker letter to Christian, August 7, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²⁰² Lasker letter to Christian, August 19, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²⁰³ Lasker to Welliver, August 20, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

celebrities.²⁰⁴ Famous actress Mary McLaren was the one who very publicly enrolled each man. Photographs were widely distributed of the team signing up next to her. Lasker convinced America that Harding, man of the people, was a lover of baseball just like them. The *Anaconda Standard* of Anaconda, Montana printed a picture of Harding signing the game ball with the caption:

The Chicago Cubs visited Marion, Ohio, and played a game with the local talent for Senator Warren G. Harding, republican nominee for presidency. Harding is a regular baseball fan, and this is the first chance he has had to cheer since he left Washington. Senator Harding threw out the first ball, and the speedy peg to the catcher showed that the senator's soupbone is in good condition. Harding then autographed the balls used for the members of the Chicago team.²⁰⁵

Another story in *The Fort-Wayne Sentinel* of Fort-Wayne, Indiana, printed the headline, "Chicago Cubs at Marion: Senator Harding is Great Baseball Fan."²⁰⁶ An excerpt from the story read, "The engagement was made today as a result of a chance remark by the senator that one of the biggest handicaps of the front porch was his inability to see baseball games." Again, Lasker's ability to plan, predict and sell proved to be exceptional as newspapers caught Harding's "chance remark" that he missed the game of baseball, and only then did planning a spontaneous game occur. Newspapers nationwide reported that Harding was finally able to enjoy his favorite activity, which he had been deprived of since leaving Washington. Further, as Harding threw the first pitch, one can only wonder how much practice went into preparing Harding for his successful "speedy peg to the catcher."

²⁰⁴ "Every Member of Team for Harding," *The Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, October 4, 1920, 3.

²⁰⁵ "Autographs Balls for Chicago Cubs," *The Anaconda Standard*, September 15, 1920, 8.

²⁰⁶ "Chicago Cubs at Marion: Senator Harding is a Great Baseball Fan," *The Fort-Wayne Sentinel*, August 26, 1920, 20.

On August 28, 1920, Harding gave a speech on the League of Nations that Lasker had considered to be “the most important speech he will make during the whole campaign.”²⁰⁷ In Harding’s speech, Lasker added the phrase “Let’s be done with Wiggle and Wobble.” He hoped this would become a slogan attacking Cox’s wavering stance on the League of Nations. The phrase was meant to show how Wilson “wobbled from watchful waiting to peaceful penetration in Mexico,” and how now Cox was trying to “wiggle” from Wilson’s League position to a position where he is pro-league “with reservation.”²⁰⁸ The phrase was also meant to attack how the Democrats in general had wiggled and wobbled with their responsibilities and electing a Republican ticket would ensure steadfast surety in Washington.

Lasker’s correspondence indicates that he was adamant in preparation for Harding’s League of Nations speech with special focus on the phrase “Let’s be done with Wiggle and Wobble.” Lasker would use news editorials to gauge how Republican-leaning press were covering certain issues favorable to Harding’s campaign, and would then cater the language of Harding’s speech to fit the mold. The idea of incorporating the “wiggle and wobble” phrase into Harding’s speech came after Lasker noted that the *Chicago Tribune*, a Republican-leaning newspaper, had published a piece about Cox’s wiggling and wobbling all over the place with his League stance. This is “evidence that some of our [Republican-leaning] press are already treating Cox’s attitude on the League of Nations as one of ‘wiggle and wobble,’” Lasker wrote to Harding’s secretary, George Christian, on August 19, nine days before Harding’s speech.²⁰⁹

Lasker spent the week before Harding’s League speech preparing to send it out to the press in an exact time frame. Lasker wanted Republican editors to have the speech in advance in

²⁰⁷ Lasker to Bone, August 18, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²⁰⁸ Lasker to Welliver, August 20, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²⁰⁹ Lasker to Christian, August 19, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

hopes that they would be able to “thoroughly digest it and get their bearings.”²¹⁰ To make sure editors across the nation all received the speech forty-eight hours in advance, Lasker methodically arranged for mail releases to be sent to “the far points” on the first day and the nearer points on the second day to ensure they all received the speech at the same time.²¹¹ He remained one step ahead with thorough planning and preparation work.

While putting in great efforts to ensure that the that the phrase was used multiple times throughout the speech and that the press were aware, Lasker also took strides to make sure that the phrase appeared to have been said naturally and with unplanned ease in the speech. In a letter to Welliver days before the speech Lasker writes, “We want it to appear when the candidate wrote this sentence in his speech it was merely a passing sentence that he injected, but that it was so forceful that it was spontaneously picked up.”²¹² He encouraged any communication with local correspondents about the potential future slogan be done in a manner that the reporters would not know that “the publicity end of the campaign had anything to do with the expression.”²¹³ As Harding’s image revolved around the idea that he was a natural, everyday kind of candidate, his slogan had to originate as such.

In mid-August, before Harding even gave the League of Nations speech, Lasker planned for billboards to go up nationwide on October 1 with the slogan “Let’s be done with Wiggle and Wobble.”²¹⁴ This gave the campaign a month to re-emphasize the phrase and for the papers to begin using it so that by the time October came, it would seem that the phrase was so impactful during Harding’s speech on August 28 that the campaign then decided to take it on as the new

²¹⁰ Lasker to Bone, August 18, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Lasker to Welliver, August 20, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Lasker to Welliver, July 28, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

campaign slogan. Lasker clearly foresaw the advertising potential in the speech's success and built on it, knowing what would sell. Interestingly, *The Washington Times* printed a story on August 31, 1920, revealing that the Democratic Party knew about Lasker's intention to widely distribute the slogan on billboards in October and tried to expose him and get in front of Lasker's plan. "Their secret is out," the paper quoted Democratic Senator Pat Harrison, "Two weeks ago a sketch of the Republican poster found its way to Democratic headquarters."²¹⁵ Harrison went on to state that thousands of the sketches were being shipped to distribution centers and claimed that the Democratic Party "urges the opposition to give it the widest publicity" as Harrison thought they could spin the slogan in their favor.

Harrison was wrong, the speech had been a success and, per Lasker's prediction, the slogan was widely repeated in publications. A friend wrote to Harding afterwards, "Cordial congratulations on your League of Nations speech today period the substance is extra-ordinarily good the style very fine and the presentation most masterly and convincing period your position will win the country."²¹⁶ Following the speech, favorable newspapers quickly began to use the phrase "Wiggle and Wobble" when discussing Cox's League stance. Proving that Lasker worked well with the media in an effort to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with them, he wrote to Christian asking if Harding could quote the use of the phrase by the *Philadelphia Ledger* in either a speech or an address to newspaper men as he predicted it would receive "added publicity in the press."²¹⁷

²¹⁵ "G.O.P. Calls Halt on Wiggle, Wobble: Republican Slogan Gets into Hands of Democrats, Who Indorse It," *The Washington Times*, August 31, 1920, 14.

²¹⁶ Jacob Schurman to Warren Harding, August 28, 1920, reel 78, box 244, WGH.

²¹⁷ Lasker to Christian, August 23, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

In August 1920, all American women earned the right to vote making them a critical target group for both campaigns. Lasker wasted no time and immediately began targeting women with campaign advertisements. In August, Lasker worked quickly to send one advertisement to 22,000,000 women's circulation including the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Pictorial Review*.²¹⁸ An advertisement printed a couple of months later in the *Needlecraft Magazine* November issue is titled, "Women! For Your Own Good Vote the Republican Ticket."²¹⁹ The advertisement included a quote by Harding on ending child labor and improving working conditions for female employees. The advertisement was anti-war, claiming "For woman is for peace," and asserted that the Democratic Party "asked for votes for the Democratic President because 'he kept us out of war.' He got them and five months later the United States entered the world war."²²⁰ The advertisement also included the header "Mother's duty to their sons," with the paragraph below promising that with the election of Warren Harding, no mother would have to give their son to war.²²¹ A Democratic National Committee produced advertisement in the *Ladies Home Journal* published around the same time was far less compelling and demonstrates the superiority of Lasker's work. The advertisement was titled, "Women of America! You are interested in the Election of Cox and Roosevelt."²²² The advertisement went on to emphasize "permanent peace, progress, prosperity and the recognition of women's value as citizens of the republic."²²³ The advertisement had no emotional appeal to the female demographic who, just months prior, received the right to vote and lacks any relatable aspect. When comparing the two

²¹⁸ Lasker to Christian, August 28, 1920, reel 39, box 120, WGH.

²¹⁹ Advertisement in *Needlecraft Magazine* (November 1920), 4.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Advertisement in *Ladies Home Journal* (October 1920), 56.

²²³ Ibid.

advertisements that were published at the same time, there is no question that the Republican advertisement is the work of an expert.

Like Woolley, Lasker and his team spent more than they had. In August 1920, Will Hays testified before a senatorial committee investigating the campaign funds. In his statement, Hays said that out of the \$3,079,037.20 budget for Harding's campaign, \$1,346,500 was for publicity uses.²²⁴ The next biggest spending expenditure in the budget was \$750,874.20 for headquarters expense. By October, they had already gone over budget having spent \$3,160,451.76.²²⁵ Clara Savage, reporter for the *New York Times*, went to the Republican Headquarters and was taken aback by the large variety of promotional buttons. The Republicans spent \$76,000 on buttons alone.²²⁶ Moreover, "other expenses involved in convincing the voter that the G.O.P is the party for which to vote, and that they want to see Mr. Harding in the White House" included \$37,600 on lithographs, \$242,00 on paid advertising, \$60,000 on pamphlets and \$21,000 on billboard posters and electric signs.²²⁷ The Democrats did not spend nearly as much on their publicity endeavors. As the Republicans spent significantly more than the Democrats and had more access to money from supportive businesses and big donors, they were still able to portray Harding and the Republican Party as the more modest, down to earth option. For example, during the campaign, the Republican National Committee released a picture titled "Homes of the Candidates," which included pictures of Harding and his running mate Coolidge's "modest" homes next to the more "pretentious" homes of Cox and his running mate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, continuing to portray Harding as the all-American, relatable candidate.²²⁸

²²⁴ "Hays Puts Budget At \$3,079,037.20; Says Wets Aid Cox," *New York Times*, August 31, 1920, 1.

²²⁵ "\$3,160,451 Spent By The Republicans," *New York Times*, October 23, 1920, 1.

²²⁶ Clara Savage, "Money Bags in Campaign: Visit to Each Headquarters Indicates That Republicans Are Less Worried Over Expenses," *New York Times*, October 3, 1920, 1.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

I do not make the claim that Albert Lasker won the election for Warren Harding in 1920. What he did do, however, was bring modern advertising into the world of politics and implement publicity into the campaign in a way that had not been done before. He was the first adman to run publicity for a campaign, and he impacted future campaigns with the techniques he used and how he advanced the concept of a “candidate-centered” campaign strategy. Albert Lasker created the image that was Warren Harding, highlighting Harding’s qualities in a way that sold him to the people. His ability to predict what would sell was unparalleled. Lasker was an integral part in the continued development of publicity in presidential campaigns. In his biography on Albert Lasker, Gunther claimed, “The seeds were thus sown, far back in 1920, for such piquant phenomena as the ‘Spots for Ike’ in Eisenhower’s campaign thirty-two years later.”²²⁹ “Spots for Ike” was a campaign strategy for Eisenhower’s campaign in 1952 where Eisenhower would answer the questions of ordinary citizens and be photographed doing so. Later efforts to sell the candidate to the public using modern advertising techniques are simply building blocks built on the foundations laid out by advertising pioneer Albert Lasker in 1920.

The 1924 and 1928 elections saw a growth in the adoption of the radio in America. The candidate-centric style of campaigning continued as the Republic Party experienced somewhat of a golden age in the 1920’s. They were the majority party throughout the decade, and the Democratic Party had faltered since losing power in the 1920 election. Publicity remained important, but it was not until the 1932 election that the next transitional figure on the road to modern campaigning would make great strides on a campaign.

²²⁹ Gunther, *Taken at the Flood*, 103

CHAPTER 4: Herbert Hoover's Gadfly²³⁰

If, for example, a senator delivered a dull and lifeless anti-Hoover speech, it was probably his own.

If the Hoover Administration was picking splinters out of its skin for a week afterward, it was a Michelson speech

- Alva Johnston, 1936

In his memoirs reflecting on the 1932 presidential election, Herbert Hoover wrote that the overall strategy of the opposing party was to “attach to me, personally, the responsibility of the worldwide depression and its evils.” He claimed that the Democratic Party’s strategy to criticize and blame was “in some aspects new in American political life.”²³¹ Hoover had been considered a “genius at publicity” after a successful 1928 presidential campaign and yet was no match for the kind of attacks that Charles Michelson, Democratic director of publicity, was targeting him with in 1932.²³²

The 1932 election came just three years after Black Tuesday and the Wall Street crash of 1929. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Democratic governor of New York, challenged Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover. Similar to the negative sentiments people had for Wilson in the 1920 election following World War I, support for current president Hoover was deteriorating as the Great Depression continued on. The 1932 election is memorable because it was the first smear campaign of this magnitude, and because FDR “successfully” used new forms of communication to “craft a ‘candidate-centered’ campaign,” emphasizing “personality as well as (or perhaps more

²³⁰ Washington correspondents often times referred to Michelson as “Herbert Hoover’s gadfly,” a fly that bites or annoys, as noted in “Meet the Men Behind Scene in Democrat Show!: Raskob, Shouse, Michelson Put Pep in Party,” *The Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1932, 4.

²³¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression 1929-1941* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1952), 218.

²³² Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 176.

than) substance.”²³³ The 1932 election allowed voters the choice of “a traditional administrative president,” Hoover, or a “modern rhetorical one,” Roosevelt.²³⁴

Roosevelt was exciting to the American people and a perfect candidate for the evolving candidate-centric campaign style. He mastered the art of the radio and put on a very personable campaign. Troy wrote that for all of the “apparent spontaneity,” Roosevelt’s campaign was “carefully planned.”²³⁵ Roosevelt had an entire publicity team methodically strategizing his every move, and at the center of this publicity was Charles Michelson.

Charles Michelson was born in 1869 into a “bookish family” in Virginia City, a small yet “booming” mining town in Nevada.²³⁶ His father was a “prosperous shopkeeper;” his sister, Miriam, was a best-selling novelist; and his brother, Albert, was the first American to win the Nobel Prize in Physics.²³⁷ As a child Michelson joined the staff of the *Virginia City Chronicle* where he served as bookkeeper and assistant reporter. When he was thirteen, the “peaceful phase” of his career ended when he went to join his brother in Arizona.²³⁸ Michelson had minor clerk jobs in Arizona until he became “a frontier tramp,” which he considered to be the most perfect period of his life.²³⁹ This did not last long before he was summoned back to Virginia City to attend high school. His graduation ceremony was the first time he was exposed to the art of ghostwriting, as his sister Miriam wrote his graduation address for him.

²³³ Larry J. Sabato & Howard R. Ernst, *Encyclopedia of American Political Parties and Elections* (New York: Checkmark Book, 2007), 347.

²³⁴ Martin Carcasson, “Herbert Hoover and the presidential campaign of 1932: The Failure of Apologia,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 349.

²³⁵ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 164.

²³⁶ Charles Michelson, *The Ghost Talks* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1944), 68.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

After graduating, Michelson ventured to San Francisco to work for the *San Francisco Evening Post* under his brother-in-law, the editor. Around this time William Randolph Hearst had taken over the *San Francisco Examiner* and began a “whirlwind campaign” to pull the paper out of the “stodginess of a party organ.”²⁴⁰ Michelson recalls that working for the *Examiner* was the “Promised Land,” and he “promptly became a sooner in the journalistic Oklahoma rush to join the new outfit,” metaphorically speaking about his attempt to join the *Examiner* staff.²⁴¹ He was hired as an extra man writing about the police courts until being promoted to regular staff. Michelson worked his way up the ladder at the *Examiner* and learned much of what he knew from Hearst, a true expert in the field. After a few years, Hearst summoned Michelson to New York to write editorials. Not long after, he was sent to Chicago to become the managing editor of the *Examiner* Chicago branch. Michelson recalled that frequently throughout his tenure with the paper he would be required to trade jobs and have a different title. Becoming unhappy with what he was writing under Hearst’s anti-Wilson agenda, Michelson began working as the Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Herald*. Shortly after, he was recruited as the head of the Washington bureau for the *New York World*, a position which he “gladly accepted.”²⁴²

As the *World’s* main Washington correspondent, Michelson was the main political writer and became familiar with presidential candidates and their campaigns. He remained there until John J. Raskob, Democratic National Committee chairman, and Jouett Shouse, Democratic National Committee chair of the executive committee, sought him out in their “campaign for rehabilitating” the Democratic Party, the minority party for roughly the last decade.²⁴³ It was in this campaign for rehabilitation that the Democratic National Committee became a full-time,

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 77.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., 97.

²⁴³ Ibid., 98.

year-round, fully functioning organization instead of just an arm of a candidate's campaign to become president. Part of their "epic reconstruction" of the Democratic Party was to establish the first permanent publicity bureau.²⁴⁴

The Republican Party had conducted consistent and thorough publicity operations throughout the 1920's while the Democratic Party's publicity efforts had "dried up."²⁴⁵ It was a challenge to get the operation up and running again, much less make it as efficient and widespread as it was by the end of the decade. The permanent Democratic National Committee's publicity bureau was established in 1929, with Michelson as the first permanent director of publicity. Michelson's publicity work for the 1932 election began shortly after, and for three years leading up to election day he constantly released material attacking the Hoover Administration and Republican Party.

Michelson's publicity operation was impressive in its ability to frame Hoover as the scapegoat for the Depression and Roosevelt the newcomer who could save America. Michelson took the idea of a candidate-centric campaign a step further by not only centering the campaign around Roosevelt, but also around Hoover and all of his faults and mistakes. Michelson emphasized the character and leadership qualities of the candidates more so than campaigns had done in the past. For all of his accomplishments and years spent as the Democratic Party's director of publicity, there is little literature about Charles Michelson.

Being the newspaperman that Michelson was, Greenberg described Michelson as having a "knack for the catchy phrase and a flair for the dramatic."²⁴⁶ Greenberg affirmed that during

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁵ Frank R. Kent, "Charley Michelson," *Scribner's Magazine* 88 (1930): 291.

²⁴⁶ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 183.

the early-to-mid 1900's publicity directors continued to build off each other's works and accomplishments, a critical assumption of this thesis, when he wrote, "Absorbing the lessons of men like Lasker, Michelson harnessed his gift for sloganeering to an ability to coordinate his messages."²⁴⁷ Greenberg also mentioned an important aspect of Michelson's legacy, his coining of the terms "Hooverville," "Hoover Flag," and other Depression-related phrases linked to Hoover.

Rosanne Sizer in her research on the smearing of Hoover in the 1932 election acknowledged Michelson as the key conspirator behind the attacks. Utilizing the Depression to their full advantage, Michelson's publicity bureau "undertook a massive campaign to discredit Hoover."²⁴⁸ Hoover and the Republican Party attempted to fire back claiming that Michelson's bureau was attempting to make "political capital out of public misery."²⁴⁹ Hoover was not wrong in this accusation, but public opinion had already been molded and the public's perception of Hoover unchanging. Hoover felt personally attacked by Michelson, and as his later memoirs suggest, would remain bitter for the rest of his life.

In their contemporary analysis of the 1932 election, Roy Peel and Thomas Donnelly claimed that Michelson's experience as a journalist served him well in his heading of the smear-campaign against Hoover. "He trained his guns on the Hoover administration," they wrote "and never ceased firing until the Republicans evacuated Washington."²⁵⁰ Peel and Donnelly described the success of the smear-campaign being in large part due to Hoover's initial

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 184.

²⁴⁸ Rosanne Sizer, "Herbert Hoover and the smear books, 1930-1932," *The Annals of Iowa* 47, no. 4 (Spring 1984): 345.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 346.

²⁵⁰ Roy V. Peel & Thomas C. Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign: An Analysis* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935), 112.

vulnerability, but that Michelson used this vulnerability to his best ability. “No president,” they wrote, “ever had his every mistake so thoroughly advertised as Mr. Hoover.”²⁵¹

Like Lasker’s role in the 1920 presidential campaign, Michelson and his publicity work were not determinants for the election outcome in 1932. With the Depression, Hoover’s defeat was expected. Michelson’s work was nonetheless a milestone in the evolution of campaigns using publicity, and a focus on his work is necessary in better understanding the modern mudslinging campaign style that exists in America. While Michelson may not have won the election for Roosevelt, his policy of “sustained propaganda” turned “defeat into a rout.”²⁵² What existed in 1932 was the need for “experts” in knowing how to “play upon the emotions, prejudices, and economic interests of the voter.”²⁵³ Michelson turned Hoover into a villain and at a time when the American people were devastated and vulnerable, and he successfully made them believe that their problems were the result of the Hoover Administration.

By 1932, definite party lines had continued to blur with more people becoming independents and able to be swayed during elections. As majority of campaign funds were spent on “organization and ‘persuasion,’” the growing number of undecided voters brought on a necessary “change in the strategy.”²⁵⁴ *New York Times* reporter Arthur Krock wrote in 1932 that campaign management and strategy at the time did not “call for a fine sense of ethics.” While it would be an applaudable strategy for a campaign manager to “deviate from the ancient system of deception,” it would in turn do nothing beneficial for the candidate.²⁵⁵ At one point, Republican

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Will Irwin, *Propaganda and the News: Or What Makes You Think So?* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936), 302.

²⁵³ Oliver McKee, Jr., “Publicity Chiefs,” *The North American Review* 230, no. 4 (1930): 411.

²⁵⁴ Arthur Krock, “The Campaign is Under Way: With Roosevelt Swinging Around the Circle, The Two Parties Begin Their Battle,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1932, 1.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

Representative William Wood of Indiana brought up the debate of “malicious maligning” on the House floor with regard to Michelson.²⁵⁶ Never before was press-agentry used in such a modern, grand manner.

Michelson oversaw all aspects of the Democratic National Committee’s publicity during the 1932 campaign including all speech material and comments to the press, pamphlets, radio policy and overall organization of the publicity bureau. As Michelson is known as one of the greatest political ghostwriters in history, one of his tasks as director of publicity was writing speeches for Democratic leaders to give on Roosevelt’s behalf, as well as speeches for Roosevelt himself. Michelson’s bureau consistently sent out releases in the months leading up to the election with a total of 504 statements issued out during a twenty-two-month period.²⁵⁷ In his 1933 assessment of the bureau’s work between 1930-1932, Thomas Barclay, political scientist and scholar of the time, noted that “customary methods of distribution” were continued within Michelson’s bureau as press associations, news agencies, and newspapers nationwide received the releases, as well as national and state party committee men and women.²⁵⁸ Michelson ensured that weekly clip sheets, newsletters and editorials were consistently made available to the press. Most of Roosevelt’s addresses were broadcast nationally as Michelson expanded the role of the radio in the process of his publicity work.

When Michelson first accepted the job as director of publicity, he felt that it was necessary to establish a research bureau within the publicity department. However, after seeking out a qualified newspaper correspondent to fill the post, no one seemed capable enough for the

²⁵⁶ “Meet the Men Behind Scene in Democrat Show! Raskob, Shouse, Michelson Put Pep in Party,” *The Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1932, 4.

²⁵⁷ Thomas S. Barclay, “The Bureau of Publicity of the Democratic National Committee, 1930-32,” *The American Political Science Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1933).

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

position. Michelson managed to lead the publicity bureau without a designated research division and instead, he himself conducted the necessary research. Michelson's bureau sent out mass amounts of publicity nationwide, but before he would send content to a new source he conducted thorough research to ensure that the publication was credible. As one telegram correspondence with Raskob shows, Michelson had prepared an article for the Temperance League for Liquor Control to publish in the *Bi-Monthly News of Dallas*. Before sending any material to the paper, Michelson insisted that the newspaper wire over a report regarding their "quality of publication" for assessment. Michelson held off on sending a draft of the article to Raskob until he analyzed the publication's report.²⁵⁹ Michelson held this bureau's work to the highest standard, and while he was trying to reach every corner of the country, Michelson only published content in sources that he personally deemed adequate after careful evaluation.

Michelson's primary issue focuses during the 1932 campaign were the Great Depression and the Smoot-Hawley tariff. Other recurring topics in the campaign included unemployment levels and Prohibition. The tariff added stress to an already crumbled economy, and Michelson worked the tariff to be an important offshoot of the overall economic devastation that Hoover had carried America into. Out of all the statements Michelson's bureau released between 1930-1932, the tariff was the most frequently addressed national issue with one-fifth of the releases dedicated to discussing it.²⁶⁰ Manufacturing industries and businesses especially felt repercussions from the tariff, and Michelson made it his job to "capitalize the grievance" of every economic group in America.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Charles Michelson to John J. Raskob, March 24, 1932, file 1547, John J. Raskob papers (Accession 0473), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE 19807.

²⁶⁰ Barclay, "The Bureau of Publicity of the Democratic National Committee, 1930," 64.

²⁶¹ McKee, "Publicity Chiefs," 413.

In his autobiography, *The Ghost Talks*, Michelson described Hoover as indecisive and thin-skinned.²⁶² In turn, this is how Michelson portrayed Hoover to the American people. Michelson wrote that there was no need for “misrepresentation” or “slander,” because what the Democratic publicity bureau was sending out was the truth.²⁶³ Michelson genuinely believed that Hoover did not belong in the White House, which likely contributed to the quality of material that he sent out because he stood behind everything that he published. Hoover’s publicity team did not help his case. As Michelson presented Hoover’s faults and mistakes to the American people, Hoover and the Republicans would throw accusations back at the Democratic Party. This was a mistake by the Republican Party as it further publicized Hoover’s distress from Michelson’s work, constantly reminding people of what Michelson had written in the first place. So, in the 1930 midterm election, Democratic Senator Pat Harrison said that the “whispering campaign of 1928” had been succeeded by the “whimpering campaign of 1930.”²⁶⁴ Cartoons surfaced of an elephant crying and distressed, often placing Hoover as the central figure. Michelson circulated these cartoons throughout the country, making the Republican publicity bureau regret ever firing back.

Although 1930 was a midterm election, Michelson never once veered his focus away from the Hoover Administration. The publicity directors for both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party met with radio companies in 1930, and Michelson suggested an opening topic of discussion be “The Hoover Administration: Has It Been a Success So Far or a Failure?”²⁶⁵ The publicity director for the Republican National Committee immediately objected arguing that the midterm election did not concern the president, and that the president’s time in office should

²⁶² Michelson, *The Ghost Talks*, 32.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

not play a factor in the election of Congressional members. The radio producers decided not to go with Michelson's idea, but from the Republican publicity director's quick objection, Michelson knew that his strategy was working and Hoover was suffering.

When Michelson joined the Democratic National Committee in 1929, he wrote that most people believed that Hoover was "still the magician of the campaign picture."²⁶⁶ Every misstep Hoover took as president and every misfortune "was taken full advantage of and given the widest possible circulation."²⁶⁷ Efforts by the Republican publicity bureau to counter Michelson's releases and paint Hoover as a martyr to the American people fell on deaf ears. "Blamed by many of President Hoover's ardent defenders," wrote Carter Field for *The Decatur Daily News* following the 1932 election, Michelson was "more responsible than all the other factors combined for convincing the public that Hoover just wouldn't do."²⁶⁸

Like Woolley and Lasker, Michelson had an outstanding sense for what would stick and how publicity material would be perceived by the public. At the beginning, Michelson had trouble getting anyone to pay attention to the publicity material that he was sending out because the country was not interested in politics so soon after the 1928 election. That is, Michelson wrote, until "fate," which always came to the "aid of the Democrats" in recent time, "took care of us."²⁶⁹ President Hoover called a special session of Congress to "mitigate the woes" of farmers.²⁷⁰ This resulted in the discussion of a bill that would include increased tariffs on agricultural products. The Republican majority in the House "crowded" the bill through and shut

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

²⁶⁷ Peel & Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 54.

²⁶⁸ Carter Field, "Democratic Guns Continue in Defensive Fire: Charles Michelson to Spread News of Whatever Mr. Roosevelt Does," *The Decatur Daily News*, November 23, 1932, 8.

²⁶⁹ Michelson, *The Ghost Talks*, 22.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

out the Democrats from any part in the decision-making process.²⁷¹ “There was really little new in this star-chamber process of formulating a tariff bill,” Michelson said, “but the secret sessions were made to order for a hostile press bureau.”²⁷² Michelson then portrayed these secret sessions of Republican congressmen to the American people as typical closeted off Republicans making backroom deals with big business leaders. This reflected poorly on President Hoover as he had called the special session. Hoover was then further criticized for indecisiveness regarding the tariff bill. His credibility and “aura” completely fell away, leaving him open and vulnerable to Michelson’s future attacks.²⁷³

Michelson flooded America with cartoons highlighting Hoover’s indecisiveness. When Hoover ended up signing the tariff bill to please the men that he depended on for re-election, protests began, which the Democratic publicity bureau happily egged on. Hoover made promises of hope and prosperity during his 1928 campaign speeches. When Hoover was not making any monumental strides towards a better economy in America, however, it was simple for Michelson to turn the people against Hoover and broadcast the living reality instead of what Hoover had promised.

In the months leading up to the election, Michelson consistently linked a Democratic leader’s name to each news story for credibility. Wayne W. Parrish, reporter for *Literary Digest*, wrote in 1934 that no matter what the Republicans did to try to get good publicity, “a Democrat popped into the story somewhere.”²⁷⁴ This led Republican leaders to accuse Michelson and Shouse of creating “synthetic news” and called their work “infamous.”²⁷⁵ When the Republican

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid., 23.

²⁷⁴ Wayne W. Parrish, “The No. 1 Democratic Ballyhoo Man,” *Literary Digest*, May 26, 1934, 28.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

Party released a full-page newspaper advertisement slandering Raskob, Michelson wrote a rebuttal statement for Raskob claiming the advertisement was a “reflection on his business intelligence and integrity” and warned all newspapers who intended to publish the advertisement in the future that he would hold them responsible for it.²⁷⁶ The advertisement was not printed again and “hastily withdrawn” by the Republicans.²⁷⁷ Michelson claimed that with attempts like this, the Republican Party sold themselves short with propaganda efforts in spite of themselves. There was no credibility or anything political about their attacks, so all Michelson had to do was craft a fierce and rapid response.

Michelson did not spend money excessively as publicity bureaus had done in the past. In 1932, the party with the smaller campaign fund won the election for the first time since 1916. While both parties spent less money in 1932 than they did in 1928, the production of promotional materials such as buttons and badges did not decrease. The 1932 election brought an increase in expenditures when it came to moving picture advertising and the radio.²⁷⁸

Roosevelt took to the radio with many of his prepared speeches to attack Hoover on air for the entire nation to hear. From his first opening campaign address, Roosevelt’s speeches and addresses were broadcasted by a nation-wide network of stations.²⁷⁹ Roosevelt inherited his cousin Teddy’s knack for being able to smooth talk the press and sway the public in the Age of Radio. In a radio address in July 1932, Roosevelt said that he hoped to use the radio “frequently” about “important things that concern us all.”²⁸⁰ The only downside to the radio was that now the whole nation could tune in. Each speech had to be as original and powerful as the last. Together,

²⁷⁶ Michelson, *The Ghost Talks*, 26.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Peel & Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 145.

²⁷⁹ “Roosevelt Starts for Columbus, Ohio, to Open Campaign,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1932, 1.

²⁸⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt radio address, “The Democratic Platform,” July 30, 1932, FDR Library.

with Michelson's phrasing and Roosevelt's charismatic manner, their mudslinging campaign speeches helped pave the way towards the era of the radio.

Political ghostwriting dates back to America's beginning when Alexander Hamilton wrote George Washington's farewell address. According to 1950's ghostwriting expert J. Douglas Knox, a talented ghostwriter knows his speaker, how he thinks, acts and expresses himself. This was one of Michelson's most important attributes as Roosevelt's ghostwriter, making Michelson a "top-flight" communicator.²⁸¹ Michelson attested that Roosevelt was a "better phrasemaker" than anyone he ever had help him, but Michelson's ability to insert "covert digs" and "sly insinuations," as Michelson himself put it, was unmatched.²⁸²

Roosevelt's speeches included uplifting phrases such as "bold and humanitarian," "continuous responsibility," "protection of children," and "framed with an eye for actual human needs," to describe his platform and hopes for the nation.²⁸³ His speeches also included phrases such "destroyed the values of our commodities and products," "crippled our banking system," "robbed millions of our people of their life savings," and "thrown away the fruits of victory, thus rejecting the greatest opportunity in the history to bring peace," when describing the Republican opposition.²⁸⁴

One of Roosevelt's speeches in particular exhibited Michelson's touch. In the introduction of his speech Roosevelt says that he intends to discuss the Republican Party's policies and promises, which "to do so without severe criticism is impossible."²⁸⁵ Roosevelt goes

²⁸¹ Robert Bendiner, "Ghosts Behind the Speechmakers: Members of an Ancient Though Unhonored Craft, They Answer an Insatiable Demand for Words," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1952, 149.

²⁸² Michelson, *The Ghost Talks*, 12-13.

²⁸³ Franklin D. Roosevelt radio address, "The Democratic Platform," July 30, 1932.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt speech, "Campaign Speech," Columbus, OH, August 20, 1932, FDR Library.

on to say that destructive criticism is an unfortunate necessity, but to “build we must first clear the ground.”²⁸⁶ Even when Roosevelt’s speeches were tearing down the opposition, he still seemed to be the bigger man, carrying himself with dignity and class. The speech goes on to blast the Hoover Administration. Roosevelt’s speeches against Hoover and the Republican Party are remarkable in that no matter how critical they were or how dirty their accusations, the speeches always left Roosevelt in a good light. Michelson was able to do this because he not only attacked the policies of Hoover’s Administration, but also his character, which Michelson denied doing throughout his life. He not only persuaded voters with the Democratic platform, but he persuaded voters because he painted Hoover weak when Roosevelt strong, Hoover as a coward when Roosevelt was courageous, and Hoover as deceitful when Roosevelt was righteous and honest. While discussing issues such as economic failures of the Hoover Administration, the speech reads: “The President hesitated, because he must have seen the awful nature of the choice. But his courage failed.”²⁸⁷ Many of Roosevelt’s speeches had a similar theme. The accusations and name calling continued throughout the election, but at no cost to Roosevelt and his platform.

Michelson also wrote speeches for a number of other leading Democratic leaders. He would write campaign addresses for them on Roosevelt’s behalf as well as editorials for the papers signed by influential party leaders. Michelson always attached a name of importance to newspaper articles so that the papers could not afford to toss it out, guaranteeing that it would be published. Following Hoover’s official nomination acceptance speech, a meeting took place at the Democratic national campaign headquarters where two dozen top Democratic leaders met for

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

“strategy conferences.”²⁸⁸ Just after, *The Tampa Tribune* reported that “from democratic ranks today came a valley of challenges” as many Democratic leaders publicly expressed criticism of the speech.²⁸⁹

Hoover’s speeches, Michelson recalled, were “largely statistical, claiming the depression was over and electing Roosevelt would hinder any progress.”²⁹⁰ These speeches were lifeless and boring compared to the vibrant and colorful speeches of Roosevelt and his supporters.

Democratic political leaders would often travel to Roosevelt’s home base of New York and deliver exciting speeches to supportive crowds attacking Hoover as much as they supported Roosevelt. Democratic leader Alfred E. Smith, who had originally been a 1932 contender, spoke in New York and based his pro-Roosevelt speech on the basis of attacking Hoover, re-emphasizing throughout the speech that Hoover was trying to scare the American public into re-election.²⁹¹

A 1936 *Saturday Evening Post* article considered Michelson to be “the miracle man of oratory.”²⁹² He wrote speeches for countless numbers of Democratic politicians and while Democrats appreciated Michelson and his work, the Republicans “made a sort of god out of him—a malignant deity.”²⁹³ Michelson’s Republican opponents both admired and feared his work. His ghostwriting was remarkable, and scary when on the other side. After his work on the 1932 election, he made “any number of Republicans believe in ghosts.”²⁹⁴

²⁸⁸ “Democratic Leader Hits Hoover Talk: Robinson Speaks for Party in Criticism,” *The Tampa Tribune*, August 13, 1932, 1.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Michelson, *The Ghost Talks*, 40.

²⁹¹ “Americans Not the Scared, Asserts Smith: Democratic Leader, in Speech At Troy, N.Y., Declared Faith in Nation’s Future,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 3, 1932, 10.

²⁹² Alva

Johnston, “Hundred-Tongued Charley: The Great Silent Orator,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May, 1936, 5.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ “A Borrowed Myth, *New York Times*, January 18, 1933, 18.

In 1930, Frank R. Kent, writer for *Scribner's Magazine*, wrote a popular article about Charles Michelson and the devastation he caused the Hoover Administration. Kent's intention was to shed light on Michelson's bureau, the agency that helped "mould the public mind" during the election by "magnifying" Hoover's misfortunes while "minimizing his achievements," and all around "making life miserable for him."²⁹⁵ While Kent's article speaks unfavorably about Michelson and his tactics, he considers Michelson's work still to be a "remarkable performance," that illuminated the power of propaganda in "skilful hands."²⁹⁶

In Herbert Hoover's 1952 memoir, he devoted an entire chapter to defending himself against Michelson's attacks from many years before. Hoover attested that he had to go through four years of personal attacks, and his writing shows that he continued to resent Michelson and the campaign Michelson orchestrated decades after the election concluded. In an article Hoover wrote for *Collier's Magazine* twenty years after the election, Hoover claimed that the 1932 election demonstrated a "debut" of new political techniques including "the 'abandonment' of facts, 'irresponsible' ghost writers, and also 'blows below the belt.'"²⁹⁷ When discussing these new "techniques" in the article, Hoover wrote that they affected all future political campaigns to come. Michelson had left Hoover mentally exhausted and one can assume when defeat came, Hoover welcomed the opportunity to leave the spotlight. However, even Hoover could not deny that the work Michelson did was unprecedented and noteworthy, with the effects of Michelson's work evident twenty years later in the words of Hoover, the target of the attacks himself.

²⁹⁵ Frank R. Kent, "Charley Michelson," 290.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Herbert Hoover, "Continuing My White House Years: The 1932 Campaign," *Collier's Magazine*, May 24, 1952, 1.

Five years after the election, in 1937, Michelson wrote an article titled, “My Advice to the G.O.P.,” providing guidance on how to come up out of the ashes as a minority party who had suffered defeat in previous years. Michelson wrote the article “not, of course from the standpoint of propagandist for the majority party,” he said, “but merely as a political analyst of some experience with at least a hypothetical knowledge of popular reactions.”²⁹⁸ Less than a decade earlier, Michelson was part of the undertaking to reinvent the Democratic Party and in 1937, was in a place to offer advice to the opposition. The article had a subtle condescending tone, and Michelson probably jumped at the opportunity to remind Republicans how successful the Democratic Party had recently become.

While in his autobiography Michelson blatantly called Hoover unfit, thin-skinned and indecisive, Michelson claimed throughout his life that he and his bureau never published personal attacks on Hoover. While Hoover was still reeling from the effects of Michelson’s work on the 1932 campaign years later, Michelson never considered the work that he did to have been nearly as impressive as other journalists and politicians of the time give him credit. Charles Michelson, coiner of phrases such as “Hooverville,” played a critical role in reinventing the Democratic Party and had a lasting impact on the campaign culture for presidential elections.

With the 2016 matchup between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, America seemed to reach “an unprecedented low in mudslinging politics,” wrote Ron Grossman, reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*.²⁹⁹ While the execution of political mudslinging may have evolved with new technologies and available mediums, Charles Michelson set the stage in 1932 for campaigns to be run with a central focus not only being the candidate, but the opposition as well.

²⁹⁸ Charles Michelson, “My Advice to the G.O.P.,” *The American Magazine*, 123 (1937): 30.

²⁹⁹ Ron Grossman, “Flashback: The Deplorable History of U.S. Campaign Mudslinging,” *Chicago Tribune Online*, Sept. 30, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-campaign-mud-slinging-history-flashback-perspec-1002-md-20160930-story.html>.

CONCLUSION: WHAT CAME AFTER

In modern elections, campaign advertisements flood our television screens. Mudslinging against the opponent seems a necessary evil. A century ago, more present candidates evolved into a candidate-centric style of campaigning contrasting the previous absent candidate and party-centric campaign. This led to the necessity of new tactics and strategies to appeal to the American people such as implemented by Woolley, Lasker and Michelson. What these men pioneered took on greater proportions in later decades, making it easy to forget that in the early twentieth century campaigning became more centered around in the candidate, tactical use of modern technologies began to take form, the publicity bureau became a year-round, fully-functioning arm of the parties and the foundations for political advertising and mudslinging were established by publicity experts.

The experiences of Woolley, Lasker and Michelson have often been lost as many scholars focus on television as the time when publicity became critical for campaigns. David Haven Blake, author of *Liking Ike: Eisenhower, Advertising, and the Rise of Celebrity Politics*, wrote how television weakened the role of the parties and “turned politicians into performers,” where candidates had to now “stage their appearances” for audiences far away.³⁰⁰ This thesis demonstrates that candidates became performers in the struggle for victory long before Eisenhower. “Eisenhower agreed to the same set of promotional strategies that advertisers used to sell products like laundry detergent and shaving cream,” Blake said, describing the way Lasker had run Harding’s 1920 campaign.³⁰¹ Kathleen Hall Jameison in her book, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, claimed that, in

³⁰⁰ David Haven Blake, *Liking Ike: Eisenhower, Advertising, and the Rise of Celebrity Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xii.

³⁰¹ Blake, *Liking Ike*, 4.

1968, “for the first time,” the campaign advertising manager ran an “almost autonomous operation.”³⁰² In fact, while Lasker worked closely with Hays throughout the Harding campaign and was hired from an outside agency, Lasker’s position as Harding’s advertising expert allowed him to make autonomous decisions about the content that was created and disseminated, seeking occasional approval from only Harding himself. Further, Gil Troy wrote that, by 1964, Americans feared that the candidate was “simply another commodity being marketed,” another concept not new to the decade.³⁰³ Troy did credit Lasker with implementing advertising “‘business’ principles” into campaigns that were carried on into 1964.³⁰⁴

The advent of television did bring a transformation to campaigning. Television placed a “new premium” on appearance.³⁰⁵ The “gap between fact and fiction” continued to grow, and Troy claimed that “personalities were more important than issues” and “impressions more important than facts.”³⁰⁶ After Eisenhower’s use of television in the 1952 election, a common claim is that with this election, for the first time, America saw the potential of “advertising, entertainment and political consulting in presidential politics” and that his campaign “ushered in the modern candidate-centered campaign.”³⁰⁷ Many believe that Richard Nixon’s sickly appearance next to the handsome John F. Kennedy in the first televised debate was a factor in Kennedy’s victory in the 1960 election. “It’s now common knowledge,” Kayla Webley for *Time Magazine* said, “that without the nation’s first televised debate [...] Kennedy would never have

³⁰² Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35.

³⁰³ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 191.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

³⁰⁵ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 297.

³⁰⁶ Troy, *See How They Ran*, 245.

³⁰⁷ Kathryn Cramer Brownwell, “This is How Presidential Campaign Ads First Got on TV,” *Time Magazine*, August 30, 2016, <http://time.com/4471657/political-tv-ads-history/>.

been president.”³⁰⁸ The television led to a greater emphasis on candidate-focused publicity as it brought a new platform for candidates to campaign using established methods, but it did not create it.

No technology medium thus far has “become infused into the political process with the rapidity that social media has been.”³⁰⁹ In the recent 2016 election, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton both took political mudslinging to an unprecedented level. Furthermore, the ability for candidates to directly appeal to voters with their tailored message across a variety of platforms continues to blend entertainment and information. More so in the 2016 election than ever before America saw celebrity politics, campaign mudslinging and an amplified candidate-centric campaign style.

Even at a time when America is at a peak in political polarization due to selective exposure online, party leaders are not what determines election outcomes. The party-centric, absent-candidate campaign style of 120 years ago has disappeared. In the most recent election, Trump, the winning candidate, was not a selection of the party, and was in fact, a true celebrity. The world of extravagant expectations that consumes Americans, laid out in Daniel Boorstin’s *The Image*, has led to the entertaining style of modern campaigning. “The highlights of our political history,” Greenberg said, “have often been consciously forged not by men of impeccable virtue and purity of heart but by the careful and caring labors of speechwriters, pollsters, image crafters, and other professional spinners.”³¹⁰ Publicity experts who run

³⁰⁸ Kayla Webley, “How the Nixon-Kennedy Debate Changed the World,” *Time Magazine*, September 23, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2021078,00.html>.

³⁰⁹ Hong and Nadler, “Which Candidate Do The Public Discuss Online in an Election Campaign?: The Use of Social Media by the 2012 Presidential Candidates and Its Impact on Candidate Salience,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2012): 456.

³¹⁰ Greenberg, *Republic of Spin*, 448.

campaigns are historical figures, writing history with each new technique to fit the mold of whatever new medium arises.

The work by these experts allows us to rethink the evolution of publicity in political campaigns. Robert Woolley began the era of modern publicity experts with his structured management and implementation of new techniques in a new candidate-centric era with new mediums. Albert Lasker brought professional advertising into the world of political campaigning which set the precedent for future campaigns. Charles Michelson successfully conducted one of the biggest mudslinging campaigns in history sullyng Hoover's name and depicting Roosevelt as the savior America needed.

As the political parties started to lose their tight control over elections, publicity experts slowly began gaining control. Today, candidates rely on such leaders to get them elected. While modern political publicity techniques continue to evolve at an expedient rate with new technological advancements and methods of outreach, the foundations for successful publicity remain with the pioneers of the early-to-mid-1900's.

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