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Vassar College

**Duck and Cover:
The Dissemination of Domestic Cold War Propaganda from 1947 to 1957 and Its Lasting
Impact on Race Relations**

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

Angelie Hu

Faculty Advisor: Professor Eileen Leonard

May 2021

Abstract

In this thesis I unpack the ideology of American Exceptionalism to reveal its roots in white supremacy. I then tie the Cold War's promotion of this ideology with the perception of civil rights movements both during the Cold War and today.

Drawing from post hoc analysis in the fields of sociology, political science, Cold War studies, media studies, and education, I explore the historical context of the Cold War and what led to its development, the popular sentiment of American society regarding race during the Cold War era, and official government response to shifts of social consciousness within the larger conditions of the Civil Rights Movement on the domestic front and decolonial movements that were occurring worldwide. I further assess the impact of the government's partnership with independent media, the role of the public school system in the indoctrination and/or assimilation of American children, and the application of these historical patterns to the activism of the front of racial justice that is taking place today, one example of such work being the Black Lives Matter movement.

Acknowledgements

To begin, I would like to thank Professor Eileen Leonard for her invaluable assistance throughout this process. You struck the perfect balance between support and necessary critique and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your ability to string together my incoherent thoughts in a logical, applicable, and precise manner.

I'd also like to thank Professor Light Carruyo for her help as my major advisor for the last four years, as well as Professors Eréndira Rueda and Abigail Coplin for teaching the classes I've cherished most in my time at Vassar. Your work and pedagogy have made me confident that I picked the right major.

Itamar Ben-Porath, you've made many seminars all the more bearable by your being in the trenches with me. Your input and thoughtful analysis have made my world expand beyond what I could imagine. I don't know anyone else who could pull off using Bourdieu in everyday life, but somehow you make it work. Our thesis writing sessions were the highlight of my weeks in quarantine.

Additional thanks to Julia Mastandrea for being the best proof-reader a person could ask for. Sorry for all the run-on sentences and mid-paragraph tense changes. My brain doesn't make any sense, but we don't both make sense together.

Above all, I'd like to thank my parents – Sarah and Dan Hu. Mom, You've been my hero since I knew what a hero could be. Is it really a surprise I became a sociologist too? Dad, You're my steady rock that never falters. I know that I can always count on you to have my back (or call me out when I'm being ridiculous). I love you. I appreciate you. I will never be able to thank you both for all that you've given me.

Finally, I'd like to thank Flora Fox, may her memory be a blessing. Without her I would not be here today. Hopefully she would be proud of the person I am and the person I will become.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this thesis, I explore how Cold War propaganda – with a special interest regarding its dissemination through the public school system – laid a foundation of American nationalism and exceptionalism that distinctly shapes modern day iterations of white supremacy. This is not to say that white supremacy, white nationalism, or American exceptionalism were invented in the McCarthy era. This is certainly not the case, as the swaths of statements from colonized Indigenous communities, former slaves, and vehement white supremacists can attest to. White nationalism has existed for as long as white people have needed to classify themselves as white in order to distinguish themselves apart from Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). I do, however, believe that without the Cold War and the cultural shifts that resulted from it in American society, white nationalism would be very different than its currently iteration with its direct linkage to American identity as rooted in Capitalist consumerism as a marker of success.

The Cold War was, and continues to be, formative to our understanding of American identity in ways that those of us who only learn of this era in a historical context can barely begin to understand. The Cold War era is generally agreed upon to be the period of time from 1947 and the creation of the Truman Doctrine to 1991 and the fall of the Soviet Union. Even now, many historians argue that the Cold War is ongoing and never truly ended (Hopf 2012). This is a broad and intensely fraught period, and the influence of these years on our current world cannot be overstated. For the sake of this paper, I will limit the span of my research and focus on the period from 1947 to 1957, which includes the rise of McCarthyism and the subsequent Red Scare. This was the moment within the Cold War era where the most academic analysis and preservation of primary sources could be located with the resources available.

As someone interested in film and media studies, I am familiar with the fact that there are academic disputes about what specifically qualifies as propaganda. With a broad enough definition, any film could be considered a piece of propaganda. For the sake of operationalizing this term, I define propaganda as a piece of media (books, posters, slogans, films, advertisements, etc.) developed directly (via governmental institutions themselves) or indirectly (via government funding, or independent producers coordinating with the government to ensure a homogeneity of ideals across different forms of content) by the United States government which serves to imbue the consumer of the media with a specific ideology of patriotism, duty, and belonging that serves to strategically benefit the United States. This can occur tangibly- one example being the weaponization of children in the realm of government policy as touched upon by Victoria Grieve in her book *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*. More generally, this work can be done by assisting the conception of the U.S. in opinion making efforts abroad and effecting international politics. Often times this propaganda was then circulated throughout the public school system (as well as other media outlets such as television programs or public service announcements) with the goal of educating not only students but the population at large. Key to this definition is my understanding of propaganda not as inherently insidious or dishonest but rather as biased in a manner that is designed to proliferate such bias in those who view it- it frames its strategic nondisclosure of information as indisputable and even claims that those who question the validity of the information are conspiracists, heretics, or, God forbid, un-patriotic.

All content presented as fact has the potential for bias. The fact that the United States has historically used propaganda against foreign adversaries in their home markets is well known. It is a founded tenet of well documented research and is even overtly stated in government policy,

such as the National Security Act of 1947 and the subsequent creation of the Central Intelligence Agency. The fact that the same tactics were used against the United States' own populace is somewhat less recognized—bringing this to the forefront of conversations about Cold War America is the larger hope of this thesis.

Of equal importance to this thesis is the clarification of the term 'American Exceptionalism'. I have come to define this as the core belief of white American superiority that can be traced back to the first settlers in North America and in turn comes to be a foundation for American identity. This core belief can be found in numerous concepts that shape the identity of our nation – patriotism, imperialism, homogeneity, specific religious ideology, assimilation, white nationalism, and white supremacy. In this sense, American Exceptionalism as I view it is an extension of the understanding of white Christian men as the norm and everyone else as the exception.

It is key to recognize that as I discuss the dissemination of propaganda to the public via public schools, there is still a wide range of experiences in the public schooling system that are dependent on states and local legislation. This can vary further depending on specific districts or even individual teachers and their personal interpretations of the role of education in our world. The ideals of assimilation, cultivation of critical thinking skills, or preparation of a Capitalist workforce within one's pedagogy all lead to varying approaches towards teaching and the development of different skills. Instilling patriotic values and preparing children for future engagement with the system of Capitalism came to be the dominant purpose of public education in the time of the Cold War. The factors I discuss as shaping the public schooling system did not impact everyone in the same way or to the same extent. I hope to provide an overview of what the American public schooling system looked like in these years while still acknowledging that

what I say will not be accurate to the experience of every student in every school across the country. While generalizations are unavoidable in this instance, I will root my description in evidence found through research in order to make room for nuance and difference.

Methodology

My methodological approach will primarily be one of library and database centered research. I will utilize secondhand documents such as post hoc analysis published in the fields of Cold War Studies, Education, and Media Studies (concerning propaganda) as well as general American culture in the Cold War era. I additionally investigate primary source documents that are relevant to my topic such as posters, images, films shown in schools, or government policy and legislation outlining the aim of the Cold War. I hope to center a multidisciplinary approach in my research process, especially because my topic interacts with many fields of study.

Justification

My research necessitates engaging in a variety of topics – namely the Cold War, propaganda, education, American exceptionalism, and white nationalism. Research involving these subjects in a self-contained sense is well established. While there are some sources that consider the interactions of a few of these broader topics, I have found nothing that engages with these fields in the precise way that I hope to. Furthermore, I have found that works engaging with these subjects are often authored or co authored by individuals who have a very specific area of expertise. Experts in Cold War Studies analyze the effects of propaganda, but they do so from a Cold War historian's very specific point of view. As someone who is interested in multiple fields, I found this approach limiting. I believe that by virtue of being a sociologist (an

already incredibly broad course of study) who is also interested in education and media studies, I believe that I am uniquely situated to bring my breadth of knowledge in these subjects to the fore in my research instead of attempting a more depth centered approach to a specific topic.

Through this research, I hope to synthesize numerous subjects that have a practical effect on our understanding of the modern world. I argue that it is most palatable to understand our current society by assessing similar events that have occurred in the past – this thesis explicitly lends itself to this approach. This allows a certain amount of emotional distance and space that provides readers with the opportunity to come at the material with a sense of even-handedness that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. By not only highlighting the use of the public school system as a tool for dissemination of propaganda in the Cold War era but *explicitly analyzing* how this effects *current* iterations of white supremacy and white nationalism, we have the opportunity to learn from our past so that we can recognize the same systems at play in current political climates. By learning where we have been, we can see where we are going. If we are lucky, perhaps we can recognize these patterns early enough to change the ultimate outcome.

Chapter Two: Cold War Era America

Government Stance, Foreign Policy, and Effects on American Public Life

The first resource we have in analyzing American culture during the Cold War era is looking at primary sources regarding the stance of the U.S. government. While such documents do not necessarily provide an accurate portrayal of public opinion and cannot point to the complexities present in any period of time where social upheaval is rampant, it cannot be denied that the official stance plays a large role in shaping the realities of public life.

The first such source we can examine is the Truman Doctrine. Written in 1947 and generally considered the indicator of the beginning of the Cold War era, then President Truman outlined a policy of intervention in international conflict. Marking a shift from prior policies of withdrawal, Truman established that the U.S. would offer economic, political, and military assistance to democratic nations that were under threat of authoritarian forces. In putting forth a policy of containment, this document would come to shape U.S. response to the perceived Communist threat during the Cold War and beyond. Implicitly, it further communicated the superiority and necessity of American military might to assist the helpless and heavily racialized Third World¹. Aptly described as “benevolent supremacy” by Grieve in *Little Cold Warriors*, this perceived inability of other countries to defend themselves against Communism is used to this day as a justification for the continued presence of the U.S. military in a slew of conflicts around the world. This policy laid the foundation for the later escalation of approaches such as Mutually Assured Destruction and Nuclear Deterrence that shaped the later years of the Cold War, after we became aware that the U.S.S.R. had undertaken nuclear testing and had likely been

¹ It is important to clarify that I say ‘Third World’ in the original sense of the term— meaning not allied with the U.S. and its European Allies or the U.S.S.R. and the Communist Bloc during the Cold War. Now, the term is considered synonymous with other loaded terms such as ‘developing world’ or ‘the global south’ suggesting thinly veiled racism while discussing countries with low GDPs. All of these terms have their own issues

successful in the development of their own atomic bomb to counter the United States' previously held exclusive domain regarding nuclear weapons. Guy Oakes states that "The loss of the American nuclear monopoly obviously reduced the relative military advantage that the atomic bomb had given the United States. Nuclear weapons as a means of deterring Soviet aggression could no longer be counted on with confidence" (Oakes 1994:49).

Coming after the close of WWII, The Truman Doctrine was the logical continuation of justification of U.S. involvement in the war. The United States had been reticent during the beginning of WWII, hesitant to get involved and even going as far as to turn away European refugees. Only after the bombing of Pearl Harbor was popular opinion swayed towards intervention and even then, it was mostly understood as being a response to direct attack rather than for the sake of any moral opposition to the fascism spreading across Europe. The perfect storm of conditions that led to the Cold War can be found in the events and shifts of policy that occurred during and after WWII.

The Marshall Plan, enacted the following year in 1948, took the Truman Doctrine one step further and ensured that the U.S. would actively provide aid to numerous countries in Western Europe in an effort to finance rebuilding efforts to repair damage done to infrastructure during the war. This document would later lead to the resurgence of European industrialization and the economic dominance of the U.S. throughout Western Europe. It is telling that the Marshall Plan was the first piece of legislation to institutionalize the concept of foreign aid in the United States as we know it today, and legitimized it as a route by which the U.S. could not only avoid international conflict but exert power in a (only slightly) less overtly colonial sense. Kenneth Osgood explains, "U.S. officials [packaged] U.S. foreign policy objectives so that they appeared noble, restrained, and fundamentally defensive" (Osgood 2002:89). It would be a

mistake to claim that this aid was purely altruistic, despite how officials attempted to mediate such governmental response. It also served to bolster the U.S. economy and created a vast new viable market for American goods in previous strongholds of the Soviet Union. Here, the intent to minimize Communist power abroad was present, but not overtly evident. It was not until the implementation of the Point Four Program in 1949 and the Mutual Security Act of 1951 that using the economic, military, and technical aid of the United States to curtail Soviet power and the spread of Communism was made blatant.

Truman's desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948 was considered a logical step towards the improvement of American military prowess and a way to better the perception of America in the countries in which they were involved in conflicts. It further made it clear that the Truman administration and the liberal establishment was on the side of desegregation not only for the armed forces but for the country as a whole. This display of leadership in combatting Jim Crow legislation certainly impacted how Civil Rights efforts would be accepted or rejected in the coming years.

A number of other pieces of legislation can aid in the understanding of the government's stance during the McCarthy Era. The National Security Act of 1947 created the CIA as a government agency whose goal was to enact covert psychological warfare on Communist countries. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 institutionalized the distribution of pro-American propaganda to foreign audiences and worked in tandem with the Ad Counsel (a private organization previously known as the War Advertising Counsel) to disseminate similar (if not identical) content on the domestic front. Other formative policies include NSC-68 (which clarified the policy of containment and suggested that the United States expand its military force and nuclear arsenal), and Truman's "Campaign of Truth" (which increased the budget for

propaganda output and ultimately shifted the style and information of the propaganda made by the U.S. to be more divisive and blatant).

Proxy wars were another method of the United States' exertion of its newfound interventionist policy. Proxy wars were a key tool in the larger anti-Communist arsenal of the United States' foreign policy during the Cold War and entailed military and/or economic intervention to uphold the superiority of Capitalism by stepping into a number of foreign conflicts involving Communist forces. While the Korean War from 1950-1953 is perhaps the most well recognized example of Cold War proxy wars, a number of other involvements are noteworthy, including but not limited to the Chinese and Greek Civil Wars both lasting from 1944-1949, the Iranian Crisis of 1946, the Paraguayan Civil War of 1947, the first and second Indochina Wars from 1946-1954 and 1953-1975 respectively, and the Algerian War from 1954-1962.

Civil Defense

A book published by the National Security Resources Board known simply as *United States Civil Defense* (or more unofficially as *The Blue Book*) sets forth civil defense as a conceptual approach to national security and was championed during the Cold War. As a policy, civil defense was beneficial for the government because it made national security in the face of atomic war an individual issue. Regardless of whether every single family in America could afford to build a fallout shelter in their backyard, if one succumbed to radiation poisoning or other ill health effects after a bomb was dropped it was because they simply were not diligent enough. Besides the benefit of showing that the government was doing something tangible to protect its citizens (information about building shelters, home protection exercises and drills,

proper fallout procedures, emergency first aid, and even how to make a bomb shelter more homey were easily accessible), civil defense also absolved the government of the responsibility of their inevitable failure to protect the American people should a bomb actually be dropped. It was an attempt to encourage a unified national effort to acknowledge the importance of preparedness, emotional self-mastery, and level-headedness under pressure. Most importantly, it brought public attitudes regarding the atom bomb into conformity with the goals of national security, albeit with the public bending more to the whim of the government than vice versa.

Of course, it is vital to convey that the goal of civil defense was not *actually* to save lives. The government did not pretend to believe that civil defense was an attempt to prepare the American people for survival in the face of atomic threat. Instead, it enacted this policy out of self preservation— a sense of *for the larger good*. It embodied a belief described by Oakes when he stated that

America's strength "lies first, last, and always in our people," an enemy unable to crush the American will to fight could not win a war against the United States. [...] [But in the event of a nuclear strike] the catastrophe might be so overwhelming that it would crush the determination of the American people to resist. In that case, "America, as we know it, could cease to exist." (Oakes 1994:39).

Rather than attempting to save lives, civil defense aimed to minimize the effects of ensuing panic and social anarchy should a bomb be dropped. The government held that

in spite of – or perhaps precisely because of– the immense destruction that could be produced by an atomic bomb, its primary military value was moral and psychological [...] The war would be won by the side that exploited most effectively [...] the "psychological implication" of the bomb: its capacity to terrify and demoralize potential victims (Oakes 1994:35).

The government's goal, then, was to minimize the fear that the bomb struck into the hearts of Americans. Oakes adds that "if the public believed in self-protection, the moral underpinnings of American national security would be secure. [...] The real objective of civil defense, then, was

not to protect the public in a nuclear attack. That was impossible. Rather, civil defense would forestall such an attack by creating a popular tolerance for deterrence” (1994:7). In making sure that the American people were prepared for the worst, there would be no need for the Soviets to drop an atomic bomb in the first place.

It is disconcerting to consider the cold calculations done on the part of the government to uphold this policy. Grieve plainly lays out the social engineering done to create an environment ripe for the acceptance of governmental authority and control, explaining that the government had documented plans to

initiate a psychological “scare campaign,” laying out what the public needed to know about the sobering facts of nuclear war and the hazards America faced in opposing a Soviet Union armed with nuclear weapons. Once the fears of Americans were aroused and they were shaken out of their apathy, the government would move immediately to the second step: a program of “public information” designed to persuade the American people that victory in the Cold War was not merely a matter of which side had the bigger air force, the more powerful nuclear weapons, or the superior military strategy. [...] The outcome of the contest with the Soviets would depend on the American people themselves: their ability to conquer the new and terrible fears created by the possibility of nuclear war and their determination to make the sacrifices that were the burden of world leadership in the nuclear era. (Grieve 1994:31-32).

The fact that the truth was included in information provided to the American people was not out of any sense of governmental obligation. Rather, it was a byproduct of the necessity of maintaining an image of American stability and superiority.

Of course, there were social aspects to this sense of patriotic responsibility. Oakes describes that “the forbidding technological, political, and economic problem of devising plausible strategies for nuclear attack was translated into a much more tractable, personal, psychological, and therapeutic problem for which the individual was finally responsible: How do I make sure that I do not become a Communist dupe, a danger to American security, and the principal weapon in the Soviet project of world domination?” (Oakes 1994:62).

The more long term effect of this was that “all the interests and values of American life were subordinated to the endless quest for national security. Citizens were reduced to the skills and disciplines needed to mold them into serviceable tools of civil defense” (Oakes 1994:108). In a soldier-less war, the American people themselves became the tools the government wielded to stave off nuclear destruction.

American Culture

Any analysis of the Cold War era would be incomplete without an in-depth contextual understanding of what specifically led to the creation of the U.S. propaganda machine. In this section, I hope to provide background knowledge and explain where the United States is today by analyzing the circumstances that brought us here.

After the victory of WWII in 1945, the United States was catapulted out of the Great Depression and into an era of post-war economic prosperity. Now that individuals had more spending money, there was greater consumerism and subsequently a greater circulation of goods. Increased industrialization enabled supply to meet this new level of demand. Developments in technological capability led to the popularization of television as a medium of both information circulation and entertainment (allowed for by the combination of aforementioned industrialization and post-war economic conditions).

Increased consumerism in the post-war years was also boosted by its direct link with patriotism in the minds of the American public. In a battle against competing economic systems, perhaps the best way to show the virtues of Capitalism was to buy more things produced under the capitalist system. Grieve states that “The advertising industry reinforced American values by equating freedom of choice with consumer options and ‘the good life’ with the acquisition of

material goods [...] in the economic boom of the 1950s, middle-class leisure and national abundance served as evidence of American superiority in the Cold War” (2018:126). This constructed image of American values “linked American domesticity, whiteness, abundance, and consumerism with national security and imagined these as threatened by foreign economic and political ideologies” (Grieve 2018:131). Notions of meritocracy and the superiority of Capitalism abounded. Grieve continues, “the secret of American success was *productivity*, and the secret of continuing American success was *more productivity*. The more goods produced per hour of work, the higher the standard of living [...] constantly expanding productivity was therefore a *national necessity*” (Grieve 2018:131-133). In such an environment, the level of an individual’s contribution to American greatness and the success of Capitalism could be tangibly measured in how much they acted as a consumer of goods. Consumerism was not only bolstered by the battle of economic ideologies, but the Cold War itself was used to sell products. In a war without physical conflict, spending became a way for everyday citizens to feel that they were personally fighting and winning the war against Communism.

In the post WWII era, commonly held beliefs regarding Communism (bolstered by government propaganda) held that the only reason a *true American* would consider Communism as a viable alternative to Capitalism was either out of ignorance, apathy, or a sense of active disloyalty to the Nation. A number of organizations with roots both inside and outside of government institutions held rallies, festivals, or other spectacle-like events to combat these perceived sources of unpatriotic sentiment. Holidays like Flag Day, I Am an American Day, Loyalty Week, and others were devised to encourage nationalism in specific groups perceived to be at ‘high risk’ for Communist infiltration – these groups generally consisted of recent immigrants, leftist activist groups, unions, and community/identity groups for Black, Indigenous,

and other people of color (Fried 1998). From an assimilationist perspective, these holidays acted as blatant displays of patriotism. They were therefore opportunities for these communities to display their embracing of Americanism and hopefully pave the path towards their acceptance into American culture.

The Question of Race

Of course, one cannot disregard the fact that the Cold War era was simultaneously a period of dramatic social upheaval on the front of racial justice. The doctrine of separate but equal, and the racist logic behind it, was the law of the land until the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954. Unofficially, segregation continued even past that landmark case in the form of Jim Crow laws, Black codes, the emboldening of white supremacist organizations such as the Klu Klux Klan, and other discriminatory practices such as red lining which obfuscate the link between policy and overt racism. This led, to borrow a term from STS scholar Sheila Jasanoff, to a distinct co-production of anti-Communism and segregation efforts (Jasanoff 2012).

The growing impact of civil rights organizations such as the NAACP in the social consciousness of the time period led to increased federal scrutiny placed on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. In order to delegitimize the efforts of such organizations on the front of racial justice, segregationist forces (including but not limited to local organizations, local government, or prominent community figures) fostered a distinct linkage of Communism with the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement and various Black led organizations within it.

With the prominence of such connections, anti-Communist legislation was a useful tool for hindering the work of the Civil Rights Movement. Jeff Woods, in his book *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948 – 1968*, states that prominent

segregationist figures continuously equated social reform with the nefarious and growing influence of foreign Communist powers (Woods 2004:48). He goes on to detail how anti-Communist policy became weaponized against civil rights organizations, stating that

Even those unjustly accused could be jailed, lose their jobs, endure physical abuse, and face ostracism in their communities. Southern segregationist anti-Communists [...] exacerbated an existing rift in the civil rights ranks by forcing leaders to publicly declare whether or not the movement would accept the aid of Communists. For some movement activists, purging Communists meant alienating a valued ally and giving in to the concerns of red and black investigators. But for others, accepting Communist aid meant the destruction of an even more valued alliance— that with liberal anti-Communist politicians who controlled the fate of federal civil- and voting-rights legislation (Woods 2004:9).

This strategic delegitimization of groups like the NAACP through linkages with Communist infiltration served to further invalidate integration efforts and halt the progress of such groups for the foreseeable future, particularly in the South. Woods explains that “It was the tendency of southern conservatives to equate Communism with socialism, socialism with liberalism, and liberalism with an assertive federal power. Thus it was natural for them to portray the events in Little Rock as a long stride toward the development of a Soviet-style, collectivist police force in America” (Woods 2004:70). The fact that the organization as a whole, as well as prominent individual figures in the group’s leadership, had all denounced Communism was not of import. The optics and media coverage were enough to put a stop to efforts pushing for desegregation.

This work was not limited to small local groups— in fact it extended to federal institutions as an arm of the state and functioned as a method to maintain the racial status quo. Woods highlights the importance of these co-efforts in his assertion that “the work of [the FBI] was buttressed by a regional propaganda machine led by the Citizens’ Councils, their offshoots, the conservative press, and local and state politicians [...] federal, state, and local friends of the

southern-nationalist cause devoted huge amounts of time, money, and human resources to exposing the alleged black and red conspiracy” (Woods 2004:6). Woods additionally highlights the importance of local groups, known as ‘Little FBIs’ or “Little HUACs’, as a tool to further the influence of the FBI. Woods states that “If the FBI could only selectively support the [...] red scare, the ‘little FBIs’ could offer their full attention to the cause” (Woods 2004:92).

While Woods presents a rather top-down image of segregationist policy that could be interpreted as absolving segregationists of responsibility, he recognizes that “the [red] scare would not have existed without popular support. White working-class southerners needed little convincing from elites that Communism and integration were part of a unified threat to the region and the nation” (Woods 2004:6). This anti-Communism was further weaponized in that it presented segregationist politicians with a rhetorical foothold to speak to national audiences. While white people across the U.S. may have been ambiguous about their attitudes towards racial justice, they were unified in their hatred for Communism and would do all they possibly could to limit the infiltration of Communists into American culture. The distinctly southern brand of anti-Communism was, as Woods calls it, “an exportable commodity” (Woods 2004:7).

In the South, this led to the cultivation of a specific brand of southern nationalism – one that linked the ideals of the white South with the nation as a whole and painted a picture of the South as the last true pillar of true Americanism, which in turn made a distinct claim regarding the question of race and its place in American society.

Communism as a concept was nimble and could be utilized for, at times, contradictory purposes across the political spectrum. For segregationists, the existence of a multiracial society was itself evidence of the infiltration of Communists at the highest levels of government.

Thomas Borstelmann in his book *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in*

the Global Arena succinctly points out this cyclical logic when he states that segregationists held that “If Communists and other radicals supported racial equality [...] what clearer evidence could there be of its subversiveness?” (Borstelmann 2001:65). For anti-segregationists, the upholding of existing racial hierarchies gave the rest of the world a foothold through which to critique the failures of the United States, and therefore Capitalism. Through such public events as the murder of Emmett Till in 1955 and the experiences of the Little Rock Nine at the hands of white Arkansas segregationist protesters in 1957, Eisenhower recognized the need for at least surface level change for the United States appear to the international political sphere as a deserving moral leader of the ‘free world’. It was this combination of domestic and international pressure that eventually led to Eisenhower’s reluctant signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into action, but only as a last resort to repair the image of America abroad. It is unsurprising that Eisenhower did not directly center Civil Rights in his administration. After all, as Borstelmann puts it, “The very idea of a containment of domestic racism cut directly against the grain of a major purpose of postwar U.S. foreign policy: to assert American leadership around the globe, thus exposing more rather than less of Americans and American culture to other nations” (Borstelmann 2001: 74).

The Civil Rights Movement is often discussed in a solely domestic context, disparaging the impact of this homegrown activist movement on the front of international policy in the context of the Cold War.

Besides this linkage of domestic civil rights organizations and individual leaders with the Communist party, many decolonial activists abroad fighting Western European powers in their countries sympathized with the Black struggle for civil rights on the domestic front of the United States. Borstelmann nicely outlines the interconnected nature of perceptions of race in the United

States and the Cold War when he asserts that, “the domestic civil rights movement and what might be called the international civil rights movement of anticolonialism moved on parallel tracks. African Americans sought to vote in the American South, while Africans and Asians strove for self-government. [...] The tradition of white supremacy in the United States was embedded in a broader global pattern of white control over people of color, and both systems of inequality appeared to some to be directly related” (Borstelmann 2001:46). In the Cold War era then, domestic policy was the maker (or breaker) of international perception of the United States and therefore the marker by which success or failure in the Cold War could be measured.

Borstelmann illustrates the linkage between domestic and foreign policy in quoting Connecticut congressman Chester Bowles, who asserted that “the division between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ policies no longer has meaning” (Borstelmann 2001:86). Race was therefore at the forefront of the minds of government officials during the Cold War.

The use of domestic propaganda to shape perceptions of marginalized racial groups was not a new tactic during the Cold War and it is not new today. Still, the Cold War brought to light just how tactfully these conceptions of race were constructed. During World War II, Japan (and therefore Japanese people) were seen as the enemy of the United States after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. With Japan having allied themselves with the Axis powers, imagery throughout a wide array of domestic media painted Japanese people as cunning, deceitful, and power hungry. On the other hand, China had fallen in line with the Allied Powers and as a result were seen as business-oriented and democratic in U.S. media. With the Cold War occurring as Japan continued to be under U.S. occupation until 1952 and China’s civil war resulted in a fall to Communism in 1949, these racialized scripts did a complete one-eighty. Japan was now seen as hospitable and non-threatening, while China’s newly developing Communism was seen as

savage and untrustworthy. Indeed, even the Soviet Union's Communism was justified via their racialized Asian-ness. Borstelmann reveals the opinions of policymakers when he states that many believed that "The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had stripped away the 'westernized upper crust' of the old tsarist elite, revealing Russians in their true form as 'a 17th century semi-Asiatic people'. It was Asia [...] that had done so much to corrupt the healthier 'European' elements of Russian life and character [...] and that now made it imperative to contain the USSR within its own boundaries" (Borstelmann 2001:50). A biological view of race was weaponized as a tool to justify U.S. policy- a pattern which persists in our current era. Our understandings of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s cannot be separated from the context of its place in the Civil War – to do so would be to misrepresent the cause of policy change and mischaracterize the intent of government officials in making such adjustments. From a federal viewpoint, such legislation as the Civil Rights Act of 1957 was only implemented as a ploy for leverage in the international sphere to not push neutral countries, many of which in the midst of anticolonial movements themselves, into the open arms of Soviet Communism. These official changes rarely resulted in a meaningful difference in Black experiences on the Homefront. Instead, they are more accurately understood as a strategy to accrue political power than as pointing to an egalitarian belief of race in the hearts and minds of U.S. government officials.

Propaganda, the Government, and the Media

Television's rise to prominence set the stage for the diffusion of propaganda directly into the homes of the American populace. For the first time, the American public had immediate access to multiple visually stimulating news programs and sources of entertainment, each with their own sets of biases and agendas. Not since the advent of the radio had there been such a shift

in unfettered access to information. With the visual component of television, viewers were able to witness firsthand images of war. This led to a more intimate understanding of the danger of international threats and the importance of security on the domestic front. Osgood explains the link between the official propaganda machine of the U.S. government and the more 'independent' or 'objective' news broadcasts that grew out of the development of television as a medium. He complicates the perceived hard line of separation between the two apparatus when he claims that that

Television [...] showed government footage of Communist activities, depicted U.S. defense preparations, and regularly interviewed generals, admirals, and high-ranking civilian officials who authoritatively defended U.S. Cold War policies. [...] Cold War propaganda came in the form of educational entertainment as much as news. [...] These programs were made possible by a cooperative relationship between government officials and representatives of powerful media organizations in the United States. Government officials reviewed scripts, provided footage, developed ideas for stories, subsidized production costs, and, in some cases, produced whole programs with only a minimum of assistance from the networks. In return, the television networks received free or inexpensive programming and fulfilled their patriotic duty in a time of national emergency. This collaboration between government propaganda specialists and private news organizations was shielded from the public by the idea of the "free press," which held that because news organizations were privately controlled, they were free from government manipulation. (Osgood 2002:103-104).

With this new democratization of information, there was no end to potential sources of constant fear in a child's life. Between television's thinly veiled messages of the importance of patriotism, signs at every corner marking emergency evacuation routes, and regular tests of emergency broadcasting and siren systems, the Cold War was more than an ideological debate. It became a tangible disruption in the daily lives of the American people, each time reifying the threat of nuclear destruction.

Television was not the only medium which aimed to spread ideals of patriotism, consumerism, and individualism. Grieve describes how art itself was used to demonstrate the superiority of American culture, stating that "American literature, modern art, theatre, dance, and

music, not to mention travelling industrial exhibitions and World's Fairs, were considered prime areas in which to showcase American high culture and material progress. In part, American policy-makers were determined to discredit Soviet accusations of the materialism and crass consumerism of American life" (Grieve 2018:6). Even (or perhaps especially) media intended for children such as comic books, cartoons, radio shows, and movies played a crucial role in mobilizing children towards the war effort (Grieve 2018:21). Grieve explains that comic book companies in particular had a popularity that allowed them to act "*in loco parentis* to inculcate appropriate values in America's children: anticommunism, corporatism, consumption, domesticity, middle-class aspirations, and foreign policy assumptions based on the benevolent supremacy of the United States" (Grieve 2018:40).

Still, it is important to note that children were not victims or passive recipients of the beliefs of the government or even their teachers, and indeed they often took an active role in the Cold War's mechanism of perpetuating American superiority. In fact, it is the agency that American children had as opposed to the perceived coercion of Soviet children that enabled them to be perfectly suited to this work. Victoria Grieve asserts that

American children actively fought the Cold War on the home front and abroad in many ways. Children watched their heroes battle Communism in its various guises on television, in the movies, and in comic books; children themselves practiced safety drills, joined civil preparedness groups, and helped to build and stock bomb shelters in the backyard. Children collected coins for UNICEF, exchanged art with other children around the world, prepared for nuclear war through the Boy and Girl scouts, raised funds for Radio Free Europe, sent clothing to refugee children, and donated books to restock the diminished library shelves of war-torn Europe. Rather than rationing and saving, Americans were told to spend and consume in order to maintain the engine of American prosperity. In these capacities, American children functioned as ambassadors, cultural diplomats, and representatives of the United States (Grieve 2018:2).

In fact, the roles that school age children took on often could not be undertaken by anyone else. The positionality of these children was effectively weaponized by the U.S. government.

Grieve further explains,

the volunteer labor and global engagement of financially secure, “apolitical” American children [was] a demonstration of the superiority of American capitalism over Soviet Communism. As physical manifestations of the American “way of life,” the healthy and cared-for bodies of American children and the material goods they donated to less fortunate children around the world functioned as propaganda. But because American children were constructed as apolitical, their work could be framed instead as innocent efforts to establish “world friendship” [...] American children understood that [...] continued national supremacy and political freedom depended on their active and well-intentioned participation in world affairs to maintain that position (Grieve 2018:4).

It was this innocence embodied by American children that constituted the political work they did on behalf of the government. This paradox is essential to keep in mind as we unravel the implications of children’s involvement as actors in Cold War efforts: they were both symbols in and recipients of the propaganda directly and indirectly produced by the U.S. government.

Although it was not well known by the general public at the time, Cold War historians have uncovered the institutional and otherwise unspoken or unofficial ways in which the government and the media worked towards the same goal of educating (albeit in a heavily biased way) the American public concerning the threat of nuclear warfare.

This partnership between the U.S. government and the television industry was not accidental. Besides its ability to reach Americans in their own homes, Nancy Bernhard points out that it had ideological advantages. She states that “industry voluntarism was the preferred method for distributing war information in that it celebrated the free market and was free from the taint of totalitarian information control” (Bernhard 1999:14). The American devotion to freedom of thought necessitated that domestic propaganda not overtly declare itself as such; the involvement of the government had to be obfuscated to make programs seem spontaneous and more like the advertising Americans had become so accustomed to rather than blatant

manipulation of the U.S. citizenry. It is worth mentioning that the people of the United States were aware of the government's dissemination of propaganda abroad; it was when the same mechanism was turned inward that such activities began to be hidden for the sake of optics. These manipulative techniques borrowed from advertising, and even psychological warfare, were acceptable when applied to those of nonaligned countries whom the United States believed simply needed to be shown the virtues of Capitalism to turn away from the grasp of the Soviet Union. To do so to its own population would mean that the United States was no different from those it was campaigning against so heavily in the global sphere. As Bernhard puts it, "truth and principles were luxuries that the United States could not afford in the fight against Communism" (Bernhard 1999:184).

The National Association of Broadcasters helped to bolster and formalize this partnership between independent media industry professionals and the United States Government. In an era where all information had military implications, the NAB partnered with the government out of a sense of patriotic duty. Justin Miller, the president of the NAB from 1945 to 1951, stated that "the essential medium which we represent— capable of conveying to our people, instantly, messages of information, advice, and instruction in times of extreme necessity— is so vital to the preservation of our way of life, that anything less than readiness for complete self-mobilization would constitute serious dereliction of duty" (Bernhard 1999:98). The media, then, acted as a voluntary arm to bolster the power of the United States government – an ongoing partnership that continues to influence film and television production to this day.

Chapter Three: Propaganda in the Public School System

The State of the Public School System // The State and the Public School System

It is essential to understand the functioning of the public school system prior to and during the Cold War era. There were, of course, differences across districts, counties, and individual schools across the nation. Even so, federal court decisions, nationwide legislation, and primary sources from this time period can give us a well founded conceptualization of how the education system of the United States functioned. Here, the documented history of federal intervention into the public school system – something generally determined on a state-by-state basis – lays a precedent for understandings of the role of education as preparatory for an industrial capitalist workforce and furthermore as a locus from which the formation of American identity can be instilled in an entire generation at a time.

In the 1940s, the federal government increased funding to schools and made a nationwide push towards standardization of curriculum that laid the foundations for the public schooling system as we know it today. The main political motivation for this change was that during World War II, the U.S. government had to turn away millions of recruits due to their inability to read or write. Disparities in education came to light as it was discovered that a person's level of education was highly dependent on where they were raised. As soldiers went off to war, there became a shortage of skilled workers to man the home front. With the new demand for technical training, institutions of education were reformed to provide more opportunities to answer the growing necessity of a skilled workforce. As a whole, these changes in legislation marked a shift towards a view of education as a right instead of a privilege.

It is important to note that up until the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954, de jure segregation was prominent in public schools *across the nation* and was not limited

to the American South. Even after the *Brown v. Board* decision, de facto segregation was still firmly established and bolstered via practices of residential segregation, gerrymandering, and other legal loopholes. In fact, Gary Orfield and Susan Eaton assert in their 1996 book *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education* that the United States public education system is more severely segregated today than it was in the era leading up to the *Brown v. Board* decision. In this portion of the Cold War era, schools were officially shifting away from the de jure segregation present in the 1940s, but the implementation and later active dismantling of this decision meant that schools were still relatively racially homogenous during this time. It is also worth acknowledging that there was a stronger federal pressure towards desegregation in the South than in the North, and as a result schools in the North took a much longer time to desegregate in more than name. This poses a series of questions: What education did Black or otherwise non-white children receive? Did it play a different, perhaps more assimilatory role, than the education of white children? This information taken together acts as a key factor in understanding questions surrounding the formation of a singular American identity that have lasting impacts in our current world.

The Red Scare, generally defined as occurring from 1947 to 1957, brought the personal lives of many educated professionals and academics, including many teachers, into question. In order to keep their jobs and avoid suspicion, many teachers began to push against progressivism in their schools. In JoAnne Brown's piece "A is for Atom, B is for Bomb': Civil Defense in American Public Education 1948-1963," she outlines the environment of fear teachers faced, asserting that

Critics indicted "Progressive" education as "REDucation" and teachers as "little red hens" poisoning young minds with communistic ideology. The common basis of this wide-ranging criticism was not educational but geostrategic: weakness in the classroom meant weakness in the dangerous postwar world. Organized educators ultimately responded in

kind, arguing that education promised to redeem and defend American greatness at home and abroad (Brown 1988:72).

Even from the beginning, fear of Communism was directly linked with American Exceptionalism. Conceptualizations of the necessity of strength and discipline in wartime educators became moralized in the eyes of watchful parents. This link between defense and education would indeed shape the nature of the relationship of the government and the public school system in the Cold War era. It is indeed telling that President Truman frequently proclaimed, “Education is our first line of defense” (1949).

Debate over the content of textbooks, stemming from a small number of vocal fringe groups, was also pervasive. These activists feared what was being put into the minds of children, boldly asserting that the only solution was total removal of any hint of Communist sympathies, stating that “There is no in-between arrangement . . . whereby we can be a little socialist and a little free” (Zimmerman 2002:83). Those who believed this polarized persuasion went as far as attacking any hint of collectivism and disavowing discussion of the beneficial aspects of a Communist system or the failures of America. Zimmerman writes, “In the white hot politics of the Cold War, the suggestion that America needed *any* reform was ‘subversive’” (Zimmerman 2002:85). The reasoning behind the targeting of textbooks was that even if a teacher had Communist inclinations, only being able to teach using a limited number of preapproved patriotic textbooks would limit the impact of individual educators’ political preferences. Even so, the question of subversive textbooks only legitimately took hold in the South, where it was linked to the more looming threat of racial integration rather than Communism (Zimmerman 2002:83). On a national scale, this detail oriented centering of textbook loyalty was generally passed over in favor of the more widespread and accepted priority of clearing out Communist teachers and professors. By 1955, the campaign against textbooks was largely considered dead.

Failures to make tangible progress via routes of official legislation such as school boards, state legislatures, and Congress meant that the movement slowly ground to a halt.

Dissemination of Propaganda in Schools

Throughout the Cold War, Grieve states that “Americans frequently accused the Soviet Union of brainwashing their youngest citizens to accept and embrace Communism while maintaining that American children were free from state-sponsored propaganda” (Grieve 2018:3). The goal of this chapter is to display, primarily using historical analysis, that this was not the case.

Brown unpacks the link between government interest and civil defense and the public education system by specifically looking at the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), a government agency created by President Truman in 1950. Brown states that the FCDA developed

educational and propaganda materials intended to mobilize state and local agencies, as well as private individuals, to spend their own funds to implement programs. Although the FCDA did not limit its educational activities to the public schools, it found in the schools a system for conveying information to the public [...] Materials intended for use in schools constituted a large portion of all FCDA publications [...] the public schools were a channel for the mass education of parents as well as children. For their part, public school officials recognized in the new civil defense an opportunity to serve their country while fortifying their profession. The new civil defense ultimately allowed educators to demonstrate the importance of the nation's schools to national security, thereby justifying federal aid to education (Brown 1988:70)

The application of theories of civil defense, while not implemented without controversy, meant that the purpose of the education system was radically altered during the Cold War. Instead of educators teaching students reading, writing, and arithmetic skills for the sake of future success and preparation for participation in a Capitalist workforce, the imparting of these skills itself

became evidence of Capitalism's superiority over Communism. Schools became a place to instill patriotism and develop a new army of dedicated Cold Warriors. Grieve explains that,

public schools were charged with teaching "mental hygiene," social skills, civil defense, and more rigorous science and math training to compete with the Soviet Union, all while the school population boomed. [...] From the late 1940s to the 1960s, parents and politicians looked upon schools as crucial training grounds for preparing children to live in an uncertain and complicated world. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were no longer adequate preparation. Amidst fears of global Soviet competition, teachers were expected to go well beyond the three Rs and instruct children in particular interpretations of American history and heritage, democracy, government, economics, and "world understanding." Whether through academic or extracurricular activities, schools provided the most direct way to instill American youth with the fundamentals of patriotic citizenship (Grieve 2018:163).

Questions of the role of schools and education in the larger community in which they operate came to the fore, with most schools having architecture meant to allow them to act as shelters in the event of a bombing. Of course, educators wanted to prepare their students without terrifying them into a state of paralysis or causing long term emotional trauma. The simultaneous goals of the preservation of mental health and preparation of realistic possibility (albeit worse case scenarios) was a challenge faced by teachers across the nation, and this constant negotiation was recognized in the FCDA's constant encouragement of teachers to "alert, not alarm" (National Security Resources Board 1950). The theory of child centered-ness, which prioritized the psychological effects of pedagogy and addressing the state of constant fear in the world outside of the classroom, became a prominent method of balancing these seemingly contradictory goals.

While schools were seen as a direct pipeline for the government to instill Americanism and other anti-Communist ideology, they were also a source of material for the government to utilize in the exportation of the same ideology to countries around the world. Grieve points out that "Art and pen pal exchanges, book sales, and sister cities were all arranged through America's public schools. Civil defense programs like 'duck and cover' tied children's daily

school activities directly to Cold War preparedness. But other federal agencies, including the Treasury department, the Air Force, and the USIA relied on the public schools to mobilize children” (Grieve 2018:187). American children themselves became beacons signaling the successes of Capitalism – their art projects, descriptions of daily life, and other successes were used as evidence that America was not only *materially successful* but *morally correct*. American – specifically white and middle-class– children not only represented America and its ideology of democracy and freedom, they were held responsible for maintaining it for generations to come.

We have access to primary sources regarding some of these changes. Images of bomb drills (below), originally implemented as part of Truman’s FCDA, show the realities of what children experienced in schools during the years of McCarthyism.



Students practice an air raid drill in 1955. American Stock, Getty Images

Clearly the importance of grappling with this new modus operandi in the public school system cannot be overstated.

It is impossible to avoid the fact that the larger goal of public schooling, and arguably its most important purpose, was that of indoctrination into American society. According to many teachers of the Cold War era, “There is nothing wrong with indoctrination [...] the problem is [the] selections of principles to be indoctrinated” (Zimmerman 2002:100-101). This stance of

teachers emphasized the larger social trend of education and recognition of its role in national politics and identity rather than individual students. While some focused on education, there were others who “[argued] that America’s entire culture and politics– not just specific individuals or institutions– were veering towards socialism or even Communism. To these critics, the question of personal loyalty was often moot. However many actual ‘Reds’ it harbored, conservatives claimed, America increasingly shared the ‘collectivist’ ethos of its Communist foe” (Zimmerman 2002:82). It makes sense, then, that the proposed solution to increasing Communist sympathies was to focus on the flaws of the Communist system and instill patriotism by discussing the virtues of American Capitalism and the free market with their students. Educators had no qualms with using the Communist propaganda framework that they so feared for the opposite intent.

The subject of propaganda in public schools is one in which we have a significant amount of primary sources to draw from. Noting the differences in the language of the Pledge of Allegiance prior to the Cold War and after is one method of displaying the high priority placed on cultivating nationalism and a sense of American Identity. Eric Groce, Tina Heafner, and Elizabeth Bellows discuss how the timing of Senator McCarthy’s rise to prominence led to Eisenhower’s presidential campaign of “moral crusade and religious revival” (Groce et al. 2002:186) culminating in his presidential success in 1952. By the time President Dwight Eisenhower advocated for the addition of “Under God” to the Pledge in 1954, there was bipartisan approval for the addition. According to the authors, “patriotism and piety [...] ‘combined to serve as an ideological weapon against atheistic Communism’” (Groce et al 2013: 186). Groce et al. discuss the progression from the argument for the addition from religious figures and organizations to civic organizations and numerous congressional resolutions stating

that “Questions about church-state separation or religious freedom were not voiced on the floor of the House or Senate. Apparently, no congressional leader wanted to ‘face accusations of being soft on Communism and lacking in patriotism,’” (Groce et al 2013:186). The bill was passed unanimously prior to receiving Eisenhower’s signature of approval. This cemented the notion of what and who a ‘true’ American was that has lasting implications to this day. Many found themselves suddenly alienated. Richard Fried writes that not only atheists but Jehovah’s Witnesses, who were opposed to the addition on the basis of idol worship and acknowledgment of secular symbols found themselves “targets of wrath. In 1940, the Supreme Court [had] held that they could be forced to salute the flag. [...] national unity is the basis of national security and was fostered by the symbols we live by” (Fried 1998:12). This was simply one of many building blocks ultimately leading to the institutionalization of the creation of an ‘other’ set apart from notions of a ‘true American’ identity.

We additionally have record of government sponsored videos shown to schoolchildren, the most recognizable being *Duck and Cover* (United States Office of Civil Defense and Archer Productions, 1951). This video, while touted as purely educational, does much to convey a sense of normalcy in the face of the atomic bomb and encourage faith in the current powers that be to protect ‘innocent Americans’. Comparing drills to similar procedures and protections such as fire drills or traffic regulations made the daunting task more approachable for children of all ages. It goes so far as to include footage (albeit likely staged with a handful of tokenized Black students in the background) of students’ discussions about the bomb in their classrooms, providing another glimpse into the function of public schools during this time period.

While it may seem that the government was attempting to *covertly* provide this propaganda to students, the actual extent to which they hid their efforts is minimal. The Civil

Defense Education project, created as the educational branch of the Federal Civil Defense Act, made no effort to hide that they “directly propagandized children through lesson plans and films, hoping to indirectly influence their parents” (Grieve 2018:166). This emphasis on reaching not only children but using schools as a means to access the more general populace and target the most susceptible populations to the Communist agenda shows the government’s prioritization of anti-Communist education and civil defense to quell Cold War fears over the means of spreading such information. It was the *image* of democracy and freedom that they treasured in their ideological opposition to the U.S.S.R rather than its *practice*.

Chapter Four: Application to the Modern Day

From Montgomery to Minneapolis: Civil Rights and the Black Lives Matter Movement

Cold War historians make it abundantly clear that race was an integral factor in the cultivation of an American national identity that was so encouraged during the Cold War. These academics often do not need to stretch far to find evidence that race was at the forefront of social thought. These discussions, of course, do not occur in a vacuum and are not isolated from the other cultural and economic contexts of the time.

The fight for the advancement of Civil Rights and the simultaneous anti-Communist fervor that spread throughout the United States were not mutually exclusive ventures. Fried states that “The emergence of an industrialized, multi-ethnic urban society prompted Americans who fretted over these trends [of increasing immigration and diversity] to seek appropriate rituals to domesticate alien influences” (Fried 1998:4). Additionally, Zimmerman, while discussing the movement to ban subversive textbooks in schools, makes sure to clarify that “three themes of right wing assault on textbooks— Communism, internationalism, and sexual depravity— [were united] and linked [...] to a fourth one: race. Across the country, critics pressed publishers and school boards to omit any mention of the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, or segregation; such passages would inevitably foment [...] ‘racial agitation,’ a key component of Communist propaganda” (Zimmerman 2002:87). While reflective of modern assessments that we live in a post racial society, Zimmerman’s statement makes it is clear that as desegregation efforts swept across the nation (albeit focused mostly in the South), race became a central issue and was intrinsically tied to the larger battle against Communism. The battle against integration and Communism became one and the same in the South. Still, propaganda in the U.S.S.R. pointed towards the discrimination Black Americans faced as a failure of Capitalism and a display of America’s

inability to fulfill its ideal of democracy. This contradiction of American governance led to international pressure and was a large factor in the federal push towards integration. Davison Douglas' book *Jim Crow Moves North* goes into this in more depth, asserting that "As the war against fascism turned into the war against Communism, increasing numbers of whites perceived the damage done to America's international interests through racial oppression" (Douglas 2005:220). As public opinion swayed in favor of desegregation due to the acknowledgement of hypocritical connotations when taken in combination with our position abroad, public opinion itself became an influential pressure that turned the legal tide. Douglas quotes an FBI address in stating

So long as inequities exist for Negroes in American life, the Axis propaganda machine possesses a powerful fulcrum upon which to rest the lever of domestic division. This fulcrum must be removed – not only for the sake of Negroes, but also for the sake assuring mankind everywhere [...] that we are engaged in a people's war of freedom [...] (Douglas 2005: 231).

Interestingly, it seems that the people of the United States led the way for civil rights legislation instead of the other way around, even if the role of the media and international politics cannot be overstated. This assessment provides much encouragement for the future of civil rights and the changes that movements such as Black Lives Matter hope to enact today.

The Subjectivity of Objectivity: Professional Standards and the Rise of Trumpism

During the Cold War, the press was an increasingly prevalent presence in the lives of Americans with the rise of TV news programs. To combat what was viewed as the Soviets' blatant propagandizing of their own people, U.S. news outlets increasingly marketed themselves as authentic and objective. With Senator McCarthy's rise to power, the press discovered that they were unable to simultaneously report his official statements and communicate to the public the basic fact of his lies. This was no accident. McCarthy was not only aware of news deadlines but

also strategically timed his press statements so that journalists would not have time to check his allegations before sending their reports off to be presented to the public. The very systems in place within the news industry enabled McCarthy to abuse the industry and weaponize it to his advantage. McCarthy was such a well recognized anti-Communist that the media could not outright critique him out of fear of being accused of colluding with the Communist cause.

There is a commonly held belief that journalism in the time of the Cold War acquiesced to the popular sentiment of anti-Communism and set aside their long held professional standards of objectivity for the sake of protecting the industry from claims that they were furthering the Communist agenda. Who, after all, would want to be the next name on McCarthy's hit list? I argue instead that the media succumbed to anti-Communism specifically because of their grasping at ineffectual standards that no longer served them in a drastically different political environment than had ever existed up until that point in time. It is through this process that the concept of 'truth' itself becomes contested. We must ask ourselves: what is objectivity when lies are normalized? With the rise of Trumpism and 'alternative facts', this is a particular area in which we can hope to learn from our past so as to not repeat it in the future. In retrospect, we can easily see that the press was not objective in their coverage of Communism. As Bernhard puts it, "ideology became fully naturalized, or normalized, as objective" (Bernard 1999:155). However, we must not forget that what constitutes objectivity does not exist in a vacuum and is *always* relative to ones circumstances.

Not only do all human beings have interests and biases which shape their interpretation of 'objective fact', but we also live in a social world. Even if it were possible to remain neutral, when 'fact' becomes a tool to be utilized it becomes subject to the same influences that the rest

of us are. Especially when it comes to identity, words are not simply words. They come with a loaded barrel of intrinsic value attachments and judgements.

Ideology is normalized when it becomes so accepted that it is painted as objective truth. Similar to the process by which anti-Communism became hegemonic in the media coverage of the Cold War, Black people today find it obvious that racial disparities still occur in the treatment of BIPOC in America. In the Black community, objectivity and acceptance of fact includes the systemic and institutional racism present in our country. Meanwhile, the media frequently debates *if* this oppression exists in the first place and approaches it from a vastly different place than those experiencing such oppression firsthand. The valorization of objectivity enables those with personal stakes in the question of human rights to be discredited or seen as unprofessional (or worse: delusional). Those with this personal experience do not have the luxury of objectivity and to pretend otherwise not only does them a great dishonor, but discredits the goals of their activist work. To counter such Mertonian norms of objectivity and declare that it is in fact *because of* one's personal involvement that one is so willing to fight for the future that they dare to hope for is *revolutionary*.

White Supremacy and American Exceptionalism Today

The Cold War has shaped the United States in numerous ways, but perhaps none is more harmful and longer lasting than the government's active incitement of American Exceptionalism. As unpacked throughout this thesis, I understand American exceptionalism as intrinsically tied to white supremacy. This ideology manifests itself in the concepts of patriotism, imperialism, assimilation, and homogeneity – all of which implicitly bolster the messages of white nationalism and white supremacy. During the Cold War, the United States tried to hide its racism

for the sake of its international reputation and the larger success of Capitalism. When those tactics failed and the world criticized its hypocrisy, the U.S. begrudgingly enacted policies that appeared to minimize the gap between the grandiose ideas of democracy and freedom and the reality of its practices. In reality, this legislation was not enough and it had a minimal impact on the lived experience of BIPOC on the homefront. Despite being touted as a success, we did not get rid of the pattern of white supremacy that can be traced to the very founding of our nation. To the contrary, the Cold War era marked the beginning of a new iteration of these same core beliefs which continue to shape the experience of Americans today.

With the increased attention in recent years brought to the long standing disparity of treatment based on race in the United States, we see that American exceptionalism and its underlying links to white supremacy have reared their ugly heads once more. This, unfortunately, is not surprising. Explicit iterations of racism have always occurred and have frequently gone unpunished due to the systemic devaluation of the lives of POC, and Black people in particular. These ideologies are not at all benign and have a quantifiable body count; both within the United States and worldwide, just one example being the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. As the U.S. maintains its world power, our insidious and imperialist proliferation of these beliefs has drastic consequences.

The United States has a list of contradictory values. As a nation, it upholds white supremacy, but it simultaneously believes in the value of equality. It bolsters American exceptionalism while fighting for democracy. It is this inherent tension that has led to a fight for the recognition of basic humanity of Black people for the past 245 years.

The mere fact of the existence of white supremacy has unfortunately become a norm we are all too accustomed to. Given the history of the United States as a country created and

legitimated by white slaveholding upper-class men, we must ask if the United States can ever grow past the confines inherent in its very foundation. A large part of this foundation is white supremacy, and this has yet to change. What *has* changed is that with the rise in grassroots community organizing, change seems within reach. For the first time in my lifetime, the U.S. has the potential to live up to its promises of equality, liberty, and justice.

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