“Remember that you are facilitating another person’s process. It is not your process. Do not intrude. Do not control. Do not force your own needs and insights into the foreground.” These maxims in *Tao Te Ching*, attributed to the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu, offer one direction in the quest to understand the mechanics of leadership. Complexities of leadership intrigue and puzzle us. In browsing through a favorite bookstore, we will likely find self-help guides, biographies, and works of philosophy that attempt to solve the riddle of leadership, but probably fail to guide us out of the maze. At best, each work may enable us to pose better questions and sharpen our perceptions on the nature of leadership. Study of leadership is essential, for we see the effects of leadership, both good and bad, pronounced and subtle, in our daily lives.

The mission of the *Compass* is to promote discussion of leadership and service among members of the Birmingham-Southern College community. To this end, the journal features papers that probe leadership and service from a variety of angles. Based on her study abroad experience in Argentina, Claire Davis shares reflections on the struggles of Mapuche indigenous communities in “Building a Movement for Indigenous Rights in Río Negro: EPADHES and the Mapuche Resistance.” Zachary Guyse, in “Dupe, Dictator, or Deity? Emperor Hirohito and Japan’s Decision to Surrender,” analyzes the actions and inactions of Japanese Emperor Hirohito in a most critical leadership moment: the closing days of World War II. In “Hope: Propaganda and the Portrait of a President,” Anne Condit examines the role of visual communication in leadership through her study of the impact of the “Hope” poster in President Barack Obama’s campaign. Drawing from her service experiences at BSC and visits to four microcredit agencies across the country, Kathleen Smith explores the feasibility of developing a microcredit operation in Birmingham in “Microcredit: The Practical Implementation of a Personal Interest.”

Allison Bovell’s paper, “Elite Behavior in Healthcare Reform Debates: A Comparative Analysis of Political Elites in the 1993 and 2009 Healthcare Debates,” provides insight into the role that the media, special interest groups, and political leaders have played in shaping discussion on healthcare reform. Offering an interpretation of the evolving attitudes of British statesman Charles James Fox toward the French Revolution, Kristin Hendricks provides a case study of leadership in “Against the King but for the Country: Charles James Fox and the French Revolution.”

Many individuals have facilitated the process of publishing the *Compass*. I offer special thanks to Jeanne Jackson for her encouragement, insight, and guidance. I am also particularly grateful to Patricia Hansen, the Office of Communications, and Charlsie Wigley for their invaluable assistance. A warm note of appreciation goes to the Student Government Association for its continued support of the *Compass* in promoting and showcasing scholarship. Finally, I want to express gratitude to Ronne and Donald Hess; their commitment to community engagement and the study of leadership provides an inspiring model of service and leadership.

I hope that you enjoy the 2010 edition of the *Compass.*

James Randolph
Editor-in-Chief, *Compass*
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Building a Movement for Indigenous Rights in Río Negro: EPADHES and the Mapuche Resistance

Claire Davis

They bombed our home. We spent months in the forest with no roof over our heads. Do you know how cold Patagonia is? They slaughtered our animals and stole all our food. My daughters still have the scars from when they set fire to our house. The government tries to force us to abandon this land, but we have resisted for seven generations. We continue to resist because our land is who we are. The land is our religion, our past and our future, our ancestors, our language, our well-being. We are Mapuche – people of the land. (Ranquehue)

This is the testimony of Silvia Ranquehue, chief of an indigenous Mapuche community on the outskirts of the city of Bariloche in the Río Negro province of Argentina. Her words reflect the centrality of land in the Mapuche way of life. In fact, the name Mapuche means "people of the land" in their native language. For this reason, to take away the Mapuche’s ancestral land is the worst possible violation of their human rights: to rob them of their land is to deny their identity and their right to exist. Traditionally, the Mapuche have inhabited the land known today as the Patagonia and the Pampa of Argentina and Chile. For centuries, the Mapuche resisted the Spanish before falling victim to genocidal military campaigns directed by the Argentine and Chilean governments in the late nineteenth century. Today, multinational corporations, unscrupulous landowners, and a booming tourism industry threaten the Mapuche. Recuperating their ancestral land and obtaining the official deeds to their territory will be the first steps in extending full civil and human rights to the Mapuche people.

As is the case with many native populations around the world, the Mapuche of Argentina struggle to keep their culture alive and live in poverty on the margins of society. But, things are suddenly changing for Mapuche communities in Río Negro. Young, educated leaders are emerging from within the communities; popular beliefs about indigenous people are growing more positive in the region; laws that protect indigenous groups are being enforced; and the Mapuche are taking back the land that has always belonged to them. Last spring, while studying abroad with the School for International Training, I went to Río Negro to understand why these sudden changes are happening. I spent four weeks interviewing Mapuche people and working alongside a small team of human rights lawyers called el Equipo Patagónico de Abogados en Derechos Humanos y Estudios Sociales (EPADHES).

The presence of these well-educated, Buenos Aires-born attorneys who are committed to justice and human rights seemed to make all the difference for the Mapuche communities in Río Negro. But after spending time with the lawyers and the Mapuche, three questions plagued me: Why could the Mapuche not build a successful and sustainable movement on their own, without the help of outsiders? Why and how did the lawyers of EPADHES become accepted by the Mapuche and become involved in their resistance? How can we measure the success of a social movement? To answer these questions and understand the sudden changes taking place in the Mapuche communities of Río Negro, we must turn to social movement and leadership theory.

Social movement theorists explain that a group of marginalized and abused people cannot simply rise up one day and force social change; if that were possible, no group would remain poor and repressed. A recipe of

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crucial ingredients must be present for a successful and sustainable social movement to emerge. Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, three of the most prominent social movement scholars today, emphasize three structural factors in analyzing the origins and development of social movements – political opportunities, resources, and cultural frameworks (2). Of course, people need the political opportunities to organize and be heard, the financial and human resources to sustain a movement, and a society that is ready to listen and respond to their demands.

However, little research has focused on the relationship between leaders of social movements and these structural elements (Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 174). In my opinion, creative and empowering leadership is the key ingredient in the recipe for social change. Leaders mobilize and organize individuals to take collective action and articulate their grievances. Leaders educate followers and empower them to take advantage of new political opportunities, resources, and openings in society. Leaders who are outsiders, like EPADHES, act as liaisons between the internal group and broader society and advocate on the individuals’ behalf. So, although the structural factors are very important in explaining this movement for indigenous rights in Río Negro, understanding the role of EPADHES in the movement is equally important and will help fill the gap that currently exists in social movement literature.

Why can’t the Mapuche build a successful movement on their own, without the help of EPADHES or other outsiders? Why can’t Mapuche leaders serve as the change agents? According to Adrián Moyano, an Argentine journalist who has dedicated his life to documenting the Mapuche experience, the Mapuche are not capable of orchestrating a social movement because cultural expression has been repressed for so long (Moyano interview). Most Mapuche are embarrassed by their heritage and do not share a sense of collective identity. Until recently, the Argentine government did not acknowledge the group’s existence, although at least 250,000 Mapuche live in the country (Alterini et al. 132).

A brief examination of the historical roots of the Mapuche struggle is key to understanding their current identity crisis. Unlike most indigenous groups in Latin America, the Mapuche resisted and defeated the Spanish (Ray 38). The Mapuche Nation enjoyed relative peace until the late nineteenth century when Argentina began a campaign to secure its borders and populate the western part of the country. Ordinary Argentines were ignorant of the Mapuche; artists commissioned by the government created images depicting the Mapuche as savages and barbarians in order to incite fear and justify violence (Ray 68). The Mapuche leaders were killed, and entire communities were forced to abandon their land and live in camps or work as servants. Generations of Mapuche people were assimilated into the mainstream culture, leaving behind their language and traditions.

Although the camps no longer exist and indigenous leaders are not openly persecuted, the majority of the Mapuche live in precarious conditions in urban areas or the most isolated, inhospitable parts of the Patagonia. The few communities that remain intact are vulnerable because the Mapuche do not have the official papers to claim land ownership. As a direct result of cultural, physical, and economic repression, many Mapuche do not receive a decent education and remain illiterate (Duch 2). Young Mapuche who have the potential to be leaders and further their education often leave their communities and reject their heritage.

The indigenous communities near Bariloche, the capital of Río Negro, are the most interesting to study because they face the greatest obstacles. Bariloche is known as the Switzerland of South America; it is home to the famous lake district, the national forest, and numerous ski resorts. Local businesses capitalize on the Mapuche presence by selling tourists inauthentic merchandise, including arrowheads and feather headdresses. The Mapuche communities that are holding on to their land in Bariloche are more vulnerable to eviction by private companies or the government because the land is so beautiful and valuable.

The odds are stacked against the Mapuche. How can the Mapuche come together and organize if they do not identify themselves as Mapuche? It is difficult for Argentine society to accept the demands of the Mapuche as legitimate because history only tells one side of the story. The Mapuche cannot take the time to protest and hold meetings because they need to work and earn a living. The Mapuche have no political representation, technical knowledge of grassroots organizing, economic resources, or understanding of the legal system. Leadership must come from the outside.

But, how and why did EPADHES get involved in the Mapuche struggle? Why would the Mapuche accept outsiders since white men have always betrayed them? About twelve years ago, Dr. Darío Duch, the founder of EPADHES, quit his job as a corporate attorney in Buenos Aires and moved to Bariloche in search of more meaningful work (Duch interview). He began representing individual Mapuche families pro bono in land dispute cases. Although existing laws protect indigenous territories, he found that the local government had no interest in upholding these laws and that the local citizens were not informed about the Mapuche situation. Duch took to the streets, passing out pamphlets to raise awareness about the Mapuche and the atrocities committed against them.
(Quintriqueo). At first, everyone in Bariloche thought he was peculiar, and the Mapuche did not understand his motivations and intentions; they did not trust him since he was a winka (“a white man”). Eventually, the Mapuche started paying more attention to Duch and began seeking his help. In 2007, he founded EPADHES as a nonprofit legal clinic and brought more lawyers from Buenos Aires to help him.

EPADHES is no ordinary group of lawyers; they do more than provide legal advice and defend clients in court. The official mission of EPADHES is to strengthen social organizations and create a grassroots base of support for social transformation (EPADHES). The lawyers have several strategies to accomplish their long-term goal of creating a more equal society that respects human rights. All these strategies exemplify how leaders shape the three structural elements needed for a social movement: political opportunities, resources, and cultural framing.

To help the Mapuche take advantage of political opportunities, the EPADHES lawyers force the local government to uphold international laws and charters that the Argentine government has ratified, such as the United Nations’ Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 on Tribal Peoples (United Nations). Unfortunately, many countries agree to uphold these nonbinding laws without having the ability or political will to actually enforce them. Through lobbying and lawsuits, EPADHES puts pressure on local, provincial, and federal government officials to ensure that the rights of the Mapuche are protected. Each time that EPADHES wins a case in court or makes a deal with the government, a new legal precedent is set to pave the way for progress in other communities.

EPADHES also provides educational resources that the Mapuche need in order to build a social movement. For example, EPADHES holds workshops to teach the Mapuche about their human rights and the existing laws that can protect them. These workshops help the Mapuche build pride in their heritage and stand up for themselves. In the workshops, the Mapuche also learn skills for grassroots organizing and coalition building. The lawyers encourage input and participation from everyone during these workshops. They intentionally use the traditional Mapuche social structure – where everyone has a specific role to play in achieving a collective goal – in order to cultivate new leadership and to make individuals feel empowered.

Perhaps the most important role that EPADHES plays in the movement is raising awareness of the Mapuche situation and helping the Mapuche legitimize their demands. This role can be analyzed in the context of the cultural framing theory of social movements. McAdam defines cultural framing as the “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (6). In order to ensure that Argentine society understands the needs of the Mapuche, the lawyers teach them first to articulate their demands and set goals and then to protest, join coalitions, and educate others. In general, EPADHES believes that Argentine society is ready to listen and respond to the Mapuche because of the current cultural climate. Since the era of the military dictatorship and oppression during the Cold War, Argentina has been focused on strengthening democracy, uncovering secrets of the past, and becoming a progressive country that respects human rights. Therefore, framing the Mapuche demand for ancestral land in the context of basic human rights and historical abuse legitimizes the claims and makes them easily identifiable for Argentines.

Two Mapuche communities in Río Negro that have experienced some success in recuperating their land can provide case studies on how the lawyers utilize their strategies. While in Río Negro, I visited both of these communities and interviewed the chiefs and other individuals about their relationship with the lawyers, the history of their people, and the broader movement for indigenous rights.

The community of Lof Trypan Anty serves as one case study. Led by Chief Silvia Ranquehue, quoted earlier, this community is emblematic and has furnished a model for other Mapuche communities in the area because it was among the first where Duch worked in Bariloche. Lof Trypan Anty is located at the base of the tallest mountain in Bariloche, and investors would like to buy the land and build ski resorts there. On paper, the Argentine Army owns the land, but Ranquehue claims that her family has lived there since the mid 1800s. Between 1967 and 1997, the army issued eight eviction orders and routinely used physical violence to try to force Ranquehue and her family to leave (Ranquehue).

After Ranquehue met Duch in 1997, he agreed to represent the community and appeal the eviction orders. Duch devised a bold plan to travel to Buenos Aires, attract media attention, and plead his case to the president. He knew that the president, Fernando de la Rúa, would not ignore Lof Trypan Anty because de la Rúa had written the Ley Indígena (the Indigenous Law) of the Argentine Constitution while serving as minister of social development (Duch 9). In 2002, the Argentine Army offered to give the community the eight acres of land where the houses stand and promised to leave the community alone. EPADHES is still working to get the land title for the remainder of the community’s territory. This case set a legal precedent for indigenous communities living on government-owned land; as a result, several other communities have more easily reached similar agreements with the local or national government to obtain titles to portions of ancestral territories.
The second case study involves Lof Takul-Chewque. In contrast with Lof Trypan Anty, the families of Lof Takul-Chewque have not always lived in this community, and the land that they are trying to recuperate is part of the national forest system. I interviewed Maria Fresia and Encarnación Tacul, sisters who are about eighty years old. In the late 1800s, their parents escaped from a Mapuche work camp and established a small farm in the forest (Tacul). Their family lived there with several other Mapuche families until 1954 when the government forced them to leave because the land had increased in value. The family then moved into the city when Maria Fresia and Encarnación were still young, and the girls were not taught the Mapuche traditions or language (Tacul).

Years later, Maria Fresia’s daughter, Ana Maria Dominick, began going to EPADHES workshops in Bariloche because she had always been curious about her indigenous roots. With the lawyers’ help, Dominick researched information about her ancestors and found evidence to prove that they once had lived in the forest. She then organized a meeting for her community—the six families descended from her grandparents—to discuss the possibility of going back to the forest to recuperate the land (Dominick). After pulling their resources together to buy building materials for a small cabin, members of the community sneaked into the national forest one night in 2007, built a cabin, and flew a Mapuche flag. A few days later, a ranger discovered them and called the police, but the Mapuche tied themselves to the trees and refused to leave (Dominick).

The response of the townspeople and newspapers to Dominick’s effort to recuperate the land was brutal. One newspaper article claimed that members of Dominick’s community could not be real Mapuche because they did not speak Mapuzugun and had non-indigenous last names (Dominick). Using Dominick’s story as a teaching moment, EPADHES held forums across the city to encourage dialogue about what it means to be indigenous and what indigenous rights encompass (Duch interview). As a result, young, urban Mapuche have learned about their heritage. Dominick has also started an organization to help young Mapuche.

The community of Lof Takul-Chewque is still fighting for the rights to their land in court, but they are currently living in the forest. Recently, a judge ruled that the community may keep the cabin and a few acres around it, but they cannot cut down any trees or raise animals. The people of Lof Takul-Chewque are working to get a statute of autonomy, which would mean their community would become like a reservation with its own local government and rules. The help of EPADHES was essential in the beginning, but now the members of the community are taking steps on their own to address community issues.

Both of these case studies of communities in Río Negro help answer the third question: How can we measure the success of a social movement? Tangible evidence shows that the Mapuche movement is progressing; court cases have been won, peaceful agreements have been made with the government, and a new organization has been created. Non-tangible evidence exists as well; new leaders like Ana Maria Dominick are emerging from within the Mapuche communities, the communities are no longer completely dependent on the lawyers, and more people in Bariloche understand the Mapuche cause. In the most telling sign that the strategies used by EPADHES are working, the lawyers have been able to move on to other issues. Basically, they have worked themselves out of a job. They have empowered the Mapuche to lead themselves towards their goal. But, the movement for indigenous rights in Río Negro is young, and much still needs to be accomplished.

The Mapuche will face many obstacles in the future. One challenge will be protecting their land from powerful corporations, such as Benetton and Wal-Mart that are trying to invest in the area, and from the very wealthy, like Ted Turner, who recently bought 80,000 acres in the Patagonia for his personal fishing and hunting resort (Duch interview). It will be interesting to observe how the movement for indigenous rights in Río Negro unfolds. I predict that the movement for indigenous rights and the example of EPADHES will spread. The strategies that EPADHES use to help the Mapuche take advantage of political opportunities, resources, and cultural framing will be utilized as a model for other movements. In Río Negro, the leadership of EPADHES has been essential in empowering the Mapuche to take advantage of structural possibilities and to take back their land that is so fundamental to their identity.

As they tied themselves to the trees and refused to leave the forest, Ana Maria Dominick and her family chanted a Mapuche war cry, maricí weu, maricí weu, which roughly translates to “ten times we will conquer, ten times we will overcome” (Dominick). The Mapuche will continue to resist because the land is who they are. The land is their religion, their past and their future, their language, their ancestors, their well-being. They are Mapuche—people of the land.
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Dupe, Dictator, or Deity?  
Emperor Hirohito and Japan’s Decision to Surrender

Zachary Guyse

In December 1988, Emperor Hirohito of Japan lay on his deathbed while the world prepared itself for the death of one of the last major figures of World War II. He still held his position as the Shōwa Emperor of Japan forty-three years after the end of the war, making him the longest-reigning emperor in Japanese history. In the years since the end of the war, Hirohito had been praised by Americans and Japanese alike as the heroic pacifist who stood up to the militaristic leaders of Japan in order to bring an immediate end to World War II. But as Hirohito lay dying, the criticism against him intensified. Motoshima Hitoshi, the mayor of Nagasaki, was a leader of this chorus. Motoshima committed the unforgiveable when he criticized Hirohito for failing to save Nagasaki and Hiroshima from their horrible fates by ending the war earlier. The controversy surrounding Motoshima continued past Hirohito’s death in 1989, to the point that he was shot by a would-be assassin in 1990.1 Miraculously, Motoshima survived, along with his controversial question: could Hirohito have done more to end the war sooner and avoid the use of the atomic bombs?

By January 1945, Japan’s defeat was inevitable. Yet despite numerous indicators of Japan’s coming defeat, Emperor Hirohito failed to use his considerable, albeit limited, influence to change Japanese policy significantly by seeking an immediate end to the war. Instead, many of Hirohito’s words, actions, and inactions in the first half of 1945 ultimately contributed to the protraction of the war. Hirohito’s failure in this regard resulted from a combination of his own naivety and ambiguity. With that said, Hirohito was neither the sole nor the primary leader responsible for Japan’s aggression and extension of the war, but he was still pivotal in the decision-making process.

Historiography

The question of Hirohito’s war responsibility remains controversial among historians. The first explanation for Hirohito’s role in World War II came in 1946 from Hirohito himself. In his “Monologue,” Hirohito claimed that he “was virtually a prisoner and powerless” before the “militarists” controlling the government.2 However, the credibility of the “Monologue” is certainly suspect: Hirohito wrote it for use in his defense should he be tried for war crimes, and many of his writings prior to the surrender, such as diaries and personal letters, have not been released by the Japanese government.3 For the next two decades, historians typically accepted the view of Hirohito as an innocent pacifist. Robert J.C. Butow argued in his book, Japan’s Decision to Surrender (1954), that Hirohito was an innocent bystander incapable of shaping policy until the combination of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Soviet entry into the war enabled the emperor to work a “political miracle.”4 In Hirohito, Emperor of Japan (1966), Leonard Mosley offered a similar interpretation, though he emphasized the roles of individual members of Hirohito’s cabinet, such as Prime Minister KantaRō Suzuki, in prolonging the war. Essentially, Mosley described Suzuki as a “senile” and belligerent windbag who severely damaged the chances of a diplomatic solution with the United States prior to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.5

The first major work to challenge the popular conception of Hirohito as an innocent pacifist was Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy (1971) by David Bergamini.

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As Bergamini asserted, Hirohito “was not the passive dupe of history,” but instead was an active and informed leader in the policy-making process. Once Japan’s coming defeat was obvious, Bergamini claimed, Hirohito began to shirk responsibility for the war by participating in an imperial conspiracy devised by the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Kōichi Kido. According to Kido’s plan, Hirohito would gradually delegate his responsibilities as supreme commander to members of the cabinet and the military while issuing vague pleas for them to end the war. Kido supposedly advised Hirohito not to make a serious move towards peace until he knew that the military and the nation as a whole had become weary with the war and that the United States had become ashamed of continuing the conflict. In essence, Bergamini portrayed Hirohito as a dictator on par with Hitler or Mussolini, except cleverer in the way he disguised his role.

As intriguing as Bergamini’s theory of an elaborate imperial conspiracy may be, his work has been viewed with almost universal disdain by American and Japanese scholars alike. To prop up his thesis, Bergamini evidently stretched or even misrepresented the truth about the content of primary sources such as the Kido Diary. Bergamini’s work was followed by Inoue Kiyoshi’s Tennō no sensō sekinin (1975), but it, too, has been regarded as “neither fair nor constructive” by other historians. Like Bergamini, Inoue argued that Hirohito was one of the primary figures responsible for prolonging the war, as Hirohito “continued to direct both aggressive wars and a system which oppressed the people.”

Despite scathing reviews of Inoue’s and Bergamini’s works, historians have begun to look more critically at Hirohito’s war responsibility. Edward Behr, in Hirohito: Behind the Myth (1989), argued that through an “ambivalence toward the military, along with a combination of guile, ruse and a passion for secrecy,” Hirohito was able to “ride the tiger’ of militarism when it suited him” and thus avoid incurring any responsibility for the war. Thus, Behr differed from prior critics of Hirohito in that he focused on how Hirohito’s inactions were just as important as his actions. Perhaps one of the most telling works on Hirohito is Hirohito and His Times: A Japanese Perspective (1990) by Toshiaki Kawahara. As an insider of the imperial court, Kawahara offers unique insight into its daily operations and ancient traditions, particularly during and after World War II. He concluded that Hirohito had both the power and influence to stop the war earlier, but his timidity in challenging the charismatic leaders of the military made him partly responsible for the continuation of the war.

The next major work on Hirohito and his role in World War II was Stephen S. Large’s Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan: A Political Biography (1992). Although Large contended that the emperor did as much as he could to end the war in 1945, he also argued that Hirohito could have done more to prevent Japan from declaring war on the United States in the first place. Overall, Large claimed that Hirohito possessed little power or influence as an individual, but that he “acted politically as part of a collective group at court and, in large measure, his influence was an expression of this group’s collective interests.” Large’s thesis was echoed by Peter Wetzler in Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan (1998). Daikichi Iрокawa, in The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan (1995), concurred that Hirohito’s responsibility for the war was “irrefutable,” but he differed from other historians in his analysis of Hirohito’s power. While Hirohito may have had limited power in affairs of state, Iрокawa pointed out that according to the Meiji Constitution, Hirohito had unlimited power over the military as supreme commander; thus, he could have – and should have – prevented the war.

The most recent and controversial biographical work on the emperor’s war responsibility is Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan (2000) by Herbert P. Bix. Similar to Behr, Bix claimed that Hirohito deserved much blame for the war, but, instead of focusing on Hirohito’s sins of omission, Bix argued that Hirohito was the “major protagonist” of the war and acted “directly and decisively, as an independent force in policy making.” While Bix’s articulate and reasoned argument against Hirohito won him the Pulitzer Prize in 2001, significant controversy remains among academics over his use of newly discovered primary sources, especially since Bix does not include a bibliography.

Despite over sixty years of historical analysis of Emperor Hirohito, he remains somewhat of an enigma. Historians have reached a tentative consensus that Hirohito bore at least partial responsibility for World War II, but much of the new evidence presented by Bix is still being analyzed and debated by historians. In seeking to add to the work of historians by comparing and utilizing evidence from their works, this paper analyzes Hirohito’s actions, words, and inactions from January 1945 through Japan’s decision to surrender on August 15, 1945. Similar to the findings of Kawahara and Behr, the conclusion reached here is that Hirohito was part of a collective group responsible for the war. Although Emperor Hirohito could have been more proactive in his attempts to end the war, he was hindered by his own naivety and ambiguity.
The Power of the Emperor – Real and Imagined

An examination of the war powers of the Japanese emperor clearly shows that Hirohito was not totally helpless. In Article XI of the Meiji Constitution, the emperor is identified as the "supreme commander of the army and navy." Furthermore, Article XIII of the constitution states that "the emperor makes war, makes peace, and concludes treaties." The only military power not vested in the emperor was setting the budget, which lay in the hands of the Diet. Thus, it appears that Hirohito had legitimate authority to challenge the militarists prolonging the war. In reality, however, Hirohito’s war powers were delegated primarily to his ministers. For the most part, Hirohito was hesitant to interfere with the decisions of his ministers lest entanglements in politics compromise his image as a symbol of national unity.

While the extent of Hirohito’s authority is unclear, his image as a national and religious symbol gave him a significant degree of influence. The central ideology of the Japanese people was based on the concept of kokutai, or national polity. Essentially, kokutai encompassed the best of Japanese ideas, tradition, and culture. Since the Meiji Restoration, the concept of kokutai gradually coalesced with the state-run religion of Shinto to elevate the emperor not only as a deity, but as the perfect moral archetype of national polity. Given that Hirohito was considered the immaculate personification of Japanese culture and ideology, he held a significant level of influence during the war, even though his constitutional authority as supreme commander was largely exercised by his ministers.

When examining the events that led up to Japan’s decision to surrender in August 1945, consideration must be given to the governing body that made that decision. The Supreme War Leadership Council, known as the Liaison Conference until August 1944, consisted of six key figures: the prime minister, foreign minister, war minister, navy minister, army chief of staff, and navy chief of staff. Since July 1940, the Council had effectively replaced the cabinet as Japan’s central decision-making body. The Council also met in the imperial palace, alongside the imperial headquarters, so both the Council and the emperor had daily access to the latest intelligence and military reports.

By the time the Liaison Conference was renamed the Supreme War Leadership Council in 1944, it was obvious to at least two Council members that Japan could not win the war. Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai secretly began to explore the possibility of achieving a favorable surrender and convincing the emperor to support such a decision. To most of the Council, only the emperor could control the military without sparking a revolt: the emperor could simply denounce any belligerent military officer as a threat to the kokutai and relieve him of command. Thus, Shigemitsu and Yonai knew that the only way an early peace could be achieved would be by gaining the emperor’s full support.

The First Signs of Defeat

By January 1945, the prospects of an Axis victory were dim. Germany’s war effort was collapsing: the Japanese army in Burma had been practically decimated; and Japanese strength in the war in China was deteriorating. With every conquest and new territory gained in China, Japanese forces were spread thinner in fighting this guerilla war that consumed over 64 percent of Japan’s military expenditures in 1944 alone. While the Council discussed the state of the war effort in February 1945, their meetings were continually interrupted by Allied air raids in Tokyo. Despite these warning signs, the Council and the emperor seemed determined to continue the war, although for different reasons. In an effort to sway Hirohito, the Council members called in various genrō, or elder statesmen, to speak with him. One such genrō was former Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō, who argued that the United States must be shown “the disadvantages of continuing the war” by increasing the military’s use of kamikaze tactics to achieve a more favorable position for peace negotiations. Other former prime ministers, including Hiranuma Kiichiro and Koki Hirota, simply urged the emperor to fight to the bitter end.

The only genrō who advised Emperor Hirohito to seek an immediate end to the war was Prince Fumimaro Konoe. As a member of the royal family and former prime minister, Konoe was held in high esteem by Hirohito. Konoe presented his case to the emperor on February 14, 1945, in what became known as the Konoe Memorial. Konoe began by warning Hirohito of the grave threat to the kokutai from communism. Konoe warned Hirohito that the Soviet Union could not be trusted to remain neutral in the war and that the military’s control faction was unwittingly leading Japan towards a communist revolution by prolonging the war and bringing the Japanese people further hardships. While Hirohito seemed sympathetic to Konoe’s views, he naively believed that the Soviet Union would not enter the war because Stalin would want Japan to remain as a major power in Asia during the Soviets’ conflict with the United States and England. Hirohito also naively believed that Japan could wait for a more favorable situation before seeking peace. In his response to Konoe, Hirohito asserted that ending the war
would be "very difficult unless we make one more military gain." Skeptically, yet respectfully, Konoe replied, "Is that possible? It must happen soon. If we have to wait much longer… [a mere battle victory] will mean nothing." Hirohito then claimed, "If we hold out long enough in this war, we may be able to win, but what worries me is whether the nation will be able to endure it until then." 

Hirohito also mentioned to Konoe a plan of General Yoshijiro Umezu, the army chief of staff, for luring the Americans to a final battle in Taiwan, where severe losses would force them to seek agreeable terms for peace. Umezu also apparently warned Hirohito that the United States would massacre the imperial family if Japan surrendered unconditionally. Supposedly, Konoe later remarked that he would be pessimistic about the chances of peace if Hirohito took people like Umezu seriously. Konoe did not relent in his efforts to achieve peace, but his message was not the only warning that Hirohito received in February 1945.

On February 15, 1945, the day after the Konoe Memorial, Hirohito and the Council were warned by intelligence officers that the Soviet Union wanted to "secure a voice in the future of East Asia" and would likely violate the Neutrality Pact with Japan. The next day, Shigemitsu informed Hirohito that Nazi Germany was close to defeat and that the Allies would leave the Yalta Conference unified in their efforts to bring a swift end to the war. However, these warnings apparently did nothing to alter Hirohito's naive faith in the aims of the Soviet Union or his intention to continue the war. On April 8, under the newly appointed Prime Minister Kantarō Suzuki, the Japanese government adopted the policy of "Ketsu-G," which relied heavily on kamikaze suicide tactics in an all-out effort to defend the homeland. In line with the government's new policy, Hirohito issued a rescript calling for the nation to "smash the inordinate ambitions of the enemy nations" and "achieve the goals of the war." Meanwhile, the state-controlled press was running a "daily die-for-the-emperor campaign" for Japanese citizens. As a result of the Ketsu-G policy, "Japan was literally losing the war" more rapidly than America was winning it. From April until the final surrender of Japan in August, the Ketsu-G policy remained in place, serving as a constant indicator of Japan's radical determination to fight to the finish.

Prolonging the Inevitable

Two other events occurred in the spring of 1945 that signaled Japan's coming defeat. One was the destruction of much of the imperial palace during a firebomb raid on Tokyo from May 24 to 26. The second development was the surrender of Germany on May 8, known later as Victory in Europe, or VE, Day. Shortly after receiving word of Germany's capitulation, Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō, who had recently replaced Shigemitsu, issued a public statement that released Japan from the Tripartite Pact. Still, neither the Council nor the emperor made any move towards ending the war until after the Battle of Okinawa ended in early June.

In light of Japan's horrendous defeat at Okinawa, the Council and Hirohito began to understand how severe the situation was becoming for Japan. However, instead of uniting in their efforts to save Japan, the Council and the emperor acted separately and secretly. Ironically, however, both parties roughly had the same idea. On June 3, Tōgō persuaded the Council to begin negotiations with the Soviet Union and sent Hirota Kōki to talk with Jacob Malik, the Soviet ambassador to Japan. In reality, though, Japan's primary objective in the Hirota-Malik talks was to bribe the Soviet Union for oil and other supplies to sustain the Japanese war effort. In addition, on June 6, the Council made the decision to formulate a comprehensive plan for the final defense of Japan that would eventually force the United States to capitulate or would otherwise serve as Japan's endgame.

Soon after the Council decided to draft the final defense plan, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Kōichi Kido, wrote, "I believe we have no alternative... but to solicit a courageous imperial decision to stop the war." On June 9, Kido presented Hirohito his "Draft Plan for Controlling the Crisis Situation," a program calling for the emperor to ask the Soviet Union to serve as a go-between or mediator for negotiations with the United States. Hirohito immediately agreed that Kido's plan was the best course of action: bribe the Soviet Union to act as a mediator by giving Stalin territorial concessions in Manchuria and the Pacific. Rather than surrender unconditionally, both Kido and Hirohito naively believed that bribing Russia would enable Japan to preserve the imperial system.

Before the emperor presented the plan to the rest of the Council, Kido was able to enlist the support of Yonai, Tōgō, and Suzuki. However, Suzuki did not prove as reliable as Kido had initially hoped. Apparently, Suzuki had failed to inform Hirohito of the Hirota-Malik talks in his report on the proceedings of June 3. Whether this omission was intentional or accidental is a matter of speculation. Additionally, after returning from a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Amaterasu, Suzuki reversed his position and began issuing robust rhetorical statements urging a fight to the finish. Four days after the fighting ended on Okinawa, Suzuki displayed just how belligerent and possibly senile he was becoming. In a public speech, he erroneously boasted that the United States had lost "ten times" more soldiers and ships in taking the island than had Japan.
Needless to say, Hirohito was outraged when he learned from his Lord Chamberlain, Matsudaira, that the Council had kept him in the dark about the Hirota-Malik talks. Hirohito was also displeased when he learned just how badly the talks were proceeding. Several times in the course of Hirota’s conversation with Malik, the Russian ambassador frequently yawned or read a newspaper. On one occasion, Malik even pretended to be sick so as to avoid meeting with Hirota. Nevertheless, Hirohito still held to his naive belief that the Soviets could be persuaded to act as a mediator.\textsuperscript{54}

On June 22, Hirohito finally addressed the Council on the issue of seeking an end to the war. However, he merely issued vague instructions for the Council members to commence diplomatic maneuvers to end the war and endorsed the Council’s efforts to form a comprehensive plan for a final battle on the homeland.\textsuperscript{56} This instance was hardly the first time Hirohito had been ambiguous in his instructions to the Council. For example, when he was asked at an imperial conference to give his opinion about attacking Pearl Harbor, Hirohito walked out of the meeting after simply quoting a haiku written by his grandfather: “Though I consider the surrounding seas as my brothers. Why is it that the waves should rise so high?”\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the Council was frequently left to interpret Hirohito’s ambiguous words, body language, and temperaments, all of which could often be interpreted in multiple and contradictory ways.

### Grasping for Straws

Having reaped no benefits whatsoever from the Hirota-Malik talks, Hirohito and Kido gradually developed a different approach. On July 12, Hirohito summoned Prince Konoe and convinced him to serve as a secret ambassador to Moscow to work toward the goal of ending the war. That same day, Tōgō cabled Naotake Sato, the Japanese ambassador in Moscow, asking him to inform Stalin or Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov about Konoe’s visit and the emperor’s desire for peace. Sato excitedly hurried to deliver Molotov the emperor’s message, but Molotov, who was preparing to leave for Potsdam with Stalin, ignored him. Thus, Sato was forced to relay the message to a vice commissar, Lozovsky.\textsuperscript{52}

Stalin and Molotov, however, were already well aware of Japan’s desire for mediation and were entirely uninterested. Stalin knew that the territorial concessions he had gained at Yalta from Roosevelt and Churchill depended on the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Japan. With that agreement in mind, Stalin told Truman of Japan’s desire for mediation, but he intentionally manipulated the message to convince Truman and Churchill that Japan was unwilling to make any major concessions and would most likely fight to the end. Stalin wanted the other Allies to think that they would need the Soviet Union’s assistance to defeat Japan. However, the extent to which Stalin’s deception influenced Truman or Churchill was likely minimal;\textsuperscript{53} at this point in the war, neither Truman nor Churchill trusted Stalin’s words. Ultimately, Konoe never visited Moscow since the Soviets sent a reply to imperial headquarters insisting that his visit was unnecessary.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, the Council and Hirohito, having failed in their attempts to achieve a desirable peace through the Soviets, once again had to evaluate their next course of action.

As the Potsdam Conference concluded, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of China issued the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, calling for Japan to accept the terms of unconditional surrender or face “prompt and utter destruction.”\textsuperscript{53} The Council’s initial reaction was split. Prime Minister Suzuki, Foreign Minister Tōgō, and Navy Minister Yonai all wanted to accept the Potsdam Declaration immediately, while War Minister Anami, General Umezu, and Admiral Toyoda wanted to continue the war until the United States would agree to keep the monarchy in place. After both sides delivered their various arguments, Suzuki formed a compromise plan and adopted a policy of mokusatsu, which meant that the Council would kill the Allied declaration with silence.\textsuperscript{56} In short, the Council simply ignored the Potsdam Declaration. Before the Council convened, Hirohito agreed with Tōgō that the terms of the declaration were the best that could be expected, but he chose to remain silent throughout the Council’s deliberations.\textsuperscript{57} This silence on the part of the Council and Hirohito proved to be fatal. United States Secretary of War Henry Stimson later stated, “In the face of this rejection, we could only proceed to demonstrate that the ultimatum had meant exactly what it said…. For such a purpose, the atomic bomb was an eminently suitable weapon.”\textsuperscript{58}

### The Last Straw

On August 6, 1945, an American B-29 bomber dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, killing 100,000 to 140,000 people instantly, and leading to the deaths of another 100,000 over the next several years. Two days later, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Then, on August 10, a second atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing another 35,000 to 40,000 people.\textsuperscript{59} After receiving news of the Soviet entry into the war on August 8, Hirohito told Tōgō, "Since we could no longer continue the struggle, now that a weapon of this devastating
power was used against us, we should not let slip the opportunity [for peace] by engaging in attempts to gain more favorable conditions."60 Hirohito had abandoned his naive hope for another military victory or Soviet mediation.

However, Hirohito did not act quickly enough to convince the Council to accept the terms of surrender before the destruction of Nagasaki on August 10. When the Council finally convened later that day, it was still caught in a deadlock between those who wanted to surrender and those who wanted to continue the fight. When Suzuki called upon Hirohito to give his opinion and break the deadlock, Hirohito replied:

I have given serious thought to the situation prevailing at home and abroad and have concluded that continuing the war can only mean destruction for the nation and a prolongation of bloodshed and cruelty in the world.... The time has come when we must bear the unbearable.61

Upon hearing Hirohito’s statement, the Council closed its meeting with the understanding that Japan would immediately begin negotiations with the United States. However, the militarist members of the Council insisted in the message sent to the United States that Japan would accept the Potsdam Declaration on the condition that the terms of surrender would not "compromise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler."62

In the American reply to the Council’s communiqué, Secretary of State James Byrnes asserted that "the authority of the Emperor... shall be subject to the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers" and that "the ultimate form of government of Japan shall... be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people."63 This reply did not sit well with the military hardliners on the Council, who demanded that the Council reconvene on August 14. For a second time, Hirohito put his foot down firmly, stating, "Japan should accept the Allied reply as it stands without further clarification or modification."64 Hirohito then ordered the Council to arrange for a radio broadcast in which he would personally read the rescript for surrender. The next day, August 15, the Japanese people heard the voice of their leader for the first time as he announced Japan’s unconditional surrender. The war was finally over.

Conclusion

By the time Hirohito broadcasted Japan’s surrender across his kingdom, nearly 20 million Asian, 3.1 million Japanese, and 60,000 Allied lives had been claimed by the war.65 Had Hirohito not acted when he did to stop the war, many more lives would likely have been lost. On the other hand, had Hirohito acted much earlier, it is likely that more lives could have been saved. As ever, it is easy to use hindsight to make sweeping generalizations of what might have been. But, ultimately, historians cannot know for certain how the future could have been altered. While it is tempting to wish that the war had ended sooner and that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been avoided, it is impossible to determine what results Hirohito’s actions could have produced. With that said, Hirohito could have been more proactive and decisive in his efforts for peace, regardless of the results. Yet, by his naivety and ambiguity, Hirohito failed to take the right steps necessary to end the war. Thus, as the ideological centerpiece and supreme commander of Japan, Hirohito was directly, but not solely, responsible for the continuation of World War II and the resulting loss of millions of lives.

Notes

3. Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 3.
7. Ibid., 68-73.
9. Okamoto, review of Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy, 414-16.
12. Ibid., xxiv.
15. Ibid., 14.
18. Ibid., 81.
21. Ibid.
22. Butow, Japan's Decision to Surrender, 230.
24. Ibid., 387; Butow, Japan's Decision to Surrender, 82.
27. Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, 487.
28. Quoted in Ibid., 488.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 489.
31. Quoted in Ibid., 489.
32. Quoted in Ibid., 490.
33. Quoted in Behr, Hirohito: Behind the Myth, 282-83.
34. Quoted in Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, 490.
35. Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, 490.
36. Ibid., 494-95.
37. Quoted in Ibid., 495.
38. Ibid.
39. Butow, Japan's Decision to Surrender, 86.
40. Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 122.
41. Ibid.
42. Mosley, Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, 299.
43. Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 122-23.
44. Quoted in Ibid., 123.
45. Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, 492.
46. Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 123.
48. Ibid., 300-01.
49. Ibid., 299-300.
50. Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, 494; Mosley, Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, 300.
52. Mosley, Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, 301-03.
53. Ibid., 303-06.
54. Ibid., 305.
56. Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 124.
57. Mosley, Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, 309.
58. Quoted in Ibid., 311.
60. Quoted in Large, Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan, 125.
61. Quoted in Ibid.
62. Quoted in Ibid.
63. Quoted in Ibid., 127.
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Hope: Propaganda and the Portrait of a President

Anne Condit

The leader wears a dark blue suit, a red tie, and a quiet, contemplative expression. In the center of the image, his head acts as the merging point between a divided background of red and blue. On his lapel is a blue “o,” with the red and white stripes of the American flag transforming the letter into a circular horizon. Beneath the leader is a single word: “hope.”

The “Hope” image of President Barack Obama has become ubiquitous. During his 2008 campaign, it could be found in storefronts, on street corners, and even on bicycle-spoke cards. People placed the image as their profile picture on social networks such as MySpace and Facebook (Fairey and Gross 8). At PasteMagazine.com, visitors could “Obama-ize” photographs of themselves to look like the icon (“Webicon.me”). Even today, the image hangs in the National Portrait Gallery and in countless apartments.

The artist behind this popular image is Shepard Fairey, known as the “Andy Warhol of this generation” (Tsai). With a style that streamlines visual collages of image and text, Fairey both critiques and creates propaganda in his art (Jerald). In the Hope poster, his most famous piece of propaganda, Fairey combined his aesthetic expertise and marketing savvy to develop a powerful tool that swept through the streets and social networks, leading to the election of America’s first African-American president.

The persuasive power of images is a fascinating topic. Although many leadership texts stress the power of verbal communication, few, if any, address the power of visual communication, which is a grave oversight. Discussing the Hope poster in the context of its visual language, psychological impact, and mass distribution can contribute to a better understanding of how Fairey’s portrait of Obama, by transforming the public image of the candidate, helped to pave the way for the presidential campaign’s success.

In our society, the term “propaganda” carries the connotation of deceit, particularly in reference to government institutions. This connotation is due largely to Great Britain’s recruitment techniques and demonization of the enemy during World War I. The negative associations of propaganda were further confirmed when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany both admitted that they used propaganda to advance their political goals. However, prior to the twentieth century, the term was largely neutral, with a meaning more akin to “advertising” or “education” than “misinformation” (Clark 8). As study of propaganda has shown, a common paradox is the tendency to describe an opponent’s work as propaganda and one’s own work as education, news, or art (Soules). Fairey has acknowledged this phenomenon in several interviews: “[A position of moral integrity], whether it’s pro a cause or against a cause is propaganda either way. I see a role for both. . . . Even the idea of using propaganda to encourage people to question advertising and other propaganda is propaganda. . . . Anti-propaganda propaganda” (Jerald). Because the Hope poster presents a visual argument, it is considered propaganda. This description is not meant to suggest that the image is sinister. Rather, it frees the portrait to be discussed within the terms of persuasive imagery.

Part of the appeal of the Hope poster is its dynamism. The tilt of the subject’s head creates a diagonal line, conveying a sense of movement. Blocks of strong color are pitted against each other, creating contrast but also unifying the image with the text. These elements point to the work’s inspirational ties to Russian Constructivism. In her introduction to “Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism,” Margarita Tupitsyn writes: “Constructivism... questioned the
fundamental properties of art and asked what its place should be in a new society. The Constructivists... explored collective ways of working, and looked at how they could contribute to everyday life through design, architecture, industrial production, theatre and film” (Tupitsyn). By freeing art from its purely aesthetic role, the Constructivists aimed for a more democratic art aimed at social change (Aronson 84).

The Constructivist style of art was used prolifically in Soviet propaganda posters during the 1920s (Tupitsyn). Visually, Constructivist posters were dominated by simplified lines and shapes, a bold, limited color palette, and the incorporation of text as a compositional element (Booth). Remarking on the influence of Constructivists in his own work, Fairey stated that he has been “inspired by historical art from the Soviet Union in the late teens through the early twenties” (Siegel). The extent of this influence can be seen in his design firm’s latest work for Saks Fifth Avenue’s advertising campaign that features “proletariat-esque” imagery and slogans calling consumers to “Arm Yourself with a Slouchy Bag!” (Wilson).

Along with its Constructivist roots, the Hope poster draws on a long history of presidential portraiture. These likenesses vary greatly depending on the image that the president or artist wished to project. The president’s expression, posture, and positioning within the picture all affect how the viewer perceives the image. Andrew Jackson’s famous piercing gaze is read as electrifying, while a closed posture, found in some portraits of Lincoln and Kennedy, is read as contemplative or even weary. Despite these differences, nearly all presidential portraits place the president at the center of the piece, thereby making him the stabilizing force (“National Portrait Gallery”). This centralized composition found in presidential portraiture is also evident in the Obama Hope poster. The composition is symmetrical, but not a mirror image. This organization keeps the image balanced, but not static. The repeating blocks of red and blue draw the eye diagonally across the page, while the central areas of off-white provide a strong focal point. These colors evoke the American flag, or, as Fairey states, “convey the idea of blue and red states, Democrats and Republicans, converging” (Fairey and Gross 7).

This use of patriotic colors found in the Hope poster is an example of a common propaganda technique known as transfer. According to the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, transfer carries “the authority, sanction, and prestige of something respected and revered over to something else.” This technique particularly applies to symbols, which can summon an array of feelings in the viewer (Lee 70). In the case of the Hope poster, the use of red, white, and blue evokes both the American flag and partisan politics. Fairey brings these symbols together to suggest Obama’s potential of uniting these colors into their intended composition.

In the book How to Win Campaigns, Chris Rose discusses how media images can come to symbolize social movements. Many of the media’s most memorable images allude to the great themes of religious icons. For example, the Tiananmen Square photograph of a young man throwing rocks at a tank evokes David and Goliath, while a woman weeping over her dead child suggests images of the Pieta (Rose 88). The icon of the visionary leader may have roots in Western religious imagery as well. The images of Christ, Mary, or other holy figures looking upward and away from the viewer are a part of the Western visual culture. By showing the leader looking away from the viewer, the artist transfers the “visions” of these saints onto the leader. In the Hope poster, Obama is shown at eye level, but his gaze is directed upward to project a belief in loftier ideals. By looking away from the viewer, the leader also portrays a sense of internal reflection, as seen in portraits of Presidents Lincoln and Tyler (“National Portrait Gallery”). In his introduction to Art for Obama, Fairey writes, “When I made the Hope portrait, I wanted to capture his [Obama’s] idealism, vision, and his contemplative nature, this last one of the most easily overlooked qualities that a strong leader embodies” (Fairey and Gross 7).

The text at the bottom of the Hope poster is an example of another propaganda technique known as a glittering generality. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis describes glittering generalities as “virtue words... that seek to make us approve and accept without examining the evidence.” Glittering generalities are vague labels used for emotional effect (Lee 47-48). Below Obama’s image, the modern, sans-serif letters state a simple message: “Hope.” The text acts as a label and effectively transforms the portrait into an icon, suggesting that Obama is the embodiment of hope. Originally, the image contained the word “progress.” However, after the initial run of these posters sold out, Fairey was commissioned by the Obama campaign to create officially sanctioned posters in the same style, but with the campaign-approved terms “hope” and “change” (Wortham). Despite their differences, all three versions are examples of glittering generalities because they are emotionally charged, positive words that mean different things to different people. These vague terms lead viewers to form an open, trustworthy response.

Aside from aesthetic appeal, the combination of image and text is psychologically engaging as well. In a study of the role of mental imagery in persuasion, Philip Mazzocco and Timothy Brock found that persuasive imagery is often more difficult to counter-argue than verbal statements. Because our perception of reality is largely visible, images can lend credibility or urgency to arguments that are otherwise implausible or vague (Mazzocco and Brock 65). Therefore, messages containing images are harder to resist and are more effective at persuasion than verbal statements alone. Cognitive research has further established that images are one of the most memorable forms of
communication. Visual materials can be encoded both symbolically and analogically, allowing a greater number of memory associations. In other research, Allan Paivio observed that study participants were far better at retrieving concrete terms such as "piano" than abstract words such as "hope." He also noted that concrete words have an increased chance of being stored in memory since they are encoded twice, once as a visual image and once as a verbal code (Paivo 32-38). Mazzocco and Brock argue that this dual-coding can increase the strength of ideas and attitudes based on visual information. These findings have interesting implications for the Obama Hope poster. By combining an abstract term with a concrete image, Fairey takes advantage of the dual-coding process while creating a new association in the viewer's mind. The vague, abstract nature of hope is difficult to counter-argue, while its encoded pairing with the image of Obama is difficult to forget.

The Hope poster is also unforgettable because of its prevalence during the 2008 presidential campaign. In addition to its iconic appearance, its popularity was due to the guerrilla and viral marketing tactics employed by Fairey and Yosi Sergant, the media consultant for the Obama campaign. These tactics were important to the Obama campaign in three distinct ways. First, by distributing the poster through the internet and on the streets, Fairey and Sergant emphasized the campaign's tech-savvy and grassroots organization. Second, by facilitating free distribution of the poster, Fairey maximized the image's potential exposure. Third, by making it a part of individuals' self-identification in social networks, voters were encouraged to take on the image and Obama's candidacy.

Fairey was no stranger to the potential of guerrilla marketing. While attending the Rhode Island School of Design, he created a series of stickers based on the image of Andre the Giant, with the word "obey" written beneath. He placed these stickers on stop signs, on abandoned storefront windows, and in other public areas with the intent of making individuals reexamine their surroundings and the pervasiveness of media messages and propaganda (Walker). With the help of several street-artist teams, Fairey was able to spread his "Obey Giant" campaign from Providence to Los Angeles (Nieratko). This image took the form of stencils, murals, and large wheat-paste posters (Harmanci). Fairey later co-founded the design studio BLK/MRKT, which has created guerilla campaigns for Pepsi, Hasbro, and Netscape (Heller and Vienne 225).

When Fairey wanted to create an image of Obama, he turned to the candidate's media consultant Yosi Sergant for permission. In an interview with the Huffington Post, Fairey stated that asking permission was not his typical style. However, he did not want his past arrests for graffiti to damage or embarrass Obama's campaign. About two weeks before the Super Tuesday primaries, Sergant gave Shepard the go-ahead. After designing the image, Fairey began screen-printing hundreds of posters for street distribution and online sales, as well as uploading a high-resolution image for digital distribution (Fairey and Gross 8). Sergant e-mailed the image to Obama supporters and distributed posters at voter rallies. To maximize its exposure, Sergant intentionally gave posters to participants who would be in camera shots.

The image piqued the media's attention, spurring a wealth of articles, magazine covers, and parodies. Fairey himself stated, "It became very clear that the demand for an image [like this existed] and that the Obama supporters were very hungry for it and also very motivated to spread it" (Arnon). In addition to Fairey's own design for Time magazine's "Person of the Year" issue (Fairey and Gross 9), Mad magazine issued its 459th issue with an image of Alfred E. Newman in the icon's style (Beale). The image received even more media attention when Fairey was arrested for pasting posters around Denver during the Democratic National Convention (Maher). Mostly because of its visibility on social networking sites and e-mail signatures, the image spread swiftly, creating a lasting impact in the public mind.

The appropriation of the candidate's image into the social-networking sphere was integral to Obama's sweep of the youth vote, often referred to as the "Millennials" (Hindman). Born between 1977 and 1996, Millennials have achieved unprecedented interconnectedness through texting, instant messaging, and social networking. In a survey by the Millennial Strategy Program, 64% of Millennials believed that everyone in a group is equal in decision making, while two-thirds of Millennials considered their friends to be the most important source on "what is cool" (Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc.). These findings mean that politicians need to appeal to the group's larger consensus rather than relying on an influential individual to sway public opinion. One way that the Obama campaign sought to achieve this objective was through social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The interactive nature of these sites facilitated political participation; for example, Nielson NetRatings showed that MySpace users of voting age were three times more likely than non-users to interact online with politicians (Winograd 170). For the Millennials, the proliferation of a "cool" image of a politician by peers was very effective. The new propaganda, therefore, must not only appeal to the individual, it must be attractive enough to be adopted by the group as well.

According to John Kotter, successful leaders "use the power they develop in their relationships, along with persuasion, to influence people on whom they are dependent to behave in ways that make it possible" to accomplish their goals (110). As a propaganda artist, Shepard Fairey was able to create a strong piece of persuasive imagery. As a guerilla marketer, he was able to spread this image as a street artist in conjunction with the Obama campaign. This


Microcredit:
The Practical Implementation of a Personal Interest

Kathleen Smith

Microcredit evokes varied images, emotions, and discussions. Popular conceptions of the impact of microcredit are embodied in images of hope: thin women, wrapped in colorful saris, expertly twist bamboo into sturdy baskets; a young man stocks the shelves of his newly expanded grocery store; and a family cares for the new milk cow they purchased to increase production of their small dairy farm. These models exude the confidence, entrepreneurialism, and optimism credited to the small loans made through organizations such as Grameen Bank, Kiva, and the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee (BRAC). While the benefits of microcredit are readily recognizable and logically laudable, critical analyses have necessarily emerged. One critic summarizes the source of the potential problems and inconclusive results associated with this fast-growing field, saying, “Credit-based microfinance has the characteristics of a development fad; it moves money to get quick heart-warming results on the ground, publicized by selective cases but with little developmental results” (Ellerman 149). This discussion becomes increasingly complicated in the framework of economic development and poverty alleviation in the United States. A brief examination of the historical context and principal critiques of microcredit provides a legitimate foundation for the focus of the research for this paper: the potential viability, sustainability, and effectiveness of microcredit in Birmingham, Alabama. To help address important questions concerning microcredit’s scope, size, interest rates, and classification as a tool for poverty alleviation, I conducted site visits to the Opportunity Fund, the Women’s Initiative, Kiva, and the Capital Good Fund. These four agencies demonstrate the potential of microcredit to help the poor in the United States. Qualitative observations made during these site visits demonstrate the promising, yet tenuous nature of the growing field of microcredit.

The Development of Microcredit

The popular notion of microcredit as a tool for poverty alleviation and economic development began in Bangladesh with Muhammad Yunus’s Grameen Bank. Professor Yunus, as Head of the Rural Economics Program at the University of Chittagong, laid the foundation for his microcredit campaign in 1976 when he undertook an action research project to assess the feasibility and design for a credit system to provide banking services to the rural poor (“A Short History of Grameen Bank”). After the initial success of the pilot project in Jobra, a small town near the University, the project expanded to other districts around Bangladesh. In 1983, after years of expansion under the sponsorship of the central bank and other nationalized banks, legislation was passed to make Grameen an independent bank.

The strength of the Grameen model is its holistic aim of giving the poor – the borrowers – “the financial and non-financial tools they need to create a dignified route out of poverty” (Daley-Harris 1). For example, in addition to the essential extension of credit, every member of Grameen Bank learns and adheres to the Sixteen Decisions, tenets that address the general development of the physical health and well-being of the borrowers and their families. These Sixteen Decisions include precepts as central as “we shall follow and advance the four principles of the Grameen Bank – discipline, unity, courage, and hard work – in all walks of our lives” (Yunus 135). Other tenets of the Sixteen Decisions are as culturally specific as “we shall not take any dowry
at our sons’ weddings; neither shall we give any dowry at our daughter’s wedding. We shall keep the center free from the curse of dowry. We shall not practice child marriage” (Yunus 136). Still other principles of the Sixteen Decisions are as basic as “we shall drink water from tube wells. If they are not available, we shall boil water or use alum to purify it” (Yunus 136).

With the Sixteen Decisions, Grameen aims to transform the culture as well as the financial system of its borrowers. Highlighting this multifaceted approach deemed necessary for extended and sustained development, Yunus explains that “these decisions are a demonstration that the poor, once economically empowered, are the most determined fighters in the battle to solve the population problem, end illiteracy, and live healthier, better lives” (137). In recognition of the effectiveness of the organization’s approach, Yunus and Grameen Bank were awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for “their efforts to create economic and social development from below” (“Nobel Peace Prize 2006”). The success of Grameen Bank is further evidenced by the expansion and sustainability of its programs and the extensive growth of its membership. In December 2009, for example, Grameen had 7.97 million borrowers in 2,562 branches and provided services in 83,458 villages (“Introduction”).

The Critics of Microcredit

This model has sparked replications throughout the world. Responding to the pace and extent of this growth, numerous critical analyses have emerged as well, although the degree of academic criticism remains somewhat slight. Richard L. Meyer explains this phenomenon:

[S]easoned veterans of foreign aid argue that the gap between microcredit rhetoric and reality is widening, particularly following the hype and bloated claims associated with the UN 2005 Year of Microcredit. The publicity surrounding the recent granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Professor Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank has elevated the claims about the magic of small loans for poor people. (225)

Despite the noisy and optimistic rhetoric surrounding microcredit, an informed discussion of its development in the Birmingham area first requires an examination of its criticism.

Many critics condemn the very ideology motivating microcredit as a catalyst to the breakdown of long-held cultural values and a first step to “a slippery slope towards consumerism” (Dichter 15). Furthermore, endorsing credit can remove the stigma of debt and promote instant gratification over savings: “The historical shift from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, from community to formal, contractual, more abstract connections (society in the coldest sense of the term), is in some sense what the encouragement of widespread formal credit can hasten” (Dichter 16). When considering the extent of microcredit loans applied toward purchasing consumer goods, this concern is strikingly evident (Dichter 16).

Considerable questions also surround the validity of promotion of microcredit programs that tout the positive results of these small loans. As David Hulme observes, microcredit loans “reduce vulnerability” by creating opportunities for the poor to empower themselves by bolstering their incomes (20). He, however, cautions that microdebt (which is associated with microcredit) can trigger unintended results, especially for borrowers confronting environmental and economic hardships, as they toil “in low-return activities in saturated markets that are poorly developed” (Hulme 20). However, even after determining the best variables for measuring success, valid quantitative analysis remains difficult because of the varied contexts and personal attributes that affect success. Beatriz Armendáriz and Jonathan Murdoch discuss this issue:

Often, though, what makes clients different is not measured – borrowers may, for example, have a more entrepreneurial spirit, enjoy better business connections, or be more focused than nonparticipants. Because these kinds of unobservable attributes are correlated with having credit, what seems like an impact of getting access to credit may in fact largely reflect these unobservable attributes. Estimated impacts of microfinance will be biased if nothing is done about the problem. And the biases can be large. (223)

For many critics, the relative age of the field further complicates these dilemmas. Armendáriz and Murdoch also explain that “microfinance is neither a panacea nor a magic bullet”(4). They add that microcredit remains an under-researched field and that existing evidence on the success of microcredit has been mixed (Armendáriz and Murdoch 4). However promising, microcredit is still developing and will be tested by time.
The Application of Microcredit in the United States

Complexities surrounding the implementation and impact of microcredit make research and discussion imperative before any microcredit initiative is attempted in Birmingham. In addition to the questions catalogued above, critics often condemn the application of microcredit in the United States as misplaced. Poverty in developing countries is different from and more pressing than poverty in the United States. Apart from skepticism concerning legitimate need and demand, many critics also question the likelihood that small loans can have a significant impact in a complex business environment like that of the United States since most of the poor who borrow money use it for consumer purposes. Furthermore, as David Ellerman contends, “[F]ew would see ‘getting more short-term credit’ to poor people as a development solution in the developed world where the business environment is considerably more business-friendly than in most developing countries” (152).

To begin to address these and other important questions, I conducted site visits to four microcredit institutions of varying size and scope. Comparing and contrasting these organizations provided an opportunity to increase my understanding of and appreciation for the necessary operational complexity of effective microcredit organizations. These visits also allowed me to engage in a more informed discussion concerning the potential role of microcredit in Birmingham.

The Opportunity Fund. The Opportunity Fund is a nonprofit lending institution based in San Francisco, California, that provides services to San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, and the Greater Bay area. The organizational operation of the Opportunity Fund centers on a vision statement:

> [E]veryone should have the chance to build a dignified life, regardless of their economic background. Our role is to help working families realize their dreams and move beyond worrying about how to live day to day. By investing in those who don’t have ready access to financial resources, we strive to break the cycle of poverty for good. (Opportunity Fund)

The Opportunity Fund attempts to fulfill this mission through three avenues of assistance: small business loans, matched savings accounts (IDAs), and affordable housing financing. My visit was primarily focused on the small business loans extended by the Opportunity Fund. These small business loans are available to home-based or small commercial business owners who are financially stable yet unable to qualify for a loan from a traditional bank. To determine loan eligibility, Opportunity Fund staff also look at individual character and business viability, preferring that clients have at least two years of experience in their respective field of expertise. Loans range from $1,000 to $10,000, with fixed interest rates of 8% or prime plus 5%; terms range from one to seven years.

My meeting with Liz Givens, vice president of fund development, clarified the Opportunity Fund’s history and current emphases. Developed by a partnership of banks, the Opportunity Fund began as a for-profit organization to help fulfill requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act. Each loan application had to go through a loan committee, so the loan process, from application to servicing, took six to eight weeks and allowed servicing of only thirty loans per year. After realizing that prospective entrepreneurs often turned to credit cards due to the long duration of the loan process, loan providers began to emphasize efficiency and eventually transformed their organization into an independent nonprofit.

Givens explained the allocation of the various steps of the loan process: marketing and outreach, loan packaging (intake and application), and loan servicing (which the Opportunity Fund outsources). She also discussed the difficult but necessary process of determining and then reaching the best market. To achieve these objectives, she explained that an organization needs to use its “hubs,” such as churches, farmers’ markets, and schools. She also warned against what she termed the 3 R’s: “No rags. No restaurants. No retail. You just need to know they have a market” (Givens). She further summarized her organization’s emphasis on personal growth and development: “We are not trying to seek self-sufficiency. [Because of this focus] there has to be a healthy tension between impact and how much it will cost [our] organization. Opportunity Fund does this because we believe it makes a difference. We are mitigating a market failure. It is not profitable to serve these people, but there are costs to not serving them also” (Givens).

The Women’s Initiative. The mission of the Women’s Initiative, another nonprofit operating in the San Francisco Bay area, is “to build the entrepreneurial capacity of women to overcome economic and social barriers and achieve self-sufficiency. [The organization has] proven that women create jobs for themselves and others, access the mainstream economy, and increase their economic self-sufficiency when they are given business planning and financing support” (Women’s Initiative). Accordingly, the Women’s Initiative has disbursed loans totaling $800,000 and has assisted clients in starting or developing over 1,600 small businesses since its founding in 1988.
Clients have achieved remarkable success after receiving assistance from the Women's Initiative; two years after completing the business training program, participants have seen their annual household income increase, on average, from $14,000 to over $37,000. As representatives of the Women's Initiative discussed these results, they not only pointed to individual benefits the clients have received, but also the benefits the clients have brought to others in their communities. For example, they noted that 57% of participants reported employing others or ensuring stable self-employment (Women's Initiative).

Complementing the traditional microloan program, the Women's Initiative requires that clients complete an eleven-week course, “Simple Steps to Business Success,” that provides training in financial accounting, planning, marketing, and self-confidence (Women's Initiative). This emphasis of the Women's Initiative on business literacy adds to the discussion of the offerings that could be made available by a microcredit program in Birmingham. I attended the preliminary meeting of this course, entitled “My Business Action Plan Session,” where approximately fifteen women from diverse backgrounds sat around a table, taking notes, and jotting down dates and ideas. One woman wanted to start a print shop; others hoped to open a jewelry store; another woman dreamed of operating a preschool in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco; two younger women excitedly chatted about owning a frozen yogurt shop and a small café; and several others wanted to open small massage therapy businesses. The women then completed a variety of worksheets meant to help assess their readiness to develop and run successful businesses. After this activity, the women were guided through a preliminary action plan for their businesses by designating steps necessary to overcome their individual challenges and fears and articulating specific short- and long-term goals.

Attendance at this preliminary meeting is required before women can take the eleven-week course, and completion of the course is a prerequisite for submission of a Women’s Initiative loan application. The staff of the Women’s Initiative, however, seem to emphasize that the business literacy component of the program is equally as important as access to loans. Statistics of the organization show that most women, within eighteen months of finishing the Simple Steps course, are able to increase their average personal income by 85% (Women’s Initiative).

Kiva. With a mission statement of “connecting people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty,” Kiva relies on a strong online platform to foster personal connection; based in San Francisco and operating in fifty-two countries, the organization’s goal is to achieve person-to-person poverty alleviation (Kiva). Kiva long had a strictly international focus, but in 2009, the organization decided to open its operations to borrowers in the United States. When I met with one of Kiva’s customer service coordinators, the organization had just spent a year reflecting, debating, and ultimately defending the decision to make microloans available to the public in the United States. Controversy still surrounded that decision, with one group claiming that “including borrowers from the USA has undermined the very core of what made [Kiva] so unique and special: small, impactful contributions to entrepreneurs in impoverished situations in developing countries” (Rao). Critics also charged that microcredit fails to lessen the effects of poverty in the United States since economic hardship in America and the developing world cannot be equated (Rao). However, Kiva CEO Premal Shah neatly synthesized the foundational philosophy for developing and sustaining microcredit in the United States:

More than 10 million U.S. business owners face difficulty obtaining capital – even before the credit crisis and economic slowdown which made lending tight. . . . [T]here is nothing wrong with giving U.S. lenders the opportunity to boost entrepreneurship at home, especially at a time where jobs created by small businesses can help lift the economy out of a recession. (Rao)

According to Shah, the United States indeed has a need and a market for this form of credit.

**Capital Good Fund.** The Capital Good Fund (CGF) is a student-led, nonprofit microfinance program founded in Providence, Rhode Island, in 2008 by Brown University students. The mission of this organization is “to create a poverty-free, inclusive green economy through innovative microfinance” (“Mission”). Since its pilot phase in spring 2009, CGF has extended seven business loans to six borrowers, in addition to making five citizenship loans. These loans were all in the amount of $3000 and were given to a variety of businesses: a tailor who needed a new steam machine; a woman who required more equipment and raw materials to expand her handmade organic soap business; a man running a carpet installation business who hoped to save money by buying tools and nails in bulk; a woman who wanted to expand her afterschool babysitting business by applying for a daycare license and building playhouses in her backyard; the owner of an environmentally friendly cleaning company; and the owner of two Curves gyms hoping to fund renovation, increase marketing, and improve staff training. Thus far, only one – the tailor – has defaulted on his loan.

During my visit, CGF executive director Andy Posner explained the foundational structure of the organization.
Although he stated that the basic structure of CGF is working well, he acknowledged that some of its planks should be changed or, at the very least, strengthened. He hopes to implement a faster loan processing structure, and the organization will begin researching the possibility of adopting a group lending model. In addition, CGF is applying to the Credit Bureau for credit reporting status. Posner explained that, with the exception of his post, students fill every position, from the administrative staff and the marketing team to individual loan officers. To keep operation costs low in order to maintain a competitive advantage, he noted that students will continue to fill these positions. In addition to instating a staff application process, CGF requires that students spend at least five hours per week in the organization’s office.

Not only was the staff impressive, but the borrowers I spoke with were equally representative of the potential of CGF. One borrower, Carmen, heard about CGF from a friend who worked at the local Small Business Development Center. Wanting to expand her side business of making handmade organic soaps, she applied for a loan. With the funds she eventually received, she was able to buy equipment, raw materials, and tailored software to help her track her finances and materials. After just one month, she reported that she could see the benefits of the $3000 loan. She was saving more; before she received her loan, her only option to expand her business had been to turn to a credit card with a near 20% interest rate, so she had simply reinvested all of her profit. Since she procured the loan, her business has been operating more efficiently because she was able to purchase more sophisticated equipment, including a stick mixer. In addition, she was able to add a new line of soaps using all organic materials. With these improvements, Carmen hopes to hire a part-time assistant in the coming months. When asked if she would apply for another loan and continue expanding her business, she answered, “You’ll be using my soaps soon” (Interview with Carmen).

While CGF’s process seemed to work and the borrowers were happy and relatively successful, Posner emphasized that CGF has not yet developed an efficient organizational structure that will allow the program to scale its operations. Consequently, gauging the potential success of CGF is difficult. When so few loans have been given, impact evaluation rests solely on stories like Carmen’s. However, CGF provided a firsthand example of a growing organization, offering an accurate and vivid picture of the realities involved in developing a start-up microcredit organization in Birmingham.

The Many Facets of Microcredit

Each of the above organizations – the Opportunity Fund, the Women’s Initiative, Kiva, and the Capital Good Fund – operates according to a similarly motivated mission statement. Yet, each organization’s interpretation of the role and scope of microcredit, as well as each organization’s particular context, led to diverse operational structures. Each organization, therefore, offers different answers to the fundamental questions concerning the structure, scale, and success of microcredit.

Focus. Among the organizations visited for this research, each has its own amalgamation of purposes and goals. With its emphasis on the importance of personal interaction, Kiva considers relationship-building to be a primary, expected outcome of its lending model. In contrast, the Opportunity Fund operates according to a more impersonal, business-oriented model: borrowers apply for a loan, receive money, and, with little oversight from Opportunity Fund employees, work to execute the proposed expansion and pay back their loan. The Women’s Initiative requires a mandatory training program for growth and education before a borrower’s application can be submitted and reviewed. Recently, with the development of financial and business literacy curricula, the Capital Good Fund staff is working to integrate each of these components into its expanding model.

Size. The size of these four organizations is similarly diverse. Kiva is the largest operation, although the number of U.S. borrowers funded through this site remains relatively small. By comparison, the Opportunity Fund has dispersed $10 million in loans to over 700 borrowers (Opportunity Fund), and the Women’s Initiative has made loans totaling $800,000, assisting clients in starting or developing over 1,600 small businesses (Women’s Initiative). During its pilot phase, CGF made a total of twelve loans, including seven $3000 business loans to six borrowers. The eventual goal of these projects is to increase effectiveness and capacity to meet the needs of individuals in their communities. However, observations from the site visits revealed that identification of a reasonable and universal loan target remains difficult because of variation in such factors as the number of borrowers, the focus of the organization, and the number of years of operation.

Group lending. During the four site visits, only a CGF representative, who had just returned from a replication training session at Grameen Bank, discussed the operational structure of group lending. According to the Grameen model, borrowers join and apply in groups of five, with the purposes of facilitating and fostering group solidarity, accountability, and participatory interaction (“Credit Delivery System”). This model, however, is not widely
implemented in the United States: in 2005, only 36 of the 198 organizations in the microcredit enterprise field offered peer group loans, while 182 organizations provided individual loans (Burrus). Armendáriz and Murdoch point to a potential shortcoming of peer group microcredit loans: “[I]f borrowers cannot observe each other’s effort levels (or are otherwise reluctant to punish shirkers) then group lending can undermine incentives by encouraging ‘free riding’” (87). Others critics charge that peer group lending counters the individual nature of American entrepreneurialism. Consequently, it will be difficult to find a successful group lending model to apply to a future microcredit operation in Birmingham.

**Interest rate.** Interest rates must reflect the risk and the ability to pay associated with the composition of an organization’s potential borrowers. As Armendáriz and Murdoch observe, “[T]he market rate of interest is a rationing mechanism – those who are willing to pay for credit are only those with projects that are most worthy” (10). However, in the formulation of an applicable and effective model for Birmingham, it is necessary to ask how high is too high when considering interest rates. For microcredit organizations in the United States, this question is related to the population being served. Kiva defines its market population as individuals who have no bank account as well as the approximately 18 million “micro-enterprises” that typically depend on payday advances or high-interest loans for business operations (O’Brien). This sector of American society is frequently termed the “unbankable.” Banks refrain from serving this population for two main reasons: profit is marginal due to the small size of loans, and risk is high due to the borrowers’ relative lack of collateral (Armendáriz and Murdoch 1). A balance, however, must be found between the usuriously high rates of payday lenders and the typical rates of traditional banks. In relation to the general context of microcredit and its potential establishment in Birmingham, Liz Givens at the Opportunity Fund validated the use of higher interest rates: "What is the cost of no capital for them? It is really high, so anything is better. Plus, it needs to be higher than for someone who would qualify for a loan [at a traditional bank]" (Givens).

**Measuring success.** Each of the organizations I studied had some established criteria for evaluating its impact, such as loans disbursed, business development, money management, and staff size. Measuring the success of a microcredit organization, however, is often difficult because these organizations operate within a complex context. As Hulme states, "[P]overty reduction requires action on many fronts: social safety nets for the poorest and most vulnerable, an effective education system, low-cost and reliable health services, governments that can provide social inclusion. . . and sound macroeconomic policies" (21). This subject is further complicated by the distinction between microcredit and microfinance, and even the distinction between economic development and poverty alleviation.

In the context of a microcredit initiative in Birmingham, a holistic approach should be pursued. It is critical to emphasize measurement of the development of the person who procures the loan rather than just the life and repayment of the loan itself. For microcredit to achieve its full potential, operations must focus on such factors as the development of a local farmers’ market, a discussion of the addition of IDAs or compulsory savings, and an increased emphasis on business and financial literacy training.

**Conclusion**

Katherine Daniel, a project manager at Rubicon National Social Innovations, offered sound advice on the implementation of a microcredit operation in Birmingham: “Don’t get so eager to start that you make yourself vulnerable [in terms of capital]. You don’t want to gloss over the weaknesses. You need to have someone overcritical looking at it.” She further summarized the task ahead by stating, “Know your goal and take on as much responsibility as you can. But, know how much you know and how much you can contribute” (Daniel). As evidenced by this brief overview of the history of microcredit and microfinance, analysis of some of the basic critiques of the field, and interviews and firsthand experiences, it is clear that scale, sustainability, and positive impact are possible in the development of a microcredit operation in Birmingham. Based on these considerations, my mission statement outlining potential microfinance operations in the neighborhoods surrounding Birmingham-Southern College appears adequate: The money raised and loaned through this project will support and, in some cases, ignite the personal initiative and entrepreneurial spirit of the poor in our community. Furthermore, students of Birmingham-Southern College will begin to learn about and understand the need for this available and seemingly viable method of fighting poverty through the promotion of the project, basic education initiatives, and volunteer participation. Still, as my focused research has shown, it is also clear that additional inquiries are required within the neighborhoods surrounding the College to determine the feasibility, measurability, and relevance of these goals within the context of the needs of our particular community. These issues, however, can be resolved. Microcredit can become part of the solution to alleviating poverty in Birmingham, Alabama.
Allison Bovell

Last summer as an intern at the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, I worked extensively with a campaign to raise awareness of and foster support for healthcare reform. After being immersed for a summer in the healthcare debate, I became interested in the history surrounding this issue. While taking Comparative Elite Behavior with Dr. Natalie Davis, I thoroughly enjoyed researching the differences and similarities between the debates in the Clinton and Obama administrations and comparing the leadership taken during both reform efforts.

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Allison Bovell

The debate over healthcare reform has spanned nearly four decades of American politics. The players, rhetoric, and media tactics may have changed, but the game remains the same. Political elites, interest groups, and the media all play a role in influencing public opinion and producing – or blocking – healthcare policies. In recent years, both the Clinton (1993) and Obama (2009) administrations have sought to implement a massive overhaul of the health insurance system. While the verdict on Obama’s attempt to reform healthcare is still unknown, Clinton’s reform effort ended in frustration due in part to the success of special interest groups in mobilizing bias through the media and the failure of political elites to bolster sufficient support for the measure. A comparative analysis of the attempts of the Clinton and Obama administrations to reform healthcare reveals the influence of elite behavior in public policy discussions. The Obama administration and other pro-reform elites – members of Congress in particular – must learn from the mistakes of the Clinton era in order to achieve their goal of implementing a massive healthcare overhaul.

On September 22, 1993, just eight months after President Bill Clinton took office, he announced his comprehensive healthcare reform plan. Prior to debate on the issue, public opinion polls showed a high level of support for extending health coverage. A nationwide Harris poll in August 1993, for example, reported that 81% of respondents thought that providing health insurance for those currently not covered was either essential or very important (Goldsteen, Goldsteen, Swan, & Clemena, 2001). Public support for Clinton’s plan eroded, however, as the discussion grew heated between political elites and interest groups. Congress ultimately abandoned the effort in August 1994. Although 57% of respondents in a nationwide poll initially favored Clinton’s plan, this level of support dropped to 37% by July 1994 (Yankelovich, 1995). Several political factors account for this collapse of support, including presidential rhetoric, lack of public deliberations, congressional partisanship, anti-reform efforts launched by special interest groups, and the elite debate that was exacerbated by the media.

In his article, “The Debate That Wasn’t: The Public and the Clinton Plan,” Daniel Yankelovich (1995) argued that a lack of connection with the American people was Clinton’s chief failing of leadership during the healthcare debate, a shortcoming that characterized other political elites in this reform effort as well. Clinton declined to open the debate to public deliberation. Instead, he persisted in his attempt to implement universal health insurance coverage, an aspect of the plan that he claimed was nonnegotiable. Moreover, after Clinton’s public announcement of the plan, the public remained unaware of its specifics. As Yankelovich (1995) reported, in the week following Clinton’s address, only 21% of respondents in a national survey stated that they were highly knowledgeable about Clinton’s plan. Clinton’s rhetoric on healthcare reform failed to stir public interest, and his inability to communicate the details of his plan to the American people made his leadership and proposed reform vulnerable to attacks. Clinton also misinterpreted and relied too heavily on public opinion reports that indicated overwhelming support for universal health insurance.
Yankelovich (1995) suggested, “What most people really mean when they say they support universal coverage can be paraphrased this way: We don’t believe anybody should be deprived of care because of money. We support the president’s goal of insurance for all that can never be taken away, but only if the nation can afford it and it doesn’t limit choice of doctors or raise taxes or cause employers to cut jobs.” Disconnected from Americans regarding universal coverage, Clinton focused his argument on egalitarian values and attempted to frame healthcare reform in terms of equality (Koch, 1998). Clinton’s failures to deliberate publicly and to connect with the American people, however, were not the sole causes of the plan’s defeat. Indeed, prospects for the plan’s passage dimmed as harsh rhetoric along party lines intensified in Congress.

While the president and his supporters relied on public opinion poll data to structure the debate, members of Congress tended to track constituent opinions through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and letters. In their article, "Congressional Leadership of Public Opinion," Jacobs, Lawrence, Shapiro, and Smith (1998) argued: “If legislators treated public opinion polls as objective, they might share a broad consensus regarding American preferences. But our interviews suggest an opposite situation: members’ skepticism regarding polls and their reliance on direct contacts with constituents encourage congressional offices to adopt divergent interpretations of public opinion.” Members of Congress, who generally maintain a key focus on their reelection efforts, were heavily influenced by their constituents’ opinions during the debate since healthcare reform was such a highly salient issue.

During the debate, the Republican minority focused on addressing the public’s views in hopes of bolstering electoral prospects for party members. In short, Republicans believed that they could gain more seats in the 1994 midterm elections if they won the legislative battle by successfully manipulating public opinion. From the onset of debate, Republican leaders strategically staked out their position on this issue and mobilized bias by opposing Clinton’s proposal in stages. House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich, in order to avoid the appearance of strict party loyalty and anti-reform attitudes, introduced alternative legislation that focused on incremental improvements to the healthcare system. This strategy allowed Republicans to “credibly claim to be for some form of health reform” (Jacobs et al., 1998). When Democrats rejected this proposal, the Republican leadership then labeled Clinton’s healthcare reform as a strictly partisan bill. The Republican caucus thus presented a united front against healthcare reform and centered its efforts on appealing to the public.

The Republican strategy had two parts: formulate or endorse policies that provided a focal point for Republican preferences and attack unsatisfactory proposals to discourage Republican members from considering them as viable options (Jacobs et al., 1998). These strategies, combined with the accusation that Democrats were rushing a vote on partisan legislation, enabled Republicans to influence public opinion. Shortly after the defeat of Clinton’s healthcare reform, Republican Senator Bob Packwood remarked, “We’ve killed health care reform. Now we’ve got to make sure our fingerprints are not on it.” His statement enforced the notion that the GOP was not responsible for public opposition to Clinton’s plan or the defeat of the legislation (Cohen, 1994). Republicans, therefore, succeeded in shaping this political debate so that the inclusion of universal coverage roused enough public anger to derail Clinton’s plan.

Media coverage and advertising by special interest groups may have aided efforts of Republicans to mobilize their bias. Special interest groups have long been key players in shaping public opinion on healthcare reform; for instance, the American Medical Association’s use of the term “socialized medicine” to describe healthcare reform efforts in the 1940s lives on in the minds of the American public. Likewise, in 1993, special interest groups invoked rhetoric that gained the attention of voters and contributed to the failure of reform efforts. One of the most notable of these efforts was the campaign launched by the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), a health insurance lobbying group. Through a number of well-funded television commercials, called the “Harry and Louise” ads, the HIAA created a “buzz” about the topic within the American public (Brodie, 2001). The Harry and Louise ads consisted of fourteen commercials that aired nationwide throughout the course of the healthcare debate. Although these ads initially expressed mistrust in the government, they soon escalated to invoke anti-government language and attack Clinton’s desire for universal coverage. These ads, which cost the HIAA nearly $14 million, playedconstantly throughout the course of the debate. Although these ads initially expressed mistrust in the government, they soon escalated to invoke anti-government language and attack Clinton’s desire for universal coverage. These ads, which cost the HIAA nearly $14 million, played a role in shaping public opinion and “potentially weakened the deliberative process” (Goldsteen et al., 2001). In the case of the Harry and Louise ads, special interest groups used their financial resources to tilt the debate in their favor. Lawrence Jacobs summarized the impact of this lobbying effort by claiming that the “HIAA’s financial resources gave it privileged access to the mass public and politicians” (2001).

During the Harry and Louise ad campaign, public support for healthcare reform declined by 20%, but this decrease was due only in part to the ads’ rhetoric. While these ads may have been a player in public opinion, the real success of the ads lay in their contribution to the “larger media strategy intended to influence legislators in key districts by persuading them that the public did not support the Clinton plan” (Goldsteen et al., 2001). Furthermore, press coverage of the Clinton administration’s reaction to the ads allowed the ad campaign to have
an indirect impact on public opinion; for example, the ads gained even more attention after the media reported
Hillary Clinton’s scathing critique of the HIAA accusing the industry of trying to protect its profits through greed
and deception (Public Broadcasting Network, 1996). The mass media extensively covered the political conflict
that ensued among Congress, the White House, and special interest groups, leading Lawrence Jacobs to observe
that “the 1990s and the Clinton episode (especially in 1994) produced an unprecedented rise in press reporting of
political conflict and strategy” (2001). The media’s ability to exacerbate the conflict among political elites, together
with issue advertising through the Harry and Louise ads, had an impact on mobilizing bias and creating public
opposition. With the help of the mass media, HIAA’s campaign reportedly produced 450,000 contacts to members
of Congress through phone calls, letters, and meetings. Therefore, the failure of healthcare reform in 1993 was
due only in part to Clinton’s inability to connect with the American people and to Republican efforts to block
the legislation. The defeat of healthcare reform can also be attributed to negative media coverage and the shift in
public opinion generated by campaigns launched by health insurance lobbyists.

In 2009, President Barack Obama seeks to overhaul the nation’s health insurance industry with the goal of
providing coverage for all Americans. To achieve progress, Obama has to learn from Clinton’s failed attempts
to achieve healthcare reform. He has recognized the need to understand the concerns of his supporters, critics,
and the undecided, and he has attempted to form rhetoric that appeals to Congress, special interest groups, and
the public. Additionally, because the crafting of public policy does not occur in a vacuum, Obama has had to
focus on the economic downturn and seek to ease fears of Americans worried about exorbitant amounts of federal
spending during a recession. As he moves forward, Obama must develop a new strategy, one that Jacob Hacker
views as hinging on mobilizing the “anxious middle, people with insurance who are nonetheless ‘fairly’ or ‘very’
worried about losing it” (2009). The Obama administration has been successful in using the climate of uncertainty
and anxiety produced by economic stressors to reinforce the need for comprehensive healthcare reform. As the
administration points out, implementation of healthcare reform can alleviate some insecurities that come with
rapid job loss. Moreover, as Jonathon Oberlander notes, “Obama’s health plan clearly embodies additional
lessons from the Clinton reform debacle: it preserves employer-sponsored insurance for insured Americans who
don’t want to change plans, it exempts small businesses from the employer mandate to provide health insurance
while providing tax credits for small companies that want to purchase insurance, and it contains no politically
controversial, centralized cost controls” (2009).

While Obama has made his positions clear, he is less insistent in his rhetoric about universal coverage when
compared with Clinton. Through the aid of the grassroots networks and organizations that supported him during
his presidential campaign, Obama has connected with the public in a way that Clinton was unable to do, so his
message has had greater appeal to the American public. Obama knew early on that he must gain support for this
reform effort and move quickly in order to get legislation passed. With this heightened sense of urgency from
Obama, Congress has been more receptive to a healthcare initiative. The chief problem, however, lies in winning
support of Americans who fear the cost of the legislation. According to a Gallup poll conducted in October 2009,
only 25% of Americans stated they would support the bill, 33% thought they would oppose the final bill, and
39% were waiting to make a decision about the legislation until details had been clarified (Gallup, 2009). In order
to secure passage of the legislation, Obama must not only gain broader support of the American people, he must
secure the backing of a majority of Congress, especially conservative and moderate Democrats.

From the beginning of the debate, it was clear that Republicans would offer limited – if any – support for
healthcare reform. Therefore, supporters of the legislation have been charged with uniting Democrats and
persuading conservative and moderate Democrats to vote for the bill. The concern of many of these hesitant
Democrats mirrors a central question in the public mind: how will the government pay for it? As a result, the bill
must be fiscally sound in order to win the support of members of Congress concerned with the growing deficit.
The biggest hurdle facing Obama’s initiative during the summer of 2009 stemmed from the efforts of the Blue Dog
coalition to block what it viewed as a fiscally unsound measure. These concerns persisted into the fall when Blue
Dogs voted against healthcare reform legislation on November 7, 2009.

In the Senate, Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus formulated a draft of the healthcare bill that reporter
Ronald Brownstein touted as “a fiscally durable framework for expanding coverage while simultaneously reforming
the medical system. The bill represents the most serious effort to implement the innovative thinking from the
community of healthcare reformers” (Brownstein, 2009b). As of late November 2009, the Senate remains a key
focus, and only time will tell if its leaders will be able to move healthcare reform to a floor vote before the holiday
break. Just as in 1993, members of the House and Senate are feeling the pressure of their constituents and various
special interest groups.

While the behavior of congressional elites may be strikingly similar in both the 1993 and 2009 debates, it
differs in one key aspect: many special interest groups that were once against reform have become more supportive of it. However, this shift in favor of reform by traditionally conservative interest groups has come at a price, as Obama and congressional elites were forced to make concessions in order to appease the demands of influential lobbying groups. According to an article in the November 2009 issue of The American Prospect, adjustments were made in the legislation so as to gain the support of such groups as the American Medical Association, America’s Health Insurance Plans, and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. For example, America’s Health Insurance Plans, a powerful health insurance lobby, has made an impact on every draft of the bill; as one compromise, the Obama administration included a section in its plan that would require all Americans to buy health insurance, a provision that benefits insurers by allowing them to cover the uninsured (Laskow, 2009). Through such compromises, the Obama administration and congressional Democrats have been able to expedite reform.

The resistance by many special interest groups has diminished, but opposition to the plan remains. Notably, several groups in the business community are working to derail this legislation. Similar to 1993, special interest groups are using advertising to communicate their views to the public. However, unlike 1993, ads represent both sides of the debate. As of November 2009, advocates on both sides of the issue had spent a combined $170 million on television advertising (Seeleye, 2009). The Harry and Louise commercials broadcasted during the Clinton debate were one of the first ad campaigns that centered on a policy issue, so they were recognizable and influential. In contrast, the impact of ads on the healthcare debate is less pronounced today since the public is inundated with a range of ads that represent a broader spectrum on this policy discussion. However, as Ann Cooper reports, this new wave of ads brings the concerns of the American people to the attention of Congress (2009). Even though many of these ad campaigns are not sufficiently widespread to have a significant impact on public opinion, they have played a crucial role in the debate by shaping attitudes on Capitol Hill.

Healthcare reform is a sensitive and difficult policy issue that has weighed heavily on political elites for decades. Although Bill Clinton and Barack Obama first come to mind, Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Richard Nixon also sought to broaden health insurance for Americans. The rhetoric invoked by opponents to Clinton’s plan is still used today. In both 1993 and 2009, conservative members of Congress and special interest groups countered the efforts of the White House to implement a comprehensive reform of the health insurance system. Rather than a complete overhaul, these groups favor incremental change. They emphasize the need to preserve a place for the business community, including the insurance industry, in a healthcare system based on the free market. In order for the current reform effort to succeed, congressional Democrats will have to rely on party unity, support of special interest groups, and Obama’s ability to connect with the public.

Although the fate of Obama’s plan remains uncertain, political scientist James Morone points out, “We have had brilliant, successful, charismatic leadership at various times in American history. And no one has gotten as far as this Congress and this president” (Brownstein, 2009a). By understanding the behavior of political elites involved in the Clinton debates, Obama and his supporters have been able to mobilize bias within special interest groups. Obama has also succeeded in connecting with the public on this controversial issue. Securing congressional and public support for healthcare reform, however, remains a challenge for the Obama administration. In order for supporters of Obama’s plan to achieve their goal, they will need to address concerns of fiscally conservative Americans and convince the American people that reform is both necessary and beneficial. Regardless of the bill’s fate, the debate on the issue affords insight into the behavior and prominence of political elites in framing public policy discussions in the United States.
References


Kristin Hendricks

I wrote this paper for Dr. Law's French Revolution and Napoleon class last spring. Since I am interested in British politics and how the French Revolution affected British citizens, I initially wanted to look at Edmund Burke's opposition during the French Revolution, but I soon focused on Charles James Fox. This Member of Parliament has attracted historians for hundreds of years because of his interesting character and open personality. My favorite part of researching was examining his numerous journals because his personality is apparent as he switches from lamenting the events of the Revolution to recounting his tennis game or hunting successes.

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Against the King but for the Country:
Charles James Fox and the French Revolution

Kristin Hendricks

The French Revolution cost Charles James Fox his closest friends, his political party, and his reputation. The resulting split in the Whig Party left Fox in charge of the opposition – the newly named Old Whigs – while Edmund Burke led the New Whigs. From 1791 until he left Parliament in protest in October 1797, Fox supported the French Revolution and argued against any actions hostile to the revolutionaries, although many of his colleagues stood against him. Even after the Reign of Terror began, Fox continued to defend the French Revolution because he believed that this movement constituted a noble, if misguided, attempt to secure and protect the liberties of the French people and presented a challenge to absolute monarchy, the form of government that Fox considered the greatest threat to the freedom of both British and French citizens.

Historical Appraisal of Fox

Over the last century, historians have expressed a range of ideas about Charles James Fox's career during the French Revolution. These scholars challenged previous notions of Fox as a traitor and treated his beliefs about the Revolution1 and actions of Parliament more seriously than had many earlier historians. Historians in the first decades of the 1900s sought to clear his name, but they failed to see Fox as more than a figure to be pitied for the injustices he suffered at the hands of men like Edmund Burke.2 By emphasizing their views on Fox's character, these historians painted an image of Fox as a well-meaning but bumbling statesman who repeatedly failed to take advantage of the situations presented to him. In Fox (1935), Christopher Hobhouse maintained that Fox formed his opinion of the French Revolution hastily and "remained deaf to the cries of justice and mercy, infatuated by his original idea that liberty had come at last."3 In this period, historians harshly criticized Fox for failing to see the unforgiving realities of the French Revolution, but the severity of these critiques was tempered by the conclusion that Fox was not a traitor to his country.

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, scholars asserted that the views Fox held on the Revolution were not entirely groundless and stressed his efforts to protect civil liberties in Britain.4 In Charles James Fox: A Man for the People (1969), Loren Reid focused on Fox's battle to preserve freedoms of speech and assembly against pressures to curtail them in the 1790s.5 Although Fox could not persuade many of his colleagues in Parliament to support the French Revolution, Reid held that Fox's opinions and actions were important in establishing a more complete image of the British reaction to the French Revolution since not every Briton felt threatened by the Revolution or supported subsequent Parliamentary actions. L.G. Mitchell's Charles James Fox (1992) furthered understanding of Fox's beliefs by stating that the Englishman did not blindly support the Revolution and that he actively opposed members of Parliament who attempted to curtail British liberties.6 Mitchell's Fox was not a bumbling, inadequate politician who failed because he was incapable of succeeding or because he was merely unlucky. Instead, this historian portrayed Fox as a man who passionately supported the preservation and extension of liberties but who made poor decisions. Mitchell also suggested that Fox was legitimately alarmed by the
British government’s actions during the Revolution. He argued that Fox opposed the suspension of rights because he feared that if Parliament continued its reactionary policies, Britons would lose their civil liberties, and the country would return to an absolute monarchy.7

As this paper argues, Fox welcomed the French Revolution because he detested absolute monarchy, but he changed his attitude toward the Revolution over time. Still, Fox opposed British legislation proposed in response to the excesses of the Revolution because he was afraid that if civil liberties were curtailed, absolute monarchy would spread to his country. Thus, Fox supported the Revolution, while he opposed Parliamentary measures that would erode civil liberties due to his fear that George III would re-create an absolute monarchy if the Revolution failed or if Britons lost their freedoms.

Fearing France

Before July 1789, Fox saw the French government as one of the greatest threats against Britain, so his initial praise for the French Revolution was surprising. According to Hobhouse, Fox disliked the French government, at least in part, because France had long threatened British power and influence on the continent.8 Mitchell explained that France, with its larger population and military might, posed one of the most dangerous threats to Britain; Fox declared that he was committed to “contain[ing] ‘the overweening pride and boundless ambition of France.”9 Fox thus was suspicious of the French government because the Bourbon monarchy could not be controlled or restricted to its own borders.

Fox’s apprehension of the French government also stemmed from his beliefs as a Whig. As Edward Lascelles pointed out in *The Life of Charles James Fox* (1939), Fox spoke out against any government that could act without limitations on its power.10 Fox believed that a government could not fully serve the interests of the people without certain checks on its authority. He advocated a balanced system, which he argued could protect the interests and liberties of citizens more effectively than could an absolute government, whether a monarchy or a democracy.11 This aversion toward absolute forms of government meant that Fox opposed France because the Bourbon king theoretically wielded unlimited power. A limited monarchy, with powers checked by other branches of government, could provide what Fox considered a proper balance.

Fearing George III

The French absolute monarchy also worried Fox because he feared that this form of government could spread to Britain. According to Mitchell, Fox earnestly believed that George III would join with absolute monarchs across Europe to broaden his control over the British government and people.12 Fox, therefore, feared that his king could threaten British liberties and the nation’s limited monarchy. In a speech in 1791 on war with Russia, Fox declared that he “should rise for the purpose of resisting such strange and unwarrantable doctrines…involving no less than whether this [Britain’s] was a mixed government, or whether the whole power of it was vested in the king.”13 That Fox would suggest the need to address the possibility of an absolute monarchy in Britain testifies to his fear that his country could lose its limited monarchy and civil liberties.

Pointing to one way in which George III might gain too much authority, Fox voiced concern that the king could employ unprecedented power in appointing members to the House of Lords. A. Barrister’s *Speeches of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox in the House of Commons* (1853) chronicled Fox’s argument that the monarch might one day fill the body of Parliament14 with a majority of men who would “destroy the constitutional control of the aristocracy in case they [the hereditary peers who would be actual members of the aristocracy] attempted to resist the crown.”15 Fox maintained that the king could prevent the aristocracy from acting as a check on the legislative actions of the commoners and the monarch. Again, Fox’s warning that the king might develop such a devious plan illustrated the depth of this fear for him. Fox’s aversion to absolute monarchy stemmed from his belief that the people, as the source of governmental authority, should have more power than the monarch.16 As Fox believed, an absolute monarchy denies citizens their proper rights and place in government. He feared that George III would find a way to erase the legacy of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 by imposing a new absolute government on the British. Thus, Fox’s hatred of the French government was inextricably tied to his fear of absolute monarchy.

Mitchell took this argument one step further with his contention that Fox believed that the very existence of absolute monarchy in France actually encouraged George III to undertake a campaign to extend the power of the British monarchy. According to Mitchell, George III could emulate Louis XVI, the preeminent example of an absolute monarch on the continent, in a campaign to increase the powers of the British monarch.17 As a monarch limited by a constitution and centuries of tradition, George III could look to his counterpart across the English Channel for inspiration on how to alter the British government to ensure the extension of control over his country.
As long as Louis XVI reigned as an absolute monarch, Britain’s constitution was threatened because George III might be encouraged to overstep the limitations on his power and change the British government.

Linking the French Revolution and the Glorious Revolution

The beliefs Fox held on government, particularly regarding the French absolute monarchy, help explain why he greeted the French Revolution with joy. Fox welcomed news of the storming of the Bastille because he believed that it ignited a movement that would mirror the English Glorious Revolution. In a speech in the House of Commons on February 5, 1790, Fox argued that the French, like the British in 1688, were attempting to check the power of the monarch and to secure their civil rights by establishing a constitution. This connection between the relatively peaceful transition of power in the Glorious Revolution and the violence in France does not seem legitimate from a modern standpoint, given that the early days of the Revolution gave way to the Reign of Terror. This association between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution, however, offers enormous insight into Fox’s opinions. He earnestly believed that citizens must periodically express their dissatisfaction openly in order to prevent the establishment of an absolute monarchy. Fox thus supported movements in the spirit of the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution because they enabled the people to check the power of the monarch and to establish or reestablish their rights as citizens. By implying that the revolutionaries in France were only trying to protect their civil liberties and were acting like their British counterparts one hundred years earlier, Fox suggested that the violence would not last. In his view, the goal of the French Revolution was to create a constitution, and the French, like the patriots in the Glorious Revolution, would be satisfied once they accomplished this objective.

Defending the French Revolution

Fox excused the violence in France by arguing that the bloodshed was temporary and the direct result of the oppression and tyranny of the absolute monarchy. As John W. Derry stated in Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt, and Liverpool (2001), Fox could not have foreseen the radical phase of the Revolution since its leaders proposed relatively mild reforms from 1789 to 1791. The tone of the early years of the Revolution explains why he could believe that the Revolution would be relatively peaceful; he had little reason to think otherwise based on his observations of France prior to the Reign of Terror. In his speech on the Army Estimates, Fox admitted that the carnage of the Revolution was not praiseworthy, but he also argued that the French, who had lived under an oppressive form of government for centuries, were merely attempting to “shake off the yoke of despotism.” Even though their methods were brutal, the revolutionaries were acting out of desperation and with pure intentions; Fox suggested that the French had no choice but to turn to violence against their oppressors. In this speech, Fox also called for British empathy for the French because the revolutionaries were fighting for a specific purpose – the establishment of their rights as citizens – and the violence would end when they accomplished their goals.

For further proof that the French were fighting for liberty and a fairer government, Fox looked to key documents of the Revolution, including the Constitution of 1791 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In the first line of the Declaration, the framers of this document declare that governments can work to preserve the interests of the citizenry by acknowledging the natural rights of the people. Thus, the introduction of this document asserted one of the basic tenets of Fox’s political ideology. Articulating his philosophy, Fox argued during a debate on the Quebec Bill in 1791 that a government was a contract in which the governors pledged to protect the natural rights of the governed. Other Whiggish ideas expressed in the Declaration and the Constitution of 1791, such as freedom of expression, also reflected Fox’s personal views and the causes he championed. A connection can thus be drawn between the ideas of French revolutionaries and Fox’s views as a Whig.

Fox also lauded his counterparts in France for their respect for freedom of religion, and he even expressed a desire to see Britain adopt the spirit of religious toleration permeating the Revolution. Indeed, he had campaigned against religious discrimination for more than two decades before Parisians stormed the Bastille. As the Revolution unfolded, he passionately called for religious toleration in his speeches during debates on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The Corporation Act, Fox explained, was intended to keep radicals out of the government by not extending equal rights to the followers of different religions, while the Test Act was meant to prevent Catholics from holding key offices. Evidencing the importance he placed on religious toleration, Fox proclaimed during a debate, “What! [W]as any specific mode of administering the Lord’s Supper, to be considered as the corner-stone of the constitution?” Further revealing his concern for religious freedom, Fox praised the emphasis that the British constitution placed on upholding this freedom and hailed the document as fundamental in protecting personal liberties.
Because Fox and the revolutionaries shared similar political beliefs, Fox was inclined to support the Revolution in its initial stages. In a campaign connected to his push for religious freedom, Fox also called for protection of the right to express oneself freely. When arguing for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Fox suggested that citizens would lose the very basis of their liberties if they were denied the right to express themselves. Thus, the right to discuss one’s beliefs and opinions publicly was crucial to Fox. As the Revolution progressed and individual liberties were curtailed, Fox fought tirelessly to protect free speech. He denounced the sedition trials of two Scotsmen – Muir and Palmer – and claimed that Britain was beginning to resemble the Jacobin government, although, admittedly, individuals convicted in Scotland for sedition were not executed. Fox, moreover, argued that people should not be transported to “Botany Bay for advising another to read Paine’s book, or for reading the Irish address at a public meeting.” For Fox, the notion that people could be punished for reading or recommending certain books or pamphlets was reprehensible and intolerable. In sum, Fox viewed freedom of speech as one of the most important individual rights, and he argued for years that people should be allowed to express their religious and political beliefs.

Questioning the Revolution

Fox supported the early stages of the Revolution because he concurred with the political ideology of its leaders, but his enthusiasm waned as the Revolution unfolded. Fox watched as the Jacobins gained power and began to make changes to the French government. As early as 1792, he suggested that the Jacobin Party could not be trusted, although he was still willing to excuse their actions as reactions to outside threats. Earlier in the Revolution, Fox had primarily criticized actions of the French in general rather than specific groups, so his denouncement of the Jacobin Party represented a shift in his response to the Revolution. However, he maintained that the Revolution would ultimately result in a successful new government for France and the spread of Whiggish ideals. Recognizing that the Jacobins were no longer promulgating his ideology, Fox began to criticize the revolutionaries for their radical approaches.

A letter Fox penned on September 3, 1792, further revealed his changing attitude toward the Revolution. Given the violence directed against Louis XVI, Fox worried about the future of the Revolution. In this letter, he also criticized members of the French National Assembly for their lack of “dignity and propriety in everything they do.” Such criticism of the Revolution suggested that Fox no longer wholly supported the movement and that his defense of the Revolution had been based on his hope that the revolutionaries would adopt Whiggish ideals.

From this point on, Fox’s language changed significantly, and he began to differentiate between the French who supported the ideas of liberty and those who led the Revolution. When discussing the September Massacres, Fox described the leaders of those executions as “monsters” and called for their punishment. Lamenting that the Revolution had generated such violence, Fox commented that this horror had caused pain to the “true friends of liberty.” Fox questioned the Revolution based on his belief that the Jacobins were no longer protecting the civil liberties of French citizens. As he pointed out, members of other French political parties, along with the victims of the September Massacres, were arrested and executed merely for their political loyalties and beliefs. Fox charged that these victims were not given fair trials before they were killed. These Jacobin-orchestrated atrocities outraged Fox since he had fought for tolerance throughout his decades in Parliament. These denunciations of the revolutionaries illustrated that Fox was truly questioning if the movement still embodied the ideals of its earlier stages. He seemed to conclude that the cause of liberty was no longer the cause of the French Revolution.

Still, Fox maintained that the government in France, even one led by the Jacobins, was preferable to a return to an absolute monarchy. He feared that Britain and other countries were determined to reinstate absolute monarchy in France and restore the surviving aristocracy. These measures, Fox feared, would mean that the early revolutionaries’ progress would be undone and that French liberty would once again be uncertain. When forced to choose between a government that did not protect the rights of every citizen and a government that refused to acknowledge those rights at all, Fox believed that he must embrace the lesser evil: his duty was to prevent the restoration of the Bourbons in France.

Back to Britain

As he became disillusioned with the actions of the French, Fox turned his attention away from foreign affairs and focused instead on the protection of British liberties. He maintained that the Treason and Sedition Bills, introduced in response to fears that ideas of the French Revolution would spread to Britain, were unconstitutional because they infringed on freedom of expression. Fox attempted to persuade his colleagues in Parliament to reject
these bills because he believed that these measures would endanger one of the most essential liberties guaranteed to
the British. If these bills became law, Fox argued, Britons would essentially no longer be able to speak freely, either
publicly or privately, thereby leaving British citizens powerless to discuss their grievances and to demand change.30
By refusing to allow individuals to discuss their opinions on political matters, Fox argued, the British government
would not only deny citizens one of their essential rights, but also relegate them to a silent, passive role in the
government by restricting their political participation.

Although Parliament and George III argued that the Treason and Sedition Bills would protect the government
by preventing the spread of revolutionary ideas, Fox insisted that these bills would actually all but force the people
toward revolution. In a debate on these bills, Fox asked his fellow members of Parliament if rebellions in other
countries were reactions against freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.41 Fox implied that the French
Revolution, like earlier revolutions, was a reaction by the politically oppressed to protect basic liberties. Fearing that
curtailing liberty would provoke Britons to rebel against the government, he warned Parliament against limiting
freedom of speech.42 He stated that actions of the British government increasingly resembled the schemes of the
Revolutionary Tribunals; along this line, he condemned the practice of arbitrarily sentencing individuals to hard
labor and death without proof of any crimes.43 Although Parliament was trying to prevent a revolution like the one
raging in France, Fox warned that Parliament was actually pushing the people toward revolution by considering
legislation that would curtail or revoke British civil liberties.

Because Fox associated the limitation of civil liberties with absolute monarchy, he feared that Parliament’s
restriction of civil liberties would lead to the reestablishment of an absolute monarchy in Britain. In a letter to Lord
Holland in September 1795, Fox expressed his concern that the British monarchy would soon exercise absolute
control over the British people, thus shattering the tradition of a limited monarchy.44 In this letter, Fox suggested
that the constitution of Britain was endangered. Thus, Fox expressed a sense of duty to encourage the people to resist
repression as long as they did not resort to violence in their campaign to prevent the reestablishment of absolute
monarchy in Britain.45 By connecting his fear of absolute monarchy with the campaign to prevent Parliament from
limiting the rights of British citizens, Fox suggested that he and other Whigs must preserve political freedoms. Such
actions, Fox stated, would save Britain’s limited monarchy from a British revolution.

Conclusion

Fox’s opinions on the French Revolution were complex, but these beliefs centered on the fear of absolute
monarchy and the desire to protect the civil liberties of citizens. Fox initially supported the Revolution because
its leaders challenged the absolute monarchy in France and declared their intention to create a government based
on the people’s rights. Not only did Fox believe that the French would successfully establish a government that
could better serve their interests, he contended that Britain’s limited monarchy would be better able to thrive in the
absence of absolute monarchy in France. The violence and intolerance of the Reign of Terror, however, triggered a
pronounced shift in Fox’s appraisal of the Revolution. Although he steadfastly refused to act against the Revolution
itself, he took this position only because he believed that the Jacobin government was preferable to the greater evil
of an absolute monarchy. The critical aspect of his reaction to the French Revolution, however, centered on his belief
that the British Parliament was enabling George III to resurrect the trappings of an absolute monarchy. Throughout
the French Revolution, Fox’s goals were to check the spread of absolute monarchy and to encourage the creation
of liberal democracy. These ideals, which first led Fox to welcome the French Revolution, later led him to view the
Revolution and the British government as threats to the very liberties they supposedly protected.
Notes

1. In this paper, I will refer to only the French Revolution as the “Revolution.” For all other events, like the Glorious Revolution of 1688, I will include the full title.


5. Reid, Man for the People, 289-92.


7. Ibid.


10. Lascelles, Life, 216.


13. Wright, Speeches, 195.

14. This statement refers to the Canadian Parliament, but I contend that Fox believed that George III would also attempt this political maneuver in Britain.


18. Wright, Speeches, 53.

19. Ibid., 65.


21. Wright, Speeches, 53.

22. Because I do not mention any other declaration, I will refer to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen as the “Declaration.”


24. The Quebec debates centered on the question of establishing a constitution and government in Quebec. These deliberations provided the House of Commons with one of the first opportunities to truly discuss the French Revolution and its impact on the political world. In these sessions, Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox finalized their separation and the dissolution of the Whig Party into the New Whigs and the Old Whigs. Thus, the writings on the Quebec Bill debates provide crucial information for historians studying Burke’s or Fox’s reaction to the French Revolution.


26. Wright, Speeches, 225.


28. The Test and Corporation Acts instituted forms of religious discrimination, including the requirement that individuals who held certain offices be members of the Church of England.

29. Wright, Speeches, 65.


31. Ibid., 69.


36. Ibid., 374.


38. Ibid., 71-72.

39. Wright, Speeches, 5.
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Would I Go Back to Athens?
Prof. Samuel J. Pezzillo

I’m not sure you want to take advice on leadership from someone who was introduced not so long ago to a gathering with the statement, “He has difficulty with authority,” and whose mantra, taken straight from the ‘60s, is Janice Joplin’s, “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.” (I occasionally have students in Latin translate that.) It is not that I favor anarchy so much as how I think of the idea. To me, anarchy means not unguided but self guided; it implies taking responsibility for oneself. That last I take to be the quintessential quality of leadership as well. And in that approach, I find my classical model in Socrates, guided, as he says, by an inner voice or daimon. As I listen to my inner daimon, I always wonder how it would guide me if I were invited to “go back to Athens,” the title of this piece and an incident in the life of Socrates that tells me a lot about self-directed leadership. Let me tell you the story.

It fell by lot for Socrates to be a presiding officer for the day when the assembly voted to put to death the eight generals involved in a victorious naval battle against the Spartans and their allies at Arginusae. In pursuing total victory, these generals had neglected to save comrades who had fallen into the sea or to recover the bodies of those who had died. Socrates resisted the motion but was defeated in his efforts; instead of following through with the order as the presiding officer, he “just went home.” The intriguing question I always ask of students is this, “Of the eight generals, how many came back to Athens to be executed?” The typical answer I get is “none.” The actual answer is six; two fled into exile. The more interesting question is why did the six come back? What qualities of being human, of being a citizen, of being a leader compelled them to answer their country’s call to come home and die? It is a question I like to ask myself. I don’t yet have an answer, and I wonder where my inner daimon will direct me when my moment comes to answer the call. And if it falls to me to execute the order, I wonder if I would have the courage to “just go home” instead.

But the question has also led me to consider a modest proposal that challenges me to wonder about today’s political leaders in our democracy. I call it the “Mall of Heroes.” In this scheme, we annually toss into a hat or very large drum the names of all elected and life-appointed officials in the three branches of government. (Recall that I lived through the era when the “unjust” military draft was replaced by the “fairer” lottery.) We then draw out ten names and invite them to die for their country with the reward that we will erect monumental statues of them as heroes on the mall in Washington. Those who refuse must step down from office and pledge under criminal penalty of death never to run for any political office at any level. Their names we inscribe on a low-lying wall on the other side of the mall, serving as a bench on which citizens may sit as they contemplate the heroic statues opposite. What would be the qualities of the leaders whose names were drawn that would have them accept this heroic status? What would be the qualities of those who would retreat into exile? I invite you to consider who among today’s leaders you think would answer the call.

But I think Socrates faced this choice and gives us an answer. We learn that Socrates was offered the chance by his friends to escape into exile with his life following his conviction in a trial recounted for us by both Xenophon and Plato. He turned it down and commented, according to Xenophon, Apology 23, “Is there any spot outside Attica inaccessible to
death?” I also think he had in mind the recent heroic model of the generals who had returned to Athens to be put to death. It was a moment in history in which he had been deeply involved. He could do no less than those heroic six. And thus for his statue on my mental Mall of Heroes, Xenophon has written for him this epitaph:

[Apology 34] And so, in contemplating the man’s wisdom and nobility of character, I find it beyond my power to forget him or, in remembering him, to refrain from praising him. And if among those who make virtue their aim any one has ever been brought into contact with a person more helpful than Socrates, I count that man worthy to be called most blessed.

There will be many roads to Athens in our lives and many roads home. So as you search for models of leadership for yourselves and your inner voice, ask as I do, “Would I go back to Athens?” Even if you never get a clear answer, the road you take may be cobbled with principles of leadership, and along that road you may meet a person more helpful than Socrates, maybe yourself “just going home.”

**Notes**

1. I won’t go into the many issues involved, but I direct you instead to Kagan’s *The Fall of the Athenian Empire*, chapters 13 and 14.
2. It is important to remember that at this stage of its democracy when offices of the state were acquired by lot, only the Athenian generalship was an elected post. As such, the generals were normally the most highly regarded citizens of the state.