

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

EVERYONE IS A CRITIC

by
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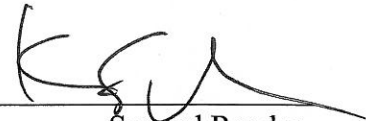
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ABSTRACT

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People have certain biases that are usually correlated to their own personal backgrounds. When pushing for policies, lobbies, think-tanks and policy makers use vehicles of rhetoric in order to serve particular interests. By deploying this rhetoric through the media to push their own agendas, policymakers have a platform available to them that enables a push for particular narratives that may be disguised as public interest. In the United States, Donald Trump and Ronald Reagan are among the entertainers-turned-presidents that have found a way to teeter the line of showmanship between entertainment and policymaking. By studying political tactics used in the past and present world, we can begin to uncover the narratives that shape how we perceive reality. Perhaps in moments of media-spewed ‘public interest’ we were momentarily under the spell of policymakers. Where once the public perceives their interests were served, a retrospective view allows the revisiting of the moment to perhaps spot an unseen blind spot. By uncovering the biases that have been constructed through the media, only then can we prevent the repetition of catastrophic events, such as a future war.

In testing a sample of perception from an audience in an experiment conducted at an AUB art exhibition; propaganda, psychology, sociology and the arts via entertainment were observed in an evaluation of public bias. By giving the audience artwork that is label-less, containing no information about the artist whose work was being observed, I used my audience’s psyche to test it as a “label-making” machine. Furthermore, an examination of political propaganda is evaluated in comparison to the experimentation conducted at the exhibit. The exhibition was used a platform to mirror that of mass media. In using the exhibition as a smaller sample size to illustrate bias, I intended to mirror mass media in presenting information to an audience as objectively as possible.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF CHARTS.....	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. MASS MEDIA: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN POLICYMAKING & PROPAGANDA	6
III. THE TRUMP FACTOR.....	12
IV. POLITICAL PROPAGANDA & THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE.....	15
V. EXPERIMENTATION: TESTING BIAS IN AN ART EXHIBITION	18
A. Data Collection	19
B. Data and Observations	24
1. The Artists.....	25
a. Poetry	25

b. Photography	28
c. Fashion Design.....	31
d. Mask Installation.....	34
2. Data and Results	37

VI. CONCLUSION	41
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REFERENCES	43
------------------	----

FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Two Comparative News Segments Presented by the <i>Daily Mirror</i>	8
2. Survey Cards Distributed at the Exhibition	20
3. An Audience Survey Card Illustrating the Desired Addition of the Option of “Arab” to be listed under the “Ethnicity” Portion of the Survey.....	23
4. The Demographics for Poet Sylvie Robinson.....	25
5. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Poem at the Exhibition.....	26
6. The Demographics for Photographer Nazlee Radboy	28
7. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Photography at the Exhibition	29
8. The Demographics for Fashion Designer Charlotte Kroon	31
9. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Fashion Design Illustrated at the Exhibition.....	32
10. The Demographics for Mask Installer Roxanne Azar	34
11. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Mask Installation at the Exhibition...	35

CHARTS

Chart	Page
1. Predictions for the Demographics of the Poet	27
2. Predictions for the Demographics of the Photographer	30
3. Predictions for the Demographics of the Fashion Designer	33
4. Predictions for the Demographics of the Mask Installer	36

To all those who helped me when the hour was darkest, I salute you.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People have certain biases that are usually correlated to their own personal backgrounds. According to Richards J. Heuer, a researcher formerly working for the CIA, psychological experiments reveal the existence of a bias, while not necessarily revealing that every individual judgment will be biased (Heuer 1999, p.112). When pushing for policies; lobbies, think-tanks and policymakers use vehicles of rhetoric in order to serve particular interests. By deploying rhetoric through the media to push their own agendas, policymakers have a platform available to them that enables pushing particular narratives that may be disguised as public interest. In the United States, Donald Trump and Ronald Reagan are among the entertainers-turned-presidents that have found a way to teeter the line of showmanship amid entertainment and policymaking. By studying political tactics used in the past and present world, we can begin to uncover the narratives that shape how we perceive reality. Perhaps in moments of media-spewed ‘public interest,’ we were momentarily under the spell of policymakers. Where once the public perceives their interests were served, a retrospective view allows the revisiting of the moment to perhaps spot an unseen blind spot. By uncovering the biases that have been constructed through the media, only then can we prevent the repetition of catastrophic events, such as a future war.

In testing a sample of perception from an audience in an experiment conducted at an AUB art exhibition; propaganda, psychology, sociology and the arts via entertainment were observed in an evaluation of public bias. By giving the audience artwork that is label-less, containing no information about the artist whose work was

being observed, I used my audience's psyche to test it as a "label-making" machine. Furthermore, an examination of political propaganda was evaluated, in comparison to the experimentation conducted at the exhibit. The exhibition was used as a platform to mirror that of mass media. In using the exhibition as a smaller sample size to illustrate bias, I intended to emulate mass media in presenting information to an audience as objectively as possible.

To understand bias, the concept of thinking, itself, must be defined. According to sociologist, Theodor Adorno, "without 'something' [to focus on] there is no thinkable formal logic, and there is no way to cleanse this logic of its meta logical rudiment" (Groff 2014, p.160). In order for one to think in the first place, a subject and object must be identified. For example, in both political propaganda and the art exhibit, portraying something to an audience required that there must be something to look at and think about in the first place. This is separate from merely thinking without a center of focus. A subject of focus must be identified, which the audience can then observe. It is from this that an attitude may be formed about the object of observation.

In linking the experiment with propaganda via mass media, both use their platforms to convey their messages to an audience. Both share the "emotion-factor" that feed off an audience's response to what is being presented. They are equally capable of making their audience "feel" a particular way and both have the capacity to influence and mold those emotions. Ultimately, they rely on an understanding of psychology and sociology as the underlying facets of this emotion-based coercion.

In a world dominated by technology, the media magnifies the "Spectacle of Society," as Guy Debord puts it, with the current spectacle, or object of focus being Donald Trump and all of his rhetoric. A contemporary example of this can be seen with

the concept of Islamophobia. For instance, Donald Trump pushes particular news or speeches across to the American public that feed off of the country's *already* existing fear of Islam. This emotion-based coercion can then be used to push policies that Trump desires, such as starting a war with another oil-rich Middle Eastern country. If the fear of Islam was not already present on the societal level of America, the media would not necessarily be able to amplify it. By distributing information in doses or segments, a news station can push a certain agenda, such as a legitimate reason for war. For example, if this particular station directs its news to a Christian audience in America, then it knows that Sundays (being a day to visit church) are probably not the best day to target this audience. On this societal level, media must abide by certain psychological and societal factors to carry out its intended aim.

According to American sociologist Alfred McClung Lee, there are several levels of social organization that an attitude towards something derives from: (beginning with) the self, the personal, group, and lastly, societal. For example, in order for a news program to convey a certain agenda, it must portray a message that permeates all four levels. Once the foundation is set on the level of "self," it is necessary to distinguish the final "societal" outcome of the sample. "[T]he direction of the attitude is determined by the information, old and new, available to us about the properties of the object" (King & McGinnies 2013, p.20). Thus, if the audience watching a particular news segment is predominantly Protestant/Christian, there are several personal attitudes that will impact the collective societal level which is differentiated from another societal level. For example, the collective societal level of a Christian/Protestant societal attitude will differ from that of a societal Hindu audience watching a news segment on why another war in the Middle East is necessary.

The understanding of psychology and sociology in policymaking is not a new concept, nor is the concept of a bias. Yet, it is the methodology used in the manipulation of bias via the media that remains somewhat unknown. As Heuer writes: “when psychological experiments reveal the existence of a bias, this does not mean that every judgment by every individual person will be biased. It means that in any group of people, the bias will exist to a greater or lesser degree in most judgments made by most of the group. On the basis of this kind of experimental evidence, one can only generalize about the tendencies of groups of people, not make statements about how any specific individual will think” (Heuer 1999, p.112). Since we are human, psychology and sociology dominate most fields of study. However, there is a difference between studying the human psyche for the advancement of mankind versus the manipulation of mankind through media.

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of existing biases through discourse, and how these biases are further evolved in the construction of propaganda in the media. These biases, if not studied, are susceptible to the manipulation of policymaking in pursuit of interests that do not serve their intended claim. To this end, this study is guided by the following research question: How do policy-makers manipulate reality using propaganda and rhetoric via mass media? This project is informed by theories of media and perception and conducted through a method of experimentation, deploying both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The specified methods of data collection used in this study are: 1) a researcher-designed experiment measuring biases in the public using several artists’ works; and 2) a desk-based review of global newspaper articles, reports, press releases, and declarations of

high-level governmental figures and policymakers; academic articles and expert evidence produced by national and international universities and research institutions.

The following discourse is broken down into the following sections, which guide the scope of the study: II) Mass Media: The Bridge Between Policymaking & Propaganda; sections its aim in observing the links between policymaking and propaganda that are presented through the vehicle of media. III) The Trump Factor; which analyses Trump, as an example, to understand the link between the entertainment industry, otherwise media, and policymaking. IV) Political Propaganda & the Society of Spectacle; which weighs propaganda in the modes of the spectacle present in today's media-dominated world. V) Experimentation: Testing Bias in an Art Exhibition; which aims to create a smaller sample size of the platform used by the media in order to understand how an audience perceives what is being presented to them. The results are then developed in attempting an understanding of the bias that was observed and how propaganda may acquire it to construct 'reality.' VI) Conclusion; lastly taking in all the literature that was reviewed, along with the experiment conducted, to reflect on the correlations of bias, media, policymaking and propaganda as a totality.

CHAPTER 2

MASS MEDIA: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN POLICYMAKING & PROPAGANDA

According to researchers Carl I. Hovland and Walter Weiss; “societal functions of the mass media have been conceived as threefold: the media act as public ‘watchmen,’ by providing surveillance of the near and far environment; they aid social decision making by providing information, opinions, and appraisals of events and persons; and they teach by providing information and skill-related knowledge to the general public or by formal use in educational settings” (King & McGinnies 2013, p.139). When affecting nation building, there are direct and indirect informational functions of the media. For example, “as Fawaz Georges writes, it ‘was under the impact of the Iranian revolution, then, that Islamism replaced secular nationalism as a security threat to US interests, and fear of a clash between Islam and the West crystallized in the minds of Americans’” (Kumar 2012, p.71). Information and news about projects, governmental actions and policies creates a shared societal understanding which can then foster support. References made by the media for national happenings foster a sense of national identity, an identity wider than a social entity of the village or tribe.

In addition, the “national media provides governmental or societal-wide interpretations and evaluations of significant events and persons. This *accepted picture* of the surrounding world is not only important for broad support of governmental policies but also aids in producing cohesion among socially and geographically disparate groups, and gives to the believing individual a necessary sense of social

support for his views and hence an organized perception of a complex world” (King & McGinnies 2013, p.142, my emphasis added). In referencing the terms “accepted picture,” they specifically note the importance that an audience must accept what they are being told. Moreover, the foundation of the argument made by the propaganda, or lack-there-of, is portrayed here. In this case, the acceptance of what one is being told is the key to the entirety of the outcome. The significance lies in the showman’s ability to convince his audience that his truth this is an acceptable truth by feeding off of emotion, rather than necessarily arguing logically that this is the case.

When addressing the topic of rhetoric within lobbying, Frank Luntz, an American political consultant, collects data for politicians via polling and analyzes public perceptions. His mantra is that language, commerce and politics are all interconnected. His book, “Words that Work,” discusses the variations between what is presented to an audience in comparison to how that same audience perceives it. According to Luntz, “you can have the best message in the world, but the person on the receiving end will always understand it through the prism of his or her own emotions, preconceptions, prejudices, and preexisting beliefs. It’s not enough to be correct or reasonable or even brilliant. The key to successful communication is to take the imaginative leap of stuffing your-self right into your listener’s shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their mind and heart. How that person perceives what you say is even more real, at least in a practical sense, than how you perceive yourself” (Luntz 2007, p. ix). In the images printed by the *Daily Mirror*, coverage of two separate terrorist mass killings were published. This British publication appeals to its readers’ preconceived biases as all papers do. In a Brexit world, feeding narratives to this company’s primarily Caucasian-English demographic illustrates the

discrepancies in perception of these events. One headline calls the perpetrator an “ISIS Maniac” while the other sympathizes with the Caucasian “angelic” boy who was somehow overtaken by the throes of “evil.”



Figure 1. Two Comparative News Segments Presented by the *Daily Mirror*.

Both the exhibit and media propaganda mold the way its audience views what is in front them. With mass media being the intersection of policymaking and propaganda, “the media and their interconnections with other societal institutions, it is evident that, in the most general way, the media are both mirrors and molders of society” (King & McGinnies 2013, p.143). This is particularly significant when molding public opinion in favor of war. There is almost an asymmetry between the United States’ relationship between going from being overly “protective” of another country’s “rights” (particularly in the Middle East) and becoming “enemies” almost overnight. This type

of cognitive distortion does not seem to have been systematically studied, which may have contributed to the likelihood of previous wars. Yet, this is not a concept that began in the Trump-era: “The Bush and Clinton administrations sought to win over Muslim-majority countries by appealing to universal values of freedom, tolerance and responsive government. Of course, in practice they did nothing to pressure their authoritarian allies in the Middle East or North Africa to open up their political systems or foster democracy” (Kumar 2012, p.79). The rhetoric in pushing for war before it happens does not necessarily match the reality of the political situation, and further, the media tends to homogenize populations of entire countries—whether friend or foe.

Trump’s election as President relied on messaging that simultaneously created divisions and societal allegiances. Research conducted by Team Populism, a network of political scientists, analyzed Trump’s speeches – both scripted, and off-the-cuff – looking for three core elements of populist discourse (Smith, “The Teleprompter Test: Why Trump’s Populism Is Often Scripted”). These elements include a Manichean world view (which depicts the moralized battle of good and evil), people-centrism (which portrays a romanticized vision of a common popular will) and lastly, anti-elitism (which blames all difficulties on the establishment that subverts the system for their benefit). Trump’s rhetoric positioned America and its allies as good, set against its enemies that are “evil.” However, when it comes to something as serious as war with another nation, this is the image being publicly portrayed because it is no longer on the level of “self” but on a “societal” level, which has been constructed via mass media. “Like many other human beings, Americans like to be liked, and like to believe that they are liked. It is unpleasant to feel hated, and the evidence that one is actually hated can be glossed over for that reason...One such factor is the moral self-image. We [Americans] do not like to

see ourselves as haters. We like to see ourselves as having neighborly, friendly feelings toward all our international neighbors except when those neighbors make such friendliness impossible” (King & McGinnies 2013, p.215).

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CHAPTER 3

THE TRUMP FACTOR

Trump's career has deeply been rooted in the entertainment industry. The entrepreneur turned public figure has been in the thralls of the media far before his presidential campaign. Yet, Trump is not alone in his systematic showmanship from entertainer to president. Ronald Reagan's presidency followed a similar path. The systematic role of the media (especially in a capitalist-driven society) granted both Reagan and Trump a platform to reach out to their audience. The only thing that changed along this path was the object in which the two centered their focuses on, deriving from entertainment for the sake of art to entertainment for the sake of politics.

Although the two artists-turned-presidents followed this track, their rhetoric greatly differed in the level of filtration of their propaganda. According to Noam Chomsky, "propaganda must seek to blame others, like public sector workers, with their fat salaries and exorbitant pensions: all fantasy, on the model of Reaganite imagery of black mothers being driven in their limousines to pick up welfare checks" (Chomsky 2017, p.53). The greatest difference in Reagan's approach to ultimately reaching the same racist outcome as Trump, is the level of innuendos. While Reagan would filter his rhetoric to insinuate that it is *Black* mothers picking up welfare checks—instead of explicitly stating that women on welfare must be Black— Trump's lack of diplomacy (which he most likely developed from high ratings for his derogative behavior)

explicitly says that it must be Blacks, Muslims, Mexicans, etcetera that are ruining the system in which these two candidates found themselves leading.

Economists, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman argue that “bias is politically advantageous to U.S. policy-makers, for focusing on victims of enemy states [which] shows those states to be wicked and deserving of U.S. hostility; while ignoring U.S. and client-state victims allows ongoing U.S. policies to proceed more easily, unburdened by the interference of concern over the politically inconvenient victims” (Herman & Chomsky 2002, p.xx). Similarly, this bias applies to enemies within the domestic home-front. In 1989, long before his presidency, Donald Trump (then a real-estate developer two years away from his first commercial bankruptcy) took out ads in New York newspapers and billboards derogatively accusing several black men (the “Central Park Five”) for the rape of a white woman, calling for their execution. In this particular scenario, Trump did not include racial labels for the Central Park Five defendants (which were accused as African-Americans). Trump’s unapologetic behavior only amplified the media-hysteria around the situation. This display of public injustice was among the first in which Trump responded so publicly, if not taking “charge” of carrying out justice himself.

Trump’s investments in New York real-estate gave him a foothold in media where he played both on-screen and off-screen roles. With roles in series like “The Apprentice” and investments in the “Miss Universe Pageant,” Trump’s investments came both on and off-screen. According to Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, it is “the same underlying power sources that own the media and fund them as advertisers, that serve as primary definers of the news, and that produce flak and proper-thinking

experts, also, play a key role in fixing basic principles and the dominant ideologies” (Herman & Chomsky 2002, p.xii). Fast-forward some odd years later and the same man became the president of one of the most powerful nations of the 21st Century.

A Pew Research Center poll conducted in July 2017 found that “a median of just 22% has confidence in Trump to do the right thing when it comes to international affairs.’ This compares to a median of 64% rate of confidence for his predecessor Barack Obama. Trump received a higher rating in only two countries: Russia and Israel” (Wike, “9 Charts on How the World Sees President Trump”). According to this data, not only did the majority of the American public not want Trump as president, but only 22% of the population entrust him with foreign policy even in his presidency. So how is it that such a statistically disliked and untrusted man continues to run the United States of America? Professors, Donna Goldstein and Mathew Ingram argued that “Trump’s campaign to become the Republican nominee was successful because it was, in a word, entertaining—not just for the white rural underclass, not just for conservatives, but also for the public at large, even those who strongly oppose his candidacy. Whether understood as pleasing or offensive, Trump’s ongoing show was compelling” (Goldstein & Ingram, “The Hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, Gesture, Spectacle) Trump’s entertainment resume—his ability to play into the spectacle of society—played a large role in his campaign tactics. His support as an entertainment figurehead carried over into his presidential campaign. With a strong background branding himself as a savior of America in public relations, the current president of the United States developing from his experience in mass media.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA & THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE

In the 1960s, the FBI launched COINTELPRO, which gave them the capability to gather information about concentrated ethnic groups, specifically targeting the Black Power movement. According to Steve Downs, a lawyer who spoke on the case; “the FBI planted false reports in the media, smeared reputations through forged letters and rumors, used agent provocateurs to disrupt organizations and create false arrests, engaged in violence, and in many other ways attacked the ability of targeted organizations to function and achieve their political goals...to ‘protect national security, prevent violence, and maintain the existing social and political order’” (Kumar 2012, p.143). Through the media, the government created a narrative that relied on racial bias to delegitimize and disrupt the targeted group. Fast-forward about half a century later to a post-9/11 world and the FBI is still legally allowed to target and racially profile ethnic groups. However, now instead of targeting just domestic ethnic groups, the spotlight has shifted to the Middle East. Through media coverage that portrays Middle Easterners as the ethnic antagonist of America, aggressive foreign policies toward the Middle East are somehow legitimized to the American public.

Many of the past studies regarding perception, manipulation and propaganda do not particularly bring into account the role in which the entertainment industry plays. However, Adorno’s work on “How to Look at a Television” bridges the gap between the entertainment industry, mass media and coercion. Adorno believes that “television is not conceived primarily on an artistic, purely aesthetic level, extraneous to present

customs. This does not mean that we naively take for granted the dichotomy between autonomous art and mass media” (Adorno 1954, p.215). His work tends to focus more on the audience than the manipulator/coercer. Adorno goes on to state that “[t]he increasing strength of modern media culture is further enhanced by the sociological structure of the audience” (Adorno 1954, p.217). For Adorno, it is subliminal messaging that dominates the field of study. He argues that mass media is not just the sum of the actions it portrays or just the messages that result from these actions, rather, “mass media also consists of various layers of meaning superimposed on one another, all of which contribute to the effect... The heritage of polymorphic meaning has been taken over by cultural industry in as much as what it conveys becomes itself organized in order to enthrall the spectators on various psychological levels simultaneously. As a matter of fact, the hidden message may be more important than the overt since this hidden message will escape the controls of consciousness, will not be ‘looked through,’ will not be warded off by sales resistance, but it likely to sink into the spectator’s mind” (Adorno 1954, p.221). The media, once considered aesthetically artistic, has been taken over by the entertainment, or cultural, industry to be used as a vehicle for coercion in our consumer-driven society.

Similarly, French philosopher Guy Debord discusses how culture has been co-opted by controls of consciousness. Debord describes economy, politics, social life, and culture as dominated by forms of spectacle in his writings entitled: “The Society of the Spectacle.” In a world dominated by technology, Debord’s writings on media are manifesting rapidly in the form of right-wing president Donald Trump. With his

extensive television-personality-resume, Donald Trump has been living in the spectacle that Debord speaks of long before his presidency. Professors, Marco Briziarelli and Emiliana Armano argue that “Trump ran his 2016 presidential campaign as a media spectacle with daily tweets that became fodder for TV news, and with rallies where he would make outrageous comments that would be replayed endlessly on cable and network news. Trump thus dominated news cycles by creating daily spectacles of political attack, insulting and negatively defining opponents, thus helping to construct daily media events through which he was able to define the news agenda” (Briziarelli & Armano 2017, p.2). This technological, media-driven, world magnifies the spectacle, with the current object of focus being Donald Trump and all of his rhetoric.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIMENTATION: TESTING BIAS IN AN ART EXHIBITION

In probing media propaganda, I wanted to test the bias from a sample audience to see if I can find the correlation for bias between the audience at the exhibit and audiences watching Trump's policy-pushing via mass media. By taking a small sample size, the experiment took place at an art exhibit on campus at the American University of Beirut, displaying work from artists with various backgrounds. There were four windows in the exhibit, each displaying a different piece by an individual with certain demographics. Additionally, the work was presented without names or labels, allowing the audience the opportunity to view it with as much of an objective point of view as possible.

Psychologist Graham E. Higgs argues that there are three fundamental principles that contribute to art-based research: reflexivity, metaphor and generativity. He writes that "these characteristics support the validity of arts-based qualitative research as a tool for investigating highly subjective aspects of human behavior and mental process" (Knowles & Cole 2008, p.551). According to Higgs, artists are expert observers and masters of translation. "Art making, by its nature, is a transformative process in which the artist and the medium are both changed" (Knowles & Cole 2008, p.551). Is this alteration not the same function as the one conducted by the rhetoric used in the media to validate policymaking? When policymakers push for reform, the reality in which government and civilian reside in is simultaneously altered. Both media and policymaking shift "reality" or perceived reality from its current state to a new,

reformed state. In order to modify reality, via manipulation or soft power, there must be an awareness of one's audience combined with a creative lens of alteration.

In conducting my experimentation, I chose to use an art exhibit in place of mass media as a platform for portraying objects for spectators to focus on. The underlying similarity in my assessment of an art exhibit and political propaganda pushed through the media was the relevance of showmanship in depicting an object of focus to an audience. Whether that object of focus is an art installation in a window at an exhibition or a news segment in mass media, both platforms feed off of their audience's emotional response. In my findings, it appears that there is a grey area in which bias can be analyzed.

A. Data Collection

Many times when a viewer observes a work of art, his or her perception is influenced by their background knowledge of the artist. Pierre Bourdieu writes of this in "The Field of Cultural Production," where the experience of viewing artwork understood as famous is significantly different for most viewers than artwork by someone unknown to the viewer. Based on Bourdieu's work, we see how different audience demographic factors feed into the perception of a work of art, somehow altering the level of credibility. Thus, we could assume that background information on the artist will change the viewers' perception of the artwork itself, based on their own predisposed biases. For example, if the artist is of a certain demographic (age, ethnicity, gender, religion) we could assume that the viewer's background will affect how they perceive art by the artist's particular label. For this study, in an attempt to point out and

Once the results were collected, they were analyzed in search of the correlation between the way the artist was perceived by their work and the reality of the situation. Nonetheless, like all projects, there were particular barriers. One of the biggest challenges with an experimentation of this magnitude was the funding. In order to get the space, materials, artists and artwork, funding had to be pulled together from my own personal expenses. Furthermore, all members in this project came from different backgrounds of expertise so logically explaining and arranging the experiment itself took a great deal of planning and coordination with all parties. One artist was to be flown out from Iran for the exhibit but was not able to due to funding issues (this is why I ended up having to illustrate one of the windows, myself).

In order to get a decent sample size with many different demographics filling out survey cards, AUB's art gallery was chosen due to the high level of visitors and student foot traffic. After getting IRB approval, putting up the consent forms on the boxes in front of the windows posed another challenge. Furthermore, mother nature does not abide by one's personal will and after putting up the consent forms, Beirut faced one of its most intense storms of the season...Getting all the art/artists on board seemed to be the least of the challenges. However, installing the work with such a limited budget was the last remaining challenge.

Additionally, the survey cards had an optional section to attain the audience's information on the back. By making it optional for the audience to fill out open-ended information on themselves, a space was created where they could write anything about themselves. (Some individuals even drew pictures in this section) How individuals perceived themselves differed greatly from how they perceived the artists. Closed-ended questions on the fronts of the cards about the artist limited answers to demographics

while open-ended questions on the back of the cards gave audience members room for interpretive answers. The concept of a bias is nothing new. However, how a bias works in relation to perception was of a curious nature in my comparison of how propaganda uses this same form of “showmanship” to push certain agendas.

By combining closed-ended and open-ended prompts, on the fronts and backs of the survey cards, the audience has the opportunity to assess the difference between the formatting. While they fill questions out about the artists’ demographics easily in the closed-ended section, some participants were not as open to complying with putting their details in the open-ended portion. Answers regarding audience members ranged from the word: “no” in the “Tell Us About Yourself” portion to elaborate illustrations. The audience was given an experience that allows for labeling on the one hand and room for interpretation on the other.

As with all experiments, there were many limitations along the way. A major difficulty was the space that was limited on the physical survey card. For instance, there was not enough space to fit more religions or specify races on the cards. In the image presented below, one audience member created their own box for the Arab race (in potential protest of the label: “Asian”). Secondly, there was not enough of a budget to fly an artist out from Iran for her installation piece so I had to take her place last minute and fill the spot for the category of art/demographics that she would cover. Other limitations ranged from: 1) Not having enough space to add Druze in the religion checklist. 2) The rain cutting down the number of participants and time, as well as, smudging some of the results. 3) I had originally printed 200 cards total but only got 108 cards filled out. 4) Because of the layout of the art gallery, most people did not see the poem around the corner of the entrance. 5) Some people did not know there was a

back to the cards. 6) Some people answered the back of the cards in Arabic, which required translation. 7) Lastly, it cannot be known for certain if all participants took this study seriously.

LABEL ME:	
AGE:	
10-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
21-30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
31-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
GENDER:	
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ETHNICITY:	
North American	<input type="checkbox"/>
South American	<input type="checkbox"/>
Australian	<input type="checkbox"/>
European	<input type="checkbox"/>
African	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
عربي	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RELIGION:	
Muslim	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Christian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agnostic	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 3. An Audience Survey Card Illustrating the Desired Addition of the Option of “Arab” to be listed under the “Ethnicity” Portion of the Survey.

Along with the limitations, there were many notable observations. These include a range of sectors involved in the process from: 1) IRB approval was less difficult to receive due to the open-ended nature of the section of the survey pertaining to the audience members; 2) The open-ended questions on the back of the cards left room for

interpretive answers from audience members, signifying that demographics are not necessarily indicative of who someone *is*; 3) Open-ended prompts on the back of cards allowed for creative. Answers/interpretations from audience members; 4) Closed-ended prompts on the front of the cards helped guarantee getting the answers I was directly looking for from the audience about the artists. Furthermore, the following pages contain specified data collected from the survey cards at the exhibition.

B. Data and Observations

The following pages include information regarding the artists that participated in the exhibition. With various backgrounds and demographics, each one contributed their own identity in their work. Furthermore, information collected in the results of the surveys illustrated the perceptions held by the audience for the apparent image of how these artists were seen.

1. The Artists

a. Poetry

Total number of Survey Cards Collected: 15



Figure 4. The Demographics for Poet Sylvie Robinson.

Only five people filled out the back of the poem survey cards (the lowest of all the window displays). I believe this is due to the location of the window being on the side of the exhibit entry. Additionally, there were drawings on the back of one of the cards that noted creativity in the audience member's perception of himself (via male stick figures).



Figure 5. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Poem at the Exhibition.

One audience member noted his love of poetry and identified with this component of the survey. Another audience member followed the exact criteria of closed-ended questions on the front and interpreted her answers as following: “54 years, female, Muslim.” Lastly, one Asian audience member wrote a joke in Arabic on the back of the card. His guess was also that the artists was of Asian-descent.

CHART 1: PREDICTIONS FOR THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE POET

Correct Answer Noted in Red

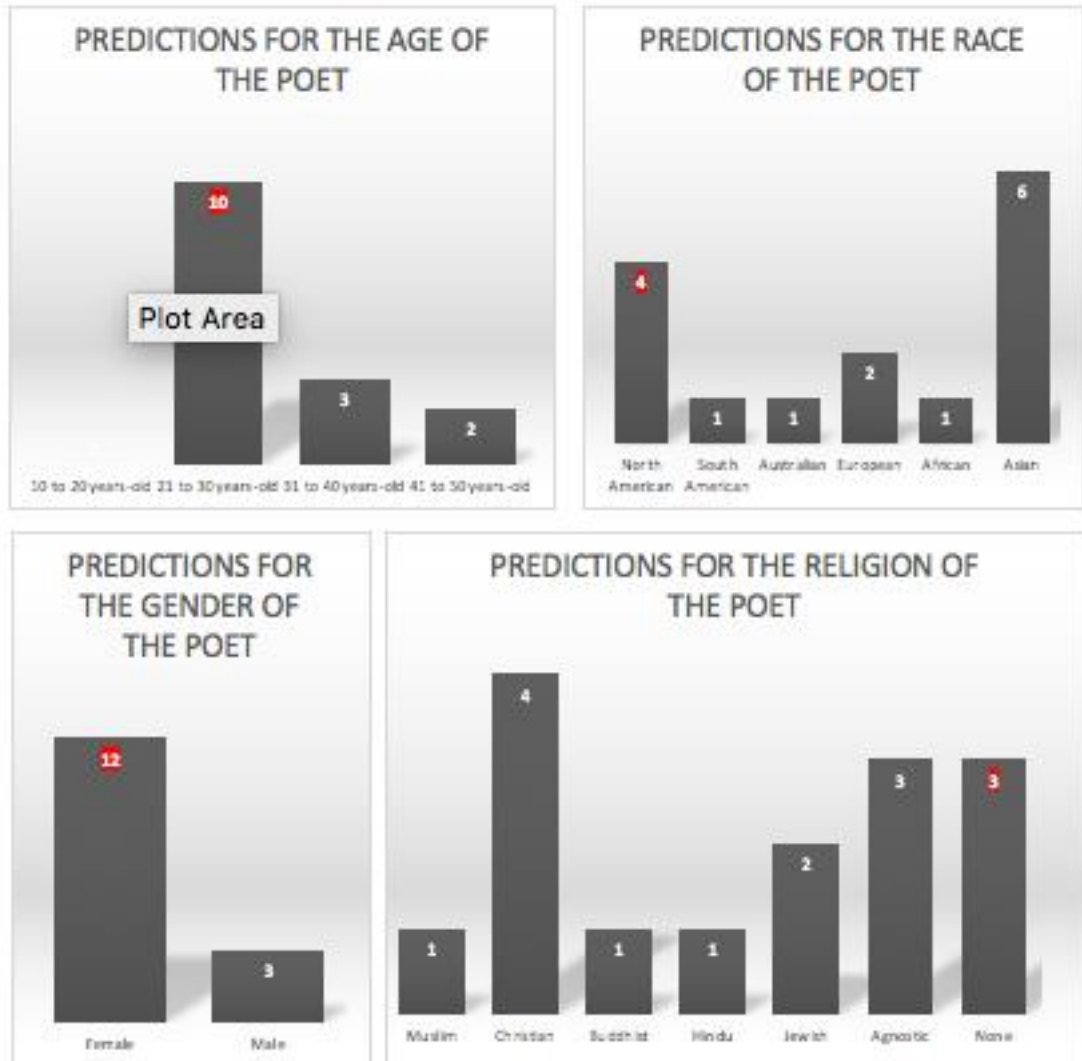


Chart 1. Predictions for the Demographics of the Poet.

b. Photography

Total Number of Survey Cards Collected: 32



Figure 6. The Demographics for Photographer Nazlee Radboy.

Since only 10 people filled out the back of the cards, it was difficult to gauge the audience. One audience member noted that they believe the artist is conservative. Nonetheless, the artist is an American-born-Iranian. While her upbringing was rather liberal, perhaps the audience noted traditional elements in her heritage. Furthermore, one of the audience members who participated was over 70 years old (an age group I was pleasantly surprised to see participated).



Figure 7. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Photography at the Exhibition.

CHART 2: PREDICTIONS FOR THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Correct Answer Noted in Red

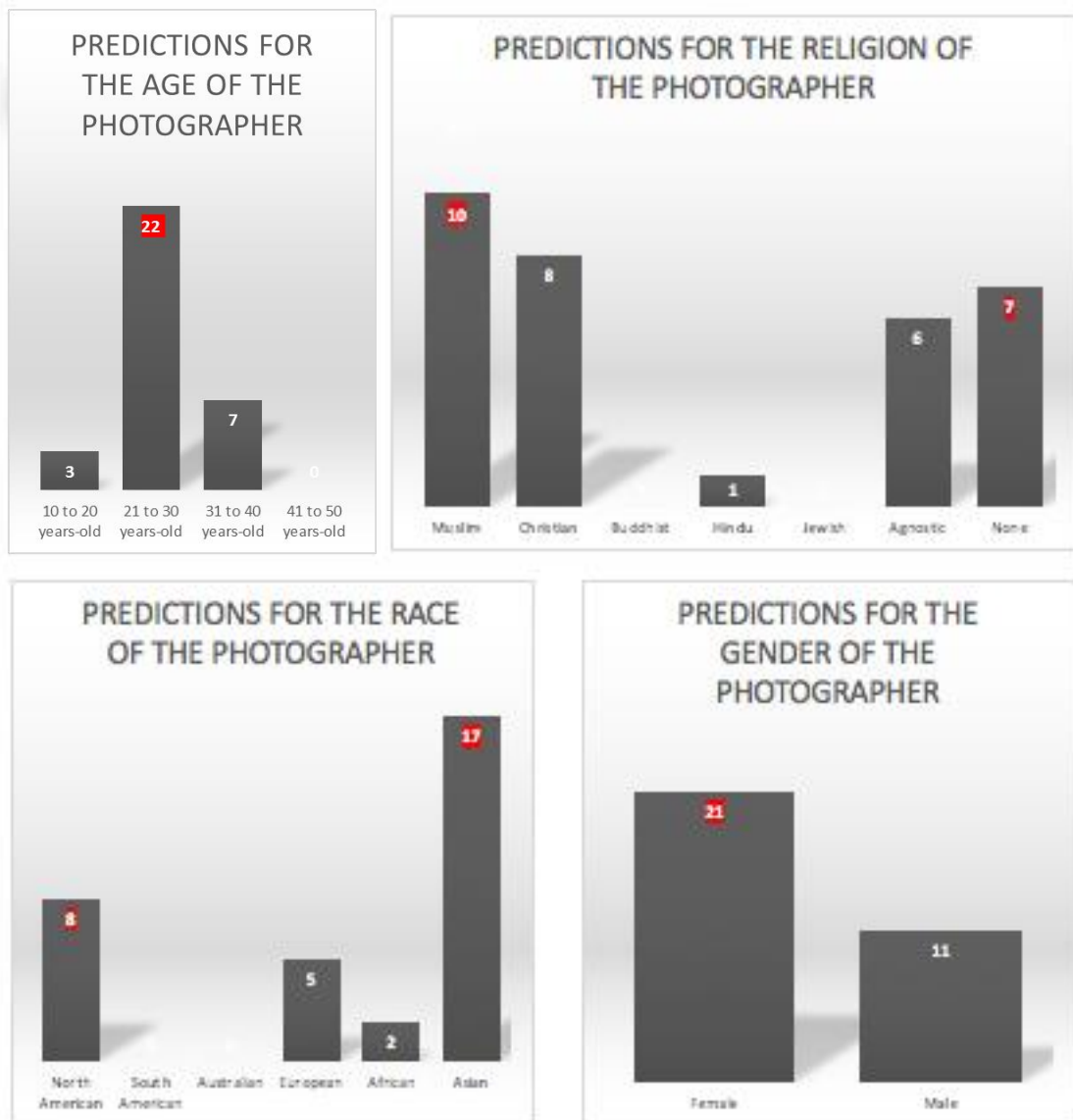


Chart 2. Predictions for the Demographics of the Photographer.

c. Fashion Design

Total Number of Survey Cards Collected:30



Figure 8. The Demographics for Fashion Designer Charlotte Kroon.

Only six people from the audience filled out the back of the cards, which was surprising since this window was located visibly in the middle of the exhibition. Two audience members interpreted what the pieces in the window meant. One stated that: the “artist is probably describing their stages in life or the 3 stages of life.” Had this been a closed-ended portion, this interpretation would not have been noted. Another audience member followed the closed-ended formatting on the back of the card, writing that she is a “31 year old female business graduate” (very few attendees followed the closed-ended formatting when writing about themselves. Two other audience members drew illustrations in the portions asking about themselves (due to the open-ended nature of the prompt).



Figure 9. A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Fashion Design Illustrated at the Exhibition.

CHART 3: PREDICTIONS FOR THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE FASHION DESIGNER

Correct Answer Noted in Red

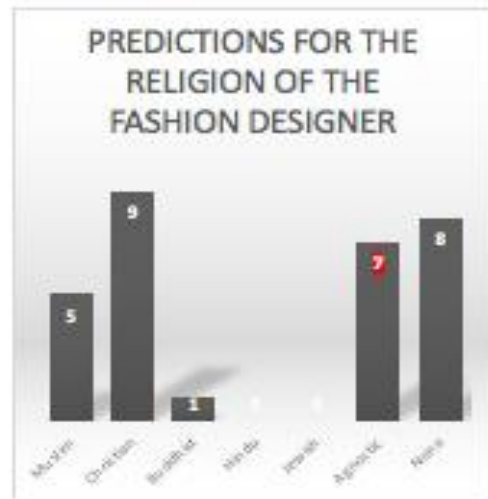
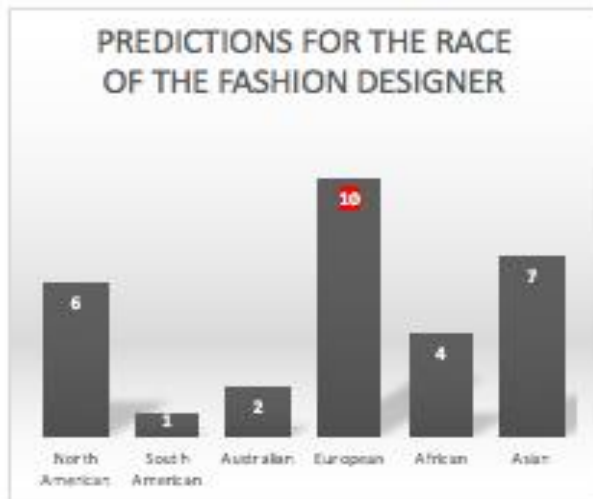
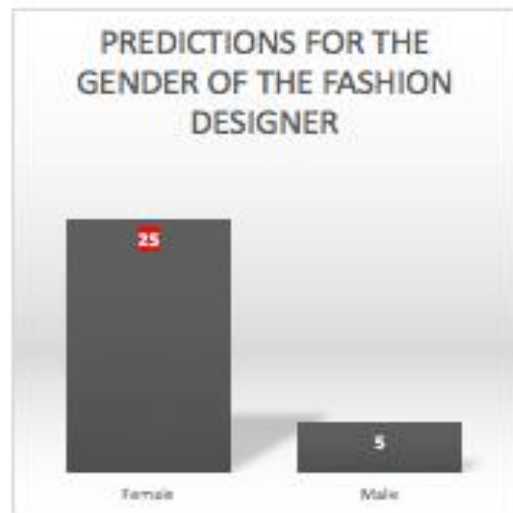
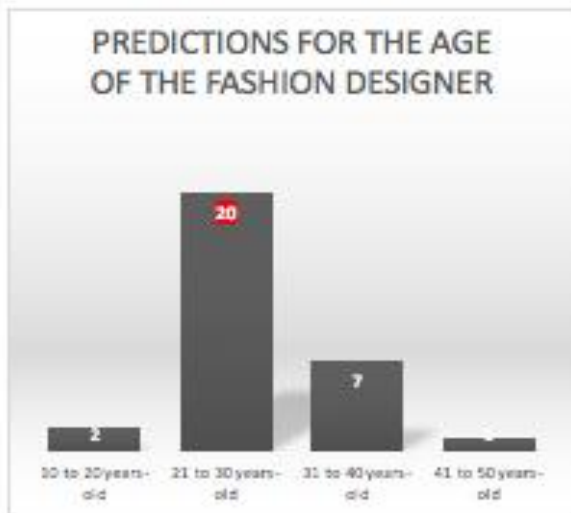


Chart 3. Predictions for the Demographics of the Fashion Designer.

d. The Mask Installation

Total Number of Survey Cards Collected: 31



Figure 10. The Demographics for Mask Installer Roxanne Azar.

Since only 13 people (about half of the audience) filled out the back of the survey cards it was difficult to gauge the audience. One audience member refused to write about him or herself on the back, stating: “no” in the “tell us about yourself section.” Another person interpreted the installation to be “problems of the world created by the U.S.A.” Another audience member referenced to political “puppet masters” in response to the piece. Additionally, three audience members followed the closed-ended formatting on the backs of the cards when discussing themselves. Lastly, one audience member drew an illustration for the section about him or herself, noting a creative response.



Figure 11.A Snapshot of the Window Displaying the Mask Installation at the Exhibition.

CHART 4: PREDICTIONS FOR THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE ARTIST FOR THE MASK INSTALLATION

Correct Answer Noted in Red

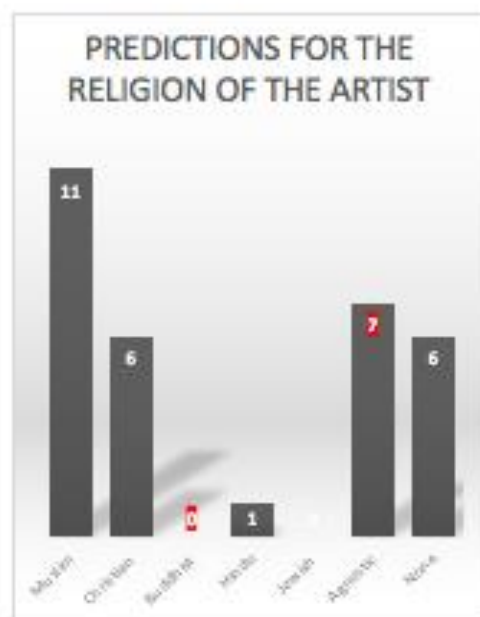
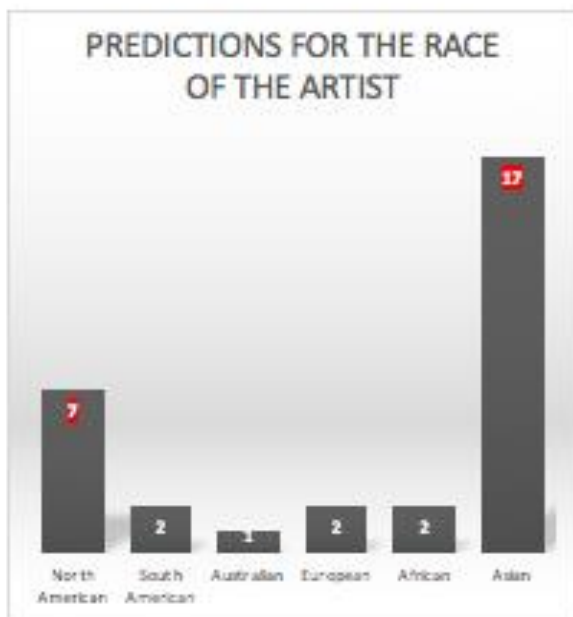
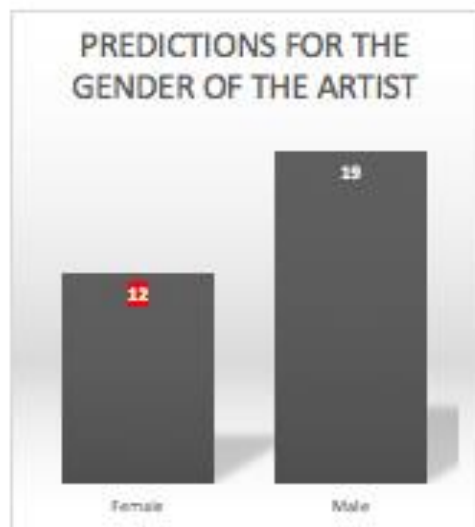
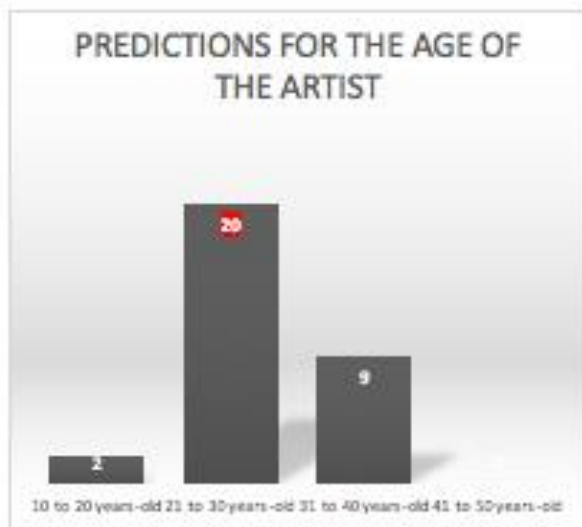


Chart 4. Predictions for the Demographics of the Mask Installer.

2. Data and Results

In analyzing the results, notable observations were furthered in alluding to preceding literature written by several of the previously mentioned authors. In reference to Frank Luntz's argument on the importance of *perceived reality*, sample size plays a pivotal role in data collection of what *perceived reality* in a given situation is. Mass media has access to a plethora of resources that makes data collection via surveying predominantly easy to do. The optional choice (due to IRB constraints) granted to audience members to fill out information in the art exhibition regarding themselves on the back of the survey cards, left room for many attendees to leave this portion blank. For example, in the window displaying the dresses, it would have been beneficial to assess whether or not female attendees assumed that the designs were made by another female. Without this information, understanding why it was assumed that a female must have designed this window does not give a comprehensive explanation as to why the *perceived reality* was female in this case. While many of the predisposed biases did pan out, several did not translate into the results. These predisposed biases that exist in how the audience perceived the art in the windows is foundationally the same as those manipulated by mass media or policy in order to construct or convey a certain message. Similarly, policymaking relies on these biases to legitimize certain political choices. It is these tropes that mass media and policymaking use to both shape and instrumentalize the achievement of their desired outcome.

Additionally, there were attendees that did fill out the back of the survey cards, showing a multitude of demographics, which participated in the survey. With a variety of backgrounds, there were different interpretations on the same window displays. In reference to Theodore Adorno's study on subjects and objects, how these audience

members perceived the objects in front of them was greatly affected by their demographic circumstances. For instance, a Western viewer, would perhaps see a cross in a photograph as out of place, because of the assumptions associated with the Middle East being Islamic. He or she may even perceive a cross illustrated in one of the photographs as a symbol for international tolerance. However, to a Lebanese audience member, the same photo displaying a cross may appear more nuance, perhaps insinuating that the artist is also Lebanese, but from a Christian sect. Depending on the sociological background of the viewer (i.e. Lebanese or Western) they might have interpreted the art as a piece of Christian propaganda or a message of tolerance.

Each individual artist is a representative member of the entirety of the society in which they come from. However, homogenizing a race or group identifiably through certain traits or symbols via art-based signifiers cannot necessarily be taken at face value. For example, the window with the masks characterized the artist as a male, yet, the artist was female. Since some of the characters represented in the masks were from male-dominated fields, such as comic books or politics, this may have elicited that a male designed this window. Not all comic book readers or those interested in politics are male. Yet, these masks (which were all male characters) were a symbol that this societal group is characterized as male.

Moreover, one audience member stated that the window with the masks insinuated the problems represented in the world created by the United States. Since the masks characterized Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush, it is possible that his or her interpretation could have been in relation to previous world events caused by public policy pushed for the invasion of Iraq. The media propaganda used by Bush to invade Iraq, via the American public's fear of Islam in a post-9/11 world, had catastrophic

results. In the two years following September 11, 2001, analysts, Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith, stated that Bush, along with seven of his administration's top officials made at least 935 false statements about the national security threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. "Nearly five years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, an exhaustive examination of the record shows that the statements were part of an orchestrated campaign that effectively galvanized public opinion and, in the process, led the nation to war under decidedly false pretenses" (Lewis & Reading-Smith 2008, p.1-5). The invasion of Iraq, illustrated the American public's dependence on emotion-based *perceived reality* over that of evidential logic. Without the media, Bush would not have had a platform dominant enough to push for this invasion. Although the audience member left the portion regarding their personal information blank, it is possible that with fewer IRB limitations, information regarding this individual's demographics could have been collected. If he or she was from the Middle East, perhaps specifically Iraq, the perception he or she had of the window display could be psychologically understood.

In the research conducted by Team Populism's Assessment of the three core elements of populist discourse, the Manichean world view and people-centrism find their basis in this synonymous propaganda. In Bush's post-9/11 America, the moralized battle of good and evil was overexaggerated, if not falsified, in propagating the American public to perceive themselves as the defenders of "good." The people-centric portrayal of a romanticized vision of a common popular American will clouded the public's perception of what deemed to be necessary cause for invasion of another nation that had then been labeled "evil."

American political scientist, William H. Riker's work on coercion and perspective proves particularly interesting in his assessment. Riker notes that evaluating evidence is a crucial step in analysis. However, the type of evidence people rely on and how they interpret it are influenced by a variety of peripheral factors. He explains that "we seldom take the absence of evidence into account. The human mind is also oversensitive to the consistency of the evidence, and insufficiently sensitive to the reliability of the evidence. Finally, impressions often remain even after the evidence on which they are based has been totally discredited" (Heuer 1999, p.143). Thus, a lack of evidence is rarely taken in to account by the receiving audience, rather, an individual's emotional reasoning dominates in creating consistent justification, which leads to the media's desired outcome.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Marketing is to media as lobbying (or rhetoric) is to political propaganda. Both use psychology and sociology to understand how their message will be received by an audience. By using the media as a medium to portray propaganda, policymaking is impacted in its end result. Since both require biases to determine what is currently considered "good" or "bad," how audiences perceive the messages presented are greatly propagated.

Media is used as a bridge for both the industrial factor of entertainment and political propaganda. Donald Trump specifically used his experience in the entertainment industry to aid in winning the presidential election of 2016. Although he won via a popular electoral vote, his speeches and anti-Muslim smear campaigns, are a few of the examples of the tactics he has used along the path of his presidency. With his extensive tv-personality resume, Trump is certainly not your average president. He knows when he has an audience, and more importantly, he knows how to address it. In the spectacle of today's society, fear-mongering applies feed off the bias of the psyche of its audience, whether it is by saying the colors of your clothes are out of season or that a country or a specific group of people are no longer to be perceived as friendly.

By studying the survey cards collected at the art exhibition, the sample size and IRB limitations constrained the evaluation of the depth of the audience's bias. While it proved useful in understanding the spectators' perception of label-less artwork, or objects of focus, the open-ended format regarding the attendee's personal background limited the correlation between the individual's perception of the artist with that of their

own background. Furthermore, observations made in the results of the survey conducted at the art exhibition, leave room for speculation on how the media manipulates the end result of their audience's perception in order to get the policies they want to get pushed. With a smaller sample size and limited resources than that used by mass media, the results from the exhibit experiment varied greatly. By reflecting back at previous tactics used by policymakers, political scientists and lobbyists, only then can we become aware of the propaganda used to alter perceived reality. Furthermore, by distinguishing perception from reality itself, the discourse of this research aims to aid in the studying of propaganda.

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