

Propaganda and Artificial Glory: The Role of Propaganda and Political Rhetoric on the Decision to Volunteer for the Spanish-American War

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ABSTRACT

This project involves the analysis of both primary and secondary sources to investigate what caused men from three towns in Indiana to volunteer to fight in the Spanish-American War, a conflict that they had no personal reason to join. The predominantly-used primary sources were newspapers from the three towns in Indiana and speeches by politicians. These three towns were selected after careful analysis of demographic information including population and number of volunteers in the Spanish-American War from every major city in the state. To further expand on these ideas, political leanings and occupations were taken into account. Upon completing this study, it was discovered that both the rhetoric of pro-imperial politicians, the propaganda that filled the newspapers of the time, and the creation of the concept of glory and the valor that could be won through combat had an effect on the men's decision to register for a conflict in which the soldiers had no personal stake.

KEYWORDS: propaganda, war, memory, media, newspaper, Spanish-American War, Indiana

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of Thursday, April 21, 1898, Major Hathaway's 12th Regiment, en route from Fort Niobrara, Nebraska to New Orleans, passed through the town of Vincennes, Indiana. As readers of the *Vincennes Commercial* learned the following day, Major Hathaway had brought with him 86 horses, 530 men, and 30 officers across three different trains. Local women handed the troops flowers, while the troops returned in kind by giving them hardtack and buttons off their uniforms.

For Vincennes residents like Edward Thuis — a 19-year-old distillery employee — the reason for the 12th Regiment's arrival was no mystery. For months, American newspapers had reported the atrocities committed by Spain in Cuba, atrocities that culminated, for many readers, in the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor in February. Alongside crusading publishers like William Randolph Hearst (and their counterparts in small towns like Vincennes), American officials argued that the nation should spread its power across the world to free the Cubans and other subjugated people from the harshness of imperial monarchies like Spain's. In response to the growing clamor for war, men like the soldiers of the 12th Regiment — and, on April 26, 1898, in the town of Vincennes, Indiana, Edward Thuis himself — resolved to fight.

Why were Edward Thuis and other young men across the country — 280,564 in total (Livingston, 1998) — willing to fight in what amounted to a volunteer army in defense of the residents of Spain's colonies? Why would these young men choose to fight in a conflict in which they had no direct stake? What created the need or desire to participate in a war effort so far outside of communities in places like Nebraska or Indiana? Was it the infamous yellow journalism that, as many historians have claimed, fanned the flames of war in 1898?

Was it the language of particularly headstrong politicians such as Albert Beveridge? Or was it simply the pressure of an economy still recovering from the nationwide Depression of 1893? In order to analyze the effects of these events and ideas, I examined military volunteers from three sites in Thuis's home state of Indiana — a state that was in many ways typical in 1898, but that also included enough cultural divergence, from its northern to its southern end, to account for a range of American cultural and political traditions. In drawing a picture of the small-town Americans who became involved in the war, I hoped to discover a more universal truth about what motivated men to fight.

William Randolph Hearst's well-known command to his staff photographer at the *New York Journal*, "You provide the pictures, and I'll provide the war," may or may not reflect the power and prevalence of yellow journalism in the period surrounding the Spanish-American War. In either case, its continued familiarity, more than a century later, speaks to a larger truth about the American press in the late 1800s: that historians and scholars have maintained that it played a major role in the creation of the Spanish-American War (Campbell, 2001, p. 98). Hearst was more than happy to oblige this claim, asking his readers, "How do you like the *Journal's* War?" As historian W. Joseph Campbell has cautioned, it is impossible to prove these claims: Cuba fell off of the front page for months at a time; other conservative papers, such as the *New York Sun*, also called for war without resorting to the tactics of the yellow papers, and no direct evidence suggests that policymakers were affected by what they read in the yellow papers. "The newspapers of Hearst and Pulitzer may have mirrored, but they assuredly did not cause, the irreconcilable differences between the United States and Spain over Cuba," Campbell writes. Yet beyond the reach of big-city papers like Hearst's *Journal*, very little has been written

on how journalistic coverage of the buildup to war affected registration at a local level in small-town America (Campbell, 2001, p. 119).

Journalists were not alone in calling out for Americans to involve themselves in foreign wars. Politicians were also highly active in the promotion of becoming embroiled in conflict with foreign nations. One of the most ardent and well-known supporters of this was Albert Beveridge. Beveridge was the Republican Senator from Indiana from 1899-1911 who became the spokesperson for American Imperialism ("Albert J. Beveridge," 2007). Beveridge gave one of his most famous speeches even as the Spanish-American War raged. Historians later labeled this speech the March of the Flag, in which Americans and their imperialistic ideals spread across the world (Beveridge, 1898). Considering the fact that he won a senatorial seat after this speech, one cannot help but wonder whether his thoughts on Cuba and the war with Spain reflected the ideas and values of the people in Indiana at the time.

Another potential factor in determining the motivation of men to fight was the economic setback that came to be known as the Great Depression of 1893. The 1890's were a transformative period for the United States, as the nation occupied a larger role in the global stage — thus increasing both its vulnerability to international economic crisis and its opportunity for gaining greater economic power. Agriculture, while still a prominent feature of the economy, constituted only 19 percent of the gross national product (Witten, 2001). New forms of production and manufacturing helped American workers to "generate one of the highest levels of output per person in the world," but also led to catastrophic unemployment following the Depression of 1893. In 1894, nearly 12.3 percent of the workforce was unemployed (Witten, 2001). In 1898, when the war broke out, the situation was not much better: 11.6 percent of the workforce was unemployed (Witten, 2001). With these three factors in mind, I investigate how they played out on the ground in one state: Indiana.

Indiana was then, as it is now, a "crossroads of America" — a representation of rural and small-town America far from the traditional stomping grounds of yellow journalism and political rhetoric, such as New York and Washington, D.C. During the 1890's, many people in the state began to develop an idea of what being from Indiana truly meant (Madison, 2014, p. 190). This Hoosier identity was built on the fact that the majority of the state's people had similar roots and ideology. The other side of this character was Indiana's reputation for being stuck in its ways, and unwilling to change. This reputation included an emphasis on local over state or national governments. This was particularly influential in the development of a better educational system, which was put in place in the late nineteenth century. Citizens of Indiana did not want members of the larger governmental bodies getting themselves involved in issues they felt belonged to the jurisdiction of the local governmental establishments. These ideas can easily factor into the slow rate of development that occurred in the Hoosier State. But, by studying the makeup of war volunteers in an area about which little has been written

in this regard, we can try to see what motivated everyday Americans to fight in the Spanish-American War (Madison, 2014, p. 191-208).

BACKGROUND

Indiana divides roughly into three sections, North, Central, and South, which are distinguished by their geography and population. The state's large German population — by far the largest group of immigrants in the state — tended to settle in the central part of the state. The second wave of immigration, which included more immigrants of Eastern European or Slavic heritage, concentrated in cities like South Bend, in the northern part of the state. In the southern part of the state, despite the presence of some immigrants, there was a much greater native-born presence, with strong ties to the states of the upland South. For the purpose of this study, I have selected one town in each of these three regions that drew a high percentage of young men to enlist in the military in 1898. I investigated who were these men, how did they resemble or differ from their fellow townspeople or Hoosiers and more generally, what would they have read about the war in their local newspapers, or heard from prominent politicians? (Madison, 2014, p. 196-198).

In order to answer some of these questions, I chose three cities in Indiana and did an in-depth analysis of several factors that could have had an influence on the decision to go to war. First of all, I must explain how I picked the cities that I am analyzing. I looked at the Memorial Library site which contained a list of all of the soldiers from Indiana who fought in the war, or at least signed up for it (Memorial Library, 2011). I tallied the numbers of soldiers who volunteered from each city, picked the top seven to nine cities from each of the regiments, and created a list of 25 total cities to be included in the calculations. I then added the total number of white men, black men, foreign-born whites, and colored men, between the ages of 18-44 from each city for the denominator, and the total number of volunteers for the numerator (University of Virginia Libraries, 2007). All of this information comes from records of the University of Virginia, which are based on the 1900 census. This left me with a total of nine cities. I then picked the top three cities with the highest percentage of participation in the military. In choosing the cities, I wanted to make sure that I picked cities from the three different sections of Indiana: the north, the south, and the central regions, so that the data could be analyzed from a regional perspective. The cities with the highest percent of participants were Greencastle in the central part of the state with the highest rate of participation, the city of Knox in the north with the second highest rate of participation, and Vincennes in the south with the third. This allowed me to look at a difference in region and size of the towns rather than simply picking the three cities with the highest number of participants (*i.e.*, Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Evansville).

The following table (see Table 1) depicts the division of volunteers from the most commonly-cited cities in the state. Each column depicts a category that was divided in the original

Table 1. *Rates of Volunteering for the Spanish-American War*

| <u>County</u> | <u>City</u> | <u>Volunteers</u> | <u>White (18-44)</u> | <u>Black (18-44)</u> | <u>Foreign born white (18-44)</u> | <u>"Colored" (18-44)</u> | <u>Total county population (18-44)</u> | <u>%</u> |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------|
| Allen | Fort Wayne | 308 | 14023 | 0 | 2009 | 15 | 16047 | 1.919 |
| St. Joseph | South Bend | 156 | 9717 | 200 | 3424 | 19 | 13360 | 1.168 |
| Elkhart | Elkhart | 108 | 9027 | 20 | 549 | 11 | 9607 | 1.124 |
| Elkhart | Goshen | 83 | 9027 | 20 | 549 | 11 | 9607 | 0.864 |
| Noble | Ligonier | 74 | 4573 | 0 | 212 | 0 | 4785 | 1.546 |
| Steuben | Angola | 74 | 3043 | 2 | 32 | 1 | 3078 | 2.404 |
| DeKalb | Auburn | 74 | 5243 | 3 | 293 | 0 | 5539 | 1.336 |
| Wabash | N. Manchester | 61 | 5533 | 3 | 293 | 0 | 5715 | 1.067 |
| Starke | Knox | 54 | 1630 | 0 | 350 | 0 | 1980 | 2.727 |
| Marion | Indianapolis | 743 | 37437 | 4384 | 4472 | 24 | 46317 | 1.904 |
| Montgomery | Crawfordsville | 96 | 5986 | 49 | 58 | 2 | 6095 | 1.575 |
| Howard | Kokomo | 93 | 5524 | 115 | 183 | 5 | 5825 | 1.597 |
| Clinton | Frankfort | 83 | 5644 | 21 | 59 | 1 | 5725 | 1.45 |
| Randolph | Winchester | 64 | 5543 | 68 | 44 | 1 | 5656 | 1.131 |
| Morgan | Martinsville | 76 | 4025 | 23 | 22 | 0 | 4070 | 1.867 |
| Fulton | Rochester | 58 | 3216 | 12 | 43 | 0 | 3271 | 1.773 |
| Vanderburgh | Evansville | 262 | 13301 | 2157 | 1109 | 3 | 16570 | 1.702 |
| Knox | Vincennes | 175 | 6718 | 136 | 215 | 2 | 7071 | 2.475 |
| Vigo | Terra Haute | 129 | 12339 | 546 | 879 | 6 | 13778 | 0.936 |
| Floyd | New Albany | 98 | 5465 | 431 | 247 | 0 | 6143 | 1.595 |
| Monroe | Bloomington | 97 | 4022 | 79 | 43 | 0 | 4144 | 2.341 |
| Daviess | Washington | 84 | 3691 | 77 | 114 | 0 | 3882 | 2.164 |
| Putnam | Greencastle | 148 | 4283 | 40 | 28 | 4 | 4355 | 3.398 |
| Gibson | Princeton | 21 | 5931 | 305 | 133 | 2 | 6371 | 0.33 |
| Jefferson | Madison | 73 | 4112 | 171 | 76 | 0 | 4359 | 1.675 |

source. They have been compiled here for ease of calculating percentages. As only men could fight in the war, each column only represents the male population of each city, broken down by racial category.

THE NORTH REGION: KNOX

The city of Knox, Indiana, was laid out in 1851 in Starke County, one of the northernmost counties in the state (McCormick, 1915, p. 54). Although it developed relatively late — the town did not have a railroad until 1882 — by 1928 it featured, in one observer's words, "two railroads running through the town, [and was] a handsome and pleasant town to live in, a town where we can purchase anything from a cambric needle to an automobile or threshing machine." The same writer praised Knox for its "fine buildings, dwellings, business houses, courthouse, jail, and sheriff's residence, churches and schools that are hard to beat in a town of its size," as well as its variety of Protestant and Catholic churches (McCormick, 1915, p. 54-58).

Knox was a small town of 1,466 in 1900 (Stats Indiana, 2015), while Starke County had a total of 10,431 people of whom 1,980 were men of military age. Fifty-four men in the city of Knox chose to volunteer to fight in the war in May 1898 (University of Virginia Libraries, 2007). Their average age — 24.75 years — was slightly higher than the men in other cities analyzed; all but two were in their early- to mid-twenties. More than half were born and raised in Indiana. All but one had American-born parents, though the majority of parents were not from Indiana. Instead, a large proportion of those parents had come to Indiana from Ohio. It is odd that there were not more men born outside of the United States in the sample, especially since Knox had one of the highest rates of foreign-born men between the ages of 18-44. However, the countywide percentage of foreign-born men was 17.67%, strongly suggesting that foreign-born men were less likely to volunteer for the Spanish-American War.

From an occupational standpoint, 63 percent of the Knox men who volunteered were farmers or day laborers on farms. Indiana has long been known for its farm production, and

Starke County is no different. Across the county, a total of 26,460 acres of corn, 2,736 acres of wheat, 7,022 acres of oats, 3,164 acres of rye, and 906 acres of potatoes were under cultivation in 1910 (Grimes, Barrett, & Bushnell, 1917, p. 10). In sum, 81 percent of the county's land was used for farming. Like many residents of northern Indiana, the majority of the county's farmers were people of northern or central European descent: Scandinavian, Bohemian, German, Russian, and in particular, Austrian. They arrived in a county eager for "satisfactory farm labor," and apparently full of work for farm laborers (Grimes et al., 1917, p. 7-17). Another possible reason why these men were less likely to volunteer for a war was because they may have been fleeing from increasingly militaristic European states.

All of the men in the sample were literate, whether or not they were formally educated. With this in mind, it is impossible to rule out the role of newspapers in their decision to go to war. There were several newspapers that were active in the Starke County area during this time period: the *Starke County Democrat*, the *Starke County Republican*, and the *Starke County Ledger*. The *Republican* reportedly had "a large patronage" among local readers (McCormick, 1915, p. 58). If the men in my study were reading a newspaper, it would have likely been one of these three. As a result, I wanted to analyze the newspapers' use of propaganda or other techniques typical of the infamous yellow journalism of publishers like William Randolph Hearst.

One of the key events that framed the Spanish-American war was the Cuban War for Independence from Spain. All of the papers in Knox carefully recorded the plight of the Cuban people. The *Starke County Republican* portrayed the Cubans as sympathetic, mentioning their cheering for the United States, and their struggles in their fight against the Spanish. The paper's features described the Cubans as starving and ill-equipped to deal with their fight against the Spanish (*Starke County Republican*, 1898a).

The destruction of the USS *Maine* on February 16, 1898 in Havana Harbor (Public Broadcasting Service, 1999), was a key provocation to the Spanish-American War. The *Starke County Republican*, like other papers of the time, believed that the *Maine* was destroyed by the Spanish. The newspaper's editors went so far as to claim that they had definitive proof that the ship's destruction was no mere accident: a "shattered section of a submarine cable." Whether or not the *Maine* was destroyed by Spanish forces, Americans believed that it had been, and that belief — encapsulated in the phrase, "Remember the *Maine*" — had power to forge action. To strengthen its point, the *Republican* included a detailed explanation of how submarine mines work (*Starke County Republican*, 1898b). Such details presumed Spanish blame without suggesting other options — such as mechanical failure — for what could have caused the *Maine*'s destruction and the subsequent death of so many American sailors.

The *Republican* reflected an appreciation, if not an obsession, with war. The paper dedicated considerable space to describing the power of the ships that the United States

would use in the event of war. In other sections, the paper focused on details of the American Civil War, including short anecdotes of events, often portrayed in a positive light. By showing the buildup to a war with Spain alongside stories on the nation's last major war, the newspaper emphasized the comparisons between them (*Starke County Republican*, 1898b).

The *Republican* consistently portrayed the Spanish from the perspective of the Cubans, emphasizing for American readers the empire's similarity to Great Britain at the time of the American Revolutionary War. In their paper on March 24, they showed a map of the world demonstrating what Spain had controlled more than 100 years earlier (*Starke County Republican*, 1898b). In addition to allowing the paper's audience to see the areas that were currently in contention, the map showed how much territory — including large sections of the United States — the Spaniards had already lost. In addition to showing Spain as a decrepit empire, the image seems calculated to instill fear that the Spaniards could try to take their land back. By playing on these ideas and fears, the paper educated its readers even as it allowed its own slant to shine through.

The conflict continued to occupy a major portion of the *Republican*'s pages even after Knox men had enlisted for service in May. On June 9, the paper described the American military's success after one month of combat: "We have demonstrated to the world that our war vessels are second to none that float, that our gunners fire to hit, and not simply to make a noise." Such descriptions treated American victories not simply as a path to defeat the Spanish, but also as a demonstration of American power and confirmation that fighting against the United States would be tantamount to suicide. Just over 30 years since the nation's own civil war, the editors seemed determined to prove the power of the United States and readiness to defend itself and its interests. They referred to the fights between Spain and the United States as "not unlike those of a pygmy measuring strength with a giant." Not satisfied with building up the United States, they continued to tear Spain down to make the Spanish enemy appear weak. This focus extended to other issues that Spain was facing: the collapse of the Spanish bank and the Spanish monetary system as well as Spain's "crushing defeat" in the Philippines. Such detail seemed designed to humiliate Spain even further in an attempt to consolidate belief in the power of the United States (*Starke County Republican*, 1898e).

The *Starke County Democrat*, despite its contrasting party affiliation, was similar to the *Republican* in its war coverage. The *Democrat* did, however, devote more attention to Don Carlos, the Spanish Pretender to the throne. By portraying an illegitimate heir, they emphasized the regime's corruption (*Starke County Democrat*, 1898c).

The *Democrat* spent a lot of its time describing the process of declaring war. President McKinley drafted an ultimatum saying that he wanted no war with Spain, but firmly asked that the Cubans be given food and other necessities, and that the Cuban government be acknowledged (Olcott, 1916, p.

20-21). The document implied that if the Spanish did not respond to these demands, the United States would declare war on Spain. In great detail, the paper described the process by which the ultimatum was written and passed through both the Senate and the House of Representatives (*Starke County Democrat*, 1898c). This account of the protracted, thoughtful process leading to Congress's declaration of war contrasts with the newspaper's account of Spain's simple declaration that "a state of war exists" (*Starke County Democrat*, 1898d), implying that either the Spanish did not plan as carefully as the Americans did, or that Spain was simply more warlike than the United States. Either interpretation implies an insult to the carefully-laid plans of the United States government, in contrast to the Americans' respect for Spain.

While both the *Republican* and the *Democrat* were indeed party papers, at their cores they viewed the war in similar ways. Both attempted to portray the Spaniards as weak, while demonstrating how the powerful United States would easily defeat them. The *Republican* presented in greater detail the glory that war could confer. The *Democrat* focused more on the troops who volunteered to fight in the war, relating them to the people who had fought in the Civil War and thus further extolling the glory of fighting in a justified war. Whether they were Republican or Democrat, the Knox men who chose to volunteer heard what amounted to the same story on both sides of the political spectrum.

The people of Knox prided themselves on their participation in the military. "Many mothers wept and sisters shed tears," wrote one Starke County historian "as those boys marched to the front, ready to do their duty like all patriotic citizens have always done when our country needs their service." McCormick's (1915) report suggests that the men who volunteered to fight in the conflict did so not out of a desire to help the Cubans in their fight with the Spanish, but because the Spanish had disrespected the values that the citizens of Knox held dear:

Many no doubt felt a longing for the old home, for father, for mother, for sister or brother, and for his sweetheart he left behind, but there is a disposition and a desire as well as a duty to his country that spurs us on, that fills the heart of man to ever be ready and willing to tread the battlefield to meet the hardships of war that our country might be saved and our laws respected and obeyed, maintaining the integrity of our nation, assuring peace and happiness to all its citizens. (McCormick, 1915, p. 146-147)

Based on this evidence (though it was published in 1915, 20 years after the war), the men who chose to fight were inspired to protect their country. The local newspapers' efforts to instill fear that the United States had been slighted by Spain possibly played on and compounded that desire. This also echoes the Hoosier localism that was considered typical of the time period (McCormick, 1915, p. 146-147).

THE CENTRAL REGION: GREENCASTLE

The second city I analyzed was Greencastle, located in Putnam County, in the central portion of the state. Like Knox,

Greencastle was a young town when the Spanish-American War broke out, having only been established as a city in the 1860's (Weik, 1910, p. 235-236). Still, the town grew quickly; a January 1868 edition of the *Banner* newspaper stated that it already contained:

one iron, one nail factory, one foundry, and machine shop, two flouring mills, one pump factory, one carriage factory, four wagon shops, seven blacksmith shops, six saloons, eight churches, thirty-five clergymen, one college, one high school, one young ladies' school, a number of other schools with efficient teachers, ten physicians, twenty-four lawyers, a population of five thousand, and more handsome ladies than any other town in Indiana. (Weik, 1910, p. 242)

Despite this passage's focus on industry, the town's most prominent feature was its access to farmland.

Greencastle, and Putnam County more generally, boasted a robust farming industry with fertile agricultural land, particularly in the northern part of the county (Barrett, 1912, p. 185). In 1900, the county's 2,883 farms (Barrett, 1912, p. 184) made up 301,039 total acres (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1999). Of that acreage, 61,808 acres were in corn, 15,772 in oats, 18,599 in wheat, 3,978 in clover, and 18,117 in timothy-grass (Barrett, 1912, p. 184). Despite what these numbers suggest about the county's economic base, the majority of the volunteers from Greencastle had occupations outside of the farming industry.

In the 1900 census, 4,355 of Putnam County's 21,478 people were men between the ages of 18-44. Of this number, 148 volunteered to fight in 1898 (University of Virginia Libraries, 2007). Despite Putnam County's reliance on farming, only 14 percent of the men in my sample worked as farmers, and nearly half of that number were laborers who worked on other people's farms. The other 86 percent of the volunteer sample group worked in a variety of careers that included clerks, merchants, a night watchman, a painter, and an auditor, among many others. Their average age was 24.14 years, although this group included James F. Fee, a 51-year-old major. With this outlier removed, the average age of Greencastle's volunteers becomes 21.6 years, making this group the youngest of the three groups analyzed (this difference may have reflected the presence of DePauw University in the town). More than three-quarters of the men in the Greencastle sample were born in Indiana, and only two had foreign-born parents, in both cases only one parent each. Despite central Indiana's generally higher percentage of German immigrants, none of the men that I analyzed seemed to be of German descent, though one had a parent from Ireland in Knox. All of the men — formally educated or not — were literate, and more than likely read the local newspapers.

Neither the *Greencastle Banner Times* nor the *Greencastle Star Press* seemed to have an obvious party bias, but both included the journalistic propaganda that was prevalent during this time. While most of the newspapers in the three cities focused on the conflict in Cuba, the *Banner Times* took this a step further, devoting nearly all of its coverage to Cuba. The paper's editors framed the conflict in Cuba in terms of how the war would affect Americans, describing the conflict

as “a constant menace to our peace.” They played on readers’ emotions as well, describing Spanish acts as “extermination not warfare” (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898a).

The ever-present issue of the *Maine* also found its way into the Greencastle newspapers’ discussion of Cuba. Instead of blaming the Spanish for destroying the vessel, the editors criticized them for being unable to protect outside ships or foreign interests. They chose to publish McKinley’s famous ultimatum in its entirety, including the president’s statement that “Spain cannot protect visiting vessels in the Havana Harbor” (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898a). While McKinley was clearly present in the pages of the *Banner Times*, Spanish leaders were rarely, if ever, mentioned. The only mention of Don Carlos occurs in an explanation of his attempt to preserve the honor of his country following the loss of their once-glorious Empire. The other prominent Spaniard mentioned is Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, Spain’s Minister to the United States (Library of Congress, 2011). On April 22, seeing that war was inevitable, de Lôme withdrew from his position in Washington and fled to Canada to escape the increasingly anti-Spanish fervor of the United States. While more than likely a wise decision, the minister’s actions had the unintended side effect of seeming cowardly. By portraying his flight in a manner intended to lower respect for the Spanish, the newspaper continued to fuel the fire of patriotism, convincing Americans that “the most improved engines of war ever invented” would lead the Spanish enemy to find that “her ships would be sunk before they could throw a shell” (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898b).

The newspaper’s anti-Spanish rhetoric was at times quite direct:

Spain’s fleet swears by the Virgin Mary that they will not return to their native land without victory. That seems quite useless in view of the probability that there will be nothing left of it to return. Victory has long ago ceased to perch on Spanish banners. (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898b)

As the war drew ever closer, the writers at the *Banner Times* started to focus on what Spain would lose if it continued to fight. There is also a description of how the Spanish had been funding the war, through “patriotic” bullfights. Bullfighting is a time-honored tradition in Spain, but to the citizens of the United States, it was a foreign concept. By mentioning it, the papers are able to portray the Spanish as something fundamentally different from America (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898a).

The *Greencastle Star Press* reiterated many of these ideas, but also discussed the appeal of Cuba: “With good government and proper sanitary arrangements well enforced, the island of Cuba would make a good place to live, and get rich” (*Greencastle Star Press*, 1898a). By contrasting Cuba as it is with how it could be, the editors allowed the citizens of small-town America to see Spain’s misrule in Cuba, and to imagine that the people of the island would be better off under the oversight of the United States. While this aspect of war would logically be a part of any discussion of imperialism at the time, only the *Star Press* seems to be willing to take

that step.

THE SOUTH REGION: VINCENNES

The final city in my sample is Vincennes, located in Knox County, in the southwestern portion of the state. Some 7,071 of Knox County’s 32,746 residents in 1900 were draft-aged men (ages 18-44). Of that number, 175 volunteered for combat in the Spanish-American War (University of Virginia Libraries, 2007). Vincennes was home to Vincennes University and the Vincennes University Cadets, who were reported to be “the only full company of cadets sent by any state educational institution in the country to engage in the Spanish War.” In addition to the university, the small city was known as a center for manufacturing (and included four flour mills): “The wage scalp of all manufacturing establishments is high and the mills and factories run on full time,” reported historian George E. Green in 1911. Green (1911) further stated that, “This state of affairs is not only a boon to the laborer, but it is a condition which the merchant thoroughly appreciates.” Despite these claims, the city, like most of the cities in Indiana, put the majority of its focus on farming (Green, 1911, p. 461-512).

In 1900, there were 305,966 acres of farmland in the county (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1999). The city boasted that it was “in the midst of one of the finest agricultural sections in the world with other natural advantages that few localities possess” (Green, 1911, p. 526-527). The majority of the area’s volunteers, however, were not farmers. Only 28 percent of the men in the sample worked as farm laborers. The other 72 percent held a wide variety of jobs, and included architects, carpenters, and express agents. Only one was born outside of Indiana, and he was born in neighboring Illinois. Twenty-one percent of the men had at least one foreign parent, with over half of that number being from Germany. Thirty-six percent of the men had at least one parent who was not from Indiana, while only one of those had parents who were both from Illinois. This makes him the only volunteer of non-foreign descent who did not have at least one parent from Indiana. The average age of the men in the sample is 23.21, which places the average right around the age of a college student. This finding makes sense due to the presence of Vincennes University. Much like the other two cities, whether or not they were formally educated or whether or not they were farmers, all of the men in the sample were literate and more than likely read one of the newspapers which were published in the town of Vincennes.

Vincennes’s principal newspaper in 1898 was the daily *Vincennes Commercial*. Additionally, at least two German papers catered to the city’s sizable German population (Green, 1911, p. 475). Much like Greencastle’s newspapers, the *Commercial* lacked an outright political bias, but the paper’s obvious support for the war shone through in its articles, including its considerable buildup to the April 26, 1898 muster. The editors described on multiple occasions the government’s plan to request as many as 200,000 troops prior to the official declaration of war (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898a).

On April 21, 1898, the *Commercial* featured its coverage of the arrival of Major Hathaway's regiment on their way to New Orleans. In addition to describing the grand procession, complete with its bugles, wagons, and 86 horses, the paper dwelled on the reception that soldiers received from "our maidens who are famous for their beauty." The newspaper's reporter focused on the flowers that the troops received in exchange for buttons off their uniforms. One man promised to bring back the scalp of General Weyler, the Spanish General, in exchange for a bouquet. Such stories romanticized the life of a soldier, suggesting that the women of Vincennes would pay more attention to men who were in the military. Coming only a few days before men volunteered for the war, this article could have provided additional incentive for why they were willing to get involved, though the newspaper described the volunteers as being "all moved by a single impulse, patriotism." With this in mind, it makes sense to shift to the role of propaganda in the newspaper in Vincennes (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898c).

The *Vincennes Commercial* employed similar language to the *Greencastle Banner Times* when describing the Spaniards' warlike ways, noting the "great enthusiasm reported through Spain at the prospect of war." At the same time, the editors stressed Spain's lack of preparation, mentioning that the Spanish were running short on food in Cuba (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898b) or that a Spanish vessel had sunk in the Irish Sea (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898e). Such efforts to show the enemy as weak boosted the morale of prospective soldiers, making the fight seem easily winnable.

The editors' language further expanded on the Spaniards' warlike character. Describing Spain's simple response to McKinley's ultimatum, the *Commercial* stated that "Spain considers the ultimatum a declaration and will make no reply - her fleet is on the move" (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898c). The newspaper juxtaposed Spain's eager response with the United States government's carefully-thought-out ultimatum (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898a). By making the Americans seem like the passive party in the conflict, the paper showed the American war fervor as simply a response to the actions of the Spanish as its large headline exclaimed on April 22, "War! Ready to fight! The hour has come" (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898c).

More than the other papers examined here, the *Commercial* focuses on the role that allies would play in the coming conflict. The core ally in their narrative was the British. The nation that had once put the United States in a similar situation was, according to the newspaper, willing to help the United States. Britain volunteered to protect American interests in Spain (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898b) and to "guard the United States against a European Coalition" (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898d). The reminder that Britain would defend the United States' European interests made Spain seem more dangerous even as it made the United States seem better protected and, once more, allowed volunteers to imagine that the war was winnable.

The *Commercial* described the leave-taking of Vincennes's volunteers in great detail. There was a large banquet and

all of the troops attended, including the University Cadets (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898f). Lieutenant C.D. McCoy thanked everyone for choosing to join the conflict and for getting involved in the city's affairs. The paper described the young men who, for all they knew, were going to fight and possibly die in the conflict, as being happy and excited, in contrast to the older soldiers, who had known of war (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898f). The banquet was also attended by female students at Vincennes University who presented a flag to the volunteers. At the heart of this article, the editors published a sketch that read "Remember the *Maine*," reminding Americans of their fears and also their hopes for what the war would accomplish. Had the Vincennes men joined hoping that they would get the glory given the soldiers from Nebraska, they would have been overjoyed. They were made to seem as heroes, before they had ever set foot on a battlefield (*Vincennes Commercial*, 1898f).

In addition to the likely influence of local journalist description of the time upon their decision to enlist, the political rhetoric of the time, too, had a particularly local cast. Albert J. Beveridge, as mentioned earlier, was one of the foremost supporters of American Imperialism, and often spoke about America's claims to the world ("Albert J. Beveridge," 2007). His most famous speech, given later in 1898, came to be known as the March of the Flag speech. In it, he continued to construct the terms of America's Manifest Destiny. Like others defending the same principle, Beveridge insisted that it was Americans' "liberty" that empowered them, and that they needed to spread throughout the world, for it was their right. With the Spanish-American War about to end, he reminded his listeners that "Hawaii is ours, Porto [sic] Rico is ours, at the prayer of her people, Cuba will finally be ours" (Beveridge, 1898).

To further his agenda for an American Empire, Beveridge compared the United States and Germany: "If Germany can govern foreign lands, so can America." By doing this, he was creating a model and an example of how the American Empire should look, while at the same time promoting his expansionist agenda. He put emphasis on the role that the military would play in this endeavor, particularly the Navy: "The oceans make them (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii) contiguous. And our navy will make them contiguous" (Beveridge, 1898). Using military strength to unite the world is often key for the creation of an empire, and knowing that the United States was often separated from the rest of the world, it would make sense for there to be more emphasis placed on the role, and the power, of the military (Beveridge, 1898).

Beveridge's prescription for empire included a large dose of racism. Beveridge noted that it was reasonable to take land from Native Americans because they lacked the ability to govern themselves, and through extension, neither understood nor properly used the resources available on their land. The same principles applied, Beveridge believed, in other places such as Cuba, whose people were unable to take full advantage of their resources. Arguing that the United States must "find new markets for our produce," he argued that "every other

nation on Earth must pay our tariff before they can compete with us" (Beveridge, 1898). By using military power to create economic power, the United States would gain more influence in a global market.

For Beveridge, the need for global lands followed naturally from historical precedent. The flag, in his speech, had been carried, along with American identity, to places on the continent that had not been part of the United States, such as Mississippi, Florida, and others. Just as earlier Americans had bought such large chunks of land, as the Louisiana Purchase, without specific plans for what they wanted to do with it, the acquisition of Cuba and other lands abroad would prove useful once it was completed.

The men who volunteered to fight would not have heard or even read about Beveridge's speech, which was published months after they enlisted. But even without directly affecting their decision, the speech's contribution to an existing discussion of the continuation and further construction of the American Empire makes it impossible for us to say that the men would not have heard or been exposed to similar ideas. Beveridge himself had attended DePauw University in Greencastle (Weik, 1910, p. 242-245), and his ideas may have been shaped in the town in ways that influenced the Greencastle men who volunteered for the War.

DISCUSSION

A few interesting comparisons emerge when considering the three cities examined in this study. Despite the fact that all three were heavily reliant on agriculture, only Knox saw a majority of volunteers with farming backgrounds. The relative scarcity of farmers or farm laborers could be explained by the year-round need for farmers to take care of the crops, and Knox in particular seems to have had a high demand for farm workers (Grimes, 1917, p. 17). Men who worked in the service or manufacturing industries seem to have been more inclined to volunteer for the war. Jobs in manufacturing were easier to replace. So if a worker decided to join the war for the two-year period that the government required, someone else would be able to fill in for them. Then when the war ended, it would be easier to get their old job back, or a job in a similar field. Since they did not have that year-round commitment that farmers had, it would be easier for them to go off to war, come back to their jobs, and continue from where they left off prior to volunteering. If they knew this was a possibility, it would make sense for them to be able to fight and make some extra money, and then come back home to start again. Farmers during this time did not have this luxury because there would always be a need for food that could be grown and distributed.

Despite Indiana's population of immigrants, of the men that were sampled from the three cities, none were born outside of the country. There were certainly men who were born outside of Indiana, and men with foreign-born parents, but the vast majority had lived out the entirety of their existence on American soil. This might have been one of the reasons why they were prone to choosing to fight in the conflict, and

also prone to falling for the propaganda that occurred in the newspapers, particularly to the rhetoric of fear. Many of the newspapers used the idea of fear to their advantage by stating that the Spanish might attack the coast — they were able to appeal to the desire of the American men to protect their livelihoods and the land that they came to cherish (*Greencastle Banner Times*, 1898b). By concentrating on the ever-present fear of the Spanish, the newspapers sought to unite the people of the United States behind a common banner, a banner that more often than not bore the phrase, "Remember the *Maine*."

Both Vincennes and Greencastle, as college towns, present common demographic information worth analyzing. When compared to towns like Knox — which lacked a university — the average age of the men who volunteered to go to war was much younger. This would seem to make sense given the average age for college attendance. However, the majority, despite being in the age range to attend their respective university, were not enrolled in classes. Most of the men who volunteered from Greencastle and Vincennes were born in those respective cities, and seem not to have traveled to the city to attend college. Working-class men who were not attending the university were more likely to enroll than their college-bound brethren.

While local Indiana newspapers did indeed use propaganda to their advantage, it is difficult to define whether or not their contents would have met the definition of yellow journalism, which was often considered to be a requirement of propaganda in journalism given the vagueness of that term. In 1900, Delos Wilcox set out to define yellow journalism, and his definition of "an above average emphasis on news of crime, or vice, use of illustrations, the publication of want ads, and medical advertising, and a tendency to advertise or call attention to its accomplishments" has remained current to this day. Under Wilcox's definition, the Indiana papers that I analyzed would not be considered "yellow." While crime was covered in the papers, it was not present to the detriment of other subjects. All of the papers used illustrations, but never to the excessive amount seen in papers such as Hearst's *New York Journal - American*. To my knowledge, none of the papers drew excessive attention to their own achievements. For the most part, the paper seemed like it was created solely to dictate facts, even if the facts were shaped into propaganda, and did not play an active role in creating the news itself. Not even such familiar stylistic elements as the banner headlines could be seen in the Indiana papers. Yet without serving as classic examples of yellow journalism, they still served a patriotic agenda through their use of wartime rhetoric (Campbell, 2001, p. 5-6).

A plethora of reasons could have inspired small-town Hoosiers to volunteer for the Spanish-American War: jobs and economic concerns like the Depression of 1893, propaganda dispensed through local media, and political rhetoric coming from nearby legislators. It is difficult to come up with a single reason as to why these men registered, or why the men of these three cities registered for the war at a higher rate than the men of any other city in the state. All of the men in the

sample were surprisingly literate, and thus likely to have read their local newspapers, which presented information that was largely accurate but was presented with the obvious agenda of justifying the war. Anyone reading these publications would have seen a portrayal of a decadent, warlike Spain attempting to enforce its claims upon its weak Cuban colony. For anyone with some knowledge of the American Revolution, the parallel between France's assistance to the new nation seeking its independence, and the potential American role in the Cuban conflict seemed obvious.

However, even those recruits who were unaware of their history could be motivated by fear. By preying upon American fears of invasion, newspapers created an added justification for war. Whether or not the papers were telling the truth, the emotional response to such threats was powerful. While not fitting the strict definition of yellow journalism, Indiana's small-town newspapers actively advocated for the conflict. It cannot be said that such papers caused local men to enlist, but they did keep people informed in a way that played on their emotions and sense of patriotic justice.

CONCLUSION

The men themselves were often as varied a group that could be found in Indiana during this period. However, they all had one thing in common: a desire to fight in the Spanish-American War. That desire might have come from a sense of boredom in a dead-end job as much as it did from the quest for glory. In comparison to this, the governmental figures of this time period, particularly Albert J. Beveridge, were pro-American Imperialism, and while he did not give any of his major speeches before the war broke out, the fact that he won a senatorial seat shortly after his famous March of the Flag speech indicates that there were some people in the state who were sympathetic to his views, views which could have been shaped by his time spent in Greencastle, one of the three cities in the sample. It is difficult to ascertain exactly the role that he, or his ideas would have played in the men's decision to join the war, but he was a creature of the times, and was constructed by the structures of feeling that were in the air in the late-nineteenth century.

Through the newspapers' creation of the concept of glory, many of the men would have found an opportunity to achieve a sense of agency by fighting in the war that they would not have previously been able to acquire working in a grocery store. But in order to have the necessary emotional response, it would have taken the work of both the papers and the rhetoric of politicians to convince the men that fighting in the conflict would be considered a "right" and "justified" response to the emotional swelling that they were experiencing. Political and journalistic propaganda and rhetoric would have been the determining factor in not only dictating how the men would feel about the war, but also how much they would know about it. News was limited to what was printed locally, and those who printed the papers could choose how much they told, and how they presented that information. However, the people who were most likely to be affected

by the propaganda were the same men who volunteered in such large numbers for the Spanish-American War: native-born men who were normally employed in careers outside of the farming industry, which was, and is, so prevalent in Indiana. It is in this manner that they effectively constructed the war — not in the sense of determining the government's decision to go to war (an accusation that historians such as Campbell have already shown to be false), but at the ground-level, among the men who would choose to fight in the war. Without soldiers, there would not have been a war, so the role that propaganda played in convincing men to fight in the war should not be overlooked. Ultimately, the story of the war that was constructed through propaganda became the story that they believed, which allowed them to decide to fight for America, for Cuba, and to Remember the *Maine*.

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