Exposing "Men with Matches":
An Exploration of Denier/Distorter Pseudohistorians, Their Motivations, and Their Dangers

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how distorting, altering, and denying historical narratives about the past aim to create a culture that perpetuates present social injustices against historically marginalized groups and how distortion and denial affect the healing and reconciliation process. It specifically examines the modern-day sociopolitical intentions that motivate the distortion or denial of a historical event. It demonstrates the dangers of distorting the past for modern-day motives through the use of two case studies: Holocaust denial and neo-Confederacy. Through the use of the case study, this thesis traces the chronological development of these ideologies.

The general public gains knowledge about historical events through a convergence of evidence, a pivotal part in the neutral historical process. Historians draw conclusions through an amassed body of evidence that points in a similar direction. Those who deny or distort a well-known and verified body of evidence do so to reshape the public debate and convince the public to draw conclusions about the past that are more favorable to their case than would occur with a fully accurate view of history. To combat denial, this thesis stresses exposure instead of engagement: engaging with deniers/distorters through debate would elevate their claims to the realm of acceptable and legitimate history. It is important to make deniers' methods the subject of study, because their conclusions are not of any academic or scholarly value. The responsibility of exposure lies with academia, those who have the ability to disseminate the truth about history. By transforming the culture of denial and distortion into one of rational academic inquiry and investigation, the historical legacies of the targeted groups are preserved and the transmission of history for future generations is safeguarded.

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Somewhere the saving and putting away had to begin again and someone had to do the saving and the keeping, one way or another, in books, in records, in people's heads, any way at all so long as it was safe, free from moths, silverfish, rust and dry-rot, and men with matches.
– Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

I. Introduction

On a regular visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), a guest can view both the *Permanent Exhibition on the Holocaust* and the installation on present-day genocide called *From Memory to Action*, run by the USHMM's Committee on Conscience. In contrast to the information-depositing strategy that the *Permanent Exhibition* employs, *From Memory to Action* offers visitors an opportunity to interact with content through the signing of virtual pledges, which asks the question, "What will you do to end genocide today?" ("Preventing Genocide - Take Action"). As an intern for the Committee on Conscience, I monitored pledges left by visitors, ensuring that no pledges entering the online database were offensive or inappropriate. On my third day as an intern, the second pledge in the queue read: "I will do absolutely nothing because the Holocaust is not real." I was shocked; I knew that Holocaust denial existed, but I always mentally relegated it to the extremist fringe of society. Reading this visitor's anonymous assertion constituted my first significant interaction with a Holocaust denier.

The USHMM defines the Holocaust as "the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). The Museum has amassed an impressive collection of documents and artifacts that corroborates this definition and serves as a living memorial to the Holocaust and its victims. Despite the overwhelming amount of evidence available to the public, the Museum faces criticism from individuals who do not hold the history of the Holocaust in high regard. These individuals, self-branded Holocaust "revisionists," ignore

the evidence and instead choose to view this historical event through the lens of present-day politics and culture. What results is an assault on memory that has widespread ramifications for the targeted groups and the field of history in general.

This thesis investigates how distorting, altering, and denying historical narratives about the past aim to perpetuate present injustices against historically marginalized groups. Specifically, I examine the modern-day sociopolitical intentions that motivate the distortion or denial of a historical event. I demonstrate the dangers of distorting the past for modern day motives through the use of two case studies: Holocaust denial and neo-Confederacy. In normal cases, the scholars and historians gain knowledge about historical events through a "convergence of evidence," a pivotal part in the neutral historical process (Shermer 32). Just as a single fossil cannot prove evolution or a lone hurricane substantiate climate change theories, a historical event cannot be proven through one sole piece of evidence. Rather, historians draw conclusions through an amassed body of evidence that all points in a similar direction. Those who deny or distort a well-known and verified body of evidence do so to reshape the public debate and convince the public to draw conclusions about the past that are more favorable to their case than would occur with a fully accurate view of history.

Research Methodology: The Case Study

To fully analyze the distortion and denial of historical narratives and the motivations behind such actions, I employ the case study. A case study is an in-depth analysis of a particular set of events, concerned with time and description, seeking to explain the rationale behind decisions and "what happened as a result" (Schramm 8). When asking "how and why questions" such as why deniers want to distort history and how they accomplish their goals, a case study

presents a holistic and meaningful overview (Yin 10). While I present historical trends and events, the use of case studies as my units of analysis allows me to access more contemporary sources of evidence, including "direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events" (11). The strength of a case study comes from its ability to handle a wide variety of evidence, including modern day documents and interviews (11). Through the medium of the case study, I also place the historical events under analysis within a modern day political framework that links the past and the present.

Perhaps the greatest strength of case study methodology is its "wide angle lens" that extends longitudinally and spatially (Schramm 12). Such a lens examines an event or series of events holistically, rather than divorcing them from context and their relationships to other events. The case study analyzes multiple elements behind patterns of decision making after the fact (12). Yet, despite the strengths behind this research methodology, the case study places "an enormous responsibility on the researcher" to present an adequate overview of context, consequences, and relationships, rather than an overemphasis on a method (13). To transform this potential weakness in my methodology, I present a balanced overview of both cases, including primary source material from the deniers themselves, while being forthright with my background and positionality to display any potential biases.

Neo-Confederacy: A Cursory Overview

Neo-Confederacy is a school of thought that reexamines the American Civil War through a modern day, socio-politically motivated approach. While differences in interpretation regarding events of the Civil War persist in academia, neo-Confederates promote a particular view of the Civil War that distorts historical events in order to romanticize a distinctly Southern way of life.

New historical analysis of the course of Civil War history is not a negative practice; problems arise when rationale for revisiting the past stems from distinctly racial or discriminatory motives. The skewed romanticization of the Old South produces a neo-Confederate viewpoint that "valorize[s] white men" and a hierarchical social order, such as the one that existed in accordance with the institution of slavery (Hague 6). The Old South thus becomes a source of guidance and precedent for present day neo-Confederate theological, social, political, and cultural behavior.

Neo-Confederates root their arguments in the assertion that slavery was not a factor in the breakout of the Civil War. Instead, neo-Confederates claim, "the South fought not for slavery but for self-government" (McPherson 68). They also attempt to distance the South from the racial and exploitative system of slavery by establishing a states' rights argument, which says that the Confederates fought not to defend slavery, but for abstract principles concerning federal and state powers. However, according to journalist and author Tony Horwitz, the reality is that much of the neo-Confederate discourse and ideology is "little more than a clever glide around race and slavery, rather like the slick-tongued defense of the Southern 'way of life' made by antebellum orators" (69-70). By distorting the history of the Civil War and denying the realities of Southern existence during this time period, neo-Confederates promote a legacy of the Confederate States of America, complete with a racial and gendered social hierarchy that mimics or replicates conditions of the Civil War South. In chapter two, I present examples that link neo-Confederate ideology to instances when politicians and prominent individuals in power have used distorted ideology to change the American social order at the potential expense of the same groups the Old South itself marginalized.

Holocaust Denial: A Cursory Overview

The case of Holocaust denial also features individuals engaging in a form of pseudohistory, or the "rewriting of the past for present personal or political purposes" (Shermer 2). Holocaust deniers reject that the convergence of evidence proves that the Holocaust occurred. Instead of basing historical revision in a desire to uncover the truth of how or why events occurred, pseudohistorians seek to use a historical event as a means to achieve a modern-day end. Specifically, Holocaust deniers believe in three main themes that they claim refute the occurrence of the Holocaust: "no gas chambers, no six million [Jews] murdered, [and] no master plan" (40). Despite the massive amount of evidence that converges on these conclusions about the Holocaust, deniers ignore this evidence in order to meet their varying modern-day sociopolitical goals.

Scholars believe that the ultimate goal of Holocaust denial is the "rehabilitation of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich," which deniers would accomplish by claiming that Nazi Germany's greatest obstacle to "greatness," its heinous war crimes, never took place (Zimmerman 119). Holocaust denial also operates with a distinctive anti-Semitic undercurrent. Walter Reich, former Director of the USHMM, writes:

> What better way to rehabilitate anti-Semitism than to make anti-Semitism [*sic*] arguments seem once again respectable in civilized discourse and even make it acceptable for governments to pursue anti-Semitic policies than by convincing the world that the great crime for which anti-Semitism was blamed simply never happened? (Reich 34)

Following Reich's logic, Holocaust deniers aim to destabilize the current sociopolitical system by creating an environment in which anti-Semitic arguments are once again logical and acceptable within the mainstream narrative.

Holocaust deniers do not expressly support violence against historically marginalized groups, namely Jews. Instead, their rhetoric and logic aims to create an environment where anti-

Semitic and neo-Nazi movements can flourish, thus encouraging the creation of "regimes that

have promoted violence against ethnic groups" without the deniers directly advocating such

regimes or behaviors (Atkins 6). In chapter three, I present examples of deniers' attempts to both

legitimize their ideology through "historical" claims and their efforts to destabilize the steps

Jews have taken toward equal status within a previously anti-Semitic world order. Denying the

Holocaust sets a dangerous precedent for any member of a group affected by a historical event;

denial robs individuals of the respect to which he or she is entitled after such a dramatic shift in

his or her sociopolitical standing.

Denier, Distorter, and Revisionist Terminology

Holocaust deniers and neo-Confederates brand themselves as 'revisionists' or

'historians.' Throughout this thesis, I refer to individuals ascribing to these schools of thought as

deniers, pseudohistorians, or distorters. The wider consensus about the Holocaust has formulated

a commonly held definition: the Nazis murdered six million Jews in a systematic fashion. Self-

named Holocaust "revisionists," through their denial of three main tenets of the Holocaust (no

gas chambers, no six million, and no intentionality), essentially deny the Holocaust's entire

occurrence. While romanticizing the Old South, neo-Confederates distort specific evidence about

the South's secession and social conditions of the time, thus distorting the convergence of

evidence regarding the causes of the Civil War to fit the present-day neo-Confederate agenda.

In the academic field of history, historians have a right to revise what is known about the

past through a refinement of knowledge or clarification of evidence (Shermer xvi). However,

never do academic historians engage in complete denial of a historical event in spite of a general

convergence of evidence, nor do they completely distort the details of an event for a clearly

identifiable modern agenda. Academia accepts revisionism when the motivations and methodology are clear, such as using accepted methods of the historical profession to challenge a long-held claim. Violations of the methodology, such as when individuals deny history for purely political and social reasons, constitute denier, distorter, or pseudohistorian behavior. Holocaust deniers and neo-Confederate distorters engage in this kind of behavior by quoting illegitimate sources, misquoting legitimate sources, using quotations out of context, and going to great lengths to appear as scholarly as possible. Their methods see, to use the form or appearance of historical scholarship to mask a methodology that is not historical, but rather propaganda. Thus, I label them based on their behavior and tactics, not to perpetuate a culture of hate and animosity, but to acknowledge the danger and potential ramifications behind certain types of behaviors.

Researcher Positionality

John Weiss writes that it is important for the reader to know the backgrounds of those who write about the Holocaust due to its incredibly sensitive emotional nature (Weiss x). I feel strongly connected to the Holocaust denial case because I am a Jewish woman, and I have an emotional association to the events of the Holocaust given the history of my culture and religion. My distant family, from scattered areas of Eastern Europe, had their lives disrupted and dramatically altered by the events of the Holocaust. The dismissal of the events of the Holocaust as a mere fabrication or embellishment, as many deniers do, negates my family's experiences. I desired to write this thesis in part to show the dangers of historical denial and distortion, but also to preserve and acknowledge the experiences of my family and friends.

I believe my positionality is important not only for writing about the Holocaust, but also for writing a thesis in general. My interest in the denial and distortion of narratives stems from my seemingly eclectic passions: an academic interest in genocide and the Holocaust; a career interest in the African continent and international education; and my internship experiences at the USHMM. I began my research and experience with personal narratives in the summer of 2010, when I worked with an international development nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Kenya. I created and implemented a writing workshop to encourage disadvantaged Kenyan youth to strengthen their voices through writing, a medium in which they could acknowledge their personal experiences and histories. As the workshops progressed, I was fascinated by how powerful an effect validation of experience had on my students' wellbeing and demeanor.

These students had never been asked to express themselves on paper for a willing reader, and the opportunity struck them as a particularly weighty chance to offer their voices to the already existing discourse on poverty in their village, mainly created through NGO development language. It was easy for groups with power, such as NGOs or the U.S. government, to distort these students' histories and experiences without a safeguard for them to preserve their memories. NGOs commonly labeled these students as their vulnerable populations, when in reality they had developed incredibly strong coping mechanisms, had fashioned normalcy into their routine, and were proud of their accomplishments. I did not want my students to be defined in someone else's terms. Rather, I knew them as hardworking and ambitious dancers, poets, or thinkers, not poor, vulnerable children without access to a quality education as they have been previously labeled. Their experiences showed me the dangerous effects of distortion on target populations.

My experiences in Kenya fit agreeably with my course of study in Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, where I crafted my Culture and Politics major and Justice and Peace Studies certificate to trace the theme of "Genocide, Trauma, and Marginalization," thus consolidating my academic research interests and extracurricular experiences under a comprehensive umbrella. To explore this academic interest in a professional setting, I began interning with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Committee on Conscience during the summer of 2011 and continued working there through the fall 2011 semester. I first encountered denial during my work for the Committee. Surrounded by such an impressive collection of documents and artifacts that serve as living memorial to the Holocaust and its victims, I could not fathom how individuals could rationally assert that the Holocaust did not occur. This disbelief prompted the inquiry that forms the foundation of this thesis. My work at the Museum is critical to this project; my time there piqued my interest in exploring denial and distorter rationale and provided me with resources for research and staff member experiences for context.

Validation Concerns

Various scholars on the Holocaust and the Civil War have avoided answering the claims of Holocaust deniers or neo-Confederates for fear of validating their positions. For example, Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt has repeatedly refused to engage with deniers on television and radio programs to avoid the appearance that denial is the appropriate 'other side' of history. Engagement with denial's followers runs the risk of providing them access to the academic sphere, a legitimization these individuals greatly desire. However, scholar Michael Shermer believes that "once a claim is in the public consciousness, it should be properly analyzed and, if

appropriate, refuted vigorously" in the public sphere (Shermer 14). I believe that denial and distortion need to be continually refuted in the public sphere for the very reason that the proponents are immune to refutation. If deniers were honest, refutation once would suffice; but because pseudohistorians are not, each generation must take up the challenge of exposure and refutation anew. In fact, it was Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, who observed that if "you repeat a lie enough times, people will believe it" (qtd. in Shermer 2). These individuals have inserted their claims into both the historical narrative and the public consciousness, thus creating a need for examination and refutation before their pseudohistorical tactics become pervasive within public discourse.

These cases are not just an issue for individuals whose experiences are being devalued. Rather, deniers and distorters affect all history and the "way we transmit the past to the future" (Shermer 16). Without responding adequately to their claims, the risk emerges of establishing a precedent accepting this type of historical analysis and perhaps contributing to distortion of other convergences of evidence. Furthermore, contrary to previous popular attitudes regarding the proper way to respond to these claims, we cannot simply ignore these movements in the hope that they will disappear. They are gaining strength and popularity within the public sphere, securing sources of financing and strongholds within political debates. Hague writes, "we must not dismiss them [deniers and distorters] as on the fringes of society," especially because their words and logic have dramatic potential consequences (Hague xi). Thus, as I discuss in the final chapter, I write this thesis to warn against the dangers of silence.

II. Neo-Confederacy

Introduction

Neo-Confederacy as a worldview encompasses behaviors dedicated to promoting and reestablishing the principles of the Confederate States of America (CSA), accomplished through a deliberate distortion of the realities of the Civil War South. Edward Sebesta, a researcher and activist dedicated to studying neo-Confederacy, defines neo-Confederacy broadly:

> Neo-confederacy is a reactionary movement with an ideology against modernity conceiving its ideas and politics within a historical framework of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) and the history of the American South. This includes more than a states' rights ideology in opposition to civil rights for African-Americans, other ethnic minorities, women and gays, though it certainly includes all these things. Opposition to civil rights is just a part of a worldview desiring a hierarchical society, opposed to egalitarianism and modern democracy. (55-56)

While the Confederate States of America lasted for a fleeting four years from 1861-1865, a mere blip in the history of the United States, the impact of its existence continues to the present day. The Confederacy still finds appeal with millions of Americans, as evidenced by the proliferation of Hollywood films, textbooks, monuments, museums, and other aspects of everyday culture dedicated to the hero-worship of the CSA.

A benign reexamination of the Confederacy using accepted and transparent historical practices has the potential to contribute to the canon of academic research on the Civil War period of American history. Neo-Confederates, however, operate with distinctively destructive undercurrents. Motivated by racist and prejudiced agendas, pseudohistorians create myths that gloss over the facts of the Confederacy's past. Neo-Confederate involvement in the historical process constitutes merely a cover for an attempt to change and alter the current social order. In the neo-Confederate case, the word "myth" does not mean "falsehood." Rather, as author James McPherson explains the distinction, "myth," in this context, needs to be viewed in the anthropological sense as a "collective memory of a people about their past which sustains a

belief system that shapes their view of the world in which they live" (McPherson 94). This interpretation allows researchers and historians to analyze the scope and motivations of neo-Confederate pseudohistorical behavior.

Neo-Confederates strike many as dated or extreme but, according to *New York Times* writer Peter Applebome, "there's nothing all that extraordinary in the growing overlap between those who worship at the shrine of the Lost Cause and the rest of the nation" (Applebome 131). Southern mythmaking is no longer limited to the fringes of society; rather, neo-Confederates have integrated into American society, whether as members of important foundations, candidates from the Republican Party, or professors at major universities (Hague xi). Considering neo-Confederates only as outliers in the sociopolitical discourse downplays potential consequences that distortion of the Confederacy and the Civil War could have for minority groups and American society as a whole.

Recasting the role and reality of the South in the Civil War in a distorted light is not a new phenomenon. The present-day iteration of neo-Confederacy has emerged as a result of mythmaking that stretches back to the days of the Civil War itself. Pseudohistory tends to behave in a positive-feedback loop: if society moves in a direction that strays from the revisionist's idealized vision, mythmaking emerges as a tool to combat society's developments. Thus, as the sociopolitical atmosphere in the United States changed since the time of the Civil War, neo-Confederate ideology evolved based on the sociopolitical situation of the time period. Given neo-Confederacy's potentially wide-reaching influence, a full examination of its origins and motivations is necessary.

The Birth of the Lost Cause in the Post-War Era

Historical narratives describing times of war tend to be written with a winner/loser binary. As the South emerged from the Civil War, downtrodden and defeated Southerners were eager to romanticize prewar Southern times to supplant their dim postwar reality. Thus, in the wake of the South's defeat, the "true myth of the South was born" (Applebome 126). Dubbed the "Lost Cause," distorted writing of the South became a Holy Grail, the ultimate act of "sectional allegiance and devotion" for defeated Southerners faced with a dissolved Confederacy (126). McPherson describes the Lost Cause philosophy as a misguided "valiant crusade for constitutional liberties and state's rights that was overwhelmed only by brute force…[S]lavery had little to do with causing the war in this version of history" (McPherson 93). Thus, the Lost Cause romanticized both the antebellum South and Southern behavior during the war with writings eager to showcase its veterans as noble and its cause as worthwhile.

Reconstruction, the period immediately after the Civil War, left the South in shambles. According to historian John Hope Franklin, the War left eleven states of the former Confederacy faced with the prospect of "awaiting readmission [into the Union] at the pleasure and the mercy of the North," a distinctly submissive and passive role (Franklin 3). While the North experienced "unprecedented economic activity and prosperity," the South desperately needed to jumpstart its decimated economy with a dearth of local resources for rebuilding (7). The Civil War also completely disrupted the social fabric of Southern society: amid the freeing of the slaves, "thousands of white refugees wandered over the land, not certain that they had a home and even less certain of the treatment they would receive if they returned" (3). The Confederacy had collapsed, but this defeat did not automatically trigger white Southerners' acceptance of the Union or Lincoln's politics. Relying on the Lost Cause myth thus served as a way to help

Southern whites deal with the "shattering reality of catastrophic defeat and impoverishment in a war they had been sure that they would win" (McPherson 94). In the wake of the Civil War and Reconstruction, a romanticized Southern identity found new acclaim among white Southerners determined to return to their old ways of life.

While insecurity and the shadow of defeat plagued the South during Reconstruction, the South's losing narrative did not acknowledge a "deficiency in leadership, self-respect, or the validity of [the South's] position" (McPherson 3). The crushing military defeat did not signal the end of the South's underlying cause; rather, it encouraged some Southern whites to preserve their uniquely Southern way of life and created the initial space for mythmaking. As journalist W.J. Cash suggests, the Civil War left Southerners drowning in self-consciousness, "far more aware of their differences and of the line which divided what was Southern from what was not" (104). New developments prompted by Reconstruction awakened this self-conscious behavior and encouraged immediate backlash against Reconstruction policies. As the antebellum Southern society relied heavily on slavery for both economic production and social hierarchy, the dismantling of the slave system sparked rage and hatred among many Southerners. Motivated by the release of slaves and the potential dangers freedmen could cause to the delicate social order, Southerners jumped at the opportunity to marginalize African Americans through restoring slavery back to Southern society in everything but the name itself. Outraged and frightened by the direction the country was taking, white Southerners began campaigns to reestablish the antebellum status quo between the races by bolstering their arguments with pseudohistorical evidence.

According to Applebome, the Lost Cause nostalgia that began to take hold in various parts of the country contained "angry manifestos, secessionist verbiage, and assorted movements

harking back to various elements of the Dixie of old" (117-118). Motivated by the rise in status of freedmen and African Americans in general, Lost Cause believers of the immediate postwar and Reconstruction period aimed to spark change in the social order, advocating for the recreation of a regime that marginalized African Americans. Distorters of this era pioneered the states' rights myth by claiming that the South fought for self-government and not the preservation of slavery. History professor Gary Gallagher believed that the Lost Cause mythmaking centered on the core beliefs that "its [the South's] warriors, neither traitors nor rebels, conducted an honorable war against a corrupt North; and that the cause, never lost, would know resurrection" (186). Thus, Lost Cause believers of this period initiated distortionist behavior by altering the realities of war for their own political motives, in this case, the delegitimization and disenfranchisement of recently freed slaves.

Edward A. Pollard, a Southern secessionist and editor of the *Richmond Examiner* during the Civil War, was one of the first Southerners to perpetuate the Lost Cause myth in the immediate postwar era. Writing from a distinctly racial perspective, Pollard focused on a Social Darwinist argument in defense of slavery. Social Darwinism is an ideology founded in the nineteenth century that applies Darwin's "survival of the fittest mentality" to social processes, holding "social evolution to depend upon the operation of the law of natural selection of favorable heritable variants" (Halliday 389). Pollard, following this line of argument, asserts that the "permanent, natural inferiority of the Negro" was central to the natural functioning of Southern society (Pollard 115). Among his many distortions, he claimed that slavery "was in fact nothing more than a system of Negro servitude in the South…one of the mildest and most beneficent systems" in existence, one that did not play a causal factor in the outbreak of war (562). He viewed Reconstruction as a means to give African Americans "political control of the

South" in order to advance the Northern Republican agenda (130). Pollard was also responsible

for the development of "Lost Cause" terminology; his book *The Lost Cause* in 1866 coined and

promoted the term to encompass the distorted motivations behind the Civil War. Pollard found

his motivation in the changing socio-political makeup of Southern society around him; according

to his view of the natural social order, African Americans were no longer in their rightful social

place, and the North tilted the balance of political power in its favor.

Pollard's writings set some of the foundation for modern neo-Confederates who echo his

line of reasoning regarding slavery's role in the conflict and social Darwinist interpretations of

race relations in the South. Historians Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan are particularly critical of

the Lost Cause mythmaking that Pollard and others championed during this time period. They

describe the Lost Cause with harsh language:

> The Lost Cause version of the war is a caricature, possible, among other reasons, because of the false treatment of slavery and the black people. This false treatment struck at the core of the truth of the war, unhinging cause and effect, depriving the United States of any high purpose, and removing African Americans from their true role as the issue of the war and participants in the war, and characterizing them as historically irrelevant. (Gallagher and Nolan 13-14)

Pollard's writings were influential for setting the wheels of the Lost Cause myth into motion.

Many present day neo-Confederates see Pollard as the first true champion of the South in

academic discourse.

Hereditary Groups and Historical Committees

As the Civil War drew to a close and veterans from both North and South attempted to

reintegrate back into their respective societies, veterans' organizations emerged as a way for ex-

soldiers to reconnect with each other and discuss the transitional process to peacetime life. In the

South, there had long been numerous local veterans' associations in existence in the postwar era,

but the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) group stands out for its incredibly transparent neo-Confederate tendencies. The UCV grew out of the legacy of veterans' groups in the South, incorporating many of them under its umbrella with its 1989 founding in New Orleans, Louisiana (Hattaway 214). The UCV's announced purpose was ardently a nonmilitary one; its members aimed to foster "social, literary, historical, and benevolent" ends (215). While the UCV never published firm membership numbers in its archives, historian Herman Hattaway suggests that, at the height of the UCV, the organization probably counted "eighty thousand former Confederate soldiers" in its ranks (214).

While veterans searched for a community of like-minded individuals, the UCV emerged as a prestigious organization to fulfill all ranges of veterans' needs. The UCV experienced rapid growth throughout the 1890s. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the UCV hit its zenith that lasted "until 1903 or 1904, when veterans began to die off rather rapidly and the UCV went into a gradual but continuous decline" (214). As membership was restricted to veterans, the group eventually morphed into the Sons of Confederate Veterans to incorporate blood ties to the Confederacy in the younger generation (Hague 282). Nevertheless, while the membership of the UCV shrank with the passing of years, the legacy and practices set in motion by its creation served as a model for similar groups seeking to preserve and honor a distinctly Southern heritage.

To fill the void created by the decline in membership of the UCV, the Sons of Confederate Veterans emerged as the direct heir of the UCV legacy. Founded in Richmond, Virginia in 1896, the SCV asserts itself as the "oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers" ("What is the Sons of Confederate Veterans" 1). Members of the SCV are dedicated to "preserving the history and legacy of these heroes, so future

generations can understand the motives that animated the Southern Cause" (1). As explained on

its website, the SCV mission is to "serve as a historical, patriotic, and non-political organization

dedicated to insuring that a true history of the 1861-1865 period is preserved" (1). The SCV

conceptualization of what constitutes a '"rue" history is telling; it engages in mythmaking

behaviors to preserve a distinctly neo-Confederate interpretation of Civil War history, motivated

by its aim to preserve the Lost Cause mentality. The SCV preached its views through its

magazine *Confederate Veteran*, a publication founded in 1893 (Hague 283). This magazine

serves as a critical foundation for the entirety of the neo-Confederate movement; many of the

views of the Civil War that are now touted by neo-Confederates in the present day stem from

commentaries in this magazine (283). *Confederate Veteran* authors regularly perpetuated the

myth of the war having nothing to do with slavery or that slaves were generally happy in their

subservient role.

      The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the sister organization to the SCV, was

formed under similar circumstances with analogous aims. According to Caroline Janney of the

Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the UDC was formed on September 10, 1894, in

Nashville, Tennessee (1). This group was "an outgrowth of Ladies' Memorial Associations and

other Confederate memorial societies" such as the UCV and SCV (Janney 1). According to

objectives listed on its website, the UDC aims to "collect and preserve the material necessary for

a truthful history of the War Between the States" ("About the UDC" 1). The UDC dedicated

most of its efforts to fundraising for monuments devoted to the Confederacy, care for indigent

widows of Confederate soldiers, and maintenance of Confederate museums (Janney 1). The

UDC, like the UCV and SCV, reflected a Southern affinity for hereditary groups that emerged in

1890; thus, the UDC and organizations in this vein limited membership to those who could prove

ancestors who served militarily for the Confederate States of America (1). Recognizing that "Confederate women shared in the same dangers, sufferings, and privations" as their male counterparts, the UDC wanted to incorporate women in the quest to preserve a "truthful" version of history (1).

The UDC operated in the context of the Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War by following techniques pioneered by Pollard and emphasizing states' rights and secession arguments as causes for the war. UDC's motivations stemmed from new rounds of racial conflict that permeated Southern society while hereditary groups gained steam in Southern culture (Janney 1). Janney describes UDC's members as "self-appointed guardians of southern and Confederate history" who were keen on using the UDC to commemorate the "traditional privileges of race, gender, and class by casting them as natural parts of the region's history" (1). UDC members therefore distorted the South's history as a means to shape race and gender relations during the time period in which they lived.

The UDC, SCV, and UCV each operated with a goal of preserving some form of Confederate history. The UCV veterans especially had an interest in compiling a certain kind of history that would show its accomplishments in a favorable light. To accomplish the preservation of their interpretations of historical thought, hereditary groups founded Historical Committees to research and disseminate neo-Confederate pseudohistorical interpretations. In 1892, Joseph Adolphe Chalaron of the New Orleans UCV chapter proposed the formation of the first "Historical Committee" with an aim to collect and preserve historical data (Hattaway 216). The minutes from this UCV meeting describe the aim of the Committee as an attempt to discover how "best to stimulate the writing of a history or histories of the Confederate struggle" (*Minutes U.C.V.* 98). Thus, the Committee began researching the status of neo-Confederate

pseudohistorical thought throughout the Southern states to find an avenue to promote its ideological agenda.

The Historical Committee issued a lengthy report in 1894 stating, "justice to the South imperatively demands a different presentation of history" (*Report of the United Confederate Veteran* 4-6). The report found that the presentation of facts surrounding the South's role in the Civil War was dramatically different than the neo-Confederate mythmaking interpretation of events. Worried about alleged Northern untruths about the South permeating Southern culture, members of these hereditary groups focused on the education system to counteract misinformed youth in order to raise a new generation of Lost Cause believers. The Committee believed that "Northern men…have…given undue prominence to what was done by their section to the omission and corresponding fair statement of what was done by the South" (qtd. in Hattaway 222). The books that children were subjected to, the veterans claimed, were "so unfair, so sectional and untrue" that true Southerners could not bear to have the record to stand as it was currently being presented (qtd. in Hattaway 222). In particular, Committee members disliked negative presentations of the nullification crisis, slavery, and secession within school textbooks; thus, textbooks provided an avenue for hereditary groups to explore and channel their efforts.

The UDC undertook initiatives similar to the UCV's creation of Historical Committees. To accomplish its goals of affecting change in its sociopolitical environment, the UDC began to organize children's groups. Its purpose involved "truth" telling to instill "the nobleness, the chivalry, the self-denial, the bravery, and the tireless endurance of the Confederate solider" into every Southern child (*Confederate Veteran Magazine* 29). Statements such as this used language that speaks to the underlying motivations of neo-Confederates behind its actions; a phrase such as "noble chivalry" recalls a feudal, and therefore, hierarchical world in which races are stratified

into their culturally dictated castes. Janney writes how in "fearing that [white] schoolchildren might not be taught the true history of slavery and the Civil war, Daughters chapters closely monitored and censored textbooks" (Janney 1). UDC chapters insisted that textbooks needed to conform to Lost Cause mythology in order to be acceptable for white students. Members believed that if white children "were properly instructed, they would become 'living monuments' to the Confederacy…[serving] as future defenders of the 'sacred principles'" (Cox 120). In the same vein, some UCV members thought that it might be most beneficial for the UCV to "choose and commission a Southern literary man to write a new [correct] history of the Civil War" (Hattaway 220). Textbooks became a main focus of both the UCV's Historical Committee and the UDC campaigns.

The hereditary groups' efforts coincided with a time of expansion for public education at the middle and high school levels. Before the emergence of hereditary groups and their revisionist historical campaigns, United States history courses were only included in the curriculum of schools "in an occasional, unsystematic way" (McPherson 97). As McPherson claims, by the 1890s, "professionalization of history at the university level had come of age," and American history became a regular part of secondary school curriculum (97). This education boom resulted in publishers scrambling to produce textbooks for the new emerging markets; most of the era's publishers and authors were located in the North, producing textbooks colored with the "triumphant nationalism growing out of the Union victory" (97). Historical Committees began to see cause for concern in the content of these textbooks and how the region's students received them.

Textbooks issued in the late 1800s and early 1900s were unsympathetic to the troubles of the South and were prone to using slavery causation arguments for the Civil War and painting

the South as a loser in the war. For example, *History Primer*, published in 1906, told its readers, in this case middle- to high-school aged students, that the South "was afraid the United States Government would make them set the slaves free" and thus seceded from the Union (Gerson 108). This text was also unsympathetic to the benevolent master and happy slave argument purported by neo-Confederates: the *Primer* stated that "slaves were owned by their masters just as a horse or a dog is" and that "most people living in the Northern states thought it was wrong to keep slaves" (Gerson 104, 108). Another text, *A School History of the United States,* published in 1897, informed students "that the South seceded, then according to its own statements, because the people believed that the election of Lincoln meant the abolition of slavery" (McMaster 380). Texts were prone to painting Lincoln in an extremely favorable light that particularly angered Historical Committees. *The True Story of Abraham Lincoln, the American: Told for Boys and Girls*, published in 1896, described Lincoln as "a man of the people" with an "especial claim to reverence" (Brooks 3). Thus, in the viewpoint of the Historical Committee, Southern children were introduced to the war through a Northern-biased binary: Northern winners and Southern losers, Northern goodness and Southern wickedness, Northern morality and Southern slaveholding.

Fearing the eternal defamation of the Southern soldier's name, UDC and UCV members aimed to counter "long-legged Yankee lies" disseminated in textbooks through the promotion of a Southern-biased view of history (97). The Historical Committees were also responsible for putting "the seal of their condemnation upon such [books] as are not truthful histories," amounting to any book written by a Northern author or volumes that contain negative depictions of slavery (*Minutes U.C.V.* 99). Historical Committees urged its members to, upon discovering a book of history they found slanderous, immediately correspond with the author and publisher to

correct their errors, in order to triumph arguments surrounding the Lost Cause myth (McPherson 98). Members found marginal success in this tactic: some publishers revised their content to make it more amenable to Southern audiences; others simply issued entirely different editions of their textbooks for sale in the South (98). The Historical Committees found these alterations somewhat acceptable, but members still longed for a complete change in the social order to make mythmaking the norm, not the exception.

Members of heritage groups realized their unique place within Southern society. The UCV "was a powerful lobby in Southern politics and the UDC enjoyed great prestige in Southern communities," positionality well-suited for tipping the political tide in favor of its campaigns (99). Historical Committees began to throw their political weight into the decision making process of Southern states' legislatures in order to purge so-called "Yankee lies" from public discourse. In 1897, the UCV Historical Committee introduced a bill into the South Carolina legislature to ban any "partial or partisan or unfair or untrue book" from every school in the state; while the bill did not pass, it certainly sent a message to school boards and teachers across the state (Hattaway 234-235). The Committee engaged in a similar practice in Mississippi: in 1904, the Mississippi legislature enacted a law requiring the state's textbook commission to choose books in which "no history in relation to the late civil war between the states shall be used…unless it be fair and impartial," typical of mythmaking behavior purported by the UCV (qtd. in McPherson 99). Laws following this logic appeared throughout nearly all of the Southern states.

By 1910, the UCV Historical Committee expressed satisfaction with the results of its textbook campaign, claiming that now "Southern schools and Southern teachers have prepared books which Southern children may read without insult or traduction [*sic*] of their fathers"

(*Minutes U.C.V.* 101). Yet the UDC's historian general, Mildred L. Rutherford, was still

unsatisfied. She believed that eighty-one percent of Southern private schools used "histories

which misrepresent[ed] the South" (Rutherford 112). To combat what she thought was a gross

misrepresentation of Southern history, Rutherford published *A Measuring Rod to Test Text*

Books and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges, and Libraries in 1919 to offer instructions to

teachers and librarians:

> Reject a book that speaks of the Constitution other than [as] a compact between
> Sovereign States. Reject a text-book that…does not clearly outline the
> interferences with the rights guaranteed to the South by the Constitution, and
> which caused secession. Reject a book that says the South fought to hold her
> slaves. Reject a book that speaks of the slaveholder of the South as cruel and
> unjust to his slaves. Reject a text-book that glorifies Abraham Lincoln and vilifies
> Jefferson Davis. Reject a text-book that omits to tell of the South's heroes and
> their deeds. (Rutherford 5)

Rutherford's treatise on textbooks was enormously influential in the course of Southern

education. Local Southern school boards adopted many of her ideas regarding the "correct"

version of Southern history. Implications for Southern schoolchildren were vast. As historian

Karen Cox points out, "the generation of children raised on this Lost Cause interpretation of the

Civil War was the same generation that engaged in Massive Resistance against public school

desegregation" in the twentieth century (qtd. in Janney 1). Thus, hereditary groups and historical

committees engaged in mythmaking behavior that contributed to children receiving a skewed

interpretation of history, altering their worldviews.

The Civil Rights Era and Backlash to the "Second Reconstruction"

   The foundation set by hereditary groups at the turn of the twentieth century created space

for neo-Confederate activity in response to the dawning of the Civil Rights Movement.

Beginning in the late 1940s, African Americans began to earn equal rights in American society

through pivotal events such as the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case and the

1965 Voting Rights Act, but these movements toward racial equality encountered fierce

resistance from political, social, and intellectual circles which favored the defense of the

previous status quo between the races. The Civil Rights Movement constituted a severe threat to

Southern sociopolitical and cultural identity, and thus neo-Confederate activity rose in a response

to counter such a dangerous threat to perceived heritage and legacy. Daniel Levitas, member of

the Southern Poverty Law Center, analyzed the neo-Confederate interpretation of the Civil

Rights movement:

> Beginning with President Harry Truman's 1948 declaration ending segregation of the armed forces, a sizable constituency of whites began to see the federal government as the enemy. Integration of the armed forces was followed by the *Brown* decision in 1954, and the use of Army troops to enforce integration at Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., three years later. By the early 1960s it became clear that more than just Southern apartheid was under attack. The 1964 Civil rights Act and the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act sealed the fate of Southern segregationists and Northern bigots alike. (1)

Through the interpretation of the Civil Rights Movement as the beginning of the South's

downfall, neo-Confederates began advocating for a defense of the "old hierarchical order"

(Hague 24). Vehemently opposed to what the Civil Rights Movement represented, these neo-

Confederates relied on states' rights arguments utilized by the Old South and the early Lost

Cause believers, distorting the past with a segregationist agenda that constituted a clearly

identifiable discriminatory motive given the sociopolitical climate of the time period.

Historian Brent Aucoin refers to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s as

the "second Reconstruction of the American South" in the eyes of white Southerners (173). The

Brown v. Board of Education decision, for example, sent an important message to the white

Southern community, just as the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 signaled

danger for white Southerners interested in preserving the status quo: it served as a warning that

the "federal government intended to drastically alter the established pattern of race relations in the region" (173). According to political scientist Emile Ader, Southern mythmakers had been effective in developing distinctive regional consciousness and strong political traditions based around "states' rights, maintenance of white superiority, and concentration of political control in the hands of the propertied class" (Ader 356). Many people in the South operated with a "Southern mind" against which anyone hoping to create a uniform resistance to change could hope to appeal (356). Thus, as the Civil Rights Movement began to create equality for African Americans, neo-Confederates assembled themselves into groups appealing to this Southern mind, utilizing mythmaking to preserve the Old South mentality.

Following the lead of the UDC and UCV, Citizens' Councils emerged as a way for like-minded Southern neo-Confederates to band together to dismantle the new pro-Civil Rights regime. Founded on July 11, 1954, in Indianola, Mississippi, the first Citizens' Council aimed to preserve the right of racial separation and the "maintenance of our States' Rights to regulate public health, morals, marriage, education, peace" and order in the United States, under the power of the United States Constitution (qtd. in "Council of Conservative Citizens – Extremism in America" 1). The small Mississippi organization took off quickly; by 1955, membership exceeded 60,000 Southerners in 253 Council chapters (1). According to historian Numan Bartley, the Citizens' Council movement found much of its militancy in the members from the black-belt South, the "same area that had produced the stimuli for secession and redemption" and was home to the South's "most belligerent and determined minority" (103). Even the slightest change in the racial status quo meant utter destruction for these black-belt whites and catalyzed their eagerness to join the Citizens' Council movement.

The emergence of the Citizens' Council movement was no surprise; the pre-Civil Rights era atmosphere of "violence, boycott, reprisal, and caste solidarity" set the stage for and "announced the arrival of" the Citizens' Council movement (Bartley 83). The Councils effectively offered a space for neo-Confederates to actively pursue a segregationist and racist agenda while masking these motivations in typical neo-Confederate mythmaking. The Councils, more a result than a cause of the hostile Southern mood, "fed on long-developing racial fears and frustrations" and, by doing so, heightened them in return (83). Citizens' Councils filled a void felt by many white Southerners, especially those who lashed out at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for African Americans making gains in American society.

The Councils positioned themselves as the premier organization for white men to counter the threat to the system posted by civil rights and espoused "reestablish[ing] Southern values as the obvious solution to the race problem" (83). In addition to the militancy of its home base, the Councils established "uneasy but workable alliance[s] with powerful political figures" in Southern politics to lend credibility to their movement and have influence at higher policy levels (84). For example, in July 1955 the Councils held an inaugural membership drive in conjunction with a white supremacy rally in Selma, Alabama; this meeting had twelve state senators in attendance, representing a "formidable array of state political influence" (89). Thus, the Citizens' Council movement took neo-Confederate mythmaking into the political arena, achieving a certain clout in Southern politics.

The Citizens' Councils' efforts to spark "new life into time-honored principles of the Republic – principles that have been neglected and even besmirched in recent years" echoed much of the rhetoric of the Lost Cause nostalgia in the post-war period (qtd. in Bartley 175). A

close reading of this quotation from a Citizens' Council member offers a nod to Old South mythmaking: the South is presented as a timeless entity with a strong set of guiding values that has not waivered from its positions and should not be compromised. Council members sought to "put society back together in its accustomed pattern, rejecting and suppressing the social and ideological aspects of change" that the Civil Rights era represented (237). Councils interpreted the legislation surrounding civil rights in accordance with their motivations and goals, not necessarily following the rules of historical evidence and fact.

Thomas Fleming, ex-director of the neo-Confederate group League of the South, revised the history of this period to make the federal government's attempt to equalize race relations completely illegitimate. He claims, "the destruction of our original confederal [*sic*] system occurred in the 1950s and 1960s…during these decades the government moved into the South under judicial decree and destroyed the social fabric" of Southern communities under the banner of promoting civil rights (Fleming 12). Fleming's rhetoric and word choice is telling: by reinterpreting history to claim that American troops, critical to ensuring the safety of African Americans and thus the Civil Rights Movement itself, entered the South not under a congressional or presidential process but rather on the whims of "judicial decree," Fleming implies an undemocratic and thus illegitimate process (Bartley 134). While this line of neo-Confederate argument appears to echo questions about federal authority over states or judicial power, the emerging underlying issue is the relationship between the races that felt threatened by the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to revising the history surrounding the legislative process of the Civil Rights Movement, neo-Confederates of this era's iteration distorted the realities of race relations in the Old South to justify the preservation of a segregated society. Segregationist members of the

Councils perpetuated the myth that African Americans "not only made their greatest gains under segregation but that the system was essential to further Negro progress," that African Americans preferred the segregated system, and that "changes in the mutually beneficial Jim Crow system could only bring discord and violence" (Bartley 185). Following the neo-Confederate logic, if the Southern system was mutually beneficial while segregated, then the Civil Rights Movement was essentially a "malicious perpetration that could only be explained as the result of conspiracy or political manipulation" (245). Council members instead wanted to return to a Civil War era conceptualization of states' rights and race relations that would in turn insulate the South from intrusions, cultural change, and disruptions in the status quo.

While Citizens' Councils were effective in reaching ordinary white Southerners who strongly identified with maintaining the traditions of the South, these groups were also extremely successful at providing rhetoric and fodder for Southern politicians to use in their political endeavors. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina emerged as a prominent Southern political official who internalized the message of the Citizens' Councils and used political channels to further the movement. Thurmond originally was the presidential nominee of the States' Rights Democratic Party in 1948 (Ader 357). His campaign strategy incorporated "states' rights" as a technique and "civil rights" as a talking point as well as a strong desire to maintain the racial status quo (357). Although Thurmond's campaign was unsuccessful in obtaining the presidency, the issue of race and preserving segregation became a focal point in mainstream American politics of the time.

Thurmond, in the wake of his defeat, embarked on another political maneuver through a different available channel. On March 12, 1956, 101 of the South's 128 senators and congressmen signed and released a document titled "The Declaration of Constitutional

Principles," in which these politicians "pledged to bring about a reversal of the *Brown* decision" (Aucoin 173). This document, known as the Southern Manifesto, was of Senator Thurmond's creation. Thurmond wanted the Manifesto to "unite and encourage those white Southerners opposed to desegregation" (174). The Manifesto's text, written by Thurmond, echoes many of the same arguments that the Citizens' Councils and Fleming utilized in their defense of segregation: the Court's illegitimate use of power destroyed "the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races" (qtd. in Aucoin 182). This blatant distortion of Jim Crow and slavery era race relations attempted to delegitimize the current social order through the distortion of the realities of race relations. Thurmond's rhetoric displays how effective the Councils were at inserting their ideology and mythmaking into the political discussion to meet their goals.

The 1970s – 1980s Paleoconservatives and the Republican "Southern Strategy"

The current composition of neo-Confederate ideology and behavior finds its main origins in the work of the paleoconservatives of the 1970s and 1980s. The segregationist ideology supported by Thurmond and his like-minded colleagues evolved into paleoconservative thought in the early 1970s, a movement of "anti-modern reactionaries, nativists hostile toward immigration who proposed a hierarchical social order in which loyalty to family, tradition, and Christianity were paramount" (Hague 25). Paleoconservatives advocated for communities that resembled their distorted interpretation of the antebellum South: small, agrarian, self-regulating, and independent from federal intervention and regulation (26). Preference for a racially segregated society spurred paleoconservative distortion of the Old South, transforming the reality

of Southern existence to one that could adequately combat the social changes and challenges of the 1970s and 1980s, in the wake of the dramatic Civil Rights Movement.

Notable paleoconservative Joseph Scotchie believed that "right-thinking Americans…need[ed] to rediscover their region's – and the nation's – history, culture, heritage, literature, its heroes, and mythologies" (Scotchie 7-8). A deconstruction of the term "paleoconservative" follows with Scotchie's assertion; "paleo," meaning "ancient," is a nod to the past and mythmaking about the South's history to actualize present-day goals. Clyde Wilson, another paleoconservative voice, wrote in 1982 that recent government actions, such as removing Christianity from public schools and desegregating the races, "greatly accelerated the deterioration of community by magnifying the unhealthiest elements of society and besieging the best" (Wilson 124). Paleoconservatives, following in the footsteps of Citizens' Councils, viewed government actions as destroying the homogeneity and hierarchies of the South that they so cherished. Wilson saw the federal government promoting the exact opposite of what he envisioned to be the prototypical Southern society; according to Wilson, government officials sanctioned "alternative lifestyles" and "gay rights," evidence of societal "sickness," "malignancy," and "retrogression" (120-121). Paleoconservatives, operating in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, viewed the 1960s as the catalyst for the acceleration of the region's sociopolitical and cultural decline. Believers implicitly preferred a racially segregated society, free from government intervention and deviations from the social norm, and drew on the antebellum South as their foundation.

In the 1970s and 1980s era, politician Pat Buchanan emerged as one of the most prominent paleoconservatives. A vocal opponent of mass immigration and supporter of segregation, Buchanan echoed many of the main paleoconservative lines of argument. In his

opposition to immigration, an obvious threat to the racial status quo, he questioned that in the wake of mass immigration, "what do we have in common that makes us fellow Americans?" and preferred instead a conceptualization of citizenship that covers "blood, soil, history and heroes" (qtd. in Chu 1). Buchanan distorted the realities of the relationship between African Americans and whites, claiming that when "black and white lived apart, went to different schools and churches, played on different playgrounds," Americans still "shared a country and a culture and were one nation" (qtd. in Fish 1). Buchanan and other paleoconservative players in the political sphere gave resentment a political focus and channel. Paleoconservatives created space for the use of "post-segregation affirmative action and immigration growth to fuel a chauvinism and a racism rooted in the fear of the erosion of white privilege" (Davidson 50). Buchanan's comments spoke to the paleoconservative revision of the South's history, romanticizing the deeds of key Southern men of the Civil War and of relations between the races for this particular aim.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the paleoconservatives were not the only individuals in the political sphere using neo-Confederate mythmaking to further specific goals. The Republican Party's "Southern strategy" developed to capitalize on the unique characteristics of the Southern mind that existed in the region. The so-called "Southern Strategy" was born under Richard Nixon's campaign for the presidency. Political commentator Steve Kornacki described the strategy as "simple": "millions of white Southern voters who had been raised to vote straight Democratic tickets were feeling more alienated" in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and "were up for grabs," so politicians had to cater to them (Kornacki 1). Through the reaction of the public to political figures like Barry Goldwater, politicians learned that explicit rejection of the Civil Rights Act, while playing out well in the South, made them out to be monsters to the rest of the country (1). Instead, Kornacki wrote, the trick was to "wink and nod at white Southerners

with signals that were simultaneously nebulous and unmistakable" (1). Rather than openly

utilizing blunt neo-Confederate ideological language outright, such as harsh criticism against

civil rights, the rhetoric shifted to discussion of states' rights and law and order.

These coded buzzwords became a way for politicians to employ the same distortion of

history that previous iterations of neo-Confederate ideology have used, but they were now

masked under a more mainstream and politically correct choice of words. Columnist Jack White

viewed the use of these coded racial messages as a method for politicians to "lure disaffected

blue collar and Southern white voters away from the Democrats," the party that traditionally

found favor in the South (White 1). While effective, these messages did not exist without

recognition by targeted groups; in 1968, Gloria Marquez of the NAACP remarked how "Nixon's

appeal for law and order has a special meaning when he uses it" ("Negro Leaders See Bias" 1).

Lee Atwater, former chairman of the Republican Party and strong advocate of the Southern

Strategy, explained the evolution of the strategy in a 1981 interview:

> You start out in 1954 by saying, 'Nigger, nigger, nigger.' By 1968 you can't say 'nigger' – that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now [that] you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me -- because obviously sitting around saying, 'We want to cut this,' is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than 'Nigger, nigger.' (qtd. in Herbert 1)

The championing of law and order and states' rights thus became an easy way for politicians to

appeal to a new Southern base and audience.

Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign for the presidency showcases another utilization of the

Southern Strategy in politics. Reagan's campaign announcement echoed the strategy in every

detail. He made the announcement in Neshoba County, Mississippi, a place Herbert described as

a "vicious white-supremacist stronghold" (Herbert 1). In 1964, three civil rights activists were brutally murdered, "shot to death by whites enraged at the very idea of people trying to secure the rights of African Americans" (1). These notorious murders still lingered in the fabric of Neshoba County society, and yet this was the atmosphere Reagan chose for the launch pad of his presidential campaign. Reagan kicked off his campaign with a speech at the Neshoba County Fair "in front of a white and, at times, raucous crowd of perhaps 10,000 people chanting: 'We want Reagan!'" (1). Reagan's speech centered around his belief in states' rights, a coded language trick central to the Southern strategy.

Herbet asserts, "everybody watching the 1980 campaign knew what Reagan was signaling at the fair" (1). Reagan's language spoke to his underlying message that was transmitted to a targeted group of individuals, and his record proved why. He was opposed to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, tried to weaken the 1965 Voting Rights Act, opposed a national holiday for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and, as president, vetoed a bill to expand the reach of federal civil rights legislation (1). Given the history associated with Neshoba County and the centrality of states' rights in his speech, "it was understood that when politicians [like Reagan] started chirping about 'states' rights' to white people in places like Neshoba County, they were saying that when it comes down to you and the blacks, we're with you" (1). Reagan serves as a useful example to showcase how the Southern strategy and its distortion tactics permeated every aspect of his campaign. When arguments solely based on states' rights are utilized, neo-Confederates and their colleagues effectively write history out of existence so that they can claim devolving power to the states actually will promote liberty. Yet, when this experiment played out in the South, a hierarchical society and rampant mistreatment of minorities was the ultimate result, not a heightened sense of liberty.

Present Day Iterations of Neo-Confederacy

Contemporary neo-Confederacy emerged into the mainstream sociopolitical debate on

October 29, 1995, when the *Washington Post* published the "New Dixie Manifesto" authored by

Thomas Fleming and Michael Hill, two founding members of a secessionist and nationalist

organization called the League of the South. The New Dixie Manifesto demanded a return to the

standards established in the United States Constitution by providing "home rule for the states"

("The New Dixie Manifesto"). Echoing the paleoconservativism from which neo-Confederacy

grew, home rule meant in effect that states could create the hierarchical, segregated society that

the authors equated with the Old South. In the authors' interpretations, present day federal

intervention in the states' matters were a threat; intervention continued to "rob Southerners" of

their existence, resulting in a "cultural genocide" of the Southern mind ("The New Dixie

Manifesto"). This manifesto synthesized over a century's worth of pseudohistorical neo-

Confederate behavior throughout different eras of American history and relied on proven

successful rhetoric and arguments to articulate its mission. Although it created a backlash in the

media, this manifesto essentially brought contemporary neo-Confederacy into the mainstream

dialogue.

Neo-Confederacy in the modern era is still unfolding, but the creation of the League of

the South is representative of the rhetoric and tactics used within this movement to influence

modern politicking. The League, founded in 1994, was originally concerned with "questions of

Southern culture" according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit that tracks neo-

Confederate and hate-group activity ("A League of Their Own" 1). According to its website, the

League's main mission is "to advance the cultural, social, economic, and political well-being and

independence of the Southern people by all honorable means" ("Core Beliefs Statement"). The League was careful to craft a "veneer as a respectable, non-racist organization led mainly by academics," contributing to its rapid growth upon its creation and its solid contributions to the present day iteration of neo-Confederacy (1). The Board of Directors, for example, includes four individuals with doctorates, contributing to its academic image.

The League advocated a secessionist agenda and independence for the South through the new establishment of an independent Confederation of Southern States (League of the South vii). This Confederation would have four more states than the original eleven members of the first Confederacy, including Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland (Hague 1). In its infancy, the League operated with a distinctive form of neo-Confederate mythmaking in categories of race, religion, and gender. Members pushed the idea "of the South as fundamentally Christian" and called, in effect, "for imposition of a theocracy" in America (1). The League also threatened secession as a final resort whenever it perceived a threat to the rights and dignity of the South.

Since 1994, the League has grown increasingly extremist, radical, and outspoken in its motivations and criticisms. Where the goal of secession was once used solely as a last resort, now it is described as a seriously stated aim. Members believe that, for non-white Christians to live in this newly seceded South, they must bow to the "cultural dominance of the Anglo-Celtic people and their institutions" and basically revert back to the hierarchical social order of the Confederacy (qtd in "A League of Their Own" 1). The League's invocation of a Celtic identity is not unique; modern neo-Confederates like to create a distinguishable white identity from other American whites by identifying strongly with Celtic culture and behavior, contributing aptly to their motivation of creating a space only for their group in the modern sociopolitical sphere. This viewpoint claims that the antebellum "Celtic" American South engaged with the so-called

"English" North in a "continuation, on new turf, of the ancient struggle by the Anglo-Saxons to subdue the wild Celtic tribes of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales" (Hague 104). This rationale is a stretch without much historical basis, as historians do not use the term "Celtic" to describe any one ethnic group (112). Yet, this imagery serves to further the League's aim of reestablishing a hierarchical social and racial order.

The League's support of Southern racial exceptionalism, compounded by the usual neo-Confederate states' rights arguments, serves as fodder for the rhetoric of like-minded present day politicians. The Tea Party that has recently inserted itself into the political limelight has internalized much of the neo-Confederate rhetoric used by the League of the South and other similar groups. This movement takes its name from the Boston Tea Party of 1773, where Americans protested the imperial power of the British (Lind 1). The Tea Party aims to do just that: advocate for the devolution of federal power to the states to the extreme by supporting a strict interpretation of the Tenth Amendment. Their claims for strict states' rights interpretations echo many neo-Confederate arguments. The media has portrayed the movement in "ideological rather than regional terms," missing the fundamental connections to neo-Confederacy ideology that make the movement yet another iteration of neo-Confederate thought (1).

While the public faces of the Tea Party movement hail from the Midwest, such as Minnesota's Michele Bachmann and Illinois's Joe Walsh, the reality of the regional appeal of the Tea Party movement is proven in the actual makeup in the House of Representatives. The four states with the most Tea Party representatives in the House are all former member states of the Confederacy: Texas, Florida, Louisiana, and Georgia (Lind 1). The Tea Party showed its neo-Confederate roots particularly during the 2011 debt-ceiling crisis in the federal government. As political commentator Michael Lind notes, "the threat of Southern Tea Party representatives…to

destroy America's credit rating unless the federal government agrees to enact Dixie's economic agenda" of preserving defense spending, slashing "entitlements," pushing an anti-labor agenda, reducing federal bureaucracy, and supporting anti-voter registration drives echoed rhetoric used by the League of the South that threatened secession in the wake of a threat to Southern culture and heritage (Lind 1).

The Tea Party movement has connected itself to the many iterations of neo-Confederate ideology through the education sector. As historical committees of the UDC and UCV aimed to present children with a distorted view of history to create a new generation of Southern defenders, the Tea Party has attempted to legislate content and curricular standards that would require teaching schoolchildren a sterilized view of American history. In January of 2012, a group of Tea Party activists in Tennessee pushed to "whitewash school textbooks…seeking to remove references to slavery and mentions of the country's founders being slave owners" (Lee 1). Hal Rounds, the spokesman for the group pushing for textbook reform, claimed that there has been "an awful lot of made-up criticism about, for instance, the founders intruding on the Indians or having slaves or being hypocrites in one way or another" (qtd. in Lee 1). The historical record indicates that many of the facts Rounds disputes are in fact part of the accepted history of the United States. Rounds told the media that the Tea Party group wanted to focus purely on the progress of the revolutionaries, which would mean that the aspects of American history that conflict with his political viewpoint would be glossed over (1).

Tea Partiers pushing for this reform wanted to teach Tennessee students "the truth regarding the history of our nation and the nature of its government," although this truth was motivated by a present day sociopolitical motive (qtd. in Lee 1). Echoing Rutherford's guidelines for textbooks in the 1920s, Tea Partiers called for textbook selection criteria to include: "No

portrayal of minority experience which actually occurred shall obscure the experience or contributions of the Founding Fathers, or the majority of citizens, including those who reached positions of leadership" (qtd. in Lee 1). Minority rights groups such as the NAACP have voiced serious concerns regarding the motivations of the Tea Party group's actions, particularly in the realm of the textbook changes' effects on minority student populations. Gary Bledsoe, president of the Texas NAACP, believed the attempt would "be extremely psychologically harmful to African-American young people because…it will require them to be taught things such as the benevolence of slavery and problems with affirmative action" rather than a more complete view of history (qtd. in Lee 1). Bledsoe also worried about the group's aims to vindicate white privilege and establish racial superiority through specific changes to curricula (1). The Tea Party tactics in Tennessee distinctly mirror those of the Historical Committees; students, particularly minorities, would be taught a racially-skewed version of their country's history in order to further advocate for the modern creation of a hierarchical society.

Neo-Confederates of the modern iteration believe strongly in the power of education to aid in the construction of a new, isolated Southern nation. The Tea Party's efforts are representative of the general neo-Confederate movement's attempt to "instill Confederate sympathies in children" through distortions in the educational system (Hague 219). Through intervention and distortion at the grassroots level, believers hope that they can build a new population of Southern nationalists and Lost Cause sympathizers by educating children with neo-Confederate ideology. The Tea Party attempt in Tennessee is representative of years of manipulation in the educational system.

Neo-Confederacy and the Implications of Distortion

In 1935, W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American historian and civil rights activist, wrote about the dangers of historical denial and revisionism:

> One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the ideal that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. The difficulty, of course, with this philosophy, is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth. (Qtd. in Shermer 75)

Du Bois touched on the nuances inherent in the historical process: revising history with the goal of increasing given knowledge about an event is part of the neutral historical process. Danger arises when revisionism is motivated by a desire to whitewash or skim over the realities of the past in order to shape or frame a present day debate. As demonstrated by the unique development of neo-Confederate thought and behavior, neo-Confederate revisionism, denial, and distortion fall outside of the realm of accepted historical processes. Rather, motivated by the distinct sociopolitical and cultural conditions of the age, neo-Confederates engage in mythmaking in order to establish a pseudohistorical foundation from which to base their campaign for current societal changes.

Neo-Confederate trends in the last century, traced in the previous sections, have coalesced into developments visible in today's sociopolitical and cultural discourse. Modern neo-Confederate groups are not a monolith; many groups hold one line of argument in greater esteem than another. This in itself is evidence of neo-Confederate mythmaking: groups and individuals pick out single theses or pieces of evidence that support personal motivations and do not focus on the accepted historical method of a convergence of evidence, ignoring facts that do not fit into their constructed distortion. While variation exists, the foundational tenets of neo-Confederacy hold true across the spectrum: the Civil War, the destruction of the Confederacy, marks the "beginning of the decline of American society and even Western civilization" (Hague 310).

Proponents of present-day neo-Confederate behavior tend to base their distortions along three distinct avenues according to their specific motivations behind their mythmaking: race/slavery, religion, and gender/sexuality arguments. Each of these categories of thought and distortion advocates for some type of hierarchical order. Holocaust deniers, in the same vein as neo-Confederates, distort and deny history in a similar manner according to specifically identifiable sociopolitical and cultural goals.

III. Holocaust Denial

Introduction

The Holocaust, as defined by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), is the "systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators" during World War II ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). Through the use of transparent and accepted historical methodologies, scholars have acquired a vast amount of knowledge about this traumatic period of history. Despite this incredible wealth of information, pseudohistorians have fought the established convergence of evidence to further their own sociopolitical and cultural aims. These individuals, self-branded Holocaust "revisionists," distort and deny any and all evidence that proves the Holocaust happened to garner support for a specific anti-Semitic, pro-fascist, and often, anti-Israel agenda. Holocaust deniers utilize many typical denial and distortion techniques, but what makes Holocaust deniers particularly dangerous is their donning of the cloak of academia to disguise their efforts as mainstream discourse.

Deniers of the Holocaust employ a basic strategy of distortion. As Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt explains, deniers mix truth with absolute lies in order to confuse those who are unfamiliar with the tactics of deniers, leaving unknowing individuals "with a distorted impression of what really happened" (2). Works of deniers are specifically designed to mimic a scholarly work, complete with footnotes, quotations from legitimate sources, and pseudoscientific evidence presented as fact. Through the façade of a genuine scholarly endeavor, Holocaust deniers ultimately aim to confuse matters surrounding the Holocaust by presenting themselves as another "side" to the Holocaust story. On some level, denial of such a well-established event like the Holocaust is as "unbelievable as the Holocaust itself," and, although no

one is murdered or injured as a result of the denier's falsifications, denial specifically abuses

Holocaust survivors and the memory of those who perished (Lipstadt 3). The success deniers

have had thus far in modern society is in convincing people that Holocaust denial is a legitimate

"other side" to history. Deniers can lead unsuspecting individuals to draw conclusions about the

past that they would have not formed with an accurate version of the facts.

According to Lipstadt, denial of the Holocaust is "intimately connected to a neo-fascist

political agenda," lending considerable strength to this political movement (3). Deniers operate

with an undeniable anti-Semitic undercurrent and, as such, they "constitute an attack on the most

basic values of reasoned society" through their deliberate distortion of the truth and manipulation

of facts for their own aims (20). Their arguments are not only anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual,

but also blatantly racist: an "apotheosis of irrationalism" that cannot be countered with the forces

of debate and argument (20). Holocaust deniers have found a ready acceptance among extremist

groups around the world, including both neo-Nazis as well as other fascist or racist movements,

who seek the rehabilitation of the Nazi regime in the eyes of the public. To gain headway in

mainstream discourse, deniers' tactics have evolved over time in order to camouflage their

underlying goals and motivations. They hide the fact that they are anti-Semites and fascists with

a specific ideological and political agenda by stating that their main objective is to uncover

"historical falsehoods, *all* historical falsehoods" (4). With this logic, deniers have been able to

insert themselves and their claims into the sociopolitical discourse.

When analyzing the techniques and motivations of Holocaust deniers, terminology

emerges as a particularly contentious issue. This thesis utilizes the term "denier" to describe their

form of pseudohistorical activity, despite their self-branding as "revisionists." As Lipstadt

explains, the deniers' selection of the term "revisionists" to describe themselves is "indicative of

their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional process of illuminating the past" (Lipstadt 20). Revisionism forms a critical part of the legitimate historical process; all historians try to revisit well-known stories about the past to uncover a new insight or angle. Many great historical discoveries have come as a result of revisionism. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., believes revisionism to be "an essential part of the process by which history, through the posing of new problems and the investigation of new possibilities, enlarges its perspectives and enriches its insights" (Schlesinger 165). Legitimate historical revisionism, cannot be "purely objective," as historians revisit the past through the lens of the present (Lipstadt 21). However, for Holocaust deniers, normal and accepted standards of scholarship, "including the proper use of evidence," are discarded in favor of strategies of distortion (27). According to the Anti-Defamation League, deniers, "dressing themselves in pseudo-academic garb, have adopted the term 'revisionism' in order to mask and legitimate their enterprise" ("Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism"). Thus, the use of "revisionist" to describe Holocaust deniers' activity plays into exactly what they hope to accomplish: acceptance and treatment as a legitimate source of information. This chapter labels them based on their actions and motivations, utilizing "denier" as a term that best encompasses the dangerous nature of their behavior.

General Analysis of Denial Ideologies

A thorough understanding of what Holocaust deniers believe and how they distort history is critical to establish before analyzing how deniers' tactics have evolved over time. The basic idea underneath Holocaust denial rhetoric and distortion is that the Holocaust – the attempt by Nazi Germany to completely destroy the Jewish people in Europe – never happened. To prove

their view of history, they engage in elaborate mythmaking to explain away rational evidence

that destroys all variations of their argument. While deniers are not a monolith, they share

several extremely simple principles in common. French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet identifies

the typical doctrine of Holocaust deniers:

1. There was no genocide and the instrument symbolizing it, the gas chamber, never existed.
2. The 'final solution' was never anything other than the expulsion of the Jews toward Eastern Europe.
3. The number of Jewish victims of Nazism is far smaller than has been claimed.
4. Hitler's Germany does not bear the principal responsibility for the Second World War. It shares that responsibility, for example, with the Jews, or it may even not bear any responsibility at all.
5. The principal enemy of the human race during the 1930s and 1940s was not Nazi Germany but Stalin's Soviet Union.
6. The genocide was an invention of Allied propaganda, which was largely Jewish, and specifically Zionist, and which may be easily explained by the Jewish propensity to give imaginary statistics, under the influence of the Talmud. (18-19)

These assertions serve as the fundamental doctrines guiding deniers' behavior. To accomplish

the unrealistic task of proving the above distortions, Vidal-Naquet has further identified

principles of the revisionist method that are characteristic of how deniers frame their arguments:

1. Any direct testimony contributed by a Jew is either a lie or fantasy.
2. Any testimony or document prior to the Liberation is a forgery or is not acknowledged or is treated as a 'rumor.'
3. Any document, in general, with firsthand information concerning the methods of the Nazis is a forgery or has been tampered with.
4. Any Nazi document bearing direct testimony is taken at face value if it is written in coded language, but unacknowledged (or underinterpreted) if it is written plainly.
5. Any Nazi testimony after the end of the war – in trials either in the East or the West, in Warsaw or Cologne, Jerusalem or Nuremberg, in 1945 or 1963 – is considered as having been obtained under torture or by intimidation.
6. A vast pseudotechnical arsenal is mobilized to demonstrate the material impossibility of mass gassings.
7. Formerly, God's existence was proven by the notion that existence was contained in the very concept of God. Such was the famous 'ontological proof.' It may be said that for the 'revisionists,' the gas chambers did not exist because nonexistence was one of their attributes. Such [a priori reasoning] is the nonontological proof.

8. Anything capable of rendering this frightening story acceptable or believable, of establishing its evolution or furnishing terms for a comparison is either unacknowledged or falsified. (21-23)

Vidal-Naquet accurately outlines the deniers' techniques of distortion that serve to shape how they structure their attacks on the convergence of evidence regarding the Holocaust.

Deniers, operating with the above logic models, can typically be sorted into two categories: hard and soft deniers. Hard deniers "completely deny the existence of the Holocaust with no reservation," considering the Holocaust to be fabricated from Jewish and Zionist propaganda (Atkins 81). Conversely, soft deniers claim that there was a large loss of life among Jews during World War II, but these deaths were not a part of a systematic plan of annihilation by the Nazis. Soft deniers, for example, believe that Jews "were imprisoned in camps but died in limited numbers as a result of illness and other wartime deprivations" (Eaglestone 8). However, as Robert Eaglestone, scholar of Holocaust and genocide studies, asserts, the distinction between hard and soft is not fixed; dichotomizing deniers in this way demands "too much consistency from the world of bigotry and false argument that these people inhabit" (8). While their behaviors may not be consistent, their motivation is: almost all deniers ground themselves in an anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, and pro-fascist agenda.

Michael Shermer, a historian dedicated to the study of pseudoscience and pseudohistory, believes "running through almost all denier literature is a fascination with Jews and everything Jewish" (Shermer 76). In keeping with the Anti-Defamation League's analysis of Holocaust deniers, deniers' attempts can be understood as another reincarnation of the classic anti-Semitic doctrine of the "evil, manipulative and threatening world Jewish conspiracy" manipulating the history of the Holocaust ("Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism"). This anti-Semitic doctrine laid the foundation for the Holocaust to occur; now some deniers use the doctrine to claim that the Holocaust is a Jewish falsehood. A surface level analysis of denial reveals a distortion of

genocidal facts, while the reality of denial hints at a deeper genocidal hatred. Many deniers try to mainstream their arguments by claiming they are neither for Germany nor against Jews, but the method in which they deny the Nazi's systematic murder of six million Jews exposes their clear anti-Semitic undercurrent. To mask anti-Semitism, various deniers rely on pseudoscience, the manipulation of science for a particular agenda, to demonstrate that it is statistically and technologically impossible for six million Jews to have died (Lipstadt 90). Furthermore, while some soft deniers acknowledge that Jews were incarcered in places such as Auschwitz, they distort the realities of concentration camp life to the extreme. Lipstadt explains how one Canadian Holocaust denier believed Auschwitz came equipped "'with all the luxuries of a country club,' including a swimming pool, dance hall, and recreational facilities" (qtd. in Lipstadt 23). As this thesis will go on to show, these arguments demonstrate an anti-Semitic worldview; invoking anti-Semitic arguments to deny the Holocaust suggests that deniers are trying to reestablish the social conditions in which marginalization of Jews was politically sanctioned.

Beyond anti-Semitism, some deniers operate with a certain political agenda. Deniers carefully advocate for the recreation of a political environment that encourages anti-Semitism and violence against ethnic groups. Lipstadt traces their attempts at an argument to their illogical conclusion: "if there was no Holocaust, [deniers ask], what is so wrong with National Socialism?" (23). It is the events of the Holocaust that taint the legacy fascism and National Socialism; thus, for fascism and Nazism to be resurrected, the "stain" of the Holocaust must be removed from the history of these political ideologies in order to gain public support for its return. Eagelstone remarks how deniers seem to believe that if the "stain" of the Holocaust is removed from the equation, "if the Nazis are acquitted, [and] if fascism is exonerated of these

terrible deeds, people will somehow find their murderous and evil creeds of hate convincing" (9-10). For some deniers, politics, not anti-Semitism, is their primary motivation.

In the realm of politics, some deniers advocate a strong anti-Israel platform, manipulating the Holocaust as a pawn to prove Israel's illegitimacy. Deniers assert that the main purpose of the Jewish mythmaking about the Holocaust is the "inculcation of a sense of guilt in the white, Western Christian world," creating a sense of power that is used to advance an international Jewish agenda "centered in the Zionist enterprise of the State of Israel" ("Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism"). By painting the Holocaust as a Zionist invention with outcomes of political and financial importance, deniers try to expose Israel as the primary beneficiary of the profitable Holocaust lie, as Germany paid Israel millions in reparations after the war. Deniers believe that the existence of Israel is justified only because of the Holocaust; thus, if this justification is not valid (i.e. denied), Israel is not a legitimate entity (Yakira 56). By relying on the dramatic imagery of destruction that talk of the Holocaust produces, deniers capitalize on this imagery to advance the idea of destroying Israel as well (55). Thus, deniers transform the victims-victimizers model of accepted Holocaust evidence to paint Jews as the victimizers, extorting Germans out of money and Palestinians out of land.

These explanations of deniers' motivations are cursory at best; motivations for Holocaust denial vary with each denier. However, the fundamental lines of argument and tactics remain consistent across the spectrum of deniers. Danger arises when deniers use tricks to garner publicity and enter the academic debate under the guise of legitimate historians, potentially influencing the general public to reach unfounded conclusions about the events of the Holocaust. Eaglestone claims, "Holocaust denial isn't bad history: it isn't any sort of history at all, and simply can't be discussed as if it is" (57). It is important to uncover deniers' disguised political

and ideological agendas to adequately assess and analyze the danger that they pose. The example of Hitler's rise to power serves illustrative in this case. Hitler quickly gained popularity in Germany partly because of his distortion of German history to appeal to the needs of the current German population; historical accuracy and truthfulness were unimportant. He found success by soliciting buy-in from a significant percentage of the German people through presenting a historical vision that demonized and blamed Jews for Germany's problems. Thus, relegating deniers to the fringe of the global discourse on the Holocaust minimizes the ability of a distorted version of history to permeate the population and change people's conceptions about their past and present. It is easy to dismiss deniers as irrelevant conspiracy theorists operating on the fringes of society, but a thorough understanding of their motivations, dangers, and the evolution of their ideology is necessary to adequately counter their threat.

Antecedents to Denial: American Revisionism in the 1920s

Holocaust denial evolved out of a long tradition in the United States of revising history to further present sociopolitical aims. Deniers consider themselves heirs to a certain historical tradition that began in the early 1920s. Scholars and historians of this era were deeply disturbed by how the United States was involved in World War I and began to revise history to look for a new explanation to the events. While the World War I revisionists form the foundation for Holocaust denial, according to Lipstadt they would be "appalled to learn of the purposes to which their arguments were put" (32). The 1920s revisionists still followed the acceptable standards of gathering and analyzing historical evidence, engaging in serious research regarding American involvement in World War I to formulate their conclusions. These historians earn the title "revisionists" precisely because of their methodology, which was relatively transparent and

motivated by the urge to discover a new angle to the story of history. Despite these glaring differences in method, "deniers have tried to link the two traditions" (32). Deniers argue that both Holocaust deniers and 1920s revisionists tried to create alternative histories for major events of the past century. This parallel is insufficient, however, as the main distinction between the two is critical: methodology.

In 1920, Sidney B. Fay, an American professor at Smith College, wrote articles in the *American Historical Review* regarding the causes of World War I. Fay proposed an argument that countered the prevailing viewpoint of the time: Germans had not sought to go to war (Lipstadt 32). Rather, in Fay's opinion, Americans were brainwashed with "silly propaganda" about who was really responsible for the outbreak of war (qtd. in Lipstadt 32). Fay insisted, "Germany had neither plotted nor wanted a war and had made real efforts to avoid one" (Lipstadt 32). Fay's revision of the well-known viewpoints regarding the outbreak of World War I constituted the birth of American World War I revisionism. Fay worked closely with his colleagues at Smith College, including Harry Elmer Barnes, in this historical project. Barnes began working with Fay in 1923 and quickly surpassed Fay in his criticisms of American involvement in the war (32). Barnes relentlessly attacked what he called the "orthodox" presentation of the war, making him a hero in Germany (qtd. in Lipstadt 32). Present day Holocaust deniers often cite Barnes as the father of American denial: he "became one of Holocaust denial's earliest proponents and wrote some of the first attacks on the history of the destruction of European Jewry" (Lipstadt 32). His unwavering commitment to his interpretation of WWI, his German nationalism, and his conspiracy mongering made him a strong foundational figure for American deniers.

Revisionists of this time period did not only exonerate Germany by shifting the blame for the outbreak of war; they also condemned the Allies, "accusing them of behaving duplicitously before and after the war" (Lipstadt 33). According to Barnes, Fay, and their colleagues, even after the war ended, the Allies continued to behave deceptively, neglecting to even entertain the slightest bit of evidence that questioned the singularity of German war guilt (33). Barnes viewed the British, French, and American acts of postwar deception and propaganda as particularly odious because he believed that as victors, the Allies knew that Germany did not hold sole culpability. While the debate is not definitively settled, the revisionist argument was quite valid in its diagnosis of the origins of the war: Germany was not completely responsible for the outbreak of war. Historian John Wiltz believes that the Versailles Treaty "contained harsh and vindictive elements that placed so onerous a financial burden on Germany as to virtually guarantee the collapse of the Weimar regime" (Wiltz 8). The revisionist cause of this period also was strengthened by British anti-German war propaganda, in which Britain engaged in pseudohistorical mythmaking of its own creation. Britain circulated "false horror stories" about German atrocities against civilians that struck a serious cord with Americans unaware that these were lies created by the British (Lipstadt 34). Perhaps the most damaging effect to rise from this period was evident twenty years later, when evidence of atrocity began to filter out of Germany; Americans "dismissed the second spate of stories as yet another set of tall tales about the Germans" (34). Unfortunately, this time the stories were accurate and factual.

As previously noted, the revisionists of the 1920s and Holocaust deniers fundamentally differ in regard to their use of the legitimate historical process. However, Harry Elmer Barnes has emerged as the main link between this era of revisionists and modern Holocaust deniers, connecting the legitimate revisionism tradition to denial mythmaking. Unbeknownst to

revisionists of the 1920s, their arguments offered perfect fodder for deniers. Revisionist

arguments about "government chicanery, mistreatment of Germany, and atrocity reports and

their desire to change public attitudes" about a historical event were too useful to ignore (34).

The work of 1920s revisionists proved that Americans could be receptive to historical arguments

that countered the mainstream historical outline of events. Thus, according to Lipstadt, deniers

looked to this movement as an example to shape their own pseudohistorical purposes (32).

Anti-Semitism and Revisionism in the American Interwar Period

The American interwar period was turbulent: President Roosevelt received harsh

criticism from all sides regarding his foreign policies; red scares emerged equivalent to witch

hunts; and many believed in conspiracies to do America harm (Lipstadt 35). During this period, a

strong sense of xenophobia and anti-Semitism emerged in the United States. Although these

elements had been present in other eras of American history, they came into new strength in the

context of the impending Great Depression. According to Atkins, anti-Semitism "had never been

as virulent in the United States as in Europe…[but] during the Great Depression and on the eve

of World War II, anti-Semitism grew at an alarming rate" (Atkins 145). As the Depression

intensified, the sentiment grew that someone – whether that be a "group, ideology [or] financial

interest" – was to blame (Lipstadt 35). Stronger anti-Semitic claims began to enter the political

debate, evidenced when President Roosevelt was accused of pandering to "Jewish interests" with

his foreign policy (35). Notably, Senator Hiram Johnson (R-CA), echoing a popular anti-Semitic

viewpoint of the time, complained in February 1939 that all the Jews "were on one side, wildly

enthusiastic for the President and willing to fight to the last American" (qtd. in Lipstadt 36).

Johnson believed that Jews' loyalties lied with their group and not their country, and that

Roosevelt and other world leaders were afraid of "offending the Jews" (qtd. in Lipstadt 36).

Relying on the Jews as a scapegoat for current societal ills was not a new phenomenon.

From antiquity, Jews "had been blamed for poisoning wells, killing Christian children, spreading

the Black Plague, and causing famines, earthquakes, and droughts (Lipstadt 37). Jews

unwillingly quickly became the target of many Americans' general frustrations over the state of

their country. In fact, 121 hate groups against Jews formed between 1933 and 1940, compared to

the 5 in existence in 1927 (Atkins 145). Targeting Jews for general discontent found especially

strong fodder when, between 1920 and 1927, Henry Ford, the auto magnate, blamed a Jewish

conspiracy for the social and economic "upheavals" in the country, publishing over 600,000

copies of "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" (Lipstadt 37).

The "Protocols" were developed in Russia by the Tsar's secret police in 1905, claiming

to be "the real discussions of the Jewish leaders' conspiracy to rule the word" (Foxman 1). The

sections of the booklet spelled out the "alleged secret plans of Jewish leaders seeking to attain

world domination," representing the most notorious political forgery of modern times ("Anti-

Semitic Myths"). Historians have since thoroughly discredited this document as a forgery, but it

is still used, even in the present day, to appeal to anti-Semitic hatred. The document circulated

Europe before eventually making its debut in America with the help of Henry Ford. The

"Protocols" constituted the first attempt to transform wild conspiracy theories about Jews into

organized anti-Semitic theory. Hitler cited the document "as proof that his anti-Jewish campaign

was not only justified, but necessary to protect Germans from the Jewish menace" (Foxman 1).

With Ford's help, this forged piece of anti-Semitic revisionist history found wide acclaim in

America, selling over half a million copies in the United States (Lipstadt 37). Ford, facing a 1927

lawsuit over the "Protocols" anti-Semitic content, eventually apologized to the public for disseminating an anti-Semitic lie, but the damage had already been done to the minds of Americans (38). Although proven false, the image of a Jewish conspiracy controlling global politics and finances held great sway with the general American population.

The interwar period is notable for the widespread acceptance and mainstreaming of Jewish conspiracy theories. Lipstadt remarked how Jewish conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial shares many common features:

> Behind each conspiracy is a collective that has targeted another group. Though the victims are more numerous than the conspirators, because they remain unaware of the conspiracy they are highly vulnerable. It is the responsibility of those who have uncovered the scheme to bring it to the victim's attention. The conspirators are thought to pursue their goals with a diabolical skill that far exceeds that of their enemies. (38)

These distortions in the 1920s made particular headway in a society plagued by problems, because the delusions were able to impose a structure of orderly thinking onto a situation that seemed to possess no explanation. Unfortunately for the Jews, the order came at the sacrifice of their own sociopolitical standing in American culture.

World War II American Relativism

After the conclusion of World War II, American historians began critically examining America's role in the war, pioneering many historical techniques that would later serve as fodder for Holocaust deniers' arguments. Charles C. Tansill, a professor of American diplomatic history at Georgetown University, emerged as a notable extreme revisionist of this era. In 1952, Tansill linked American entry into World War I with the rise of Nazism in Europe, the former having resulted in the later: "our [American] intervention completely shattered the old balance of power and sowed the seeds of inevitable future conflict" (Tansill 9). Tansill's line of arguments would

later become essential elements of Holocaust denial. For example, he contended that Hitler did not desire war with Poland, but instead "planned for Germany and Poland to dominate Europe together" (Lipstadt 40). This in particular is an extreme argument that he made without citing any evidence to support it; it is rejected by virtually all historians. Lipstadt describes the uniform view as being that "Hitler did not intend to make Poland a satellite but to decimate it," and that he regarded the Poles as *Untermenschen*, less than complete humans (40). Tansill was motivated by the goal of rehabilitating Germany's image and moral standing in the world, and as a result, he needed to revise and distort Germany's role in the world to accomplish his objective.

Tansill and World War II revisionists believed that a "strong, revived Germany was the key to the future of western Europe" (Lipstadt 41). As a result, this era's revisionism needed to mitigate the uniqueness of Germany's wartime behavior to help rehabilitate Germany's broken postwar image. Tansill and his colleagues developed the relativism argument by "engaging in immoral equivalencies by citing what they claimed were comparable Allied wrongs" (41). The behavior of the Nazis, particularly their genocidal actions against the Jews, prevented these extreme revisionists of achieving their goal of a rehabilitated German image and state, so they employed relativism to put the crimes of the Nazi regime into a wider context of wartime wrongdoings. By saying that everyone during this period was equally guilty, the cruelness and barbarity of Nazi Germany is not unique. Tansill's relativism argument became a central tenet for future deniers: relativizers claimed that the Nazis were no worse than anyone else, mitigating the uniqueness of German wrongs (42).

The relativism line of reasoning permeated American culture in the immediate postwar era. For example, George Morgenstern, an editor of *Chicago Tribune*, offered a mild example of American relativism when he argued that "none of the Allies had clean hands" or were "real

exemplar[s] of justice" (4, 7). In 1945, Frederick Libby of the National Council for the

Prevention of War joined Morgenstern when he tried to lessen Germany's war burden, stating

that "no nation has a monopoly on atrocities…war itself is the supreme atrocity" (3-4). Libby

and his colleagues also honed in on the legitimacy and justice of the Nuremberg Trials, claiming

that the Allies were hypocrites for holding them, given that if the tables were turned, they

themselves would have been placed on the docket (Lipstadt 44). Certainly, Libby, Morgenstern,

Tansill, and other relativists of this time had a few historical examples to serve as fodder for their

relativism assertions, but they took these examples beyond the realm of traditional

historiography to extrapolate outlandish conclusions. For example, Allied behavior during and in

the wake of the war was not without fault. According to Lipstadt, in the immediate aftermath of

the war, "there had been insufficient planning…the de-Nazification program was applied

unequally and inequities in punishment resulting from it" (45). However, relativists failed to take

into account the incredibly difficult global circumstances producing these chaotic situations. The

relativists of the time, attempting to rehabilitate Germany's image in the face of the defeat in

World War II, popularized the tactic of equalizing Nazi and Allied atrocities to explain away the

uniqueness of German evils, a method later employed with much zest by modern deniers.

Postwar Birth of the Holocaust "Hoax" Falsification

By 1950, American revisionists and relativists had set the foundation for deniers,

individuals who would take the basic lines of argument of earlier legitimate historians and adapt

them for their own motivations. Almost all lines of argument from the previous era – Germany's

lack of culpability, deception by Wilson and Roosevelt, Allied propaganda of falsified German

atrocities – were adopted by deniers to prove that the Holocaust was not only a "hoax," but a part

of a larger trend of distortion and deception by outside forces. However, while the critics of United States foreign policy analyzed American involvement in the war, they never suggested the possibility that the Holocaust did not occur. Instead, these legitimate historians attempted to relativize the atrocities, but they avoided dismissing them completely.

As the end of World War II signaled the destruction of Hitler's dream of a Third Reich, many rational individuals also believed that Hitler's defeat meant the end of fascism as a viable political ideology. According to Lipstadt, "as long as fascism could be linked with Nazism, and Nazism, in turn, could be linked with the horrors of the Final Solution, then both would remain thoroughly discredited" (49). Some deniers, however, were not "willing to abandon these political systems" (49). They knew that the only way to revive these tarnished systems would be to remove their history from that of the Holocaust, most easily accomplished by denying the Holocaust's existence and magnitude. Around 1950, individuals began to emerge who distorted these previous assertions for their own agendas. These early deniers operated with the goals of rehabilitating fascism as a political ideology and recreating a regime that advocated for a hierarchical society where Jews had no place or rights. The earliest deniers in the immediate postwar period established tactics and arguments that have been incorporated as critical elements into modern denial, making little to no effort to disguise their anti-Semitism.

In 1947, Maurice Bardéche, a prominent French fascist, was the first to contend that the "pictorial and documentary evidence of the murder process in the camps had actually been falsified" (Lipstadt 50). Bardéche was also the first to claim that gas chambers were used not for murder, but for disinfection. He believed that the Allies falsified much of the evidence of concentration camps, and that the majority of deaths in the camps occurred as a by-product of war, not as a result of systematic annihilation. His argument was also vehemently anti-Semitic:

he believed that the Jews "deserved no sympathy because they helped to instigate the war," making them the culprits (50). Bardéche also began purporting the anti-Israel line of reasoning, that Jews spread this lie in order to "win control of Palestine" (Yakira 8). What motivated Bardéche most of all, beyond his fascism and anti-Semitism, was his struggle against De Gaulle's republicanism and, especially, Bardéche's "sharp opposition to hunting down the *collabos*, those who had collaborated with the German occupation of France" (8). His denial was motivated by the perceived need to change current policies in France. While modern deniers have used his arguments and reasoning, they rarely mention him because of his openly fascist political views, which render him unpalatable to the general population.

In 1948, Paul Rassinier emerged as another prominent Holocaust denier who possessed a unique angle to bolster his claims for legitimacy. Rassinier, a former French communist and socialist, was interned in the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dora and used his experiences as purported proof that the realities of the camps were grossly over exaggerated (Lipstadt 51). Rassinier intended to demonstrate how Holocaust survivors' claims about Nazi behavior and brutality were unfounded and untrustworthy. In his books, he mixes "blatant falsehoods" with "half-truth, quotations out of context, and attacks on the 'Zionist establishment'" (qtd. in Lipstadt 51). When speaking about camp behavior, he viewed the inmates entrusted with the camp's day-to-day operations as responsible for terrors and brutalities, not the SS overseers.

Originally, Rassinier's arguments set out to "demolish the credibility of his fellow prisoners' testimony," because unless no one could trust what they said, "any attempt to absolve the Nazis would be futile" (53). Furthermore, Rassinier utilized techniques from American relativists by suggesting that camps were not uniquely German institutions; incarceration in

camps, he believed, was a "classic method of coercion" practiced by many countries of the time (qtd. in 54). Perhaps most appallingly, Rassinier claimed the concentration camps were in existence for the prisoners' own protection: Nazis wanted to protect their adversaries by putting them "where they could not hurt the new regime and where they could be protected from the public anger," allowing them time to be rehabilitated to "a healthier concept of the German community" (qtd. in Hofstetter 36). In this way, concentration camps had benign motives; internment was a "gesture of compassion" (36). His logic attempted to rehabilitate the image of the Nazis, transforming them from perpetrators to benefactors. However, Rassinier disregarded how, following with Nazi racial conceptualizations, there was no possible ways Jews could be "rehabilitated" into Germans.

In the 1960s, as Israel strengthened its position in the Middle East, Rassinier began to shift the focus of his denial; instead of solely directing his tirades at the credibility of survivors, he began to attack other available material evidence as well. He claimed the "charge about gas chambers was a fabrication, as was the claim that six million Jews died" (Lipstadt 55). He related his denial to a distinctly anti-Israel agenda. Because Jews wanted to "make Germany an everlasting milk cow for Israel," they devised the Holocaust "hoax," demanding that "Germany pay to Israel sums calculated on the basis of about 6,000,000 dead" (qtd in Hofstetter 214). Thus, in Rassinier's conceptualization, the inflation of the death toll of the Holocaust translated to a greater financial payout for Israel. Rassinier's financial connections between the Holocaust and the state of Israel served as a foundation for future deniers, forming a critical element of Holocaust denial as this association fit well with traditional anti-Semitic imagery of Jews. The Jewish "association with money, particularly ill-gotten gains," was a common image in anti-

Semitic propaganda (Lipstadt 57). Rassinier opened the gateway for attacks on the legitimacy of

Israel using the denial of the Holocaust itself as a prime piece of evidence.

Rassinier still faced a fundamental problem in his reasoning: Hitler and his colleagues

had explicitly stated numerous times his objective to destroy Jews. On January 30, 1939, Hitler

gave a speech touching on his genocidal intentions:

> Today I want to be a prophet once more: If international finance Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed once more in plunging nations into another world war, the consequence will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe. (qtd. in Hilberg 257)

Confronted with this potentially damning piece of evidence concerning Hitler's real plan for the

Jews, Rassinier dismissed it as irrelevant exaggeration, preferring to falsely claim instead that

Jews started the war. Anytime there was evidence "explicitly indicating an intention to

annihilate, he dismissed it as euphemistic, hyperbolic, or irrelevant" (Lipstadt 62). Although he

never offered a clear answer as to how Hitler's numerous comments about his intentions for the

Jews fit into his conceptualization about the Holocaust, Rassinier's arguments have found great

appeal in all realms of subsequent circles of deniers. While both were in France, Rassinier and

Bardéche pioneered techniques of denial that held enormous influence over later American

Holocaust deniers.

The 1960s Reception of Denial in America

At the beginning of the 1960s, Holocaust denial was primarily the product of fringe

extremists and racists with pockets of support in respectable circles. These early deniers were

receptive to arguments from Rassinier and Bardéche, especially that the "Holocaust had been

created by Jewish leaders to control the world's finances and increase support for Israel"

(Lipstadt 65). Ultimately, the earliest American deniers had little impact because they were

viewed as extremists and racists, hurting their credibility. Despite the fact that they were considered extreme, their arguments managed to eventually permeate the mainstream. Harry Elmer Barnes, a World War I revisionist, emerged as the most direct link between the "two generations of American revisionists and Holocaust deniers" (67). Barnes began his career as a legitimate World War I revisionist, and after the war, he moved to the isolationist, pro-German end of the spectrum, influencing his later arguments.

Barnes believed Hitler to be a "reasonable" man, placing the blame for World War II onto Britain, France, and the United States (11). Barnes was instrumental in buttressing the false notion that Germany was indeed the complete victim of World War II, while the Allies were the victimizers. Barnes recognized that to gain steam, he needed to lend credibility to his movement; he partnered with David Leslie Hoggan, a colleague at Harvard, to provide himself and his ideas with a measure of credibility stemming from Hoggan's Harvard credentials (Lipstadt 73). In the 1960s, as Israel further established itself in the Middle East, Barnes shifted his focus to the issue of the supposed German atrocities of World War II. Barnes, never explicitly denying their occurrence, instead suggested that tales of German atrocities were simply inaccurate and motivated by politics. He condemned "the lack of serious opposition or concerted challenge to the atrocity stories and other modes of defamation of German national character and conduct" (qtd. in Lipstadt 74). He employed a relativist argument to minimize German barbarity, arguing that the atrocities of the Allies "were more brutal, painful, mortal, and numerous than the most extreme allegations made against the Germans" (qtd. in Lipstadt 74). This form of relativisim thus became a staple of tactics used by Holocaust deniers.

While focusing on German atrocities, Barnes was exposed to Rassinier's Holocaust "hoax" arguments, prompting him to also "contend that the atrocity stories were fabrications"

(Lipstadt 74). For Barnes, Rassinier acted as a catalyst to provide him with academic proof that World War II and World War I were the same: Germany was still the wonderful nation of old and there existed a conspiracy to blame Germans for atrocities that were wildly over exaggerated (74). However, Barnes faced a challenge when attempting to release Germany from culpability. It was difficult to claim atrocities either did not happen or that they were equal or comparable to Allied barbarity when the postwar "West German government accepted responsibility" for both the war and these atrocities (79). Barnes did not even entertain the possibility that West Germans accepted culpability for the atrocities because they actually occurred and German officials knew this. Instead, he rationalized this behavior away through distortion and mythmaking.

The German government's request from Israel for forgiveness particularly infuriated and disgusted Barnes. Barnes found the relationship between West Germany and Israel to be galling, even as a non-German. According to Lipstadt, his contempt "for the Jewish state, its supporters, and Jews in general" helped set the tone for subsequent Holocaust deniers who echoed their anti-Israel sentiments (80). Furthermore, Barnes' Germanophilia and anti-Semitism served as strong motivations for his revisionist approach to the political arena of World War II (80). However, Barnes recognized that strongly worded anti-Semitism or anti-Israel arguments would never make adequate headway in mainstream discourse; if he could be dismissed as an "anti-Semitic extremist," he would never reach the general public (81). Thus, he attempted to maintain the guise of academic legitimacy by incorporating his Harvard colleague's academic credentials and presenting his pseudohistory in the same tone and style as traditionally accepted scholarly work. Barnes served as an instructive model for the next iteration of deniers.

In the 1970s, deniers learned from Barnes and made a concerted effort to enter the American mainstream. Arthur R. Butz, a professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern

University, began an effort in 1977 to win scholarly and historical legitimacy for Holocaust deniers (Lipstadt 123). Author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Butz assumed a different tone, confronting issues previous deniers had simply ignored in an attempt to seem more legitimate and less extremist. According to Lipstadt, the presentation of material in his book suggested that he sought clearly to "disarm innocent readers [to] enhance Butz's aura of scholarly objectivity" (Lipstadt 124). Butz did not engage in easily identifiable anti-Semitic arguments; rather, he gave the impression of being a legitimate academic critical of Nazi anti-Semitism. In addition to filling his text with footnotes of legitimate sources and trusted names to appear "scholarly," Butz attempted to present himself as an hardworking honest investigator working to uncover the truth, claiming that he spent "the entire summer of 1972 working on an exposé of the hoax [of the Holocaust]" (Butz 18). However, underneath his guise of academia and scholarly inquiry, the underlying message remained the same, packaged differently for a broader audience.

Butz echoed previous iterations of deniers when he declared that the greatest tragedy of World War II was not the Holocaust, but that "the Germans and Austrians had been the real victims" of the war (125). To demonstrate his assertions, he worked hard to shed doubt on the credibility of witnesses and survivors, declaring "all testimony inferior to documents" that, in his mind, were more easily categorically rationalized as forgeries or propaganda (129). However, Butz did not offer his readers any independent source of evidence to uphold his conclusions, a typical behavior of deniers. When he was faced with the overwhelming convergence of evidence about the Holocaust, Butz "actually presented so much evidence that it happened that only a very gullible person or one desperate to believe his thesis" could reasonably and rationally accept his conspiracy theories and "implausible rationalizations" that he offered to explain away evidence

(Zimmerman 131). Butz's attempt to transform and repackage the message of denial under a more legitimate academic fashion showcased the absurdity of denial logic: an attempt at denial in a pseudoacademic setting contains so much detail to develop a "scholarly" identity as to be self-refuting.

The 1978 Institute of Historical Review

In keeping with Butz's objectives of moving from the extremist fringe to the realm of academic legitimacy, the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) was founded in 1978 to offer an umbrella organization to Holocaust denial activities. The IHR aimed to look legitimate to non-historians so that it could claim that professionals rejected its claims only for ideological reasons. The IHR's description on its website is particularly telling of its objectives and motivations:

> The Institute for Historical Review is an independent educational research and publishing center that works to promote peace, understanding and justice through greater public awareness of the past, and especially socially-politically relevant aspects of twentieth-century history. We strive in particular to increase understanding of the causes, nature and consequences of war and conflict. We vigorously defend freedom of speech and freedom of historical inquiry. ("About the IHR")

While promoting itself as an organization dedicated to the review and revision of all history, the IHR almost exclusively deals with Holocaust and World War II era material. The Holocaust, it claims, is the "most distorted period in history" and most often used as a "historical club to bully public opinion" (*IHR Newsletter 1981* 3). Its website describes the inspiration for its historical revisionism as stemming from "distinguished historians such as Harry Elmer Barnes, A.J.P. Taylor, Charles Tansill, Paul Rassinier and William H. Chamberlin" ("About the IHR"). The individuals connected to the IHR expose the Institute as nothing more than another argument based in anti-Semitism and racism.

The IHR signaled a fundamental transformation in denial tactics; deniers were offered an outlet for their publications and activities that attempted to lend them some academic credibility. Lipstadt claims that "were its publications and activities not enveloped in the aura of research, they [the IHR and its followers] would be dismissed out of hand for what they truly are: fanatical expressions of neo-Nazism" (142). The IHR's anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, and racist stance can be seen in virtually all of its materials and activities. For example, Mark Weber claims in a piece of IHR literature that "the most lucrative expression of this seemingly endless campaign [of Holocaust mythmaking" is the massive reparations payments by West Germany to Israel, a distinctive anti-Israel sentiment (Weber 1). Another denier supported by IHR, Theodore O'Keefe, alleges in an IHR publication that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum promotes a "propaganda campaign…in the interests of Israel" (O'Keefe 1). Camouflaged under the guise of a research institute, the IHR engaged in activities typical of an academic endeavor: publishing a *Journal of Historical Review* that mimics the "highbrow language of academia" and sponsoring annual gatherings structured as academic conventions (Lipstadt 142). In reality, the IHR's goal as a research institution was to rehabilitate National Socialism and to further anti-Semitism and racism by explaining away the Holocaust in a legitimate arena.

Some deniers argued that, in order to accomplish its goal of maintaining legitimacy, the IHR should widen its scope and make the Holocaust only one of the many "hoaxes" it addresses (218). Thus, the IHR took great care to frame itself as motivated by the dedication to the "cause of truth in history" in order to "bring history into accord with the facts," so as to avoid being called out on its purely anti-Semitic motives ("About the IHR"). The IHR relied on its supposed quest for truth any time legitimate historians highlighted the inaccuracies of its behaviors. However, the broadening of its reach does not stem from either a genuine desire to revise all of

history or a lessening of the IHR's fascination with the Jews. This tactic was another way for the IHR to gain acceptance in mainstream debate. To the unsuspecting visitor, the website appears to be similar to any other academic institution; unassuming individuals could easily read materials on the IHR's website, believing them to come from credible historians, and form completely distorted opinions regarding Holocaust history.

The IHR's website claims that it "steadfastly opposes bigotry of all kinds" and that it is proud of the support it has earned "from people of the most diverse political views, and racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds" ("About the IHR"). However, actual text from the institute's published materials paints a different picture. In the *IHR Newsletter* distributed in 1989, the IHR relied on traditional anti-Semitic motifs when it equated the creators of the Holocaust "hoax" with Jews (*IHR Newsletter* 7). For example, the IHR claimed that the orchestrators of the Holocaust myth were a "super wealthy" and "tiny segment" of the general population who had no concern about the cultural "damage and distortion" the encouragement of the Holocaust story caused (7). The attack on Jews in this *Newsletter* is easily identifiable. For an organization claiming to oppose bigotry, the IHR engages in thinly veiled anti-Semitic attacks on Jews and the state of Israel, using the Holocaust as a pawn to delegitimize both.

Faces of Present-Day Denial

Present-day Holocaust denial takes many forms, but there are numerous individuals who have risen to the forefront, managing to enter mainstream debate with their distortions and make significant headway. Relying on the successes of past iterations of deniers, these individuals have found ways to insert themselves into the fray, camouflaging their more sinister intentions by presenting another "side" to the Holocaust story through a pseudoacademic lens. These

deniers have also transformed themselves once more; as the 1970s taught them to avoid

polarizing the population with extremism, they have since learned they can make an impact in

the American political realm by packaging their ideology for reception by politicians. As this

section demonstrates, deniers have become adept at not only reshaping history, but also inserting

these falsifications into the political sphere.

According to Lipstadt, British pseudohistorian David Irving is perhaps "one of the most

dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial" (181). In the early 1980s, Irving emerged as a

prominent face of British denial. As a writer on the military and political history of World War

II, Irving is extremely familiar with the historical evidence, and he bends it until it conforms with

his "ideological leanings and political agenda" (181). His revisionism is motivated not by a quest

for truth, but a distinctly anti-Semitic and pro-fascist agenda. Although not physically present in

the United States, his ease in manipulating historical evidence has transformed him into a

prominent model for all modern deniers.

Scholars have described Irving as a "Hitler partisan wearing blinkers," accusing him of

deliberately manipulating documents for his own purposes, especially through selectively

quoting or under-analyzing evidence (Lipstadt 161). He is best known for his main thesis that

Hitler was unaware of the Final Solution, an idea that has been thoroughly discredited by

historians using accepted historical methodology (161). His outlandish and unfounded

conclusions about Nazism are dangerous in their own right, but Irving attempted to make the

jump into the political arena to actualize the intentions driving his denial. As a self-described

"moderate fascist," Irving founded his own right-wing political party in Britain, established with

the belief that Irving was destined to be the future leader of Britain (161). Irving's political

leanings can also be described as "ultranationalist;" he views Britain on a path of steady decline

since it foolishly launched a war against Hitler (161). Irving's ability to blur the lines between academia and pseudohistory and translate this into a political career speaks to the dangerous turn denial has taken in its quest to gain academic legitimacy.

Irving has established relationships with American denial institutions, particularly the Institute for Historical Review. He has appeared at numerous IHR conferences and his material is featured on its website. At one particular IHR conference, he went as far as to declare Hitler the "biggest friend the Jews had in the Third Reich," a blatant misrepresentation of Hitler's relationship to Europe's Jewish population (qtd. in Lipstadt 162). At these conferences, Irving also echoed denial's traditional anti-Israel sentiments by identifying Israel as a swindler. West Germany, he claimed, gave Israel more than ninety billion deutschmarks in reparations "essentially in atonement for the gas chambers of Auschwitz," which he believed were a complete fabrication (Irving 6). However, in Irving's quest for academic legitimacy, he made one fatal error. Lipstadt, in her seminal work on denial, identified Irving as a denier and fabricator. Irving, in response, sued Lipstadt in British libel courts and lost; the judge ruled that Irving was a man whose trademark technique was to seize "on a small and dubious particle of evidence, using it to dismiss far-more-substantial evidence that may not support his thesis" (qtd. in Lipstadt 161). Irving's credibility after the trial was destroyed, rendering his stature as an academic a serious blow. Regardless of the outcome of the case, Irving serves as an instructive example, as he first tried to both make the jump into politics in the 1980s and also maintain his credibility as an academic.

Pat Buchanan, one of the foremost right-wing conservative columnists in the United States and a micro-case from the previous chapter, demonstrates another example of how Holocaust denial rhetoric has begun to permeate the mainstream political dialogue. Buchanan

has never stated in full that he believes the Holocaust to be a hoax, but parts of his written

columns expressed views that echo traditional denial lines of reasoning. For example, in his

column dated March 17, 1990, Buchanan wrote:

> The so-called "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome" involves group fantasies of martyrdom and heroics. Reportedly, half the 20,000 survivor testimonies in Jerusalem are considered "unreliable," not to be used in trials. (qtd. in McCarthy 1)

Buchanan was relying on a misquotation of Yad Vashem Archives director Shmuel Krakowski,

from an article of the *Jerusalem Post* in 1986, which claimed that Krakowski believed half of the

20,000 testimonies were inaccurate. In response, Krakowski wrote the newspaper, stating in fact

that "many hundreds of the 20,000 testimonies held in our archives were extensively used in

Nazi war criminal trials," contrary to what the *Jerusalem Post* wrote (qtd. in McCarthy 1). By

coming to an irrational conclusion based on incorrect facts, he attacked the credibility of

survivors, a typical denial technique. The Anti-Defamation League has described his behavior as

a "disturbing pattern of baiting Jews and attacking Israel" (Anti-Defamation League 7).

Buchanan also has a pattern of revisionism: his work *A Republic Not an Empire: Reclaiming*

America's Destiny was a work of World War I revisionism. Furthermore, when Buchanan was

seeking the 1992 presidential nomination, he refused to retract his contentious Holocaust-related

statements, meaning that denial found its way into the mainstream political culture.

David Duke, another prominent American Holocaust denier, internalized the logic of the

realm of legitimate academia in order to garner more attention and success. Duke, a former

Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, was a hardcore neo-Nazi before he attempted to jumpstart

his political career in the late 1980s (Lipstadt 5). Duke realized that when he was identified as a

Klansman "his access to the public arena was limited;" when he decided to enter the political

fray, he "shed his sheet and donned a three-piece suit," winning him a respectable audience (5).

In the late 1980s, Duke was elected to the Louisiana state legislature; two years later, he won

forty percent of the vote for the United States Senate (5). He ran for governor in 1991, receiving

close to seven hundred thousand votes, and ran for president in 1992 (5). Thus, despite the fact

that he routinely celebrated Hitler's birthday and was candid about his views regarding the

Holocaust, he managed to attract a significant following.

Duke has been extremely vocal about his views of the Holocaust, candidly displaying his

anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-Israel agenda. For example, after moving away from the Klan in

1980, he quietly incorporated the nonprofit National Association for the Advancement of White

People (NAAWP). Duke used this organization as less extreme umbrella organization for his

denial activities. In one of the NAAWP's newsletters, he not only called the Holocaust a

"historical hoax" but wrote that "the greatest Holocaust was perpetrated on Christians by Jews"

(qtd. in Lipstadt 5). The NAAWP's website is vocal about its racist and anti-Semitic intentions,

stating, "now is the time for all good men and women [to] come to the aid of their country and

the genocide of the 'American White Culture'" ("National Association for the Advancement of

White People"). Under Duke, the NAAWP advocated "the segregation of all racial minorities in

different sections of the United States" (Lipstadt 5). This organization and Duke's participation

highlighted Duke's underlying dangerous sociopolitical motives.

Utilizing a technique pioneered by previous deniers, Duke equated the Holocaust with

financial gain, claiming that the Holocaust generates tremendous financial gains for Israel.

Duke's rhetoric was openly anti-Semitic, such as in 1986 when he declared that Jews "deserve to

go into the ashbin of history" and denied that the gas chambers were used to murder Jews (Berry

1). David Duke's official website thoroughly explains his ideology:

> Dr. Duke views Zionist-driven Globalism and its collaborators the greatest
> enemies of mankind. He asserts that a matrix of international criminal banks,

news and entertainment media, as well as Zionist political corruption drives the world to war, to economic exploitation and to destruction of fundamental human rights, health, freedom, human values and independence. ("A Short Biography of Dr. David Duke")

Duke's use of "Dr." is also interesting: he first received an honorary doctorate and subsequently worked for his own doctorate at the Ukrainian Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP). The Anti-Defamation League calls the MAUP a "university of hate" for its anti-Semitic activities and publications ("Ukraine University of Hate"). His minor success in the political sphere while being openly anti-Semitic and critical of Holocaust history showcases how pervasive denial can be, and how dangerous it can be when presented to the general population which might be unaware of Duke's tactics and underlying beliefs. He has also used his former prominence and support in the United States as a way to bolster foreign neo-fascists.

Duke demonstrated how deniers could find political success by using the Holocaust as a political tool. In February 2012, another politician emerged echoing Duke's rhetoric in his quest for political power. Art Jones, a resident of Lyons, Illinois, positioned himself as a hopeful Republican candidate to run against the incumbent Democratic Congressman Dan Lipinski in Illinois' 3rd Congressional District (Swanson 1). Similar to Duke, Jones has neither denied nor repudiated his past affiliation with the neo-Nazi Party (1). In an interview, he openly voiced how he believes the Holocaust is "nothing more than an international extortion racket by the Jews…the blackest lie in history," equating the Holocaust to a financial gain made by Jews and the state of Israel (qtd. in Swanson 1). He continued in this vein, repeating Buchanan's "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome" when he said, "the more survivors, the more lies that are told" (qtd. in Swanson 1). By denying the Holocaust, he essentially is advocating for the recreation of regime that marginalizes the ethnic groups that are so prominent in his district.

Fred Leuchter is another denier who made significant contributions to denial in the form of pseudoscience. In 1988, Leuchter, an self-professed engineer from Boston specializing in constructing execution apparatus, was recruited by another denier, Ernst Zündel to make a trip to Poland (Lipstadt 162). Zündel was on trial in Canada for publishing works of Holocaust denial, and he wanted Leuchter to investigate and testify as an expert witness at his trial that gas chambers scientifically did not exist. Zündel paid Leuchter $35,000 to travel to Poland, where Leuchter spent three das in Auschwitz/Birkenau and one in Majdanek illegally collecting bricks and cement garments – his "forensic samples" – from buildings (Lipstadt 163). He wrote a report of his findings, *The Leuchter Report: An Engineering Report on the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Majdanek, Poland*, and published it with Irving and Zündel's denial publishing houses (Lipstadt 163).

In this report, Leuchter concluded that there had never been any homicidal gassings at these camps, basing this conclusion in what he called his "expert knowledge" of designs for gas chambers and his visual inspections of the remains and of "original drawings and blueprints of some of the facilities" (qtd. in Lipstadt 163). However, when Leuchter tried to have his findings stand up in court as a witness for Zündel, he was thoroughly refuted by a judge. In court, he was exposed as a man "without the qualifications necessary to perform this analysis" and his work was demonstrated in court to "be scientifically and methodologically fallacious" (Lipstadt 181). Author Shelly Shapiro refuted *The Leuchter Report,* thoroughly claiming that "Leuchter's lack of expertise, his purloining of the title of 'engineer' to offer an 'engineering opinion'…demonstrate that *The Leuchter Report* is not a credible scientific analysis" (Shapiro 1). Even though his qualifications and conclusions were deemed inadmissible and scientifically unsound in court, Leuchter is noteworthy for bringing pseudoscience into Holocaust denial.

While the political realm holds much appeal for Holocaust deniers, these individuals also recognize the value in reaching young people with their materials in order to reeducate an entire generation early in the realities of the Holocaust hoax. The Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH) is an organization that attempts to reach out to the younger American audience. Bradley Smith, a Californian involved with denial since the early 1980s, and his fellow denier Mark Weber founded CODOH in 1987 (Lipstadt 184). CODOH has attempted to portray itself in a manner similar to the Institute for Historical Review; Smith works hard to "create the image of a man who wants to encourage reasonable debate among reasonable people" ("Poisoning the Web" 1). According to CODOH's website, its mission is to "break the power of taboo – encouraging intellectual freedom with respect to the Holocaust story" ("Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust"). While attempting to position itself as a space for rational debate regarding controversial aspects of Holocaust denial history, the website itself gives away its true motives: there are numerous links to denial websites, such as the controversial "Elie Wiesel Cons the World," a website dedicated to exposing the notable survivor Wiesel as a Zionist fraud.

CODOH presents as an important example for analysis because of its college outreach program. Smith attempted to put ads in a number of college newspapers regarding his interpretation of the Holocaust. His first ads appeared in April 1991, titled "The Holocaust Story: How Much Is False? The Case for Open Debate" (Atkins 171). Smith was careful to avoid cries for outright denial and revisionism; instead he framed his denial under a quest for rational understanding and inquiry into a historical period. Smith received the attention he craved when about seventy college newspapers actually published these denial ads in the mid-1990s ("Poisoning the Web"). These ads invited students to the CODOH website, where they could be

further bombarded by denial propaganda. The CODOH website urges students to distribute CODOH literature on campus to fight the "Campus Thought Police" or legitimate Holocaust historians ("Poisoning the Web"). Students visiting the website are offered a set of links asking them to "choose a major such as Mathematics, Science, or Politics…by clicking on a major, they are linked to Holocaust denial articles specially tailored to their areas of interest" ("Poisoning the Web"). These ads caused great controversy on college campuses with Jewish groups protesting the editors' choices to include them in the campus newspapers.

CODOH's college outreach is disturbing because of the contention voiced by students, faculty, and university presidents that, "however ugly, the ad constituted an idea, opinion, or viewpoint – part of the broad range of scholarly ideas" (Lipstadt 207). These students disassociated themselves from the advertisement's content, calling it a "viewpoint," unknowingly advancing the cause of Holocaust denial. Lipstadt writes: "that students failed to grasp that the ad contravened all canons of evidence and scholarship was distressing…[they] failed to grasp that the ad was not advocating a radical moral position but a patent untruth" (207). Many students read the ads and editorials denouncing the inclusion of CODOH ads in newspapers. These students may have emerged from the controversy believing that there are in fact two acceptable sides to the Holocaust debate: the "revisionists" and the "establishment historians" (208). This is the danger that the latest iteration of deniers pose: fostering an aura of academic legitimacy to convince an unsuspecting public that there is a real "other side" to a debate, when in fact, these two sides do not possess equal validity.

The techniques of deniers pioneered in America have become important weapons in the arsenal of Holocaust deniers around the world. Most notably, on December 11, 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad convened a conference called "Review of the Holocaust:

Global Vision," colloquially known as the "International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust" ("Iran Hosts Anti-Semitic Hatefest"). According to the ADL, the conference, brought together a "diverse group of anti-Semites, including white supremacists and neo-Nazis, radical anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian activists, and Islamic fundamentalists," as well as notable American deniers like David Duke who gave the keynote address ("Iran hosts Anti-Semitic Hatefest"). Journalist Robert Tait described the conference attendees as an "international cast of established Holocaust deniers and implacable foes of Israel" (1). The conference utilized the American tactic of creating legitimacy by masking its true intentions; the organizers insisted that "their aim was only to scientifically investigate the history of World War II," but the speeches and guests were "universally devoted to either denying that Jews were the victims of genocide…or delegitimizing the State of Israel" ("Iran Hosts Anti-Semitic Hatefest").

President Ahmadinejad and his Foreign Ministry sponsored the conference. There are numerous theories as to what motivated Ahmadinejad's denial. In the realm of politics, perhaps he wanted Iran to "resume the revolutionary role of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini by assuming the leadership position in the Muslim world," so he "attacked Israel [through denial of the Holocaust] as part of an agenda to make Iran an international pariah," enabling it to develop a nuclear program without international interference (Atkins 216). By purporting the cause of Holocaust denial, Ahmadinejad "tapped into the reservoir of resentment against Israel," becoming a hero to the international extreme Right (217). The ADL believes that the conference proves that Iran is intent on giving credibility to the deniers themselves, sending signals that it aims "to position itself as the new nexus of Holocaust denial in the Muslim world" ("Iran Hosts Anti-Semitic Hatefest"). Iran's unabashed acceptance and promotion of Holocaust denial

suggests that the deniers, originally starting out on the fringes of mainstream society, have now garnered serious influence.

The Façade of Legitimacy

As this chapter demonstrates, Holocaust deniers commonly believe in the same falsifications regarding Holocaust history, but their motivations and techniques for garnering attention and legitimacy differ along a spectrum. Starting mainly on the fringes of society, deniers have begun to infiltrate the worlds of both academia and politics with potentially devastating consequences for the history of targeted groups. While Holocaust denial may be an attack of the history of the most traumatic event for Jews, it also poses a significant threat to anyone who believes that "knowledge and memory are among the keystones of our civilization" (Lipstadt 19-20). Over time, the cause of Holocaust denial has united various political forces, such as anti-Semites, anti-Zionists, neo-Nazis, and white supremacists, because the idea of historical distortion of such an important event fits with their political agendas (Atkins 233). The Anti-Defamation League has conducted groundbreaking research on the impacts and effects of Holocaust denial in America, concluding, "although current American attitudes toward the Holocaust seem generally sympathetic and well informed, there is no guarantee that they will remain so" (Anti-Defamation League 2). As deniers become more sophisticated and clandestine in their tactics and motivations, the segment of the population ignorant or unaware of Holocaust history is more susceptible and vulnerable to the falsifications of Holocaust deniers.

Attacks on Holocaust history are not only damaging to Jews; deniers have the potential to dramatically change the way established truth is transmitted between generations. Lipstadt echoes this sentiment when she writes: "Just as the Holocaust was not a tragedy of the Jews but a

tragedy of civilization in which the victims were Jews, so too denial of the Holocaust is not a threat just to Jewish history but a threat to all those who believe in the ultimate power of reason" (Lipstadt 20). Holocaust deniers are motivated not by the quest for historical truth, but by present-day sociopolitical and cultural gains. They aim to reshape history completely to fit within their worldview and goals, rehabilitating persecutors and demonizing victims. If deniers have demonstrated anything, it is the "fragility of memory, truth, reason, and history…the deniers' campaign has been carefully designed to take advantage of those vulnerabilities" (216). When discussing deniers' motivations, Lipstadt describes the danger to the unassuming citizen:

> They [deniers] attempt to project the appearance of being committed to the very values that they in truth adamantly oppose: reason, critical rules of evidence, and historical distinction. It is this that makes Holocaust denial such a threat. The average person who is uninformed will find it difficult to discern their true objectives. (217

Deniers have worked hard to establish an outward veneer that can lead individuals to form conclusions not based in any semblance of historical fact. If they are afforded space in the academic and political debate, they have the potential to pull the center of any debate to a more radical position, creating an environment and culture where fantastical ideas are considered accepted "other sides" to history.

Some day the load we're carrying with us may help someone. But even when we had the books on hand, a long time ago, we didn't use what we got out of them. We went right on insulting the dead. We went right on spitting in the graves of all the poor ones who died before us. We're going to meet a lot of lonely people in the next week and the next month and the next year. And when they ask us what we're doing, you can say, we're remembering. That's where we'll win out in the long run.
– Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

IV. Conclusion

Historians and the Past

Neo-Confederacy and Holocaust denial offer compelling commentary on the nature of history as a field of study and practice. Both phenomena deal with how individuals distort and deny the past purely for their own modern sociopolitical and cultural motives. However, this type of historical manipulation has greater implications beyond the group whose history is being falsified. Neo-Confederates and Holocaust deniers have the potential to transform the ways in which individuals transmit information about events cross-generationally.

As Robert Eaglestone explains, events happen one way – forwards – but are studied and written about in another way: backwards (25). In this manner, history and the act of recording the past is retrospective. Since the act has passed, it is difficult to judge the accuracy of an account of the past by simply revisiting the event itself. The accepted methodology of history dictates that individuals "judge the accuracy of one historian's accounts by comparing them to another historian's accounts" (25). No one historian is able to cover the entirety of the past, opening up the field for a multitude of interpretations. If the historian follows the generally accepted methodology of drawing conclusions based on a convergence of evidence, then the interpretation is considered valid and worthy of analysis. Because knowledge of the past is learned retrospectively, edited, and unverifiable, there is a "difference between the past and history"

(26). History is not a perfect recreation of the past as it exactly happened; it is a name that historians give for the stories told about events in the past.

History is never solely these stories; implicitly or explicitly, any particular history "also embodies a methodology or philosophy of history…any history is an example of how that methodology works" (Eaglestone 30). Deniers and distorters capitalize on the gap between the actual events of the past and how historians interpret them; they know how to manipulate the field of history for their own aims. It is important to recognize that these individuals discussed in depth in this thesis are not historians precisely because their methodology does not follow standards set in the neutral historical process. Thus, their conclusions cannot be seen as having equal validity as those that are well established through an accepted and verified convergence of evidence.

The Contemporary Extremist Movement

The modern iterations of neo-Confederacy and Holocaust denial are reflections of the growing equalization among marginalized groups in America. Sociologist Barbara Perry has linked the contemporary reconstruction of the hate and extremist movement to the "perceived crisis of identity spawned by the Civil Rights Movement" and the inclusion of the marginalized in mainstream American society (Perry 113). Since the 1960s, multiple social movements have voiced their claims to "group autonomy, political inclusion, and freedom from discrimination" (113). What these movements all shared was a commitment to the equal valuation and treatment of all social groups, a distinct challenge to the deeply embedded "ideologies and practices which consciously sought to devalue 'Otherness'" (113). In modern American society, the conceptualization of an "American" is no longer an "uncontested vision"; rather, the meaning of

the American identity and the meaning of "Whiteness" have been brought under the microscope (113). In response to the challenges to the widening of national identity, hate and extremist groups, such as neo-Confederates and Holocaust deniers, have mobilized to fight these disruptions to their ideal social stratification.

While hate and extremist groups in general preferred violence as a means to an end, modern extremist groups are sanitizing the "look" and "feel" of their movement to bring it into the mainstream. The changes in the "presentation, membership, and technologies of hate have enabled the extremists of the twenty-first century to repackage the movement in ways that find resonance and legitimacy among the general public" (Perry 114). The quest for legitimacy makes these extremist groups, in this case neo-Confederacy and Holocaust denial, particularly dangerous, as acceptance in mainstream conversation can convince people that there is truly another side to history, when in fact, this "other side" is not founded on any accepted historical methodology.

Dangers of Denial and Distortion

As Lipstadt explains, "the past and, more important, our perception of it has a powerful impact on the way we respond to contemporary problems" (28). If individuals are presented with a distorted version of the facts, this could influence the way in which people respond to problems of modern society, a main danger of denial. Furthermore, denial and distortion of a group's history has profound psychological and traumatic effects on the targeted group's population. Denial of an individual's or a group's "persecution, degradation, and suffering is the ultimate cruelty – on some level worse than the persecution itself" (28). Denying that the Holocaust is akin to re-traumatizing all survivors and offending all individuals murdered by the Nazi regime.

Distortion of the realities of slavery in America before the Civil War profoundly affects the

conceptualization of African American identity and the struggle for civil rights equality.

Shermer's analysis offers a strong link between the two cases: "if people can be convinced that

the Holocaust never happened, perhaps they can also be persuaded to believe that slavery is a

hoax perpetuated by blacks to coerce Congress to institute affirmative action programs" (16).

Thus, denial and distortion is not simply a Jewish issue or an African-American issue. It is an

attack on all forms of history and how individuals transmit information from the past to the

present and the future.

Countering Denial: Exposing "Men with Matches"

Deniers hope to achieve their goals by achieving legitimacy and recognition as a serious

subsection of academia and planting "seeds of doubt in the younger generation" (Lipstadt 29).

Recognizing the threat of denial and distortion will ultimately help thwart the deniers' efforts.

Thus, it is important to make deniers' methods the subject of study, because their conclusions are

not of any academic or scholarly value. To counter the dangers of denial and distortion, the

responsibility lies with academia – educators, historians, sociologists, and political scientists – to

defend the truth, as these individuals "cannot be beguiled by diversionary arguments and soft

reasoning" (219). It is important for those who understand the dangers of denial to make the truth

available and easily accessible to the general public.

While analysis is a critical tool to combat denial, a dialogue between the two parties does

not present as a viable option, as it would simply play into the goals of the deniers. Dialogue

"presupposes a common ground, a common respect – in this case for truth" (Vidal-Naquet xxiv).

Analysis and discussion of their tactics is acceptable, but debate with these "revisionist"

historians elevates their pseudohistorical claims to the level of acceptable and legitimate history. Deniers long to be considered the "other side" of a debate and they are enemies of the backbone of honest debate: truth and reason. Although direct engagement is not advisable, those who are concerned about the potential ramifications of deniers must be vigilant in protecting the historical tradition.

> Lipstadt offers a strong avenue to counter denial in all forms:
>
> When we witness assaults on truth, our response must be strong, though neither polemical nor emotional. We must educate the broader public and academe about this threat and its historical and ideological roots. We must expose these people for what they are. (221-222)

The ideologies hate and extremist groups endorse "provide a framework within which others can also articulate and legitimate their own antipathies to potential minority victims" (Perry 119). The potential to create an overwhelming culture of hate heightens the necessity to fully understand and analyze the strategies, motivations, and methodologies of deniers and distorters. The establishment of Holocaust museums, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, plays an important role in the effort to combat denial and distortion. While these institutions must be incredibly careful about how they display and transmit information so as to not leave room for deniers to engage in mythmaking, they can be crucial cornerstones in the effort to preserve truth and memory for future generations.

Perry explains how the most effective means of confronting these groups and individuals is by calling for an "ethnical commitment to social justice grounded in justice rather than injustice, inclusion rather than exclusion, respect for rather than resentment of difference" (129). By transforming the culture of denial and distortion into one of rational academic inquiry and investigation, the historical legacies of the targeted groups are preserved and the transmission of

history for future generations is safeguarded. I firmly believe that this is a possibility, and I wrote

this thesis to begin the crucial steps in this transformation: education to end the silence.

Appendix

For my presentaction of my Justice and Peace Studies thesis, I traveled to the University of Notre Dame to participate in the Notre Dame Student Peace Studies Conference as a panelist and presenter. Held on March 30th, 2012, this conference focused on *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in the Modern World*. From the conference website, http://www.nd.edu/~peacecon/, the organizers describe the conference's intentions:

> The 2011-2012 academic year is the 25th anniversary year of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. In recognition of this milestone and the institute's pioneering approach to peace - strategic peacebuilding - the organizers chose the theme *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in the Modern World.*
>
> Today, we live in a complex world characterized by globalization, shifting ideals, technological advancements and changing social relationships. These challenges force us to approach peacebuilding more strategically than ever before. In order to combat violence and structural injustice, we must integrate established methods and traditional skills with research into new and innovative nonviolent solutions as well as with education that fosters global citizenship and a mutual understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all.
>
> We believe that globalization and the rise of social networking provide unique opportunities for individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations and nations to focus both their individual and collective efforts and resources where the world needs them most. With this conference, we hope to explore the interdisciplinary nature of peacebuilding and foster dialogue about how processes at various levels of society, from local to global and from the powerful to the marginalized, can unite to increase peace.
>
> The conference will address a wide variety of topics related to peace studies and peacebuilding, particularly those that address the challenges and opportunities posed by the complexities of the modern world.

I presented my thesis as part of the "Learning from the Holocaust" panel, where I mainly focused on the modern day iteration of denial and distortion and the ramifications of such behavior.

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