

A Description and Analysis of Propaganda Techniques used in Undergraduate Recruiting Materials Published and Distributed by the University of Georgia, College of Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Situation:

At the present time, there are a total of 1,009 students enrolled in the University of Georgia College of Agriculture. Of the total, there are 704 undergraduate students majoring in 20 areas of concentration. This represents an increase of 10 percent over undergraduate enrollment of Winter Quarter, 1970.¹

Estimates from department heads and division chairmen within the College of Agriculture indicate there will be a minimum average of two job openings for every recipient of a bachelor of science in agriculture degree granted by the University of Georgia in 1971.²

Even with the economic depression which has plagued the job market nationwide, agricultural graduates have remained in demand from federal, state and private organizations and institutions. Although the agriculture job market is down somewhat when compared to 1969, the College of Agriculture is unable to provide enough graduates to fill the jobs available. The faculty recruiting committee estimates that the easing of the economic situation will lead to even more requests for University of Georgia graduates.

During 1969, approximately 2,500 baccalaureate degrees in agriculture were awarded by 19 colleges and departments of agriculture in 14 Southern states. The average annual starting salary of those graduates was \$7,524. BSA graduates from the University of Georgia demanded an average annual starting salary that year of \$7,716, a total of \$194 more per year than the Southern average.³

In an effort to fulfill its mission of providing agricultural education for the citizens of Georgia and of providing qualified graduates for employment by federal, state and private organizations and institutions, the College of Agriculture has embarked upon an undergraduate recruiting program designed to produce a minimum average increase in enrollment of 10 percent annually.

Generally, the undergraduate population of the College of Agriculture has come from three sources: (1) accredited high schools; (2) junior college graduates; and (3) transfers from four-year college-level institutions.⁴

In an effort to recruit students from the sources cited, the College of Agriculture has prepared a series of undergraduate recruiting brochures and pamphlets which are distributed to students through high school guidance

counselors, visits to "career day" sessions, and visits by College of Agriculture personnel to various educational institutions. The preparation of recruiting brochures and pamphlets is but one of the activities supervised by the College Faculty Recruiting Committee and conducted by the Office of the Assistant to the Dean and the Office of Director of Resident Instruction.

Purpose and Goals of Study:

The purpose and goals of this study are to describe and analyze the propaganda techniques used to recruit undergraduate students for the University of Georgia College of Agriculture through a series of recruiting brochures and pamphlets published and distributed by the College of Agriculture. By so doing, the Faculty Recruiting Committee, the Director of Resident Instruction and the Assistant to the Dean may be in better position to evaluate the role played by the recruiting materials in the recruiting of undergraduate students. It will also be a goal of this study to determine the usage frequency of certain propaganda techniques and which infrequently used techniques should be considered in future publications.

"Propaganda" has been variously defined by a number of communicators and scholars, and definitions of the term are almost as numerous as the people who have studied the subject.

Alfred McClung Lee defines propaganda as follows:

In the struggle for your mind, propaganda is the use of symbols to forward or oppose something with a public. The symbols have an omnibus character (no single carefully defined meaning), and they are tied to common patternings of thought, emotion, and action. They may be words, pictures, ideas, events, personalities, or whatever. The "something" forwarded or opposed may be an interest, cause, project, institution, commodity, doctrine, class, caste, group, party, or person.⁵

Michael Choukas defines propaganda as "the controlled dissemination of deliberately distorted notions in an effort to induce action favorable to pre-determined ends of special interest groups."⁶

Lindley M. Fraser defines propaganda as "the activity, or the art, of inducing others to behave in a way in which they would not behave in its absence."⁷

Leonard W. Doob defines propaganda as "the attempt to affect the personalities and to control the behavior of individuals toward ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time."⁸

¹Source: "Analysis of Enrollment, Winter Quarter, 1971," prepared by the Office of the Director of Resident Instruction, University of Georgia College of Agriculture.

²Source: Minutes of February 10, 1971, meeting of the Faculty Recruiting Committee, University of Georgia College of Agriculture.

³Source: "Summary of Placement Survey of Southern Colleges of Agriculture" conducted by deans and directors of Southern Colleges of Agriculture, 1970.

⁴Source: A 1970 Survey conducted by the Faculty Recruiting Committee, University of Georgia College of Agriculture.

⁵Alfred McClung Lee, *How to Understand Propaganda* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1952), p. 18.

⁶Michael Choukas, *Propaganda Comes of Age* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965), p. 37.

⁷Lindley M. Fraser, *Propaganda* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 1.

⁸Leonard W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (2nd ed.: Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), p. 240.

Richard M. Hardison defines propaganda as, "the systematic use of emotion-directed communication, psychologically geared to induce pre-determined behavior in an individual or group of individuals. The social value of this act is determined by the methods used and the ends achieved, or both."⁹

For the purposes of this paper, the author prefers to use the Hardison definition of propaganda. In explaining his definition, Hardison comments:

The term "systematic use" implies that the propagandist approaches his task in an organized manner rather than in a haphazard fashion. The term "emotion-directed communication" implies that the appeal is directed more toward the emotions than toward the intellect. The term "psychologically geared" implies that the propagandist has some knowledge, or access to knowledge, concerning psychology. The term "pre-determined behavior" implies that the desired outcome has been determined by the propagandist previous to the communication.¹⁰

This definition also implies, according to Hardison, that propaganda can be used for goals that are of useful social value as well as for goals that are of doubtful social value.

The author prefers the Hardison definition of propaganda over the others cited because in each of the others, an important aspect of propaganda is left out. For example, the Lee definition does not indicate whether propaganda is good or bad. Choukas, by including "deliberately distorted notions," implies there is something bad about propaganda. In addition, the Choukas definition is too narrow. It says that propaganda is aimed only at special interest groups and says nothing of disinterested individuals. In Fraser's definition, he infers that propaganda is dishonest since it induces people to act against their will. Also, much propaganda is aimed at groups which would probably act the same way without the influence of propaganda as they do with it. By using the words "of doubtful value," Doob implies that propaganda serves no useful purpose.

The author is of the opinion that propaganda can be of both good and bad social value. He recognizes the popular connotation that "propaganda" implies something bad or evil. Yet, in a real sense, the term connotes "persuasive communication" which has not suffered from a negative response by most.

Review of Literature:

The author of this paper was unable to find literature directly applicable to the study, although it is not inconceivable that such studies have been conducted at other institutions. The fact that no such literature has been generated on this subject at the University of Georgia College of Agriculture could be due to the fact that it has only been within the past year that a position was created and filled with a professional with major responsibilities in the development of recruiting brochures and pamphlets. In the past, most recruiting literature and the appeals made were left to the discretion of agricultural scientists rather than to a professional communicator.

METHODOLOGY

As already mentioned, this study is devoted only to those undergraduate recruiting brochures and pamphlets published and distributed by the University of Georgia College of Agriculture. The study does not include recruiting material distributed by the College of Agriculture which is published by the various agricultural societies and organizations which make such literature available.

The author selected brochures and pamphlets from the following subject areas: agricultural economics, animal

⁹Richard M. Hardison, "An Analysis of the Propaganda Techniques Used by George Corley Wallace During the 1968 Presidential Campaign" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1970), p. 4.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

science, dairy science, entomology, environmental health science, food science, poultry science and a general college-wide brochure encompassing the entire academic program.

In evaluating copy, headlines and art in each of the pieces of literature, the author used the eight classic propaganda techniques identified by the Institute For Propaganda Analysis.¹¹

Lee, listed the techniques (or devices) as: name-calling, glittering generality, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, band wagon, hot potato, and stalling.

Name-calling, according to Lee, is the use of a bad name or stereotype to describe an opponent and impugning his motives.

All forms of name-calling are intended to simplify the issue by belittling the opposition and diverting attention from the real issues.

Glittering generalities, on the other hand, are "virtue words" used to describe the propagandist and his ideas. This technique is the opposite of name-calling. These prestige-building terms and favor-finding words and phrases are usually more vague, intended to mean all things to all people.

The transfer technique, according to Lee, "carries the authority, sanction and prestige of a respected institution over to something else, in order to make the latter more readily acceptable, or it does the opposite." In short, by use of the transfer technique, a propagandist tries to bask in the light of another's fame and/or good reputation. It is a commonly used device.

The testimonial technique is the use of a leading figure or institution to endorse the propagandist's ideas. A good example of this is the use of motion picture and television stars, athletes and astronauts, politicians and reputable leaders who endorse products and services in the advertising industry.

The plain folks technique is the application of the "common touch" to propaganda messages. By using this technique, the propagandist tries to imply he is a "regular guy" just like the majority of people. Generally, this device is exemplified by the propagandist telling a joke on himself or depicting himself and his ideas as "just one of the common folks."

The band wagon technique is the appeal which urges people to join the happy throng and not be queer outsiders. "Everybody's doing it" is the thought, tending to create "the illusion of universality." The propagandized is given to understand that the proposal, whatever it is, must be right or so many others wouldn't favor it.

The hot potato technique is the attempt "to get something on" one's opponent which will cast disparagement upon him. It is the use of damaging information about one's adversary, whether real or contrived. It is to convict one's opponent through fact or implication. There is questionable ethical integrity in the use of this technique, although the author recognizes its effectiveness as an influencing tool.

The stalling technique involves a play for time, the use of plausible delaying tactics that may permit the opposition to lose vigor, interest or support before the real struggle occurs. Lee says this device may be called the "yes, but" technique whereby a hypocritical supporter of a measure keeps his record clear but achieves his real purpose nevertheless. It is the use of "I'm in favor of your objectives but I want to investigate to make certain your methods are the best by which to achieve them."

In conducting the study, the author carefully reviewed all copy, headlines and art and coded words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs which obviously fell into one of Lee's propaganda techniques.

¹¹Alfred McClung Lee, "The Analysis of Propaganda: A Clinical Summary," *The American Journal of Sociology*, September, 1945, as cited in Curtis D. MacDougall, *Understanding Public Opinion* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1966), p. 96-97.

This task was extremely difficult and quite subjective. In many cases, the assignment of an item to one of the techniques was purely arbitrary; however, the author made every attempt to be consistent. In making the assignments, the author soon discovered it was necessary to establish criteria for each category (using his concept of the thought conveyed). In some cases, when a bona fide decision could not be easily made, the author assigned that particular item to as many as two techniques. This was particularly true in the evaluation of art.

FINDINGS

A numerical accounting, by technique, for copy, headlines and art in each publication is contained in the accompanying set of tables.

Of the 445 devices used in the copy (see Table 1), nearly half (211) were devoted to the transfer technique. A total of 170 glittering generalities were used in the copy for the eight

brochures and pamphlets studied. Name-calling, plain folks, hot potato and stalling techniques were not used at all in the copy. It was quite revealing to see the difference in approach, simply by the techniques used, in each of the brochures.

As opposed to the copy, headlines (see Table 2) made more use of glittering generalities than transfer. Glittering generalities accounted for more than 50 percent of the propaganda devices used in headlines.

The art, too, reflected more use of the glittering generality technique than of the transfer. (See Table 3).

Table 4 reflects the total number of propaganda devices used (combining copy, headlines and art) and indicates that transfer and glittering generality devices were most used. It also reflects that no use whatsoever was made of the name-calling, hot potato or stalling devices, which should have been expected. The lack of these "negative" appeals indicates that in each case, the brochure or pamphlet was based on "positive" appeals.

TABLE 1
COPY

| | Glit. | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| | N-C | Gen. | Trans. | Test | PF | BW | HP | Stall | Total |
| AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS | - | 11 | 24 | 1 | - | 5 | - | - | 41 |
| ANIMAL SCIENCE | - | 26 | 25 | 5 | - | 9 | - | - | 65 |
| DAIRY SCIENCE | - | 7 | 25 | 3 | - | 4 | - | - | 39 |
| ENTOMOLOGY | - | 13 | 10 | 11 | - | 2 | - | - | 36 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE | - | 8 | 3 | - | - | 3 | - | - | 14 |
| FOOD SCIENCE | - | 20 | 10 | 41 | - | 1 | - | - | 35 |
| GENERAL | - | 62 | 60 | - | - | 10 | - | - | 132 |
| POULTRY SCIENCE | - | 23 | 54 | 6 | - | - | - | - | 83 |
| TOTAL | - | 170 | 211 | 30 | - | 34 | - | - | 445 |

N-C - Name Calling
Glit. Gen. - Glittering Generality
Trans. - Transfer
Test - Testimonial

PF - Plain Folks
BW - Band Wagon
HP - Hot Potato
Stall - Stalling

TABLE 2
HEADLINES

| | Glit. | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| | N-C | Gen. | Trans. | Test | PF | BW | HP | Stall | Total |
| AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS | - | 2 | 2 | 3 | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| ANIMAL SCIENCE | - | 7 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 9 |
| DAIRY SCIENCE | - | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| ENTOMOLOGY | - | 8 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 12 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE | - | 9 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | 13 |
| FOOD SCIENCE | - | 5 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 10 |
| GENERAL | - | 6 | 8 | 3 | - | - | - | - | 17 |
| POULTRY SCIENCE | - | 5 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 11 |
| TOTAL | - | 45 | 30 | 10 | - | 1 | - | - | 86 |

N-C - Name Calling
Glit. Gen. - Glittering Generality
Trans. - Transfer
Test - Testimonial

PF - Plain Folks
BW - Band Wagon
HP - Hot Potato
Stall - Stalling

TABLE 3
ART

| | Glit. | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| | N-C | Gen. | Trans. | Test | PF | BW | HP | Stall | Total |
| AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS | - | 2 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 6 |
| ANIMAL SCIENCE | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 7 |
| DAIRY SCIENCE | - | - | 1 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | 7 |
| ENTOMOLOGY | - | 4 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 16 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE | - | 12 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 16 |
| FOOD SCIENCE | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| GENERAL | - | 12 | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | 18 |
| POULTRY SCIENCE | - | - | 5 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| TOTAL | - | 33 | 29 | 10 | 4 | 3 | - | - | 79 |

NC - Name Calling
Glit. Gen. - Glittering Generality
Trans. - Transfer
Test - Testimonial

PF - Plain Folks
BW - Band Wagon
HP - Hot Potato
Stall - Stalling

TABLE 4
TOTAL PROPAGANDA DEVICES
(including copy, headlines, and art)

| | Glit. | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| | N-C | Gen. | Trans. | Test | PF | BW | HP | Stall | Total |
| AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS | - | 15 | 29 | 4 | 1 | 5 | - | - | 54 |
| ANIMAL SCIENCE | - | 35 | 29 | 6 | 1 | 10 | - | - | 81 |
| DAIRY SCIENCE | - | 10 | 29 | 9 | 1 | 4 | - | - | 53 |
| ENTOMOLOGY | - | 25 | 21 | 13 | 1 | 4 | - | - | 64 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE | - | 29 | 10 | 1 | - | 3 | - | - | 43 |
| FOOD SCIENCE | - | 26 | 14 | 5 | - | 2 | - | - | 47 |
| GENERAL | - | 80 | 74 | 3 | - | 10 | - | - | 167 |
| POULTRY SCIENCE | - | 28 | 64 | 9 | - | - | - | - | 101 |
| TOTAL | - | 248 | 270 | 50 | 4 | 38 | - | - | 610 |

N-C - Name Calling
Glit. Gen. - Glittering Generality
Trans. - Transfer
Test - Testimonial

PF - Plain Folks
BW - Band Wagon
HP - Hot Potato
Stall - Stalling

An interesting secondary study developed when the author discovered the frequent use of the transfer technique. Because agricultural science has not been generally recognized as one of the "hard" sciences, the author assumed that frequent use of the transfer technique was designed to equate agricultural science with the "hard" sciences.

To test that hypothesis, the author counted the number of times "science" and "research" and their derivatives were used in the copy. He counted the total number of words in copy, headlines, and cutlines in each publication, then divided by the number of times "science" and "research" were used to establish frequency of use. The study was quite revealing. The author did not include, in this secondary study, words which referred to the "hard" sciences. He counted only the use of "science" and "research" and their derivatives.

Table 5 indicates the results of the secondary study. It shows that, on the average, "science" or "research" or their derivatives were used once in every 48 words. Agricultural economics had the lowest ration (only once in every 95 words) while food science had the highest ratio (once every 30 words).

TABLE 5
USE OF "SCIENCE AND RESEARCH"
(including derivatives)

| | Approx. No. of Words (heads & cutlines) | Science | Research | Total Frequency | |
|------------------------------|--|---------|----------|-----------------|------|
| AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS | 1,045 | 8 | 3 | 11 | 1:95 |
| ANIMAL SCIENCE | 1,580 | 25 | 9 | 34 | 1:46 |
| DAIRY SCIENCE | 677 | 17 | 3 | 20 | 1:39 |
| ENTOMOLOGY | 768 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 1:64 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE | 431 | 14 | - | 14 | 1:31 |
| FOOD SCIENCE | 696 | 22 | 1 | 23 | 1:30 |
| GENERAL | 3,334 | 52 | 4 | 56 | 1:60 |
| POULTRY SCIENCE | 1,403 | 30 | 9 | 39 | 1:36 |
| TOTAL | 9,934 | 176 | 33 | 209 | 1:48 |

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, the author concludes that the College of Agriculture is taking advantage of only five of the eight propaganda techniques used to evaluate undergraduate recruiting brochures and pamphlets.

The glittering generality and transfer techniques are the most used, while the plain folks technique was used on only four occasions, and these were in the art.

The study also indicates that an attempt, whether intentional or not, has been made to equate agricultural science with the "hard sciences." This is a valid approach and one which should be continued in future publications.

The author would not recommend the use of the name-calling, hot potato and stalling techniques in any recruiting literature. As mentioned earlier, these appear to be "negative" approaches which the author thinks would be of little value in recruiting programs.

It is the author's opinion that two of the brochures studied contain a reasonable balance of propaganda techniques, namely, the entomology pamphlet and the general brochure.

It is impossible to draw further conclusions without the benefit of additional study. In general, however, it is safe to say the College of Agriculture has made use of the propaganda devices which will best fit the College's particular situation. This is not to say, however, that better use cannot be made of the propaganda techniques.

Without data which reveal the effectiveness of the various propaganda techniques on the particular audience for which a specific recruiting piece is intended, it is impossible to determine the implications of this study. For example, should it be found through further study that high school sophomores and juniors are particularly influenced by testimonials in recruiting pieces, then the College of Agriculture has missed the boat.

On the other hand, if further study indicates the glittering generality and transfer techniques have a greater persuasive influence on high school students, the College of Agriculture has been using the proper appeals.

Further study on the effectiveness of the propaganda techniques on various age groups could also indicate whether or not separate literature should be developed for recruiting high school students as opposed to college-level students. Should different appeals be made to different levels of education?

In addition, while it would be extremely helpful to know which of the techniques influences most, that knowledge would not necessarily dictate which method of reaching various groups of students should be used. Additional study on the effectiveness of different approaches in each of the techniques for a particular audience would be quite helpful in determining content of recruiting materials.



Dr. R. B. Flood, right, Head of the Department of Agriculture at Central Missouri State College, congratulates Dr. Thomas D. Edmunds, left, upon being chosen one of 15 outstanding living graduates of the School of Applied Sciences and Technology as part of the College's 1970-71 Centennial celebration. Dr. Edmunds, a 1956 graduate of the College, is now CMSC Vice President for Student Affairs.