

Institution: University of Kent
Unit of Assessment: D30 History
Title of case study: Public understandings of propaganda, power and persuasion
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study refers to civil society, cultural life, public discourse and education. As an international authority on propaganda and persuasion, David Welch has raised public understanding of this key component of contemporary life across a number of countries through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as lead consultant on three major television series on propaganda and war commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2010-13). • Acting as co-curator and historical consultant for two exhibitions: the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s ‘State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda’ (2009) and the British Library’s ‘Propaganda: Power and Persuasion’, and author of the accompanying book (2013). <p>The television series has been broadcast in five countries and achieved global viewing figures in excess of 7 million. Public attention to the museum exhibitions was equally significant with 384,000 people visiting the Holocaust Memorial exhibition in its first year and 68,250 that at the British Library. Reactions to these contributions have been overwhelmingly positive, revealing the reach and significance of the impact.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research was carried out by David Welch (Professor of Modern History 1992-) who has an international reputation as a leading expert in the field of propaganda studies. In this REF assessment period, his expertise has been targeted at consolidating his research into the relationship between propaganda, war and the state in the twentieth century. His research has drawn upon a wide range of evidence including film, radio, television, newspapers, state documents, art, cartoons and posters from an equally broad range of archives across the world. In particular, Welch’s research has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plotted the ways in which propaganda and warfare have become inseparable companions in the functioning of the modern nation/industrial state. • Explored the ways in which propaganda, while maligned as a label and viewed as a synonym for misrepresentation and falsehood, actually performs a critical function of the state in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. • Considered the strengths and weaknesses of propaganda techniques and messages. • Investigated the extent to which, in the total wars of the twentieth century, propaganda was actually produced by the state or by private organisations working under the loose supervision of the state. • Explored the concept of the role played by propaganda in asymmetric warfare in the twenty-first century. • Demonstrated the effects of technological developments on communication and the political function of propaganda within different historical contexts. • Considered the historical development and the iconography surrounding the idea of a ‘just war’. • Examined the deployment of history and attendant manipulation of historical memory as a propaganda tool. • Explored propaganda as an agent of reinforcement by looking at a wide range of propaganda artefacts such as stamps, coins, place names etc. • Reappraised previous simplistic assumptions by analysing ‘resistance’ or ‘immunity’ to propaganda. <p>The research has been disseminated through a number of outputs including a monograph, edited volumes and contributions to a multi-authored volume and journal articles. (See Section 3 below for this REF period.) The research was also disseminated through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s documentary series and in the curating of the British Library exhibition, ‘Propaganda: Power and Persuasion’ (May-September 2013) and the accompanying book which represents a major research output in its own right.</p>

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. D. Welch, 'Représentations de L'ennemi et Films de Propagande Durant la Première et la Seconds Guerre Mondiales', in Philippe Kaenel and François Vallotton (eds), *Les images en guerre (1914-1945) De la Suisse à l'Europe* (Antipodes, 2008), pp.109-122.
2. D. Welch, 'The Military, the Media and the Propaganda War in Northern Ireland', in P. Dennis & J. Grey (eds), *The Military and the Media: the 2008 Chief of Army Military History Conference* (Australian Military History Publications, 2009), pp. 158-173.
3. D. Welch and Joanne Fox (eds), *Justifying War. Propaganda, Politics and War in the Modern Age* (Palgrave, 2012). This volume was very positively reviewed in the *Journal for Military History*, Vol. 77, No. 1, January 2013.
4. D. Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion*: REF2 Output 3 (EP-31203). Antony Beevor referred to this publication as 'excellent' in his review for the *Sunday Times*, 12 May 2013.
5. D. Welch (ed.), *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion. From World War I to WikiLeaks*: REF2 Output 4 (EP-31207)
6. D. Welch et al (eds.), *The First World War: Propaganda and Recruitment*, an online collection of primary sources and expert commentary. Welch's contribution included the essay 'German Propaganda and World War I' and an overview of the website, 'Nature and Scope'. The website went live in November 2013.

Welch's work has become a standard point of reference for academics working on propaganda and persuasion.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

As a specialist in modern history and propaganda with a particular strength in relating historical examples to contemporary contexts, Welch's work has become an important primary reference point for a number of non-HEI agencies interested in the ever-widening public debate on the flow of information and attempts to influence opinion.

Broadcast Media

Because of his international research profile in this area, Welch was approached in 2010 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to serve as historical consultant and on-air commentator for an ambitious multi-series project entitled [Love, Hate and Propaganda](#). Designed to showcase the role of propaganda and war in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries within specific contexts, three commissioned series were produced between 2010-2013 (*The Second World War*, *The Cold War*, *The War on Terror*). As Canada's state broadcaster, CBC's mission in producing these programmes was to educate a target audience within the 17-30 age group about the role played by propaganda in modern history. Welch's expertise shaped the programme content by suggesting that propaganda was not necessarily a cancer on the body politic but rather a means of persuasion practised by governments of all ideological leanings – including democracies. The overarching intention of the project was to challenge preconceptions of propaganda and ensure that the audience came to an understanding of propaganda as an all-persuasive element in public discourse and not simply as a method of mass brainwashing.

Exhibitions

From 2008, Welch has acted as historical consultant on a number of museum and library projects, most notably as a consultant historian for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington D.C.). Welch assisted the board of Directors and Curators in the shaping of the 2009 exhibition, ['State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda'](#) by interacting with the museum's team and producing a series of recommendations based on its initial proposal.

In 2012, Welch was approached by the British Library to co-curate a special summer exhibition on propaganda (May – September 2013). ['Propaganda: Power and Persuasion'](#) was planned as 'a ground breaking exhibition' which sought to demonstrate Welch's belief that propaganda is a 'much maligned and misunderstood' concept [3.4]. Welch acted as the historical consultant and shaped the structure and themes of both the exhibition and book and suggested individual case studies and artefacts to be included. The exhibition challenged previously-held assumptions about propaganda, the media and the state. In effect, the exhibition and the accompanying book represented a distillation of Welch's work to date on the relationship between politics,

Impact case study (REF3b)

propaganda and public opinion, changing technology and different types of warfare. By exploring a wide range of exhibits from around the world, visitors to the exhibition, and readers of the accompanying book, were invited to look critically at messages, methods, and media, discovering more about the use of propaganda through time and across cultures. In addition, the exhibition was deliberately designed to ensure public engagement through a range of supporting events. These included open lectures with leading thinkers on public discourse such as [Noam Chomsky](#) (19 March 2013) and events aimed at [schools and colleges](#). Welch gave a dedicated public lecture to schoolteachers and educators at the British Library (['Picturing Propaganda. A Study Day'](#), 1 June 2013) following which they were given a special viewing of the exhibition. Welch was also involved in a public debate with journalists and military figures on the relationship between 'war, media and propaganda' in modern history including the 'war on terror' (['Justifying War'](#), 21 June 2013).

Reach

In its first year the Holocaust Museum exhibition was visited by 384,000 people and has been reshaped into a permanent [online exhibition](#) which has given it worldwide and on-going reach. The website is available in Arabic, Farsi, Italian, Spanish and Turkish and received 1,659,000 visits in its first year and 900,000 visits in 2010. [5.1]

The British Library's 'Propaganda: Power and Persuasion' exhibition (May-September 2013) had a target of 50,000 visitors, but achieved 68,250 of which 5,044 were school or HE group visits. (Monthly average: 13,650). [5.9]

The first series of *Love, Hate and Propaganda, Selling World War II*, consisted of 6 one hour episodes and attracted 5.2 million Canadian viewers (3.76 million English-speaking; 1.5 million French-speaking). There were 94,981 further streams of this programme through the digital media site and 245,170 hits on the dedicated website related to the series. The second set of programmes, aired in 2011 and entitled ***The Cold War***, featured 4 one hour television programmes with a total number of 1,434,000 viewers (702,000 English; 732,000 French-speaking). This series was released to international markets in China, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. The website streamed full episodes a further 40,938 times, and received a total of 251,646 hits. In December 2012, the third series, ***The War on Terror***, consisting of 2 one hour television programmes was broadcast and has been accessed by approximately 750,000 people. [5.5] (Work has begun on a fourth series to commemorate the 100th anniversary of First World War).

School and college-age students were identified as a key target audience. To date, 1.7 million English-speaking and 374,000 French-speaking students have viewed *Selling World War Two*, while 870,000 English-speaking and 191,400 French-speaking students watched the set of programmes on *The Cold War* through a special agreement which saw the series streamed to Canadian educational institutions. [5.5]

Significance

The Holocaust Museum exhibition formed the basis for an [online workshop for teachers](#) in 2011, and was commented upon positively within the museum world. A peer review site stated that it was 'highly effective, visually engaging and rigorously researched'; 'a masterful exhibition... [it] should be remembered as one of the best attempts to do this [understand Nazi propaganda]'. [5.2] It was also appreciated by the wider public. A Maryland visitor stated that the 'propaganda exhibit...was VERY informative, and generated good conversation between me and my boyfriend'; a Rhode Island visitor stated that the exhibition 'should make everyone think', whilst a South Carolina resident recorded, 'I had never understood how the holocaust could happen, but after visiting the propaganda exhibit I can see how something so terrible can start'. [5.4] The reviewer for the Washington Post (11 February 2009) remarked that 'the depth of information available is...remarkable'. [5.3.]

The CBC series have also made a significant impact. The Canadian journal *National Post* (16 November 2011) deemed the Cold War series 'compelling', and *The Globe and Mail* (17 November 2011) review concluded: 'Any thinking person can see how "the global fight for your mind" continues, using similar tactics but different media, today' thus revealing that the intention

Impact case study (REF3b)

to show continuities against different contexts was communicated. [5.6; 5.7]

In addition to public broadcasts, *Love, Hate and Propaganda* was also presented in Canadian schools and universities as an educational tool. Welch helped CBC establish a state-of-the-art [online website](#) for educational purposes aimed at schools and universities. This contained a lively interactive content including [competitions and prizes](#) that, for example, encouraged secondary and post-secondary students to design their own propaganda posters. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation judged the learning resources as a 'highly recommended resource for educators' and added that 'students in Grades 11 and 12 are guaranteed to find the content relevant and engaging'. [5.8]

The 'Propaganda: Power and Persuasion' exhibition produced a deep impact provoking visitors to reconsider their preconceptions, as is evident from reviews and tweets regarding the exhibition. The *New Statesman* described it as 'provocative exhibition... [which provides a] compelling argument'; this was echoed in the *Economist*, which referred to 'this absorbing exhibition', and the *Creative Review*, which described it as 'a vast and thought provoking collection'. The *Exhibitionologist* stated that 'the exhibition changed my perceptions and made me ask myself what I think propaganda is'. [5.10; 5.11; 5.12; 5.13] Such responses were echoed in the tweets of visitors: 'so engrossing that I only got round the first two bits in the hour before it closed. Return visit needed'; 'I thought I knew all about propaganda but the BL exhibition brings it to a whole new level'; 'Thoroughly thought provoking, redefined my view of what propaganda is'; 'Thought-provoking, essential, riveting, enlightening, timeless – urge you to go'. [5.14]

Welch has therefore made a highly important contribution to education and public understandings of a crucial method of modern communication, helping people to evaluate its influence on their own lives.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Information relating to the 'State of Deception' exhibition, Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum:

1. Visitor numbers and website hits can be found in the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum annual reports for [2009/10](#), pp.2-3 and [2010/11](#), p.11.
2. Mara Kurlandsky, '[State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda](#)', *ExhibitFiles.org*, 4 March 2011
3. Philip Kennicott, '[Hitler's Terrible Weapon: Publicity](#)', *Washington Post*, 11 February 2009
4. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Tripadvisor Reviews: [April 2012](#), [11 September 2012](#), [24 September 2012](#)

Information and resources relating to the CBC TV series 'Love, Hate and Propaganda':

5. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation viewing figures and DVD sales figures and website hits supplied by Kevin Chlebovec, Sales Executive, CBC Learning
6. Scott Stinson, '[CBC takes on the Cold War with Love, Hate & Propaganda while NBC gives cold shoulders to Community](#)', *National Post*, 16 November 2011
7. John Doyle, '[The heartbreaking truth about the war for our minds](#)', *The Globe and Mail*, 17 November 2011
8. Janet Nicol, '[Learning resource review: Love, Hate and Propaganda](#)', *Teacher Newsmagazine*, Volume 23, Number 4, Jan./Feb. 2011

Information on the public exhibition 'Propaganda: Power and Persuasion' at the British Library:

9. Email correspondence with Ian Cooke, British Library, confirming visitor numbers for the exhibition
10. En Liang Khong, '[Propaganda: Power and Persuasion at the British Library: Reading between the lines](#)', *New Statesman*, 7 June 2013
11. '[Read between the lines](#)', *The Economist*, 20 May 2013
12. Rachael Steven, '[Propaganda: Power and Persuasion](#)', *Creative Review*, 16 May 2013
13. '[Review – Propaganda, Power and Persuasion](#)', *The Exhibitionologist*, 24 July 2013
14. Tweets relating to the exhibition on [14 June](#), [28 June](#), [10 July](#) and [17 July](#) 2013 (see also [#blpropaganda](#) May – July 2013)