The 1932 Presidential Election: The Tough-Minded Common-Man and the Virtuous Savior

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In his First Inaugural Address on March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) famously proclaimed that it was his "firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."[1] Using an inspirational tone he continued, as he had throughout his campaign, to emphasize that hope in dark economic times required "a leadership of frankness and vigor…met with that understanding and support of the people."[2] As the nation listened to his words, FDR solidified his carefully constructed self-image as a tough-minded common-man trumping Herbert Hoover's seemingly antiquated virtuous savior image. FDR's sweeping victory during the 1932 election showed quite clearly that the tough-minded common-man image made more sense than Hoover's virtuous savior narrative. In the context of the Great Depression and Prohibition, weary Americans looked toward FDR's proactive depiction of leadership revealing that Hoover's principles and words were just not enough to confront the nation's problems. FDR's victory emphasized an alignment with "common difficulties" of the people and promised a mental

[1] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address" (speech, U.S. Presidential Inauguration, March 4, 1933), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=14473&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[2] Ibid.

toughness aimed at approaching leadership with "a candor and decision" necessary to combat the economic and social perils fostered by the context of the Great Depression and Prohibition.[3]

Previous historians have approached the 1932 presidential election between Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover and Democratic candidate Franklin Roosevelt using a more traditional political lens. Donald Richie described it as the election that served to unify the Democratic Party through the sweeping Democratic defeat of the Republican incumbent.[4] Davis Houck looked to Roosevelt's Commonwealth Club campaign address to assess the influence of Roosevelt's political advisors on the speech's more progressive economic focus and alignment with the actual New Deal policies.[5] Finally, demographic historian David Darmofal examined the 1932 election through a more empirical perspective utilizing spatial analysis techniques to describe the political geography and voting patterns during the election.[6] Although these historians have made significant contributions to understanding the context of this election, they overlook the influence of a political manhood narrative that can provide additional insight into Roosevelt's 1932 victory. Historians focusing directly on manhood provide groundwork for several related manhood themes, the self-made man, common-man, toughness, and physicality, but have not examined these themes in the context of the 1932 election.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Donald A. Richie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2007), 1-263.

[5] Davis W. Houck, "FDR's Commonwealth Club Address: Redefining Individualism, Adjudicating Greatness," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 262. Houck contrasts Richie's claim by explaining that Roosevelt had almost no involvement in writing the speech and that the speech was more of a campaign blunder made by Roosevelt's chief campaign advisor Raymond Moley.

[6] David Darmofal, "The Political Geography of the New Deal Realignment," *American Politics Research* 36 (2008): 932-961.

Richie argues that Hoover expected the nomination for the 1932 presidential ticket and espoused a strong fear-based campaign rhetoric that the people needed to ride out the economic storm of the Great Depression without a change in leadership. According to Richie, the observers can best analyze the outcome of the 1932 election as a historical phenomenon derived from FDR's charisma and generalized audience appeal.[7] Alleging that Roosevelt's campaign speeches used vague terms to plot solutions to the Great Depression, Richie argues that FDR's electoral victory was the result of successfully pitting the social ills of the Great Depression on Hoover's presidency. Roosevelt's campaign theme of national hope in the midst of the Great Depression, a seemingly hopeless situation, was the most effective campaign tactic during the election.[8]

Davis Houck also examined the 1932 election through a more traditional political perspective, redefining the influence of Roosevelt's famous Commonwealth Club address given during a campaign stop in San Francisco. Houck discusses the way this speech most closely aligned with future New Deal polices and marked a significant turning point in the election as it begrudgingly won Roosevelt the votes of more progressive aligned Republican senators.[9] Although previous historians, like Richie, describe this speech as one of FDR's more progressive and economically focused addresses, Houck claims that FDR had very little involvement in the speech's construction and actually received a tepid response from the audience.[10]

David Darmofal analyzed the 1932 election through a more empirical perspective, overlooking the candidates in favor of a spatial analysis that utilized statistical data to describe the voting patterns and political geography that gave pollsters the

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[7] Richie, 132-133. Richie suggests that Roosevelt tactically chose when to discuss contemptuous issues based upon which voters were in the audience.

[8] Richie, 136. Richie contrasts Hoover's exasperated hopeless tone to showcase the effectiveness of FDR's campaign theme of hope.

[9] Houck, 259-260.

[10] Richie, 132. Richie explains the Commonwealth Club Address as revealing Roosevelt's progressivism.

impression of Hoover's lead during the last few weeks of the election.[11] Darmofal's work differs from previous studies in that it attributes Hoover's slight rise in the polls to inaccurate data; the result of the newness of scientific polling not unemployed voters.[12] Questioning the precision of scientific polling during this election, Darmofal argues against previous historians, such as Richie, who portrayed Roosevelt's sweeping victory as a surprise attributed to the support of unemployed voters not reflected in campaign polls.[13]

Although Richie, Houck, and Darmofal provide contextual analysis of the 1932 election and touch on some major campaign themes, they overlook an important manhood narrative underlying the presidential race. For example, Richie describes Hoover as the weaker candidate and addresses Roosevelt's generalized approach to campaign issues. However, he dismisses the language of manhood that served to align public perception of emotional weakness while aiding FDR's tough-minded common-man campaign persona by showing his ability to provide hope through decisive action and empathy.[14] Houck's analysis of FDR's Commonwealth Club Address clearly identifies one of Roosevelt's major critiques: his generalized approach to national issues that served to depict him as a demagogic leader. Still, Houck underestimates the influence of political manhood narratives that contrasted FDR, the demagogic leader, to Hoover, the respectable virtuous male savior.[15] Darmofal's main argument also overlooks the influence of manhood on FDR's common-man persona as well as his

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[11] Darmofal, 934.

[12] Richie, 151. Richie attributes Hoover's slight rise in late polls to media perception led by Hoover's party officials.

[13] Darmofal, 959. Darmofal argues unemployed status of voters didn't influence voting patterns and described prior Republican voting and non-prior Republican voting as having impeded Democratic voting.

[14] Richie, 136. Richie describes Hoover as reflecting indignation and exhaustion from the rapid pace of campaigning that Roosevelt set.

[15] Houck, 276-277.

alignment with struggling employed and possibly unemployed voters.[16]

Previous historians studying manhood identify several key themes related to the 1932 election: the self-made man, virtue, toughness, and physicality, while also suggesting their importance to a political manhood narrative throughout U.S. history. Catherine Allgor described the self-made man through a discussion of "republican virtue" campaign rhetoric used during the 1828 election to ease fears that the United States of America was in danger of becoming less democratic and more aristocratic like the European monarchies at that time.[17] Although Allgor suggests that this self-made manhood would later change once elected, Andrew Jackson's alignment with "republican virtue" and "the people" helped connect the notion of "republican virtue" with the common-man.[18] Elizabeth Varon also discussed male virtue describing the way Whig women involved with politics enhanced the appearance of male virtue with respectability. Varon claims that the image of virtue and moral restraint provided by Whig women legitimized male political gatherings.[19] In addition, Michael Pierson addressed male moral restraint showing that the careful construction of Republican candidate John Fremont's elopement revealed a paradoxical manhood narrative that simultaneously evoked ideals of virtuous manhood by suggesting men exercise public restraint while incorporating aggression in the context of household leadership. [20] Rebecca Edwards builds upon Pierson's

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[16] Darmofal, 959.

[17] Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: in Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2000), 146.

[18] Ibid., 225. The manhood issue of republican virtue played out through a "petticoat war" regarding John Eaton's wife who was described as tainting male virtue with her sexual allure and promiscuity.

[19] Elizabeth R. Varon, "Tippecanoe and the Ladies, too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 502.

[20] Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics.* (Chapel Hill: University of

paradoxical political manhood by highlighting male reform and domesticity as a part of the moral aspect of manhood. She argues that President Grover Cleveland's marriage in office connected female domesticity with a new political male culture that imparted moral reform to refine and bring domestic virtue to political campaign activities.[21]

Other historians have looked at the physicality of manhood in the context of politics suggesting a connection between male virtue and physicality. Gail Bederman contributes by addressing characteristics of male physicality—aggression, sexuality, and primitive strength.[22] Bederman's study of Theodore Roosevelt's 1899 "Strenuous Life" speech incorporates physicality as an idealized trait of manhood suggesting that turn-of-the-century concerns with over-civilization along with a Darwinian understanding of imperialism reformulated prior descriptions of manhood revering male aggression, sexuality, and civilization in addition to earlier notions of male virtue and morality. Kevin Murphy touches upon the intrinsic linkage between male virtue, moral reform, and physicality, describing toughness as an ideal leadership trait in turn-of-the-century political manhood. The convergence of 1896 street parades in Murphy's discussion identifies militarism as a masculine virtue meant to combat progressive era concerns with

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North Carolina Press, 2003), 121-122. Pierson argues that the contradiction between moral restraint and unrestrained command of the household paradoxically emerged to recast the existing self-made manhood narrative.

[21] Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 67-68. Cleveland's idealized domesticity extended to campaign events as women's involvement in campaign activities increased and men attempted to drink less and minimized public events in favor of more sophisticated debates and speeches.

[22] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995, 193.

effeminacy and over-civilization.[23] Murphy suggests that elite men used the physicality of militaristic order to impart moral reform and virtue on the lower classes. By professionalizing moral reform through a physical militaristic order, Murphy, like Bederman, revealed a progression of manhood through which physical toughness and moral reform converged to construct a turn-of-the-century manhood narrative. Historian K.A. Courdileone studied later versions of manhood to describe the 1952 and 1956 elections as a conflict between intellectual softness and masculine toughness, showing earlier versions of masculine toughness that started to emerge during the 1932 election as a prominent male trait carried on through the cold war crisis.[24]

Historians studying Great Depression and World War II manhood noted the reemergence of the common-man, suggesting that wartime focus on physicality reestablished its importance in political manhood narratives. Cristina S. Jarvis extended this discussion, adding to turn-of-the-century political manhood narratives that emphasized the 1930s notion of physical manhood. Jarvis argues that the concept of physicality in manhood emerged during the Great Depression context of the 1930s to challenge pre-existing versions of manhood that depicted the ideal man through characteristics of virtue and household status as a breadwinner.[25] Jarvis also described the presidency of FDR as an additional contribution to manhood narratives showing that by avoiding discussions of his physical limitations in the media, FDR separated notions of the physical male body from the body politic. This separation offered a symbolic American body politic defined through images of masculine morality—strength, honor, courage, and

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[23] Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood, Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 93-102.

[24] K.A. Courdileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91-92.

[25] Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 2004), 18.

attractiveness. [26] Although Jarvis accurately articulates the importance of masculine toughness to the 1932 election, her discussion falls short describing FDR only through the lens of physicality and overlooking the mental component of toughness and decisive action central to FDR's campaign self-image. Jarvis also downplays masculine respectability, suggesting that physicality was linked to morality which fails to reconcile the different elements of virtue in FDR's common-man image and Hoover's campaign projection as the nation's virtuous protector. Looking at manhood in a more complete manner that recognizes the Great Depression and Prohibition campaign issues during the 1932 election, we see a more complex convergence of the common-man, male virtue, toughness, and physicality.

The 1932 election between Republican incumbent, Herbert Hoover, and Democratic candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, built upon these preexisting political manhood discussions to reveal that each candidate used gendered language to describe themselves and their opponent in the context of the Great Depression and Prohibition. During the election, FDR portrayed himself as the common-man whose mental toughness and decisive action would lead the country out of the Great Depression. Conversely, he described his opponent, Hoover, as lacking male virtue and depicted him as an out of touch elite, defensive and distanced from the immediate needs of the people. Hoover's experience as the current president of the United States allowed him to project a self-image as the nation's virtuous savior whose decisive male leadership and experienced authority protected the people from the perils of the Great Depression and upheld the virtue of temperance when it came to Prohibition. Hoover also portrayed FDR as physically and mentally weak, lacking the virtue and experienced male leadership needed for the presidential office.

Despite FDR's wealth and elite social status, during the election he described himself as a man of the people, empathizing and understanding the needs of the common-man, but also leading with a mental toughness and decisive action

[26] Ibid., 32. Jarvis argues that the symbolic American body politic also extended through World War II images of muscular manhood.

intended to combat national issues. During one of FDR's early radio addresses, he used images of equity and collaboration to describe his common-manhood persona. During this radio address, he argued that he held equal status with the people saying, "I do not want to feel that I am addressing an audience of Democrats…I speak merely as a Democrat myself."[27] In the context of Republican critiques that claimed "it was his name, his wealth, and his social and family influence" that supported his career, the emphasis FDR placed on being "merely" a Democrat shows him crafting a common-man persona that deemphasized his political status to portray him on an equal platform as the people.[28] He also extended this common-manhood persona when describing the economic challenges of the Great Depression showing them as "too serious to be viewed through partisan eyes for partisan purposes."[29] Knowing that FDR came from a wealthy family and held significant economic and political power, the weight he placed on approaching the seriousness of the nation's issues with an equal societal platform incorporated his common-man image of empathy and action. By invoking a manhood narrative of social equality and empathy in the midst of the Great Depression crisis, FDR depicted himself as a common-man equally struggling and fighting for solutions in the context of an economic depression and national debate about Prohibition.

In addition to aligning his manhood image with the needs of the common-man, FDR also defined his common-man persona in terms of leadership qualities. During the *Forgotten Man*, FDR emphasized a democratic bottom-up approach toward leadership that aimed at helping out the proverbial "little fellow" while fighting a national economic crisis. To describe this decisive male leadership, FDR invoked a military metaphor that

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[27] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address from Albany, New York: "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech"" (campaign radio address, April 7, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88408&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[28] "The Record of Roosevelt," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 1932.

[29] Roosevelt, "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech."

could counter any potential critiques of his physical disability.[30] Describing his common-manhood narrative in terms of leadership stability and democratic strength, FDR used military metaphors in his speeches to remind the public of his physical strength and involvement in World War I.[31] In highlighting his role as part of a larger collective body that aimed metaphorically at "building from the bottom up" to defeat a great national crisis with democratic stability and collaborative leadership, he also described this experience as a "public duty" that called him to "an active part in a great national emergency."[32]

One newspaper advertisement in support of Roosevelt highlighted the strength of FDR's democratic common-man theme by strongly urging voters to "Return the Government to the People on November 8th" by voting for Roosevelt.[33] Claiming that Hoover's current administration was indecisively weak and failed to represent the people, FDR illuminated the importance of strong democratic leadership to his common-man campaign image. By including the strength implicit to democratic responsibility in his common-man image, FDR prescribed a political manhood image that claimed it was the democratic "objective of Government itself, to provide as much assistance to the little fellow as it is now giving large banks and corporations."[34] Again, portraying his self-image as equal to the

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[30] "The Record of Roosevelt." The *Los Angeles Times* compared the physicality of Theodore Roosevelt to Franklin Roosevelt suggesting that there were "hardening, toughening experiences" that Franklin was forced to avoid "to some extend from necessity."

[31] Roosevelt, "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech" and Accepting the Democratic Nomination, 1932.Roosevelt brought his experience in World War I into discussion about unemployment as a metaphor to describe democratic strength and toughness.

[32] Ibid.

[33] "Campaign Advertisement on November 6, 1932," http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/depression.htm (accessed November 28, 2012).

[34] Roosevelt, "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech." Roosevelt described governmental assistance of the people as building from the

"little fellow," while downplaying his connection to the large businesses, FDR carefully wove a self-narrative that described him as a common-man of strength and democratic leadership who would go to battle against the lawlessness of Prohibition and the economic challenges of the Great Depression by building democratically from the bottom-up to defeat these great national emergencies.

This strength in FDR's democratic common-man leadership also extended through another self-image FDR built during the 1932 election: the stable and secure leader whose decisive action would make him an effective male leader. Roosevelt portrayed himself in these terms early in the campaign as his initial speech accepting the Democratic nomination urged voters to embrace his campaign promises because he would "leave no doubt or ambiguity on where I stand on any question of moment in this campaign."[35] FDR described stability as an ideal masculine quality, which he also used in his *'Forgotten Man' Speech* describing himself to have the "calm judgment" necessary to face the economic challenges ahead of the American people.[36] This "calm judgment" manhood theme revealed itself in FDR's discussions of another major campaign issue, the repeal of Prohibition. FDR looked to the calm judgment or stability of his masculine leadership by describing himself with political confidence and decisive leadership.[37]

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bottom up in the same fashion that was necessary to defeat World War I.

[35] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago" (speech, Democratic National Convention in Chicago, IL, July 2, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=75174&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[36] Roosevelt, "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech."

[37] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey" (campaign speech, Sea Girt, New Jersey, August 27, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88395&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012). Roosevelt described his leadership as steady and concrete in the context of the

Contrasting the Republican Party as indecisive about repealing Prohibition, FDR emphasized the inherent strength in the stability of his stance against Prohibition which he described as a question of "faith and confidence in leadership and the words of leaders."[38] Portraying stability through the consistency of his words showed FDR to be a decisive, calm, and stable leader who could be entrusted with leading a democratic government. Campaign media also showed Roosevelt's decisive judgment self-image as a Sunday newspaper advertisement espoused the slogan, "We Need Action!," claiming that, "he's ready! Are you?"[39] Describing a vote for Roosevelt as synonymous with decisive action, this image suggested that Roosevelt was a stable, secure, and decisive leader prepared to make effective masculine leadership decisions without emotional or feminine wavering.

FDR also extended this self-image of decisiveness to portray mental toughness through descriptions of himself as decisive and strong-willed. Using the masculine-enhanced language of authority and physical prowess to describe how the Democratic Party "fairly and squarely met the issue" of Prohibition, FDR continued showcasing his commitment to repeal Prohibition, accepting his party's position "one hundred percent."[40] Emphasizing mental toughness in terms of a stubborn "one hundred percent" commitment revealed that FDR's male authority was decisive and strong enough to leave no room for mental weakness, especially in the form of doubt or indecision. In Roosevelt's early campaign speech given in Columbus, Ohio, he claimed to have a strong belief "in the intrepid soul of the American people" and a "horse sense" that would provide a

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Republican Party's split opinion towards the repeal of Prohibition

[38] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey."

[39] "Campaign Advertisement on November 6, 1932," http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/depression.htm (accessed November 28, 2012).

[40] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey."



Figure 1. Roosevelt campaign advertisement from November 6, 1932.

"constructive program" of economic relief to the people.[41] This self-narrative connected masculine toughness to the mental realm as it articulated descriptions of FDR with "horse sense" or stubborn leadership and decisive authority toward the Great Depression and Prohibition.

During the campaign, FDR described Hoover as a person who lacked decisive action as well as an aristocratic elitist out of touch with the common-man. Many of FDR's speeches flipped his self-image of the proactive decisive leader to project Hoover as a weaker man—slow to action, indecisive, reactive, and defensive. FDR portrayed Hoover in his campaign address about Prohibition as "fighting a battle of words," not action, to shield people from the truth of Prohibition's "tragic failure."[42] These "defensive words" described Hoover as lacking the decisive mental toughness and masculine authority that FDR, a man of action, embodied in his self-image toward the repeal of Prohibition. FDR powerfully asserted this as he called the people to "witness the Republican Platform—long, indirect, ambiguous, insincere, false."[43] During a campaign speech in Columbus, Ohio, FDR also described Hoover's administration as "not frank, not honest, with the people" deceptively offering "blundering statements" to postpone actions necessary for economic relief.[44] By using words to evade, instead of direct authoritative opinion and action, FDR depicted Hoover as the weaker authority full of indecisive, empty, and emotional words. To FDR, this inaction and emotional wavering would prove insufficient in the context of the Great Depression and the lawlessness produced by Prohibition's failure.[45]

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[41] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Columbus, Ohio" (campaign speech, Columbus, OH, August 20, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88407&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[42] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey."

[43] Ibid.

[44] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Columbus, Ohio."

[45] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey."

FDR also extended his portrait of Hoover's evasive weakness to distance the Republican incumbent's image from the people and align him with the interests of aristocratic businesses. In his campaign speech in Columbus, Ohio, FDR attacked Hoover's claims of individualism and protection of democracy suggesting that, "we find concentrated power in a few hands, the precise opposite" of Hoover's claim to individualism or democratic leadership.[46] FDR's perception that Hoover was the weaker leader, willing to aristocratically deny democratic individualism for personal gain, capitalized on Hoover's mistaken claim that "we have passed the worst" of the Great Depression.[47] In addressing Prohibition, FDR referenced the lawlessness in Hoover's administration to almost suggest that the current president's upper class status allowed him to profit from the implementation of Prohibition. FDR argued Hoover's defense of prohibition was so that "all the time a steady flow of profits, resulting from the extractions of a newly created industry, was running into the pockets of the racketeers."[48] Highlighting how Hoover's support of Prohibition was in the favor of wealthy "racketeers," FDR associated Hoover's Prohibition policies with government corruption and opened the door for additional critique.[49]

Despite FDR's own background as a wealthy elite with connections to old wealth, he portrayed Hoover's lack of virtue in a manner that aligned the Republican candidate with the capitalist interests of big businesses and that he was critically out of touch with the people. In a radio address, FDR attacked Hoover's lack of virtue and favoritism toward big businesses, suggesting that Hoover placed a "two billion dollar fund" at the

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[46] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Columbus, Ohio."

[47] Ibid.

[48] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey." Roosevelt described the purpose of Prohibition as padding the pockets of racketeers corruptly working with government enforcement agencies.

[49] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey." Roosevelt associated Hoover's Prohibition policies with government corruption and lawlessness.

"disposal of the big banks, railroads and the corporations" while purposefully ignoring the needs of the people.[50] FDR also addressed Hoover's top-down approach to the implementation of Prohibition arguing that his willingness to support State regulation was "only when the Federal Government [could not] get away with the destruction of state control."[51] This top-down leadership depicted Hoover as an elitist, no longer able to empathize with the people and their struggles.

As the incumbent in the 1932 election, Hoover portrayed himself as successful in implementing policies to defeat the Great Depression, revealing descriptions and utilizations of self-image as a virtuous savior whose moral authority provided the experience needed for good leadership. In this same context, Hoover criticized FDR as being mentally and physically unfit for presidency. Hoover described these mental and physical weaknesses through gendered language that placed FDR in opposition to his self-image as an experienced male authority. Hoover's experience in office and descriptions of himself using moral authority countered FDR's campaign attacks of his indecisive character and reversed them describing FDR as a demagogic and deceptive leader. The Republican-aligned media also described both presidential candidates in similar terms during the campaign.

During the election, Hoover and the Republican Party sought to describe Hoover as a virtuous leader, protecting the nation from the Great Depression. The Republican-aligned *Los Angeles Times* describes Hoover as having "neglected politics for his job, while Roosevelt has neglected his job for politics."[52] Hoover's party allies described his campaign failures as selfless, placing the needs of the nation above the labors of the campaign trail. Hoover also described himself in similar terms, articulating in one address to have "resolutely rejected the temptation" in the midst of the Great Depression to "resort to those panaceas and short cuts" that would undermine the long-term needs of the

[50] Roosevelt, "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech."
[51] Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Prohibition in Sea Girt, New Jersey."
[52] "The Promising Candidate," *Los Angeles Times,* 26 October 1932.

democratic government.[53] By emphasizing selflessness and virtuous long-term planning, Hoover carefully represented himself throughout the campaign as virtuously protecting the democratic principles of the government and placing the needs of the government above his own campaigning.

In addition, Hoover extended this virtuous leader image to describe his experience in office as saving the nation from degeneration and immorality that the Great Depression and Prohibition fostered. In one of his campaign addresses, Hoover discussed his involvement with the economic situation as having "saved this nation from a generation of chaos and degeneration."[54] He continued explaining that, "we preserved the savings, the insurance policies, gave a fighting chance to men to hold their homes."[55] This virtuous savior and protector image Hoover evoked aimed at preserving masculine virtue and the male breadwinner ideal. By giving men a "fighting chance," Hoover subtly upheld the male breadwinner ideal as an invaluable characteristic as well as his role as the virtuous savior protecting the nation from the threat of unemployment. The *Los Angeles Times* also emphasized the Republican candidate's virtuous savior status through discussions of temperance. When they interviewed society clubwomen for an article on October 31, 1932, they linked the women's support of temperance to Hoover's protection of Republican virtue. Depicted as preserving the virtue of the American people, one woman in particular described Hoover as a president who "stands for temperance and magnifies home life."[56] Hoover's early campaign alignment with temperance enhanced his campaign image, showing him to

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[53] Herbert Hoover, "Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination" (speech, Washington D.C., August 11, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=23198&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[54] Herbert Hoover, "Address at Madison Square Garden in New York City" (speech, New York City, October 31, 1932) http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=23317&st=&st1= (accessed November, 2012).

[55] Ibid.

[56] "Hoover Lauded by Clubwomen," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 1932.

magnify "home life" in a paternalistic manner that protected the male breadwinner's status while also exercising morality, restraint, and control to lead the nation. The Republican-aligned media also extolled this image describing Hoover as "continually working for the up-building and strengthening of our country."[57] Despite the fact that the proposed repeal of Prohibition divided the Republican Party's opinion of moral reform during the campaign process, Hoover's image working as the nation's virtuous savior and protector promised to rescue the nation with his virtuous moral authority and demonstrated Party stability during the campaign process.

Hoover extended his virtuous savior image by subtly aligning his campaign self-image with a good solid male character intended to uplift the nation toward a democratic direction. In accepting the Republican Party's nomination on August 11, 1932, Hoover emphasized that his leadership while in office "maintained the sanctity of the principles upon which this Republic has grown great."[58] In this self-description, Hoover associated his democratic "principles" with his virtuous male savior image extending it to depict himself as uplifting the moral purity of American democracy. He suggested in a later campaign speech that the aim of democratic leadership is "cooperation for the care of those in distress."[59] Cooperation and benevolence in this context reveal Hoover's political manhood image as a virtuous protector of democratic principles working toward reform and morally uplifting the people with his superior moral character.

Hoover attributed his success as a savior to his ability as a resolute leader. He argued in a speech that because of his experienced leadership, the economic "forces were overcome" and the Great Depression was defeated "under the resolute

[57] Ibid.

[58] Hoover, "Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination."

[59] Hoover, "Address at Madison Square Garden in New York City," 1932.

leadership of the Republican Party."[60] Hoover's argument that he conquered the Great Depression fueled campaign rhetoric as he portrayed himself persisting to heal the battle wounds left by the economic disaster. In a different speech, he described a self-image of unwavering male leadership by "refus[ing] to be stampeded into such courses," suggesting that his unyielding or resolute leadership was more virtuous when compared to the quick-fix version prescribed by FDR.[61] The *Los Angeles Times* described Hoover in similar terms showing that "the record of Hoover is one of a lifetime of self-reliant battling with the problems in all parts of the world."[62] Hoover's self-reliant leadership experience, a "lifetime," portrayed the man as a persistent leader virtuously working to protect democracy and selflessly impart virtue on people throughout his political career.

By portraying a self-image of the virtuous savior and resolute leader, Hoover criticized FDR as the antithesis – mentally and physically weak, unfit for presidency. These mental and physical weaknesses described by Hoover and the Republican media showed FDR in terms of demagogic deception, inexperience, and lacking toughness, which all subtly alluded to physical weakness. Masculine toughness was central to this claim as Hoover's critique of FDR's mental and physical weakness suggested that FDR's aristocratic background and physical limitations prevented him from having the stamina necessary for the presidency. In this aristocratic alignment, Hoover associated FDR's political career with weakness of the mental realm and deception attributing his charisma and charm as the mechanism through which his demagogic appeal deceived the nation with false hope.

On August 11, 1932, Hoover described FDR as mentally unfit for the presidency warning that, "ofttimes the tendency of democracy in the presence of national danger is to strike blindly, to listen to demagogues and slogans, all of which destroy and do

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[60] Hoover, "Address at Madison Square Garden in New York City," 1932.

[61] Hoover, "Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination."

[62] "The Record of Roosevelt."

not save."[63] Hoover portrayed the appeal of FDR's rhetorical style and stage presence as demagogic in nature, exploiting the people and carrying them towards an anti-democratic nation that lacked male virtue. In the context of the Great Depression and Prohibition, Hoover's projection of FDR as having the opportunity to destroy democracy in the U.S. played upon preexisting fears of his opponent's wealthy family and social status.[64] One article in the *Los Angeles Times* bluntly suggested that FDR "capitalized on a certain surface similarity" to Theodore Roosevelt.[65] A political cartoon carrying this theme depicted FDR as an adorable infant toddler who claimed naively to fix a broken grandfather clock labeled the "economic situation." FDR, drawn to be an adorable young boy on a blanket with his tools or toys claims, "- see? It's all fixed now!" but as the audience can see, FDR "fixed" the economic situation by disregarding the clock's "master wheel" which is labeled obviously with "instructions for making it work."[66] This master wheel and its instructions represent American democracy, driving home Hoover's critique that FDR was dangerously naïve and lacked the experienced male authority needed for democratic leadership.

The *Los Angeles Times* also contrasted Hoover's manhood and experienced resolute leadership with FDR's deceptive demagogue. One article described FDR's demagogic leadership as aimed "to strike the popular note and to appeal to

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[63] Hoover, "Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination."

[64] "The Record of Roosevelt." The *Los Angeles Times* published three separate articles during the campaign that discussed Roosevelt as aligned with aristocratic wealth and status.

[65] "The Record of Roosevelt." The fundamental difference between Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt was described as toughening experiences that Franklin Roosevelt's disability supposedly prevented. The only similarity described between Theodore and Franklin was name and mannerisms.

[66] "The Master Wheel Forgotten," Political Cartoon, May 1932, http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/historic_sites/ccc/new_deal_texas_html/1.phtml (accessed October 23, 2012).

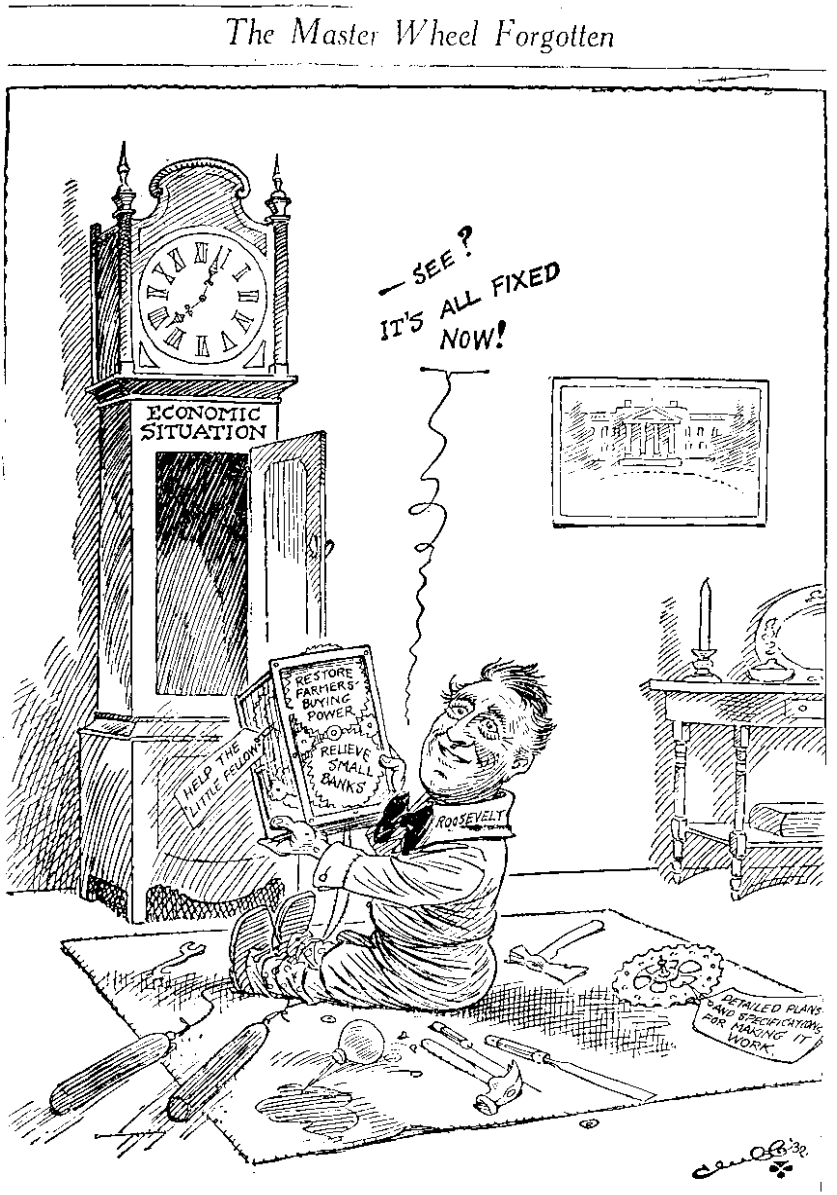


Figure 2. "The Master Wheel Forgotten." A political cartoon from May 1932.

popular prejudice without informing himself of basic facts."[67] This Republican portrayal of FDR as lacking mental acuity and toughness aligned the Democrat's campaign image with language of deception, inexperience, and weakness. The *Los Angeles Times* continued to critique FDR's manhood in these terms describing him as having campaigned with "an honest effort to suit everybody and displease no one."[68] By emphasizing popular appeal and charisma as dangerous qualities, the Republican discourse played up Hoover's virtuous manhood and described FDR as immoral and ignorant, especially in his willingness to deceive the people during an economic crisis. Again, the description of FDR as deceptively lacking male virtue brought the motive behind an emotional appeal to the forefront as the *Los Angeles Times* claimed that, "if he is merely ignorant, he cannot be trusted with such responsibilities." [69] These entrusted responsibilities were naturally that of the presidential office, which Hoover had virtuously occupied for over three years.[70]

The manhood narrative weaved during the campaign played into the climate of the Prohibition and the Great Depression. Hoover portrayed himself as the nation's virtuous savior resolutely battling to preserve democracy, where FDR described himself as having a shared experience with the common-man, recognizing the immediate needs of the people and aiming to propose decisive solutions with mental toughness. In spite of his assumed defeat of the Great Depression, Hoover, the virtuous savior, not only lost the election but by a significant amount revealing the depths of the Great Depression and effectiveness of FDR's tough minded common-man persona. Roosevelt won the 1932 election with 22,829,501 votes to Hoover's 15,760,684. [71] Three million additional voters cast ballots in the 1932 election, a rise from the 1928 election,

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[67] "The Record of Roosevelt."
[68] "Two Theories of Government," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1932, 1.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Richie, 158-160.

perhaps highlighting a heightened interest in politics within the Great Depression and Prohibition.[72] FDR's sweeping victory did more than oust the Republican incumbent Hoover, it articulated a changing manhood narrative that placed a greater emphasis on the common-manhood experience, mental toughness, and decisive action, which reformulated the seemingly virtuous moral manhood that Hoover had advocated in descriptions of restraint, self-control, and resolute leadership.

[72] Ibid.