
A Thesis by

Sandra C. Sipes

Bachelor of Journalism, University of Missouri, 1982

Submitted to the Elliott School of Communication
And the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

July 2006
I have examined the final copy of this Thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication.

___________________________________
Patricia L. Dooley, Committee Chair

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

___________________________________
Les W. Anderson, Committee Member

___________________________________
William C. Parcell, Committee Member
DEDICATION

To my parents, Maxine Collins and Kenneth D. Collins, Ph.D.,
For their constant and abiding love and for instilling in me a thirst for knowledge
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my graduate advisor and thesis chair, Dr. Pat Dooley. I am grateful for her steady guidance, infinite patience and support. I would also like to thank the other members of my thesis committee, Les Anderson and Dr. William Parcell, whose guidance, patience and smiles are much appreciated. I am blessed to have a wonderful family, without whom I would be nothing. I thank my husband, Martin, and my daughters, Amanda and Madeline for their love, support and cooking talents while I spent many hours in the library and in front of a computer screen. I also want to thank Connie Morris for starting me on this path and for being a terrific role model. Finally, to my graduate teaching and research assistant buddies, especially Becca Binns, Leslie Blythe, Cori Dodds and LaChrystal Ricke, thanks for two years of laughter, late study nights and free counseling. I treasure our friendship.
ABSTRACT

Like most wars, the Spanish-American War had its heroes: the heroes who rescued Cuban prisoner Evangelina Cisneros, the heroes who gave aid to starving, suffering Cubans, and the heroes who investigated the possibility of a sinister element in the mysterious explosion of the battleship Maine. Even the yellow press could be construed as a hero since its leaders spared no expense in sending reporters to Cuba to capture the events leading up to the Spanish-American War for the American public. Designed to explore the hero and the heroic in journalistic coverage of war, this thesis involved qualitative textual analysis of front-page newspaper stories published in New York City during the Spanish-American War.

Using Joseph Campbell’s power of the myth and the hero as a framework, this thesis explores three major themes: 1) the story of Evangelina Cisneros, 2) the desperate situation of the Cuban people, and 3) the sinking of the battleship Maine. The following research questions are explored: What events in the nine-month period leading up to the war call for heroic action? Who were the heroes according to the yellow newspapers of Hearst and Pulitzer? How did these yellow newspaper stories mirror Campbell’s concept of the mythic hero and his/her heroic journey? The analysis shows that these articles answered the human need for excitement, for drama, for a hero, and the need to be a hero.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION/LITERATURE REVIEW</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>The Newspaper After the Civil War</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow Journalism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did the Press Start the Spanish-American War?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>ANALYSIS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Story of Evangelina Cisneros</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Living Conditions of Native Cubans</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sinking of the Battleship <em>Maine</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>A. Time Line</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In spectacular circumstances, then, the Spanish-American War was bred, not born. American newspapers responded to the country’s expanding role in world affairs, manifesting their own destiny by winning more readers, creating financial stability through advertising, and popularizing their product with bigger headlines and sensational stories. In the new “yellow journalism,” events were transformed into both hard drama and melodramatic stories driven by violence and action (Lande, 1995, p. 127).

Much has been written about the Spanish-American War, just as much has also been written about yellow print journalism in the United States. Some scholars blame newspaper moguls William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, the “yellow” giants of this time period, for causing the Spanish-American War through their publication of highly jingoistic sensational news stories. Others disagree, finding economic or other factors more important in the period leading up to the United States’ declaration of war against Spain on April 21, 1898.

This longstanding debate will probably never subside completely. But that should not stop scholars from looking for new ways to study and interpret the newspaper stories about Cuba and Spain printed in the yellow press in the months leading up to the war. This thesis does just that by using the theories of cultural historian and mythology scholar Joseph Campbell on the power of mythic heroes across cultures and time. The concept of heroes is a fruitful one to study war, since every war has its villains and heroes. Following this line of thinking, who the journalistic media deem as villains and heroes preceding the declaration of war by one country against another arguably contribute in some way or another to their country’s climate of opinion on such matters.
In light of these assumptions, this thesis addresses the following questions in a study of the nine-month period leading up to the war—August 1897 to April 1898: 1) What, if any, events or situations related to Cuba and Spain in the nine-month period leading up to a declaration of war called for heroic action? 2) Who did the newspaper stories published in the New York City yellow newspapers of Hearst and Pulitzer identify as the heroes within these events and situations? And, 3) How did these newspapers’ coverage of such heroes in the months leading up to a declaration of war mirror Campbell’s concept of the mythic hero and his/her heroic journey?

The thesis consists of four chapters. Following this introduction, chapter one continues with a review of relevant historical background information, a literature review section related to the yellow press and its coverage of the Spanish-American War, and a discussion of the theoretical perspectives that guided the research and analysis reported on here. Chapter two provides a description of the thesis’s research methodology. Chapter three includes the description of the research findings and analysis. Finally, chapter four offers further discussion of the findings, as well as a conclusion.

This nine-month period, the predecessor to a 3-month war, is but a snapshot in history; however, it is a snapshot in crystal clear, vivid color. It is a picture that includes heroes and villains, damsels in distress and the horrors of war. Let the adventure begin
Without question, the general public, if it thinks at all about newspaper sensationalism, thinks first of the Spanish-American War. The press’s exploitation of the conflict was even more evident during the prelude than during the fighting itself. The causes of that war were much more complex, but still it is an unsavory chapter in journalism history, best understood as the culmination in the bitter circulation battle between Hearst and Pulitzer (Stevens, 1991, p. 94).

The purpose of a literature review is to research and provide the information scholars have written on the subject of this era in U.S. journalism history. There is the saying, “Reasonable people will disagree.” In the case of yellow journalism and its role in the Spanish-American War, this could be its mantra. For every book and article written that blames the yellow war between Pulitzer and Hearst for the start of the Spanish-American War, there is another book and article that refute this claim. Included is historical background on the newspaper and yellow journalism as well as the events between the United States, Spain, and Cuba that resulted in the Spanish-American War.

The Newspaper After the Civil War

President Abraham Lincoln’s assassination solidified the newspaper’s role as being the primary news source in the United States after the Civil War (Smythe, 2003). The telegraph had already proven a useful tool in transmitting information quickly during the war; its usefulness continued after the war. The telegraph was placed in areas where railroad tracks were not yet set, so telegraphed information could get to the more rural areas of the country, as well as the developed areas with the same efficiency (Smythe).

There were “energies that had been building in the U.S. for decades after the Civil War: the explosion of its industrial power, the ineluctable impulse to expand” (Lacayo,
Even though the United States was still predominantly rural, urban areas were beginning to develop. New York City “dominated the country in population, manufacturing, and newspapers” (Smythe, 2003, p. 5). According to Time magazine, the population in the United States doubled between 1860 and 1900 (Lacayo, 2006). This led to strains on its economy, including poverty, child labor in factories, and growing resentment between industrial workers and management. This information is congruent with the following quote:

During the 1890s the United States experienced the social strains and anxieties of accelerated transformation. The nation’s population more than doubled in the period 1865 to 1898, and it grew increasingly urban. Foreign immigration and the general decline of the domestic agricultural sector crowded millions of country folk into American cities to work in sprawling factories (Lande, 1995, p. 125).

It is no wonder that Pulitzer and Hearst were drawn to New York. And other newspapers across the country looked to their counterparts in the East as the leaders in the industry (Smythe, 2003).

Newspapers were also becoming independent; that is, they were moving away from partisan ownership. This type of ownership had been practiced since the birth of the nation, and with good reason, as it financially supported the newspapers (Smythe, 2003). So now how would newspapers survive? The answer was in advertising. By financing newspapers in this way, coverage of daily happenings could be reported without slanted political undertones (Smythe, 2003). Still struggling under Reconstruction after the Civil War, the South progressed at a slower rate than the North, but by the early 1880s changes in Southern newspapers began to mimic is counterparts to the north (Smythe, 2003).

Publishers of these independent newspapers were changing as well. Called the progressive generation, these men were born between 1845 and 1855. They were either
immigrants or were from the northern United States; they were too young to have served in the Civil War and either founded newspapers or assumed control of already existing newspapers (Smythe, 2003). Austrian immigrant Joseph Pulitzer is a prime example of this progressive generation.

Reporting for these newspapers became a romantic, adventurous job, drawing mainly young men for these jobs. In keeping with Campbell’s hero, the job of the reporter fits the mold of a hero embarking on an adventurous journey: “Even the hazardous conditions in gathering some stories, which required tenacity, vigor, and devotion, attracted people whose imaginations were fed by accounts in the press” (Smythe, 2003, p. 152). Smythe also writes, “the number of dead and wounded correspondents was subject to debate, but at least two were killed in Cuba before the war, others died from injuries and diseases during the war. Numerous reporters suffered nonfatal wounds or debilitating diseases” (p. 190). A hero’s job is never easy. The adventures of Journal reporter Karl Decker while stationed in Cuba is but one example that will be explored in this thesis.

One other important innovation changed the role of newspapers in the United States, and that is the formation of press agencies, or wire services, the largest of which were the Associated Press and the United Press. These press agencies allowed, for a fee, the dissemination of news stories across the United States to other newspapers, thereby spreading information from New York to California (Smythe, 2003).

Lastly, mention should be made of the political relationship between the United States and Spain. The United States was already working on annexing other territories, particularly Hawaii. An article appeared in the Indianapolis Journal that questioned
which territory would be first to grab the American flag – Hawaii or Cuba (Rosenberg and Ruff, 1976). It also appears that this expansionist effort was held in high regard in different areas of the country: “Imperialist expansionism was the new order of the day, and citizens of Indiana appeared willing to march to its tune” (Rosenberg and Ruff, 1976, p. 30). The United States and Spain had already tangled on the high seas regarding the U.S.’s contention that Spain conducted an illegal search and seizure on one of their ships, the *Alliance*. Spain had the legal right to search any foreign ships that came within three miles of its territory. The captain of the *Alliance* maintained that the ship was six miles from the coast, but Spanish authorities boarded the vessel anyway, resulting in strained diplomatic relations between the two countries (Wilkerson, 1967). A more complete list of events leading up to and during the Spanish-American War is included in the appendices section.

**Yellow Journalism**

The New Journalism required active reporters who searched the city for news and scandal. Police and court beats, always important, received greater attention; and certain kinds of stories – scandals, divorces, malfeasance – received heavy display … (Smythe, 2003, p. 206).

Much has been written about yellow journalism, and much space has been devoted to this topic in order to provide a glimpse of the time period, the impetus behind this era in journalism history, and the giants in the New York publishing world at the end of the 1800s who played a major role in its development. Therefore, “yellow giants” Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst are discussed. Included in this section is a glimpse at new technologies, which either occurred as a result of yellow journalism or aided in expanding the reach of all journalism, yellow or otherwise.
The emergence of the term “yellow journalism” coincided with a failed campaign in New York City to exclude the *World* and the *Journal* from “public and university libraries, reading rooms, social organizations, clubs, and other institutions” (Campbell, 2001, p. 26). There are scholarly discrepancies as to who first penned this term; however, most scholars agree that Ervin Wardman of the Press was the first journalist to use the term “yellow journalism” in reference to the *World* and the *Journal* (Douglas, 1999, p. 110).

Yellow journalism got its name from a wildly popular comic in the Sunday edition of the *World* called “The Yellow Kid.” Drawn by Richard F. Outcault, it “caricatured the life of New York tenement kids, and the color specialists of the *World* decided to give the most prominent and raucous kid … a yellow apron” (Douglas, p. 109-110). The use of yellow ink in the cartoon was also used an experiment to lure more people to buy the newspaper (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p. 718). Outcault was later lured to Hearst’s *Journal* by means of an exorbitant salary increase. Pulitzer hired George B. Luks, another cartoonist, to draw the feature for the *World*. “There were now two ‘yellow kids,’ one in the *World* and the other in the *Journal*” (Douglas, p. 110). This cartoon war exemplified much of what was deemed to be wrong with Pulitzer’s and Hearst’s journalistic ethics; hence, the term “yellow journalism” was born.

Although many definitions of journalism exist, one that was written around the period of the Spanish-American War is provided below:

> It is the ephemeral, the daily happenings in a community or nation that make history. In the case of an individual, these unconsidered trifles form his character. The work of journalism is to gather these ephemera and to crystallize them day by day. This is done by a series of news deposits gradually rearing what is permanent and true. The quicker and the better the so-called ephemera and the apparently trivial are gathered into what
we call news, the truer the journalism. The mists of understanding are dissolved by the process. In this way, through journalism, more light is reflected and foundations for better civilization, freedom and manhood are constructed (New York Press Club, 1905, p. ii).

The New York Press Club further states: “The journalism of today aims to give all the news so that individuals may do their own thinking. It is this individual thinking that is the safeguard of American institutions and has placed the United States in the lead of all the nations of the earth” (p. v).

A more recent definition is provided by Jim Willis in a 1991 book, The Shadow World: Life Between the News Media and Reality. Willis outlines the following goals for journalism:

1. [To provide] an accurate account of what a source or sources said;
2. [To portray] an accurate picture of the portion of the event the reporter actually witnessed;
3. [To present] two sides of the story;
4. [To present] an accurate picture of that portion of the event the reporter actually witnessed;
5. [To present] an accurate account of the information known at the time of the event; and
6. [To report and write] the story in such a way as to uphold the principles of an established ethical code for journalists (p. 2).

One might argue that yellow journalists of the late 1800s neither shared nor emulated these journalism goals. Douglas offers this insight concerning Pulitzer’s World: [the World was] “a paper that reached to the masses. It was a blatantly popular paper” (1999, p. 96). Mott (1964) states Pulitzer’s influence on print journalism in the nation with his purchase of the New York World “affected circulations, prices, and news and editorial policies of the papers. The practices thus introduced soon came to be called the New Journalism” (p. 415). “Examples of front-page headlines from the World include “All For A Woman’s Love,” “A Bride But Not A Wife,” “A Mother’s Awful Crime,” and “Love
And Cold Poison” (Douglas, 1999, p. 96). In referring to Pulitzer’s Sunday *World*,
“romance and sex stories were sure-fire hits, and almost every week men and women
found vicarious enjoyment in the highly wrought text and elaborate pictures” (Kobre,
1964, p. 50). “The use of shrieking headlines, which frequently misrepresented already
exaggerated news dispatches, was one of the most pernicious practices employed by
yellow journals” (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 122). Perhaps Stevens (1991), author of
*Sensationalism and the New York Press*, states it best:

During the late nineteenth century the *World* and the *Journal* were two
peas in a pod. Both newspapers capitalized on technology and changed
conditions to build enterprises of a size never before dreamed of.
Screaming headlines, big type, colored inks and illustrations lured readers,
as did unremitting attention to crime, sexual innuendo, and violence. They
justified their policies as giving the public what it wanted and as a way to
draw them for the more serious content. Both papers showed enterprise in
developing and gathering news. Although it is tempting to caricature the
yellow papers as being edited for janitors and clerks, both papers
published a fair amount of sober financial, political, and diplomatic
information, just as the *Evening News, Tribune*, and *Times* covered some
murder trials and prize fights. More than the lower-class scandal sheets in
England and France, the *World* and the *Journal* probably were read by
people in all social classes (p. 98).

Therein probably lies the reason why sensational papers in the late 1800s were so
incredibly successful, along with the lure of power by Pulitzer and Hearst. It is
reported that Pulitzer’s *World* became so powerful that it “was often called a
mighty force in its time. Its power was though to be so great that it was both
courted and feared by the elect of the land” (Hohenberg, 1978, p. 83).

Pulitzer and Hearst most definitely knew their audiences and how to write, or hire
the journalists to write, in a way that appealed to the masses. “Both Pulitzer and Hearst
were outsiders when they came to New York. Their papers appealed to the same elements
of the city that had previously been ignored by the press. Women, labor leaders,
Democrats, immigrants and the poor found articles that held their interest and represented their political views” (Joseph Pulitzer, 2004, p. 7). Another author puts it this way: “Newspapers were not yet perfect in doing their job, but the press of the turn of the century, even the yellow press, was both more interesting and more useful than the press of the antebellum period. It served a broader public in more ways” (Smythe, 2003, p. 214).

Joseph Pulitzer, himself an Austrian immigrant, knew well the importance of newly arrived immigrants having a news source they could understand as well as afford. He understood that many immigrants arriving on the shores of America were fleeing from oppressive governments in their homelands. “In the United States, the first sign that the adopted land of these frightened immigrants was truly free came in the appearance of public discussion of the ills of government in the daily newspapers, which could be purchased for a penny or two and read openly anywhere. Reading the press was, therefore, a prized privilege to a less sophisticated and more trustful generation of Americans” (Hohenberg, 1978, p. 29).

Author John Hohenberg (1978) gives his personal perspective on the typical immigrant family to whom Pulitzer targeted:

We were typical, I suppose, of most immigrant families of the latter 19th and 20th centuries, to whom the newspaper was oracle and teacher, advocate and friend. To be sure, the better-educated middle and upper classes of the era generally considered themselves to be superior to the press and critics like Upton Sinclair mercilessly berated it. But such people were far removed from us. We depended on our newspaper both for news and guidance; the better people, after all, ignored us (p. 95).

Author William Grosvenor Bleyer (1927) offers this insight:

In giving prominence to sensational news, Pulitzer aimed to secure as large a circle of readers as possible … he sought to obtain readers for his
editorials by offering them sensational news. To reach the masses, he felt that he must give the masses what they wanted in the way of news. Whether the end justified the means may well be questioned. The success of this sensationalism in building up rapidly the largest circulation in this country, led a host of newspapers to imitate the World’s sensational methods. Thus it exerted an unwholesome influence on the American press. In so far as it secured readers among the masses who had not hitherto read newspapers, it marked another step toward the democratization of the press (p. 352).

Actually, it was Pulitzer who knew his audience; Hearst just copied what Pulitzer had already done.

By the time he got to New York, Hearst was fully intending to get to the top by out-Pulitzering Pulitzer, if such a thing was possible. With the passage of time, Hearst would own a great many newspapers and become a far greater newspaper tycoon than Pulitzer ever aspired to be, although his contributions to journalism are far more tawdry and open to skepticism …. Hearst considerably diluted the quality and the ethical standards of the American Newspaper (Douglas, 1999, p. 105).

Hearst’s Journal was a perfect example of a yellow journalism newspaper in 1897-1898, according to Wisan (1965):

The typical new journal was jealous of its power; it was proud of itself and of its circulation, of which it blatantly boasted. It spent money lavishly. It hired special correspondents for important assignments. It “did things” as well as wrote about them. It was contemptuous of its rivals…. Anxious to wrest circulation leadership from Pulitzer’s World, it spared no expense to furnish exciting news (p. 187).

Hearst “left no great legacy of thought or action. He was tremendously resourceful, he was talented, but essentially he was a hollow man, guided by the opportunities of the moment” (Douglas, 1999, p. 116). “Hearst bought everything he could – equipment, technology, and people – to beat the competition. Other newspaper publishers tried to compete with Hearst, but most proved unsuccessful because they simply lacked the financial resources” (Bleyer, 1927 p. 387).
This was high drama at its finest, full of intrigue and scandal, with Pulitzer and Hearst at center stage. Both publishers were jockeying for domination in the newspaper world, using their sensational yellow journalism tactics to accomplish their goals. In Speed’s content analysis of four New York newspapers in the late 1800s, he concluded that yellow journalism “had injected high levels of gossip and scandal into newspapers” during this time period; further, he demonstrated that “Pulitzer and his imitators cluttered their newspapers with accounts of scandal and private gossip” (Sumpter, 2001, p. 64).

More and more people settled in and around New York City, and this new way of urban life changed the way newspapers were purchased. As men walked to and from their places of work every day, they passed the corner newsstands. Publishers of the sensational newspapers were hard-pressed to make their front pages as startling, bright, and eye-catching as possible so these passersby would be encouraged to buy the newspapers, six mornings and evenings per week. Obviously, the competition for these potential buyers was intense (Juergens, 1966). Scholar Michael Schudson also discusses the concept of mass transportation and its impact on journalism:

City [living in the 1880s] was much more a mosaic of races and social types; it was much more a maelstrom of social and geographic movement. Geographic mobility for a growing middle class (became) a daily round of movement from home to work and back again. Improved urban transportation and the movement of the middle class into the suburbs meant that this daily movement could be considerable in terms of miles and time consumed…. The expansion of horse-drawn buses and railways … and later cable lines and electric surface lines, elevated rapid transit and subways, made mass suburban living possible by 1900 …. This had several consequences for the newspaper…. For the first time in human history, people other than the very wealthy could, as a part of their daily life, ride in vehicles they were not responsible for driving. Their eyes and their hands were free; they could read on the bus (Crowley and Heyer, 2003, p. 142).
There can be no doubt that the competition for readers intensified as New York City grew and expanded its borders.

Technological advances in printing presses and typesetting helped newspaper publishers in the printing of more newspapers in less time, as evidenced by the following:

The seeds of sensationalism are found as much in the new mechanical wonders of the late nineteenth century as in social movement: in such inventions as the telephone and typewriter; in press folders that could cut, paste, fold, count, and deliver twenty-four page papers at the speed they were printed; in the Hoe Company’s web feed quadruple press, capable of printing 24,000 sixteen-page papers per hour; in Ottmar Mergenthaler’s Linotype machine, which relieved printers of the costly and tedious process of setting type by hand; and not least, in improved techniques of illustration, from woodcuts to zincographs to halftone photo-engraving (Juergens, 1966, p. 49).

The newspapers were larger in size, with colored ink and reproduced illustrations.

“Economic and technical factors interacted in the late 1800s to make the consistent publication of large daily newspapers possible” (Sumpter, 2001, p. 70).

[There was an] urgency driven by competition for more readers and greater advertising profits. Faster presses and typesetting machinery, along with increased advertising revenues, enabled publishers to print larger newspapers more quickly than in the past. To fill the larger editions and attract readers, news workers were tempted to expand the definition of legitimate news (Sumpter, p. 64).

With new technologies, however, came increased expenses to pay for these technologies:

New technologies were raising the cost of doing business, forcing owners and publishers to compete for readers by offering a product that was more entertaining, and more simplified in its approach to the news, than ever before. At the top, the competition was exemplified by the bitter feud between Pulitzer, the eccentric idealist who read Schopenhauer, George Eliot, and Shakespeare for entertainment, and Hearst, the all-American wiz kid whose ignorance of history was exceeded only by his genius for public relations (Milton, 1989, p. xiii).

One interesting change in the design of newspaper front pages occurred after the battleship Maine exploded on February 15, 1898, in Cuba’s Havana harbor: “the sinking
of the *Maine* may be said to fix definitely the beginning of the practice on the part of most American newspapers of utilizing heavy type across several columns in displaying significant news, a practice which developed as the Spanish-American War progressed, leaving an indelible impression upon American journalism” (Wilkerson, 1967, pg. 101). This was a technique implemented by both the *Journal* and the *World*.

The stakes were high – after all, a newspaper business was and is just that – a business. The stockholders expected profits. The population of New York was approximately 2,800,000 and “the combined circulation of the dailies was almost 2,000,000” (Brown, 1967, p. 11). It is no wonder many newspaper publishers of the era turned to sensationalism to help increase profit margins. “They used Pulitzer’s *World* and Hearst’s *Journal* as examples of newspapers having financial success in New York City” (Faber, 1963, p. 81). Research of yellow journalism newspapers in the late 1800s reveals that if this type of sensational journalism did not sell newspapers, Pulitzer and his imitators would have switched to another kind of reporting to generate profits.

Joseph Pulitzer did not originate sensationalism, and he certainly was not responsible for the social and economic changes which enabled sensationalism to flourish in the 1880s and 1890s. But he played a crucial role in the history of American journalism simply by being present at the time their influence was felt, and responding quickly and imaginatively to the opportunities they offered. The *World’s* attempts to attract a wider audience, and its experiments with new editorial techniques, are significant precisely because they occurred at such a time, and met with such success, as to make it the first of the modern, mass circulation dailies (Juergens, 1966, p. 49).

There is a plethora of information concerning yellow journalism and arguably the two most famous yellow journalism giants in American history, Pulitzer and Hearst. Kobre (1964) caricatures Pulitzer’s Sunday editions of the *World* as “a vaudeville show
and a shelf of dime novels combined into one newspaper” (p. 50). The stage for this drama is likened to a vaudeville show. The stage is also set for the final showdown, which would occur during the time leading up to the Spanish-American War, specifically the nine months preceding the start of the war in April 1898. “The great newspaper war between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst was roaring toward its resounding climax at the time of the Spanish-American War … and all the other newspapers in the city were being buffeted mercilessly by the combat of the giants” (Johnson, 1946, p. 108). As Hearst told the story, his newspaper, the *New York Journal*, deserved all the credit for starting the war (Freidel, 2002, p. 3).

**Did the Press Start the Spanish-American War?**

Joseph E. Wisan (1965), author of *The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press*, scolds the American press and states that he wrote this book to serve as a cautionary tale to readers to be more discerning and dispassionate in the reading of journalistic news reports and opinions of events in times of emotional public turmoil:

> The principal cause of our war with Spain was the public demand for it, a demand too powerful for effective resistance by the business and financial leaders of the nation or by President McKinley. For the creation of the public state of mind, the press was largely responsible (p. 5).

Scholar John Edward Weems (1958) insists his research proves that “many persons in the United States, including some influential men in government and several important newspaper officials, desired the war” (p. vii). After all, the Spanish-American War made Theodore Roosevelt a war hero. He is quoted as saying: “I do not think a war with Spain would be serious enough to cause much strain on the country or much interruption to the revival of prosperity” (p. vii-viii). It was Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, who ordered Navy captains to prepare their
battleships in the event of war. Roosevelt resigned his Navy post to enter the war serving with the Rough Riders. It was Roosevelt who led the Rough Riders up San Juan Hill to fight and win one of the bloodiest and decisive battles in the Spanish-American War (Weems, 1958). Author Wisan (1965) writes, “the Cuban revolution came at an opportune time for the newspapers. For twenty years, no other foreign event had aroused sustained interest” (p. 34).

And who can forget the story of the wire sent by William Randolph Hearst to illustrator Frederic Remington in March 1898. Upon Remington wiring Hearst to report that there was nothing happening in Cuba, Hearst wired back: “Please remain. You furnish the pictures, and I’ll furnish the war” (Weems, 1958, p. viii). Noted yellow journalism myth-buster author W. Joseph Campbell (2001) notes that this story “so neatly captures conceit, arrogance and journalistic power, (that) the anecdote has proved timeless” (December 2001, p. 16). It is a great story; however, Campbell states that it is just that – a story. It is just one myth that is explored in this thesis.

Weems (1958) characterizes the press as “irresponsible” concerning reporting on the activities in Cuba. He cites the example of a story Richard Harding Davis of the Journal reported concerning three young Cuban women being searched on board the American steamship Olivette by Spanish policemen. Frederic Remington provided an illustration showing a woman without any clothing: (the illustration showed) “three lewd-looking Spaniards stripping one of the girls in her cabin. Over the story a headline screamed: DOES OUR FLAG PROTECT WOMEN?” (p. 40). The truth was revealed much later that the women were actually searched by a Spanish policewoman. However, the damage was done. Americans voiced their outrage and
members of Congress pushed for an investigation into the matter (p. 40). This story is but one example of the kind of news reporting about Cuba that appeared on the front pages of American newspapers. Talk of war gradually turned from a question of “if” to a question of “when.”

There were a number of Cuban immigrants living in the United States, mainly along the Eastern seaboard. They watched with interest the drama unfolding in Cuba, doing what they could to aid in the rebellion. “Mass meetings were held, concerts were given, clubs were organized, all to aid in the liberation of Cuba” (Wisan, 1965, p. 69). Concerned Cuban immigrants also organized “the Junta, an organization composed of naturalized and unnaturalized Cubans and Cubans sympathizers, the purposes of which were to raise money to air the Cuban cause, to promote the fitting out of filibustering expeditions, and to arouse sympathy among Americans for the rebels” (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 15). Author Jan Rogozinski (2000) gives further insight into the Junta.

After the Ten Years’ War, the most dedicated separatists chose exile rather than submitting to continued Spanish rule. Most of the thousands of workers forced to seek work in other countries also were devoted to independence. A commitment to armed struggle held together the ranks of exile separatists in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. José Marti led New York’s intransigent patriotic society, the Cuban Junta. Marti was an extraordinary leader, simultaneously a skillful politician, a poet and journalist, and a philosopher with a compelling vision of Cuba libre. His propaganda promised a Cuban republic free of racial and social inequalities, although he never drew up specific plans to obtain these goals. It rallied both American support and the unemployed of eastern Cuba, where Marti raised the standard of revolt in 1895 (p. 204).

It is mentioned here to make the point that not all of the information about Cuba came from American newspapers; much of it came by way of the Junta and letters from family members and friends still living in Cuba.
It was also a rebellion that in the beginning failed to win support by many newspapers. The *Evening Post* established a policy unsympathetic to the Cuban rebellion. The editor’s position is stated in this manner: “Godkin was fearful of a jingoistic American imperialism that, in his opinion, would undoubtedly follow our intervention in the struggle” (Wisan, 1965, p. 44). Wisan (1965) also discusses the fact that most Americans, while sympathetic to the suffering of the Cuban people, did not support war with Spain, which were mirrored in stories that appeared in such New York newspapers as the *Times*, *Tribune*, and *Sun*. The *Times* was equally opposed to the prospect of Cuba being annexed by the United States, citing the cost of the effort would outweigh the benefit.

We might never know whether the New York newspaper stories manipulated public feeling or they were manipulated by such as the activities of the Cuban immigrants. However, not all newspapers jumped on the same bandwagon. An example of this appears below:

> But if a sincere desire to conduct a high-standard newspaper, clean, dignified, and trustworthy, requires honesty, watchfulness, earnestness, industry, and practical knowledge applied with common sense, I entertain the hope that I can succeed in maintaining the high estimate that thoughtful, pure-minded people have ever had of the *New York Times* (my italics). – from Adolph S. Ochs’ prospectus, dated August 19, 1896, the *New York Times*

One might think there is nothing new in Ochs’ prospectus, written at a time in U.S. print journalism history when yellow journalism was soaring toward its zenith. Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst of the *New York Journal* were the printing giants, battling each other for circulation supremacy. They used sensational headlines, drawings, photographs, and stories to lure potential buyers and
readers, which, in turn, generated advertising dollars. Ochs was but a handful of newspaper publishers who fought to stem the yellow tide in New York.

Although the Spanish-American War seems a vivid example of how America responded appropriately to a distorted picture of world events, but inappropriately to the events as they were really happening, it nevertheless represents an episode of conscious media distortion. The faked and distorted stories published in the pages of yellow journals like the *New York Journal* and *New York World* were malicious, in that the editors knew them to be exaggerated when they were published, and they were intended to produce the results they did (Willis, 1991, p. 207).

Stevens (1991) offers this commentary: “We all know that William Randolph Hearst caused the Spanish-American War. Thanks to the war, he and Joseph Pulitzer sold so many copies of their yellow journals that they made fortunes” (p. 91).

Members of the United States Congress were also paying attention to these articles. For better or worse, the news stories aided in their decision-making process and served to legitimize, at least in some small way, yellow journalism:

The practice of utilizing newspaper reports of Spanish atrocities in debates had another decided and far-reaching effect – that of making available to Washington representatives of newspapers in every section of the country, as well as the news gathering organizations, sensational accounts of the Cuban insurrection, which would not have become available to many of the papers in any other manner. Conservative publications, which refrained from exploitation of the revolt and severely denounced other papers in this respect, were inclined to use portions of the debates, despite the fact that much of the material for such debates had been taken from sensational newspapers, because the charges made by the press were given authority when they were repeated by members of Congress (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 55).

The yellow journals’ practice of polling members of Congress and other public officials in an effort to reveal their views on Cuba “was an insidious means of spreading propaganda” (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 122). The results of the polls were often printed in the yellow journals, but usually without proper documentation to substantiate said results.
Wisan (1965) would agree with Hohenberg in his statement concerning yellow journalism and the time period leading up to the Spanish-American War:

The decade of the 1890s, which witnessed the final crisis of the long continued friction between Spain and her Cuban colony, marked also the appearance of a new type of journalism in New York City. While a number of veteran newspaper men were grimly attempting to maintain conservative standards, a new school in newspaper making with its reckless headlines, “popular” features, and sensational appeals to the masses reached many readers previously impervious to the comparatively staid sheets of the old order (p. 21).

The stories coming out of Cuba concerning the rebellion of its people against governing Spain during this time were excellent fodder for the yellow journals. Douglas Allen (1971), author of *Frederic Remington and the Spanish-American War*, offers this insight:

Here was a people oppressed by a despotic government, and it was Hearst’s theory that if the coverage was handled right, he would have something of value to sell to the public. He began to treat the Cuban situation sensationally. His correspondents would report the struggle of a freedom-loving people against the tyranny of a cruel and powerful nation, for Spain at that time was a world power (p. 1).

The disaster of the battleship *Maine* proved the impetus for the publishers of the *World* and the *Journal* to push for Cuban independence in their newspapers. They continued printing stories about the disaster so as to keep the loss of so many lives foremost in the minds of their readers. The *Maine* was just what Pulitzer and Hearst were looking for to push readers’ thoughts of war forward. Lande (1995) writes, “objectivity, an indispensable tool of a good reporter, was too often tossed aside during the Spanish-American War” (p. 127). “The American press, particularly the yellow New York newspapers, used the themes of reporting on the Spaniards attacking defenseless prisoners, their disregard for the rights of the Cuban people, and their mistreatment of
visiting American citizens to successfully campaign for Cuban freedom” (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 52).

Author George W. Auxier (1940) writes that before one can universally damn the American press for starting the Spanish-American War, one must first explore the editorial content of all American newspapers. In his article, titled *Middle Western Newspapers and the Spanish American War, 1895-1898*, Auxier attempts to partially fulfill this exploration by studying the editorial content of newspapers in the Midwest section of the United States. Auxier contends that editors of the majority of these newspapers wrote far more about “economic imperialism, military strategem, political idealism, and a large measure of humanitarianism” (p. 524).

Auxier (1940) also points out that members of the Cuban Junta in the U.S. were just as responsible for the “instigation of material and moral aid in promotion of Cuban independence. The practical program of these agencies was hypothecated on the premise that their own objectives could be achieved only through assistance from the United States” (p. 526). According to Auxier, editors of the newspapers studied “stood on common ground in consistently advocating Cuban independence through intervention of some sort,” and that this intervention did not necessarily require the use of force (p. 531). Auxier’s conclusion is that the influence of the yellow press left relatively little impression on the editors of newspapers in the Midwest.

Another scholar expanded on Auxier’s study by looking at newspapers of the same time period in the state of Kansas. Harold J. Sylvester’s (1969) findings are in agreement with those of Auxier: The majority of Kansas newspapers studied appeared unaffected by the persuasion of the yellow newspapers in New York. Also, the editors of
these newspapers tended to agree with President McKinley’s more conservative approach to war with Cuba and to stress that the main reason for going to war was on a humanitarian mission to help the people of this island.

In a similar vein, author Mark M. Welter (1970) employs the same research methods as Auxier and Sylvester in studying newspapers in Minnesota during this same time frame. His results mirror that of the previous two authors, and he goes so far as to state: “The Western Press not only failed to mimic Eastern tactics but was openly and sharply critical of the lack of professionalism” (p. 722). Even after the sinking of the battleship Maine, newspapers in Minnesota still insisted that American leaders remain calm and exercise cautious restraint.

Indiana newspapers prior to the start of the Spanish-American War also tended to have a more moderate and cautious editorial slant in their reporting. According to authors Morton M. Rosenberg (1976) and Thomas P. Ruff (1976), however, once the formal decision was made for the United States to go to war, Indiana residents were quite willing to back President McKinley’s decision by enlisting in the military. It appears as though sentiment regarding American intervention swayed for Indiana readers after the sinking of the battleship Maine, but the authors also state: “Imperialist expansionism was the new order of the day, and citizens of Indiana appeared willing to march to its tune” (p. 30).

Finally, mention must be made of the ramifications and results of the outcome of the Spanish-American War. This was not just a war over a small island: it was a war that knocked Spanish rule out of the Caribbean and established the United States as a global super power. “Spain had been reduced to the rank of a minor power, and the deeply troubled lands of Cuba and (later) the Philippines came under U.S. sway” (Kennedy,
2006, p. 65). And many scholars believe it was “this consistent drumbeat of publicity, whether true or not, that raised the Cuban profile in the minds of many people” (Smythe, 2003, p. 188).

The next section explores the theory used in the content analysis of the artifacts. It is Joseph Campbell’’s power of the myth theory, especially as it relates to the hero. This theory is the framework around which the artifacts are analyzed.
THEORY

To research a time in history is to research human drama. James Carey (1989) states in his book, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*: “… news is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it” (p. 21). Dramatistic analysis is a “critical/cultural textual approach in which the researcher examines a communication event as though it were theatrically staged and acted” (Rubin, Rubin, Piele, 2005, p. 292). In other words, communication does not just convey information. More importantly, he argues, communication serves a ritual purpose that simultaneously constructs and reifies a society’s cultural and social underpinnings.

There are many dramas one could explore in the few months prior to the start of the Spanish-American War; however, few contain all the elements of suspense and intrigue as that of the events surrounding a beautiful young Cuban woman named Evangelina Cisneros. This drama includes villains General Weyler and Spain, “damsels” in distress Cisneros and Cuba, and heroes Karl Decker and the United States. To explore this drama more fully, a study of Joseph Campbell’s power of the myth is required, including the importance of this concept of the “myth” in everyday life. Campbell’s work explored the use of mythic symbols society holds on to in order to explain the world and therein, the resulting actions taken by society. According to Campbell (1988), myths are important in society in order to understand and interpret messages.

Campbell (1988) first gives a rudimentary definition of myth as “stories about gods” (p. 22). He further extrapolates this definition by defining the meaning of gods: “a
personification of a motivating power or a value system that function in human life and in
the universe” (p. 22). “The myths are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human
being, and the same powers that animate our life animate the life of the world” (p. 22).
Campbell is also identified as a “mythographer”: one who writes about myths.
Campbell’s discovery is that all myths have the same story line, endlessly retold in
infinite variations (Vogler, retrieved 2006, June 28).

Yellow journalism of the late 1800’s flourished, in part, because it fed the
insatiable desires of its readers. Hearst and Pulitzer were the mythical giants, feeding
With a Thousand Faces. He states that symbols of mythology are not manufactured;
rather, they are spontaneous productions of the psyche. Hearst and Pulitzer were part of
what Campbell (1969) calls “the mythological image of the cornucopian banquet of the
gods” (p. 173). Joseph Campbell’s work entailed studying these myths as metaphor vs.

fact.

Religious scholars L.W. Gibbs (1975) and W. T. Stevenson (1975) offer insights
as to the function of myth. According to the authors, myth gives “meaning and shape to
the world [and state] what is really real, self-founded, true, and good” (p. 5). The
language of myth is also addressed: “At the most fundamental level (myth) enables us to
perceive reality” (p. 6).

A successful society operates under an idea of “invisible support,” the notion that
“society was there before you, it is there after you are gone, and you are member of it.
The myths that link you to your social group, the tribal myths, affirm that you are an
organ of the larger organism” (Campbell, 1988, p. 72). We need myths to explain our world; we need myths for self-identification within society.

It is necessary to explore the mythic image of a hero and its importance in society in the analysis of the front-page news stories of the events leading up to the war. It is logical to assume that the majority of cultures contain mythical stories of heroes; Campbell explains our need to have a hero: “Because that’s what’s worth writing about. Even in popular novels, the main character is a hero or heroine who has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience. A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (1988, p. 123). It is an adventure, usually beginning “with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there’s something lacking in the normal experiences available or permitted to the members of his society. This person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary … to recover what has been lost” (p. 123).

Campbell (1990) explores this hero myth more fully in his book titled, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*. The hero embarks on a quest, an adventure, full of romance and intrigue. “This is a wonderful story: that which we intend, that which is the journey, that which is the goal, is the fulfillment of something that never was on the earth before – namely, your own potentiality” (p. 212). Campbell also discusses the importance of the courage of the convictions of the hero that his/her quest is true, just, and right. Truth, justice, and the American way, that the American military was the “savior” of the country of Cuba, are recurrent themes in the news stories of the newspapers studied. It is in the application of these frameworks that this thesis was researched.
CHAPTER II

METHODODOLOGY

This study addresses questions related to events and situations within the nine-month period – August 1897 to April 1898 – that preceded a declaration of war against Spain by the United States. The theories of Joseph Campbell on the power of mythic hero across cultures and time suggest that who the journalistic media deem as villains and heroes may be reflected in a nation’s climate of opinion on whether to go to war. More specifically, research answered the following questions:

1) What, if any, events or situations related to Cuba and Spain in the nine-month period leading up to a declaration of war called for heroic action?

2) Who did the newspaper stories published in the New York City yellow newspapers of Hearst and Pulitzer identify as the heroes within these events and situations?

3) How did these newspapers’ coverage of such heroes in the months leading up to a declaration of war mirror Campbell’s concept of the mythic hero and his/her heroic journey?

To answer question one, I reviewed a series of historical works on general American history around the Spanish-American War, as well as books and articles on the period’s newspapers, including the yellow sensational press. As I read these works, I looked for events or situations in and around Spain and Cuba that raise questions of villains and the need for heroes.
To answer question two, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of front-page New York City newspaper stories published by Hearst and Pulitzer during the nine-month period August 1897 to April 1898. The analysis involved examining the front-page of every issue of Heart’s *New York World* and Pulitzer’s *New York Journal* for stories on the events/situations that came out of research that addressed question one.

Content analysis is defined as a “research methodology used to identify, enumerate, and analyze occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded primarily in mass-mediated texts” (Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps, 1991, p. 313). A content analysis also “looks at the characteristics of communication messages. Its purpose is to learn something about the content and those who produced the messages” (Rubin, Rubin and Piele, 2000, p. 200). These same authors corroborate this decision, citing that content analysis is a good methodological choice when one is conducting research on news stories so as to learn about “underlying attitudes, biases, or repeating themes” (2000, p. 200). Because this thesis is historical in nature, the choice of the research methodology content analysis is “an indirect way to making inferences about people. Instead of asking them questions, we examine what they read or watch and then work backward, assuming that what people read and watch are good reflections of their attitudes, values, and so on” (Berger, 1998, p. 24).

I decided to use a qualitative rather than quantitative methodology because I wanted to study the actual words written instead of converting them into numerical statistics. Researchers Miles (1984) and Huberman (1984) agree: “Words, especially when they are organized into incidents and stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another reader, a policy-maker,
a practitioner – than pages of numbers” (p. 15). My research did reveal a quantitative content analysis of major newspapers in the late 1800s conducted by John G. Speed, the results of which confirmed his hypothesis that there was an increase of sensational news stories on the pages of newspapers (Sumpter, 2001). However, I did not find any qualitative research that explored these articles historically by applying the theories of Campbell.

To address question three, which asks whether the newspaper coverage studied in the previous question mirrors Campbell’s concept of the mythic hero and his/her heroic journey, I used the tenets of Joseph Campbell’s power of the myth. To do so, I looked at the selected artifacts in terms of constructing a framework around which these news stories were written. Campbell’s work explored the use of mythic symbols society holds on to in order to explain the world and, therein, the resulting actions taken by society. According to Campbell, myths are important in society in order to understand and interpret messages (1988, p. 6).

Campbell (1988) gives a rudimentary definition of myth as “stories about gods” (p. 22). He further extrapolates this definition by defining the meaning of gods: “A personification of a motivating power or a value system that function in human life and in the universe” (p. 22). In addition, he wrote, “The myths are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human being, and the same powers that animate our life animate the life of the world” (p. 22).

Joseph Campbell (1969) also authored *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. In this book, Campbell identifies stages in the life of a hero, and some of these stages are exemplified by the coverage and events prior to the Spanish-American War:
1. The hero hears and responds to a call to adventure;
2. There are people/objects for the hero to rescue;
3. The hero must endure the final battle; and
4. The hero returns home.

He states that symbols of mythology are not manufactured; rather, they are spontaneous productions of the psyche. Hearst and Pulitzer were part of what Campbell (1969) calls “the mythological image of the cornucopian banquet of the gods” (p. 173). Joseph Campbell’s work entailed studying these myths as metaphor vs. fact. This information was used to unmask the identity of the heroes depicted in the newspaper artifacts.

Religious scholars L.W. Gibbs (1975) and W.T. Stevenson (1975) offer insights as to the function of myth. According to the authors, myths give “meaning and shape to the world [and help humans to discover] what is really real, self-founded, true, and good” (1975, p. 5). The language of myth is also addressed: “At the most fundamental level [myth] enables us to perceive reality” (p. 6).

It is necessary to explore the mythic image of a hero and its importance in society in the analysis of the front-page news stories of the events leading up to the war. Campbell (1988) explains our need to have a hero: “Because that’s what’s worth writing about. Even in popular novels, the main character is a hero or heroine who has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience. A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (p. 123). It is an adventure, usually beginning “with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there’s something lacking in the normal experiences available or permitted to the members of his society. This person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary … to recover what has been lost” (p. 123).
Campbell (1990) explores this hero myth more fully in his book titled *Transformations of Myth Through Time*. The hero embarks on a quest, an adventure, full of romance and intrigue. “This is a wonderful story: that which we intend, that which is the journey, that which is the goal, is the fulfillment of something that never was on the earth before – namely, your own potentiality” (p. 212). Campbell also discusses the importance of the courage of the convictions of the hero that his/her quest is true, just, and right. Truth, justice, and the American way, that the American military was the “savior” of the country of Cuba, are recurrent themes in the news stories of the newspapers studied. The drama of a small country being bullied and beaten down by a larger, more powerful, ruling country, the drama of a beautiful young woman being unjustly held by this same bully, the drama of an American ship being blown up in Havana harbor while on a mission of peace are examples of such frameworks. It is in the application of these frameworks that this thesis was researched.

It is necessary to formulate an operational definition of yellow journalism, or sensationalism. *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* defines yellow journalism as: “the use of cheaply sensational or unscrupulous methods in newspapers, etc., to attract or influence readers” (2001, p. 1659). The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that the term “yellow journalism” is uniquely American, and applies “to newspapers (or writers of newspaper articles) of a recklessly or unscrupulously sensational character” (1989, p. 718). Wilkerson (1967) defines this new journalism as: “A policy of aggressive activity in bringing to light unusual incidents which were exploited to build circulation” (p. 83). This term came to represent everything flamboyant and sensational in journalism, including fabricated stories. When using the term “yellow journalism” to describe a
newspaper’s content in this era, it was most usually to denigrate or express disapproval of said content. My operational definition of yellow journalism includes the above dictionary definitions, and I looked for words in the articles that appeared to be sensational in nature in an effort to influence readers.

Finally, there is another element unique to the yellow journals of the day: “One of its defining characteristics was the tendency to promote itself in everything it did. Publishers not only advertised with posters and railroad placards, they self-publicized in the news” (Smythe, 2003, p. 207). There is no shortage of self-promotion by the World and the Journal and examples will be provided corroborating Smythe’s claim.

The next chapter provides reports on results gathered in research to answer questions one through three.
CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

To answer question one, which involved identifying any events and situations prominent in the period leading up to the Spanish-American War that raise questions of the need for heroes, I researched histories of the Spanish-American War and the yellow press of the period. My examination of this literature led me to select three events/situations for further analysis, using Campbell’s mythic hero as a frame of reference: 1) The story of Cuban prisoner Evangelina Cisneros, 2) the living conditions of the native Cubans, and 3) the sinking of the battleship Maine.

To answer question two – Who did the newspaper stories published in the yellow papers of the period identify as the heroes within these events and situations? – research involved identifying front-page stories published in Hearst’s New York Journal and Pulitzer’s New York World from August 1897 through April 1898 that included articles related to these three situations. Of the 540 front pages examined, of which 291 contained stories about the Cuban situation, 18 contained stories about Evangelina Cisneros, 37 contained information on the explosion and sinking of the Maine, and 31 reported on the growing desperate situation of the Cuban people. What I learned in the examination of these stories concerning their embedded themes related to heroic myth is in the next three sections, each of which starts with background information. Before discussing how these stories reported on these villains and heroes, further descriptions of these events/situations are needed.
Evangelina Cisneros was young and beautiful. She was the daughter of a prominent Cuban rebel and a niece of the president of Cuba (Wilkerson, 1967). Cisneros was charged with “having lured Colonel Berriz, Military Governor of the Isle of Pines, to her home where hidden men killed him” (p. 87). The Journal reported an entirely different story, one that pinned Colonel Berriz with the title of scoundrel, a beast who tried to force himself on her. Her story is one of intrigue and scandal, just the kind of story Pulitzer and Hearst loved to report in their newspapers, and just the kind of story people loved to read. Upon learning of Cisneros’ story Hearst is reported to have said, “We’ve got Spain now” (Brown, 1967, p. 95). Campbell’s power of the myth works quite well with this real-life situation: There is a damsel in distress, a villain who tries to force himself on her, her imprisonment even though she is innocent, and a hero who risks life and limb in the successful rescue of said damsel. Hearst capitalized on the romance and intrigue of Cisneros’ dilemma and printed many stories about her in the Journal. By capitalizing on the Cisneros’ story and by blanketing the front pages of his newspaper with the stories of her situation and subsequent rescue from prison, Hearst was rewarded with soaring circulation numbers for the Journal (Smythe, 2003).

Julian Hawthorne, who wrote the introduction to the book, The Story of Evangelina Cisneros: Told By Herself, paints the romantic picture perfectly:

We are indeed accustomed to finding truth stranger than fiction; but it is a new sensation to find it also more romantic – more in the fashion of the Arabian Nights and the Gothic fairy-tales of Mediaeval ages. The New Journalism has achieved many wonders; but nothing so wonderful as
when its best representative, the New York Journal, conceived the idea of freeing an imprisoned maiden from a cruel tyrant, and carried the conception into successful realization through the agency of Mr. Karl Decker. No adventure of modern times has so appealed to the imagination of the world; had the knight of La Mancha not been a Spaniard, and had the achievement been less splendidly practical, we might call it Quixotic (1897, p. 17-18).

Hawthorne furthers the mythic hero image:

None could be innocent, constant and adorable than she; none more wicked, detestable and craven than her enemies. All is right and lovable on the one side, all ugly and hateful on the other. . . . We may liken [the Journal] to that of some puissant prince of fairy legend, dispatching a courteous but cogent message to the Ogre, calling his attention to the wrong done his captive, and demanding justice in her behalf (1897, p. 19).

Journal reporter Karl Decker (1897) was sent to Havana to rescue Cisneros from prison. The following excerpt is taken from his writing of the adventure:

It was just a newspaper assignment, that’s all, which he had accepted, and which, as a matter of course, he would fulfill – or die! . . . Well, the miracle takes place; the Ogre is defrauded; the maiden is rescued; we hear the cab rattling over the pavements in the night – silence: she and the hero have vanished into the unknown, and all is well. Another newspaper reporter has done his duty, and the managing editor permits himself a smile of satisfaction (p. 25-26).

Decker is as humble as his boss, William Randolph Hearst! This rescue has gone down in history as “perhaps one of the most notable instances of newspaper aggressiveness” (Wilkerson, 1967, p. 87).

Hawthorne credits the Journal with showing the United States what it ought to do concerning the situation in Cuba. Using the rescue of Cisneros as an example, Hawthorne states:

Evangelina is not the only Cuban woman whom Weyler, with the connivance of the Spanish Government, has outraged. On the contrary, she is the representative of them all . . . . We owe all that we are to liberty; and from those to whom much is given much shall be required. If we do not
love liberty for others as well as for ourselves, we are not deserving of it. In the person of Evangelina Cisneros, Cuba appeals to us (1897, p. 27).

There were many stories of atrocities and injustices dealt to the people of Cuba reported in the pages of American newspapers. Included is the story of Evangelina Cisneros, “one Cuban girl, who for alleged complicity in an uprising in the Isle of Pines had been cast into the foul prison for abandoned women in Havana” (1897, p. 31). Cisneros’ crime as reported by Decker (1897), was “not for any part she had taken in rebellion against Spain, but for resisting the insulting advances of a savage in Spanish uniform” (p. 32). For her supposed crime, her sentence was that she be sent to a prison in Africa, “where she would be at the absolute mercy of Spain’s worst criminals” (p. 32).

As these stories appeared in American newspapers, women of prestige began a letter-writing campaign in an effort to free the young Cuban girl. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, widow of the former head of the Confederacy, wrote to the queen of Spain, imploring for Cisneros’ release: “To you I appeal to extend your powerful protection over this poor captive girl – a child, almost, in years – to save her from a fate worse than death” (“Women’s Noble Appeal,” 1897). Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, who wrote The Battle Hymn of the Republic, made a passionate plea to Pope Leo XIII (1897). Included in these letters were the signatures of many other prominent American women who signed petitions demanding the release of the young lady. In an article titled “American Womanhood Roused,” it was reported that thousands of signatures of American women, including American President McKinley’s mother” were forwarded to Spanish authorities (“American,” 1897).

There was a delicate political problem attached, however, to the release of Cisneros. Captain General Weyler, the military man and Spaniard in charge of Cuba,
would have to convict “Col. Jose Berriz, nephew of the Prime Minister of Spain and a favorite adjutant of Weyler” (Decker, 1897, p. 52).

[Berriz] persecuted her with his evil attentions, when her father was a prisoner in his custody as Governor of the Isle of Pines. He had sought to force her to submit to him by making her father’s liberty contingent on her compliance, and on one occasion had broken into her room at midnight to compel her to accede to his wishes, and thereby got himself well beaten by the prisoners who saved her from him. Even the ethics of the Spanish army could not ignore such brutality on the part of an officer. To save Berriz from disgrace, all the machinery of the Spanish Government in Cuba was put in operation to the destroy the name and ruin the life of an innocent Cuban girl (Decker, 1897, p. 52-53).

An even more vile portrait of Weyler is painted:

The hatred of Weyler and his determination to cause Evangelina Cisneros to suffer fully for all the humiliation she had brought upon Berriz, through her successful effort to defend herself against his brutal attempt upon her honor, made hopeless any attempt to secure her liberation through ordinary means. The Queen Regent interested herself in the case to the extent of writing to Weyler to use clemency toward the girl, but his reply was such as to cause the Queen to discontinue her attempt in the girl’s behalf. He claimed that at the trial, which was rapidly approaching, he would clearly show that Evangelina had been guilty of conspiracy against Colonel Berriz, having for purpose the capture of that officer and the liberation of all the prisoners on the Isle of Pines (1897, p. 59-60).

The daring rescue was chronicled in an article titled “Evangelina Cisneros Rescued by the Journal” (Evangelina Cisneros, 1897). Depicted as a romantic and daring hero, modest, a little embarrassed, but victorious, Decker was the epitome of the hero defined in Joseph Campbell’s works (Brown, 1967). This was just the kind of press Hearst wanted for his newspaper. In this battle for yellow supremacy, the Journal clearly outmaneuvered the World to claim victory. In response, Pulitzer printed a story supposedly quoting Consul General Lee from Havana, who stated liberties had been taken in exaggerating the story of Evangelina Cisneros. This story did nothing to stem the popularity and circulation boost for Hearst and the Journal (Brown, 1967).
Decker (1897) rented an apartment across the street from the prison and suspended a ladder from one of the windows across to a cornice of the jail. By cutting through the bars on Cisneros’ prison cell, he was able to pull her to safety. After keeping her hidden in a home for a few days, Decker helped her escape from the island by way of disguising her appearance: “She was dressed as young ‘Marinero,’ with blue shirt, flowing tie and a large slouch hat. Her hair was plastered under the hat with cosmetics” (p. 108). He then secured passage for her on board the Seneca, a steamer ship headed to the United States.

The Journal headline on October 14, 1897, read: “Evangelina Reaches the Land of Liberty” (Evangelina, 1897). Once Cisneros arrived in the United States, publisher Hearst continued to capitalize on her celebrity status. In an article concerning a benefit organized to raise funds for a memorial to the fallen soldiers of the battleship Maine is this headline: “MONUMENT FUND’S MONSTER BENEFIT. More Than $8,000 Realized for the Journal’s Memorial to the Maine Heroes. Vast Audience Went Wild over ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’ Evangelina Cisneros and Maine Survivors Present Loudly Cheered” (“Monument,” 1898). On the front page of the March 26, 1898, edition of the New York Journal appears this advertisement for yet another fundraiser:

“EVANGELINA CISNEROS Will attend the BROOKLYN BENEFIT in aid of the MAINE MONUMENT FUND – MONTAUK THEATRE – TO-MORROW NIGHT.”

My research leads me to believe that the Cuban refugee was forever grateful to Hearst for assisting in her escape from her Spanish captors, and was a willing partner in Hearst’s boastful self-promotions through his Journal.
Wilkerson (1967) states that “the Cisneros rescue combined the elements needed to make a sensational story, and interest in the event must have been widespread. The danger of international complications was evidently not considered by the Hearst paper, and the general acclaim that followed the rescue indicates the attitude of the American people in the matter” (p. 97). He also makes the point that at this point in history, the press was the only means by which Americans could get information.

The story of Evangelina Cisneros is but one example of how the sensational press agitated the American public in a time when relations between the United States and Spain were already strained (Wilkerson, 1967). More information about this is contained in the sections concerning the condition of the Cuban people and the sinking of the battleship Maine.

In seeking the answers to the research questions, the above news articles portray themes of heroes, damsels in distress, villains, and protectors. Whether the details of Cisneros’ escape were exaggerated, they still fulfill our romantic notions of heroes. Obviously, women were especially drawn to this dilemma in light of their letter-writing campaign. This is the stuff of which romantic novels are written, novels that are usually read by women. The heroes are Decker, Hearst, the Journal, the American women who responded to Cisneros’ plight, and the United States.
The Living Conditions of the Native Cubans

The need for heroes seems obvious when one reads the story of how Spain treated native Cubans in the years leading up to the Spanish-American War. In researching front pages published in the nine months preceding the declaration of the Spanish American War in April 1898, I discovered 31 news stories concerning the living conditions of the native Cubans. Spain controlled Cuba since Christopher Columbus discovered the island in 1492. Cuba is on the western edge of the Caribbean and its climate and fertile plains made producing such products as sugar and tobacco ideal. The mountains on the island are naturally situated so roads and railroads were easily constructed coast to coast. Strategically, Cuba’s harbors ease the movement of people and goods by water. In other words, Cuba is an island with many advantages making it an ideal possession of mother Spain (Rogozinski, 2000).

In 1868, after years of oppressive Spanish rule, certain Cuban aristocrats staged a series of revolts as their desire for independence became more intense. The mother country began offering certain concessions in an effort to suppress the revolt, but the Cubans refused, having had their appetites whetted for freedom. A financial depression in 1894 led to the closing of many sugar factories in Cuba, adding to the unrest. Officially, the start of the Cuban revolution occurred on February 24, 1895, near Santiago (Wisan, 1965).

The Cuban unrest and revolts were on the rise, and it appeared as though the Spanish governor-general was powerless to quell these problems. Unfortunately for the Cubans, a much different governor-general replaced him. In 1896, Valeriano Weyler was
named governor-general of the island in the name of Spain, and his rule was both brutal and merciless (Blow, 1992). “Weyler had a reputation as a ruthless soldier” (Brown, 1967, p. 27). As an example of Weyler’s vicious rule, the governor-general made it a goal to “lay waste the country and starve the revolutionists into submission” (Davis, 2000, p. 20), ordered their homes be burned, and ordered their food crops be destroyed. “His methods, which immediately earned him the nickname of “The Butcher” in American newspapers, were effective enough to bring relative calm in 1897. They also left several hundred thousand Cubans starving” (Weems, 1958, p. 39). Weyler also rounded up thousands of peasants throughout the island and “forced them into hastily erected concentration camps, where thousands died of hunger, abuse, and epidemics” (Rogożinski, 2000, p. 205).

It is probably safe to say that Governor-General Weyler was unpopular with all save Spain and William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the New York Journal. Hearst “soon realized the potential of the Cuban struggle and began to recruit the best available talent for the fray. When Spanish artillery saluted the arrival of Valeriano Weyler in February, the big guns on the Journal boomed. ‘The Butcher,’ as Weyler was promptly dubbed, was also a ‘fiendish despot … pitiless, cold, an exterminator of men … there is nothing to prevent his carnal, animal brain from … inventing tortures and infamies of bloody debauchery” (Blow, p. 56).

Hearst hired Richard Harding Davis and Frederick Remington to cover the stories of the day from Cuba. Davis’ job was to file interesting and compelling stories while Remington’s job was to bring these stories to life through sketches and photographs. The two men arrived in Havana on January 9, 1897. Their first interview was with Governor-
General Weyler; Remington sketched “the only profile of Weyler on this side of the Atlantic on (his) cuff” (Blow, 1992, p. 59).

The stories describing Weyler’s rule over the Cuban people were far from favorable. The *World* reported that Spanish soldiers were sent in the fields disguised as farmers with orders to shoot peasants. The stories concerning Cuban atrocities at the hands of Weyler began appearing with regularity in American newspapers. Weyler was not ignorant of the way he was being depicted in the press, and he issued an order of censorship in an effort to stop the printing of such stories in American newspapers, even ordering American journalists off the island (Wilkerson, 1967).

Most of the Cuban people were already poor and these conditions worsened during Spanish rule. Davis (2000) paints a vivid picture:

> The huts in which these people live at present lean one against the other … where dogs and cattle and human beings tramp over daily growing heaps of refuse and garbage and filth, and where malaria rises at night in a white winding sheet of poisonous mist. The condition of these people differs in degree: some are living the life of gypsies, others are as destitute as so many shipwrecked emigrants, and still others find it difficult to hold up their heads and breathe (p. 44).

In the larger cities, Davis paints a still more desperate picture:

> Thousands of human beings are now herded together around the seaport towns of Cuba who cannot be fed, who have no knowledge of cleanliness or sanitation, who have no doctors to care for them and who cannot care for themselves (p. 54).

Davis’s writings for the *Journal* include accounts of people hacked to death with machetes, as well as people shot and dumped in shallow graves, all at the hands of Spanish guerrillas led by Benito Cerreros with Weyler’s blessing. The reporter stated that these guerillas murdered “men and boys in the field around Sagua as wantonly and as calmly as a gardener cuts down weeds” (p. 110). Davis rarely failed to mention that
Americans as well as Cubans were killed, many times unarmed and defenseless. It is no wonder that Governor-General Weyler was nicknamed “The Butcher.” “For this is not a war – it is a state of lawless butchery” (pg. 116). Davis summed up the Cuban situation in this manner:

A reign of terror sounds hysterical, but it is an exact and truthful descriptive phrase of the condition in Cuba. Insurgents and Spaniards alike are laying waste land, and neither side shows any sign of giving up the struggle. But while the men are in the field fighting after their fashion, for the independence of the island, the old men and the infirm and the women and children, who cannot help the cause or themselves, and who are destitute and starving and dying, have their eyes turned toward the great republic that lies only eighty miles away, and they are holding out their hands and asking, “How long, O, Lord, how long” (p. 139).

On April 19, 1898, the United States Congress passed a resolution declaring Cuba to be independent and authorizing the president to use force in extricating Spain from the island. On May 1, 1898, the first shots were fired, signaling the beginning of the Spanish-American War (Weems, 1958). The war lasted three months. The United States was victorious in ending Spanish rule in Cuba. The defeated Spain signed a peace treaty on December 10, 1898 (Weems, 1958).

In many of the articles I read, vivid pictures were painted depicting the desperate situation on the island. One subheading read: “NO FOOD IN SIGHT. Woman and Children the Principal Victims. HORRORS OF CAMPS. Hapless Cubans Not Even Allowed to Raise Provisions. High Born as Well as the Humble Forced to Ask Alms. (“Cuba Turned,” 1898). The seriousness of the American intent to help the Cubans is shown in the following excerpt from another article:

The president is more than ever determined to avoid war, unless Spain commits an overt act to thwart the humane intentions of this Government. Relief will be sent to the starving Cubans on a great scale, but on merchant
ships. The navy will be “within call” for use, only if Spain makes forcible resistance. This the President does not expect (“Spain Expected,” 1898).

In reading the Journal during this time period, one might believe that the newspaper was solely responsible for saving the lives of the Cuban people. In an article titled “JOURNAL HAS DONE MORE FOR CUBA THAN ALL THE AGENCIES OF THE GOVERNMENT,” Congressman D.A. DeArmond of Missouri is quoted:

I say here, and it is at once a declaration to the glory of newspaper enterprise and the patriotism of newspaper offices; it is at once the declaration of the shame of this Government and the trifling methods that have controlled it, that more has been done for Cuban independence, more for the cause of freedom, more for the honor of this great country, by one single newspaper, the New York Journal, than by the entire agency and power of this great Government (“Journal Has Done,” 1898).

William Randolph Hearst had no problem with self-promotion, whether or not it was true. Never mind if the American public thought of him as hero – it was enough that Hearst thought of himself as a hero.

Back to reality, Governor-General Weyler moved most of the rural Cubans into concentration camps. The living conditions were horrific and many people starved to death. This was really happening and people were really dying. Part of President McKinley’s message to Congress was reprinted in the following article:

The cruel policy of concentration was initiated February 16, 1896. This policy the late Cabinet of Spain justified as a necessary measure of war and as a means of cutting off supplies from the insurgents. It has utterly failed as a war measure. It was not civilized warfare. It was extermination (“The Journal Polls,” 1898).

Further, the article states this statistic:

When the rebellion began the population of the island was 1,631,687. It will be seen, therefore, that more than one-third of the original population of the island have been ruthlessly and cruelly swept from the face of the earth (“The Journal Polls,” 1898).
The *World* pressed for immediate American intervention: “The rainy season of death and disease in Cuba begins in weeks – unless intervention comes before, then the whole struggle must be postponed until October” (“President’s Programme to End War,” 1898). Not only were the Cubans dying at the hands of their Spanish oppressors, they were in danger of dying because of the weather. In the same article, Senator W.E. Mason of Illinois was reported to state that war with Spain was inevitable. “For myself, I think we have stood the impudence of the newsboy nation long enough,” Mason mused. “Of course, the war will not last long, for Spaniards do not fight well except in the dark, or whenever they can murder people without fear of detection” (“President’s,” 1898). This article exemplifies the powerful words written to stress the strength of the United States in the face of the much weaker Spain.

Once Weyler’s successor was named, the U.S. newspapers wasted no time in printing articles about new Governor-General Blanco: The *New York Journal* printed this headline and accompanying story: “JOURNAL’S COMMISSION DECLARES THAT NOTHING CAN JUSTIFY POSTPONING INTERVENTION IN CUBA!” (“Journal’s Commission,” 1898). Within this article, the subject of starving, dying Cubans is once again reported. “Half the Inhabitants in Cuba are Dead” is a sub-headline included in the story (“Journal’s Commission”). An artist rendering of wounded, starving, emaciated Cuban men, women, and children accompanied many of the newspaper articles. One in particular is a depiction of a hospital overflowing with sick and dying Cubans (“Horrors in Cuba,” 1898) while another picture shows an orphanage with starving, emaciated teachers and children (“Glimpse in an Orphanage,” 1898).
This sub-headline appeared in the *New York Journal*: “… Relief Will Be Sent to Cuba with an Escort of War Ships” (“President’s Programme: *Maine* Report” 1898). The United States was painted in similar articles as the savior bringing aid to the Cuban refugees and patriots, under escort of battleships, no less. The United States, ever the hero, swooped in to save the Cuban people. Another headline reads, “America’s Noble Charity Saved Starving Thousands” (“America’s Noble Charity,” 1898). More articles were written in these newspapers that depicted a noble America feeding the starving people of Cuba. An article that appeared in an issue of the *World* stated: “Relief will be sent to the starving Cubans on a great scale” (“Spain Expected,” 1898). Talk of war began to appear in the headlines of these newspapers in conjunction with the headlines concerning the condition of the Cuban people. As the expectation of the United States declaring war on Spain intensified, there was speculation as to the continuance of aid being delivered to the Cubans. U.S. President McKinley assured the nation that aid would continue: “Hundreds of tons of provisions will be hurried to Cuba, under the guns of our great battleships” (“Spain Calls,” 1898).

In relating the above articles to the research questions, the Cuban life and death situation was reported from the aspect of Spain being the villain and the United States stepping in to take on the mantel of heroism. Helpless people suffering at the hands of a tyrant probably evoked feelings of resentment and anger from the readers of these newspaper stories. The villains also took on the human forms of Governor-Generals Weyler and Blanco, with the human hero being William Randolph Hearst – all by himself! Seriously, the situation was dire. Immediate action was required to bring aid to the Cuban people. President McKinley could also be thought of as a reluctant hero,
unwilling to commit to war but steadfast in providing aid. These examples further exemplify the work of Joseph Campbell.
The Sinking of the Battleship Maine

Much like the Cisneros affair and the plight of native Cubans, the sinking of the Battleship Maine led to cries for revenge to which only heroes could respond. In reading the front pages of each issue of the New York World and New York Journal published during the nine months leading to the declaration of war, I identified 37 front pages of the researched newspapers containing news stories about the sinking of the battleship Maine. Early in 1898, President McKinley ordered the battleship Maine be deployed to Cuba, telling the public its mission would be that of friendship. However, with the large number of U.S. citizens living in Cuba, the Maine’s true mission was that of providing security for these citizens (Weems, 1958). Captain Charles D. Sigsbee was commander of the vessel. The ship arrived in the port of Havana on January 25, 1898. Three weeks later, “on the evening of February 15, 1898, at 9:40, the Maine blew up, killing 260 of the crew” (Freidel, 2002, p. 4).

Two reporters were at a café in Havana when the explosion occurred. George Bronson Rea of Harper’s Weekly was with Sylvester Scovel of the New York World when they witnessed this terrible event. The two men “were startled by the sound of a terrible explosion that shattered several windows in the city. … Rea observed an intense light in the sky toward the harbor” (Weems, 1958, p, 88-89).

The United States blamed Spain, but there was never any concrete evidence that pointed a definitive finger at that country. What is known from the wreckage of the Maine is that there was no internal explosion on board: it is speculated that a torpedo or some other type of bomb outside the ship was responsible for the explosion. A captain of
the ship called the *City of Washington*, anchored in Havana harbor on the same night in question, testified to authorities that he first heard a “muffled blast, seeming to come from under water. This was followed instantly, he said, by a second explosion” (Weems, 1958, p. 110). Divers hired to search the wreckage of the battleship supported the ideas that 1) the explosion occurred outside of the ship, and 2) there were two separate explosions.

When the *Maine* exploded, 260 crewmates were killed. The event shocked and horrified the United States and would prove to be the final straw. Spanish and American relations were already strained and accusations began to fly as to how this terrible event occurred. The guilty party was never found, but some possibilities were discussed. “Some persons suggested that Cuban rebels caused the disaster, to bring the United States into the fighting. Many believed that a handful of Spanish fanatics rigged it” (Weems, 1958, p. 128). Regardless, the *Maine* was sabotaged in Havana harbor; ultimately, Spain was culpable.

Hearst did everything in his power to capitalize on the disaster. “During the week beginning February 17th, the *Journal* devoted a daily average space of 8½ pages to the *Maine* – news, editorials, and pictures. It sent the yachts *Buccaneer* and *Anita* and the tug *Echo* to Havana, and massed at the Cuban capital its group of special correspondents – Hawthorne, Decker, Creelman, Lewis, Bryson, and artists Remington and Bengough” (Wisan, 1965, p. 390). Hearst also put up a reward of $50,000 for information leading to finding the person(s) responsible for the *Maine* disaster. The headline on the front page of February 17th’s *Journal* read, “The warship *Maine* was split in two by an enemy’s secret infernal machine” (p. 1).
On March 21, 1898, the results of the Naval Board of Inquiry concerning the explosion were released. A submarine mine was responsible for the carnage but the identity of the perpetrator(s) remained a mystery (Rosenberg and Ruff, 1976). On April 19, 1898, the United States Congress declared the independence of Cuba with the passage of a resolution declaring as such and authorizing President McKinley to use force in ridding Cuba of Spanish control (Wisan, 1965). War was officially declared on April 25, 1898 (Rosenberg and Ruff, 1976).

Richard Harding Davis (2000) perhaps captured the feelings of most Americans concerning entering a war:

Before I went to Cuba I was as much opposed to our interfering there as any other person equally ignorant concerning the situation could be, but since I have seen for myself I feel ashamed that we should have stood so long idle. We have been too considerate, too fearful that as a younger nation, we should appear to disregard the laws laid down by older nations. We have tolerated what no European power would have tolerated; we have been patient with men who have put back the hand of time for centuries, who lie to our representatives daily, who butcher innocent people, who gamble with the lives of their own soldiers in order to gain a few more stars and an extra stripe, who send American property to the air in flames and murder American prisoners (p. 129).

In this example, the *Journal* announced the commission of the battleship to sail to Cuba in this manner: “WAR SHIP MAINE GOES TO CUBA AT LEE’S DEMAND” (“War Ship Maine,” 1898).

The first news of the blast of the battleship was reported in the *World* by way of the following headline: “The U.S. Battleship Maine Blown Up in Havana Harbor. More than One Hundred of the Crew Killed by the Explosion Which Occurred While They Were Asleep” (“The U.S. Battleship Maine,” 1898). The *Journal* reported: “CRUISER
MAINE BLOWN UP IN HAVANA HARBOR – Capt. Reports Only Fragments Left. Disaster a Mystery, and loss of Life Said to Be Appalling” (“Cruiser Maine,” 1898).

In the days immediately following the explosion, newspaper articles appeared in these newspapers that speculated on the person or persons responsible for the dastardly deed. One example reads: “EXPERTS AT HAVANA SAY SOME GREAT EXTERIOR FORCE RENT AND SUNK THE SHIP” (“Experts at Havana,” 1898). Clearly, there were many questions as to how the ship exploded. In the days following the disaster, this headline appeared: “SPAIN WILL DEMAND AN INTERNATIONAL COURT OF INQUIRY” (“Spain Will Demand,” 1898). Diplomacy between the United States and Spain was quite strained and this article highlights this attempt to delay any retaliatory action the United States might take once it was discovered that the Maine’s explosion occurred from the outside the ship.

U.S. President McKinley was reported to take the diplomatic approach to the disaster: “Midnight Opinion From the President. His Latest Information Leads Him to Believe ‘that the Maine was Blown Up as the Result of an Accident, and He Hopes the Court of Inquiry Will Develop that Fact.’ If the ‘Disaster was Not Accidental Prompt and Decisive Steps Will be Taken’” (“Midnight Opinion,” 1898).

There was also speculation as to what outside mechanisms could have caused the explosion. Some newspaper stories discussed the possibility of underwater mines while others discussed the possibility of a torpedo causing the explosion. Joseph Pulitzer even tried to send his own divers into the deep waters of Havana Bay to investigate the wreckage of the Maine: “Spain Refuses to Let World Divers Go Down to Maine’s Wreck” (“Spain Refuses,” 1898). The World began making its own conclusions about
what happened to the *Maine* without bothering to wait for the Court of Inquiry report: “THE WORLD’S LATEST DISCOVERIES INDICATE MAINE WAS BLOWN UP BY SUBMARINE MINE” (“The *World’s Latest Discovery*,” 1898). On the same front page appeared another article entitled, “Nothing But a Mine Could Have Blown Up the Battleship” (“Nothing But a Mine,” 1898). Not to be outdone by its fiercest competitor, the *Journal* offered a $50,000 reward to information leading to the perpetrator(s) of the *Maine* explosion (“Destruction of the War Ship,” 1898). Hearst even had a copy of the check printed on the front page of the February 19, 1898, edition of the *Journal* (“World-Wide Interest,” 1898).

The United States government held a court of inquiry to determine how the *Maine* was destroyed. One of the stories in the *World* was headlined: “Report of Court of Inquiry Sent to the President. The Board Finds the Explosion on the *Maine* was from an exterior mine or torpedo” (“Report of Court,” 1898). In the article titled, “Mine Maker Tells the *World* *Maine* Deliberately Destroyed,” the inventor of the submarine mine, J.P. Gibbons, tells the *World* in an editorial: “The only submarine mines which have been supplied to the Spanish Government since 1886-1887 were manufactured under my own patents” (“Mine Maker,” 1898). This article states that the Spanish government did, in fact, purchase submarine mines from J.P. Gibbons’ company.

One must remember that photograph reprinting on newspaper pages was not yet perfected; however, illustrations were frequently used. One particular front-page news story in the *World* contains an illustration of the wreckage of the battleship *Maine* that spanned the entire front half of the page. The headline reads: “Experts Show by *World*

The *New York World* found “experts” in Havana to provide information for two shocking stories which shared the same front page: 1) “EXPERTS AT HAVANA SAY SOME GREAT EXTERIOR FORCE RENT AND SUNK THE SHIP. If the 10-Inch Magazine Had Let Go Its Store of Explosive Force, the Vessel Would Have Been Pulverized – Believed that the Forward Magazine are Practically Intact” (“Experts at Havana,” 1898); and 2) “FIFTY PHYSICAL PROOFS THAT MAINE WAS BLOWN UP BY A MINE OR A TORPEDO. *World* Correspondent Brings Out the Awful Truth – Fifty Times the Amount of Powder Which is Known to Have Exploded Within the *Maine* Could Not Have Wrought the Dreadful Havoc” (“Fifty Physical Proofs,” 1898). These twin headlines spanned across the entire front page, with an artist’s rendering of patriotic bunting framing the top.

The *Journal* reported the findings in this fashion: “HERE IS THE REPORT OF THE *MAINE* BOARD: BLOWN UP BY A MINE ON THE PORT SIDE” (“Here is the Report,” 1898). The article also reported explosions were heard on that fateful night. The *Journal* reported in this same article that the sailors aboard the battleship were cleared of any fault concerning the explosions; therefore, the final decision concerning the explosion was that it occurred from outside the battleship. In spite of Hearst’s offer of a $50,000 reward, no definitive culprit was ever found (“For War,” 1898).

As the investigation uncovered the likelihood that the battleship *Maine* was blown up from an unknown external source, the politicians entered the fray; hence, the subtitle headline stating, “Spain Must Get Out! Further Delay Intolerable. The Democrats Will
Put it Stronger, Demanding Cuban Recognition and that We ‘Remember the Maine!’” (“Cuban Independence,” 1898). A sub-headline appeared in an edition of the Journal boasting of impending war: “Board of Inquiry’s Report That the Maine was Blown up by Submarine Mine, as Journal Reported, Sent to Spain – Protest Against Sailing of Spain’s Torpedo Fleet” (“Actual Declaration,” 1898).

In relating the research questions to the above articles this particular theme is one of patriotism. A war must be fought in retaliation for an unspeakable and unprovoked crime inflicted upon the battleship Maine. Once again, Spain is the villain and the United States is the hero. This violent act did what no amount of yellow press concerning a damsel in distress and starving women and children could do: the United States went to war with Spain over Cuba.

“Remember the Maine!” became the battle cry of Americans in the last two months leading up to the United States’ declaration of war on Spain on May 1, 1898. It was this cry that was heard from the five hundred men on the battleship Olympia as they fired the guns that signaled the beginning of the Spanish-American War (Freidel, 2002, p. 20).

The Spanish-American War lasted only three months, but it is interesting to note that coverage prior to the war went beyond the nine months analyzed in this thesis. Drama, intrigue, horror, and patriotism were captured in the news stories. Women and children were rescued. A small island country was set free. Heroes were worshipped and villains were damned. The drama resembles a movie of the week. Perhaps stories were embellished or even created by wealthy newspaper publishers. Allen (1971) agrees, stating that the yellow journals of the day were “that form of American journalistic energy which is not content merely to print a daily record of history, but seeks to take
part in events as an active and sometimes decisive agent” (p. 5). The final chapter discusses all of these ideals. Ideas for future study are also discussed.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis covers a small piece of United States history concerning yellow print journalism. Because of its historical nature, I can only look at what has been written on the subject. Scholars disagree as to the influence of yellow journalism, including its influence on politics, public policy, and society. The three events I researched concerning the Spanish-American War stressed the need for a hero. In every case, more than one hero was identified, but throughout each case, the yellow press claimed to be a hero. The press did not necessarily cause the war, but it capitalized on the crisis by feathering its nest in focusing in on these three events in an effort to increase newspaper circulation.

In looking at these news stories through Campbell’s power of the myth, I explored these artifacts in terms of the human need for excitement, for drama, for a hero, and to be a hero. These elements are necessary to the human condition and yellow journalism played on these elements to sell newspapers. Even Adolph S. Ochs is quoted as saying, “Such papers as the World and the Journal exist … because the public wants them. I hold that some of their features are open to criticism, but each of them has done infinitely more good than harm” (Brian, 2001, p. 242).

Did the yellow reporting of the events leading up to the Spanish-American War in fact lead to the war? Would the war have been fought anyway, regardless of the reporting of the yellow press? I do not know the answers to those questions. But it is not as important to answer these questions as it is to realize our needs as human beings. Perhaps
in this realization we are better able to ascertain the truth within the news stories that are reported.

None of my research disputes these facts:

1. The Spanish monarchy did rule the island of Cuba with an iron fist;
2. Evangelina Cisneros was a young Cuban women unjustly imprisoned;
3. The human condition in Cuba was desperate;
4. The battleship *Maine* was blown up externally, the exact details of which have never come to light; and
5. The United States intervened with military action and won the Spanish-American War.

The Spanish-American War, unlike so many others in United States history, was a popular war. Wisan (1965) maintains that while business leaders and government executives may not have wanted it, “the public, aroused by the press, demanded it” (p. 455). Some news correspondents of the era believed the press should be applauded instead of damned for starting the war. Journal reporter James Creelman defended the practice of yellow journalism. He also stated that those war correspondents who lost their lives covering the war in Cuba should be acknowledged for contributing to the success of the war (Smythe, 2003).

This work could be expanded with further research into the politics of this war. Presidents Cleveland and McKinley were ridiculed in the yellow press for their reticence in taking quick action against Spain. There is always another side to a story, however, and to look at this war through the eyes of national and world politics would add another element to this work. This includes the information contained in the Monroe Doctrine, which forbade the United States from interfering in “the internal affairs of other nations” (Brown, 1967, p. 5).
Cuba is a mere 80 miles away from the United States border and my research shows an existence of fear that Spain would attack American soil. One must remember that a part of the southeastern United States was once owned by Spain, and the United States was still a relatively young country. The thought of Spain attempting to re-take this previously owned soil in retaliation for the United States interfering in the affairs of Cuba was not entirely out of the question. There was also the question of a fledgling United States Navy versus the great Spanish Armada regarding the protection of the U.S. coastline.

The Spanish-American War also made a legendary war hero. Young Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders were instrumental in helping win the war by capturing San Juan Hill. This hero image helped Roosevelt ride all the way to the presidency of the United States. His military prowess did not escape the American newspapers. The July 3, 2006, issue of *Time* magazine is devoted to exploring the life of Theodore Roosevelt. In reporting on Roosevelt’s exploits during the Spanish-American War, one article states:

Roosevelt was on a horse for only the first few moments of the charge, and the rest of the Rough Riders were on foot during their famous battle. That didn’t stop the press of the day from wildly romanticizing – and inflating – Roosevelt’s deeds (Lertola and Dykman, 2006, p. 61).

Many books and articles have been written about Roosevelt; still, it would be an interesting endeavor to apply Campbell’s theories to Roosevelt’s life in the making of this American hero.

A quantitative study of the front pages of the newspapers in this qualitative analysis would also give more information regarding the sheer numbers of articles printed in yellow newspapers regarding the months preceding the Spanish-American War. Another interesting path to take might be to quantitatively look at the newspapers across
the country that printed the same stories carried by way of the wire services. It might give a better perspective on the scope of yellow journalism across the United States.

Equally intriguing is the feeling expressed by Lande (1995) that the quick success of the Spanish-American War played a big part in helping Americans forget about the lessons learned after the Civil War, thereby blinding them to the realities of horror and loss of lives due to the “romantic and heroic” stories depicted in this very short war (p. 169). A study of American sentiment before and after these three wars in relation to Campbell’s theories might provide new insights into humanity and warfare.

It is important to study the history of yellow journalism in an effort to better understand how playing on human emotions by way of sensationalizing or fabricating stories influences the decisions made in such areas as politics, public policy, and society in general. It is equally important to realize the human need to have and to be a hero, and how prevalent that theme is in our daily lives. While not all of the history of yellow journalism is necessarily bad, admittedly much of it is not good. Budding journalists would do well to study this important era in journalism so as to be better researchers, writers, and reporters.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

TIME LINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS LEADING UP TO
AND DURING THE
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

1868
Ten Years’ War in Cuba begins

1890
Author Alfred T. Mahan advocates the United States’ taking of the Caribbean Islands, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands in his book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1600-1783*

1892
Cuban revolutionary party is formed in New York, Philadelphia, Tampa, and Key West

1895
Cuban revolutionary movement begins in Cuba
U.S. President Cleveland issues neutrality proclamation in Cuban insurrection

1896
Cubans subjected to reconcentration policy by Spain
Philippine revolution begins
President Cleveland suggests possible U.S. action in Cuba if crisis is not resolved
U.S. intelligence officer completes strategic study of military strategy in the event of war with Spain; suggests freeing Cuba through naval action, including blockade, attacks on Manila and Spanish Mediterranean coast

1897
Hearst’s *Journal* and Pulitzer’s *World* step up sensational reporting on affairs in Cuba, strengthening anti-Spanish and pro-war sentiment in the U.S.
William McKinley inaugurated as President of the United States
Evangelina Cisneros incident occurs
Theodore Roosevelt appointed assistant U.S. Secretary of the Navy
Assassination of Spanish prime minister prompts change in government

1898
February – *U.S.S. Maine* is blown up in Havana Harbor, killing 260 soldiers

March – U.S. Congress approves $50,000,000 budget to strengthen military
U.S. government issues ultimatum to Spain to leave Cuba, which Spain rejects
April – President McKinley seeks Congressional authorization to intervene in Cuba
Spanish government prepares special budget for war expenses

April 19 – U.S. Congress votes to adopt the Joint Resolution for war with Spain

April 20 – President McKinley signs resolution; ultimatum is sent to Spain

April 21 – Spanish government considers the resolution a declaration of war
Diplomatic relations between the two countries are suspended
President McKinley orders blockade of Cuba
Spanish forces mine Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

April 25 – The Spanish-American War is formally declared

May 1 – Admiral Dewey and U.S. forces defeat Spanish fleet at Manila Bay

May 4 – U.S. House of Representatives call for annexation of Hawaii

May 10 – U.S. forces ordered to capture Guam on their way to Manila

May 18 – President McKinley orders elimination of Spanish forces in Philippines

May 27 – U.S. forces block the port of Santiago, Cuba

May 28 – U.S. forces in Tampa receive orders to move to and attack Cuba

June 10 – U.S. Marines land at Guantanamo, Cuba

June 12 – Philippines declare independence

June 13 – The Rough Riders sail to Santiago, Cuba

June 15 – U.S. Congress votes to annex Hawaii

June 20 – Spain surrenders Guam to United States
16,200 U.S. soldiers and 153 ships assemble near Santiago, Cuba

June 22 – U.S. troops land at Daiquiri, Cuba

July 1 – San Juan Hill is taken with the help of Theodore Roosevelt and Rough Riders
Kettle Hill is taken with the help of Leonard Wood and Rough Riders
These victories open way to U.S. forces capture of Santiago
APPENDIX A (continued)

July 3 – Spanish fleet attempts to leave Santiago Bay  
U.S. forces destroy entire Spanish fleet

July 15 – Spanish forces surrender Santiago to U.S.

July 18 – Spain requests a suspension of hostilities so as to start negotiations to end war

July 26 – Spanish request is communicated through French government

August 12 – Peace protocol is signed in Washington D.C.  
Calls for end to hostilities between Spain and U.S. in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Philippines

August 13 – U.S. troops take Manila, Philippines

December 10 – Representatives of U.S. and Spain sign the Treaty of Peace in Paris  
Spain renounces all rights to Cuba, cedes Puerto Rico and Guam to U.S.  
Spain gives up West Indies and sells Philippine Islands for $20,000,000

(The World of 1898, retrieved 2006, July 8, p. 1-12)
APPENDIX B

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES USED IN RESEARCH

Actual declaration of war with Spain now seems to be only a few days away. (1898, March 26). *The New York Journal*. p. 1.


Fifty physical proofs that *Maine* was blown up by a mine or a torpedo. (1898, February 24). *The New York World*. p. 1.


APPENDIX B (continued)


Midnight opinion from the president. His latest information leads him to believe that the Maine was blown up as the result of an accident, and he hopes the court of inquiry will develop that fact. (1898, February 18). The New York World. p. 1.


Nothing but a mine could have blown up the battleship. Spanish Naval officer may have mistaken the exploding for the testing key of the submarine battery. (1898, February 20). The New York World. p. 1.


Report of court of inquiry sent to the President. The board finds the explosion on the Maine was from an exterior mine or torpedo. (1898, March 20). The New York World. p. 1.

Spain calls 80,000 men to fight the U.S.: our Key West fleet to block Havana. (1898, April 22). The New York World. p. 1.

APPENDIX B (continued)


The World’s latest discoveries indicate Maine was blown up by submarine mine. (1898, February 20). The New York World. p. 1.

