3

Propaganda Institutionalized

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were periods of great expansion of propagandistic activities. The growth of the mass media and improvements in transportation led to the development of mass audiences for propaganda, increasing its use and effectiveness. Each of the mass media—print, the movies, radio, and then television—contributed its unique qualities to new techniques of propaganda. Radio in particular brought into existence the possibility of continuous international propaganda, whereas television and other forms of popular culture have increased the problem of "cultural imperialism," in which one nation's culture is imposed on another nation's. This led to a call for a New World Information Order by many third-world countries in the latter part of the 20th century. Since the 19th century, advertising has become the most pervasive form of propaganda in modern society and is now disseminated on a global scale.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw an unprecedented explosion in the field of communication and transportation, a trend that shows no indications of slowing down at the beginning of the 21st century. Initially, the limitation on both the speed of communication and the difficulties experienced in transportation in an age of rough roads and horse-drawn traffic severely restricted the flow of information between geographically separated points. Even the growing urban centers, which were now a common manifestation of the push toward industrialization, had problems in circulating and controlling information to a large number of people within a short

period of time. Newspapers and commercial newssheets of the early 19th century did not have wide circulation, and despite the increase in the literacy rate among the middle class, books were not yet as widely available for the general population as they would be later in the century. Public oratory, though important, also had the inherent handicaps of a limited audience and irreproducibility. The result was that rumor and gossip continued to be an important means of maintaining communication links between groups and individuals wishing to circulate specific messages. (The role of rumor as propaganda will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Before the practice of propaganda on a mass scale could proceed, new forms of communication that provided a greater degree of message control and targeting of audiences had to emerge. This is exactly what happened in the 19th and 20th centuries, and propaganda became increasingly more sophisticated, widely practiced, and accepted as part of modern society.

The New Audience

The introduction of new forms of communication created a new historical phenomenon—the mass audience. For the first time in history, the means now existed to disseminate information to large, heterogeneous groups of people within a relatively short period of time. With the introduction of the *New York Sun* on September 3, 1833, the era of the "penny press" was begun, and the entire shape of news was altered. The penny press was not so much a revolutionary development but rather the inevitable result of the gradual shift away from selling newspapers only through monthly or annual subscriptions. Founders of the penny press, such as Benjamin Day of the *Sun* and James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald,* recognized that a growing audience of middle- and working-class readers was willing to pay for a newspaper on a daily basis (Crouthamel, 1989). Whereas the earlier commercial press had disdained much interest in everyday events, the penny press deliberately sought to cultivate the audience's interest in local events and everyday occurrences. Also, as Schudson (1978) noted,

> The new journalism of the penny press . . . ushered in a new order, a shared social universe in which "public" and "private" would be redefined. . . . With the growth of cities and of commerce, everyday life acquired a density and a fascination quite new. (p. 30)

The formation of these new mass publics came about at the same time democracy as a political process was gradually being introduced into many

countries for the first time. Although the United States had been founded on entirely democratic principles, the young nation was still struggling to internalize exactly how this rather novel experiment of "government by the people" would work in practice. Historians have often labeled the 1830s the era of "Jacksonian democracy" because of the emergence of a clear populist sentiment at this time. We must view the introduction of the mass press against this historical-political background. Schudson (1978), after examining this important historical event, suggested that the penny press was a response to what he called the emergence of "democratic market society," created by the growth of mass democracy, a marketplace ideology, and an urban society. He noted,

> The penny press expressed and built the culture of a democratic market society, a culture which had no place for social or intellectual deference. This was the groundwork on which a belief in facts and a distrust of the reality, or objectivity, of "values" could thrive. (p. 60)

As the newspaper assumed a larger and more consistent role in the dissemination of information, the public came to depend on such daily information to a much greater degree than ever before and for several reasons. First, as yet, there were few competing voices besides the remaining commercial newsletters and the occasional book. Second, even those competing news sources could not match the newspaper for availability, timeliness, and consistency. Third, newspapers made no pretense at being politically neutral in this early period, and therefore they appealed directly to the biases of their readers. Fourth, the demands of a democratic political system required that the electorate have a continuous knowledge of the workings of the political system, and only newspapers were able to provide this continuity. Fifth, the average working-class or middle-class citizen did not have the time or the organization at his or her disposal to keep up with political or economic developments and therefore was forced to rely on the news-gathering abilities of the newspaper. Last, the newspaper provided more than just political and economic information; it also offered entertainment and local news that created a sense of social cohesion in an increasingly fragmented world. The reader was made aware that he or she was part of a wider world, sharing and reacting to the news.

The existence of this shared experience made it possible for propaganda to work, for propaganda can be successful only when it is targeted toward specific groups without having to diffuse the message through a variety of channels. Not only did the gradual increase in importance of the mass media throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century bring into existence

viable and reachable publics, but the media themselves also began to assume the mantle of "expertise." This proved to be a potent combination, for now the media were both collectors and disseminators of information, and this placed them in a powerful position to act as the channel for all types of persuasive messages, from merely informative advertising to the most blatant forms of propaganda for specific causes.

Figure 3.1   The cartoon by Thomas Nast caused William Marcy "Boss" Tweed to be arrested in Spain. The Spanish police misinterpreted the illustration to mean that Tweed was wanted for kidnapping. The word *reward* on the bottom left also caught the eye of the police. First published in *Harper's Weekly,* July 1, 1876.
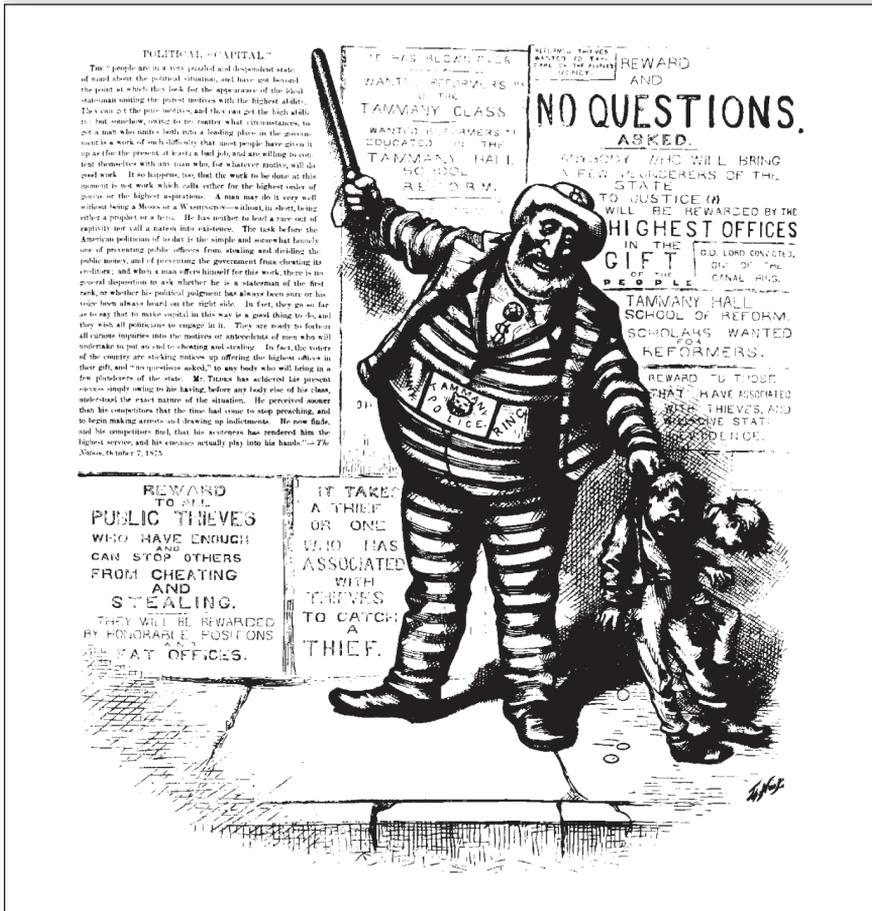
The Emergence of Mass Society

More important than the real power of these new media was their perceived power, for politicians and others reacted to what they assumed this power to be. This was an age when the study of the psychology of human communication was still in its infancy, and it was naturally assumed that people would react in a homogeneous manner to whatever stimulus was exposed to them. Much of the concern for the power of the media stemmed from the growing body of sociological literature in the 19th century that suggested that the population shift from rural communities to an urbanized, industrial setting was creating something known as "mass society." Bramson (1961) noted that European sociological pessimism on the subject of mass society stemmed from the 19th-century notion of the breakdown of the traditional community. Thus, European sociology of this period had a preoccupation with "social disorganization" and "social disintegration" caused by the emergence of an industrialized and urbanized, large-scale society. The end result was that

> this perspective of nineteenth century sociology is recapitulated in the twentieth century theory of mass society, particularly in its view of the past. By contrast with the anarchic individualism of life in the cities, the impersonality of social relationships, the peculiar mental qualities fostered by urban life with its emphasis on money and abstraction, theorists of mass society idealized the social aspects of the traditional society of the later middle ages. (p. 32)

The role of the emerging mass media in this shift from the traditional type to the modern type of society was seen as crucial, for through the popular media the public was acquiring new ideas. It was also suggested that the media encouraged a cultural blandness that satisfied public tastes at the lowest possible level and thereby severely hampered attempts to elevate humankind to its full potential. Furthermore, from the perspective of the socialist and communist thinkers whose ideas were beginning to gain some credence at the turn of the century, the mass media were seen as the handmaidens of the capitalist system, lulling the populace into a political lethargy that prevented them from realizing their true plight as victims of the capitalist system.

The dominance of the negative concept of mass society in intellectual circles in the first part of the 20th century was a salient factor in shaping the attitudes and subsequent attempts to control the perceived power of the mass media. Subsequent developments in propaganda must be examined within this intellectual context, for early propagandistic efforts using the

Figure 3.2   "A Group of Vultures Waiting for the Storm to 'Blow Over'"—"Let Us Prey." It was Thomas Nast's cartoons such as this one that caused Boss Tweed so much anguish and eventually resulted in his downfall. First published in *Harper's Weekly,* September 23, 1871.
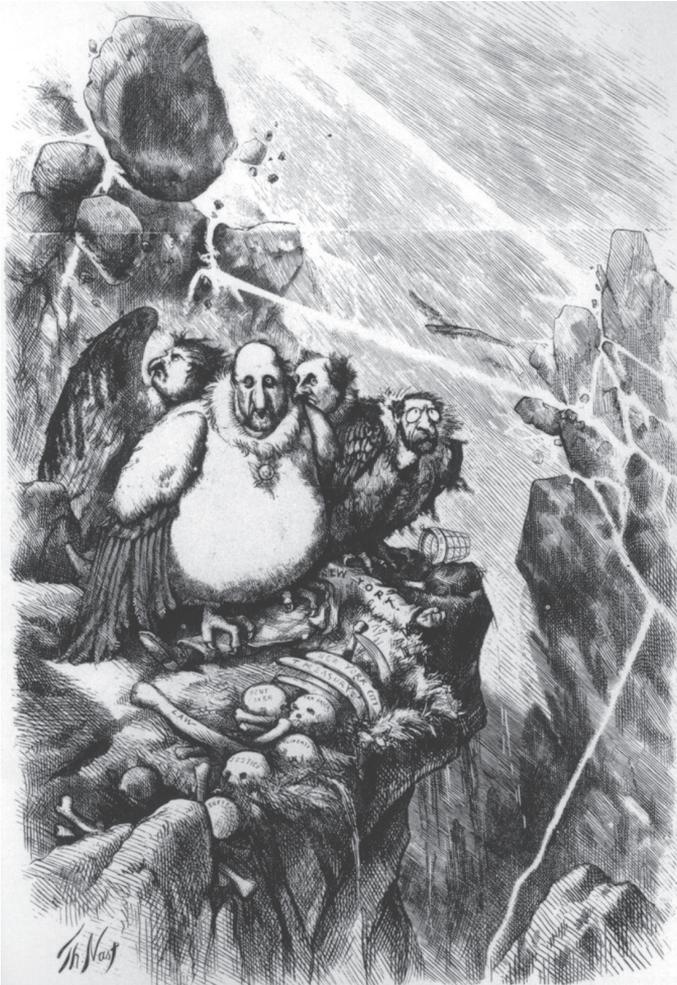
new mass media seemed to justify all the fears and doubts surrounding these new channels of information and their potentially dangerous ability to manipulate their audiences.

The Emergence of the Propaganda Critique

One major concern that emerged at the end of the 19th century was the future of the democratic process in the face of the new possibilities of manipulation of public opinion through increasingly skillful propaganda techniques. The potential for such manipulation led many theorists to reject even democracy as a viable political system. Qualter (1962) cited the case of the English philosopher Graham Wallas, who in his book *Human Nature in Politics* (1908) suggested that men were not entirely governed by reason but often acted on "affection and instinct" and that these could be deliberately aroused and directed in a way that would eventually lead to some course of action desired by the manipulator. Qualter noted of Wallas,

> Given a greatly expanded franchise, with its corollary of the need to base authority on the support of public opinion, political society invited the attention of the professional controller of public opinion. When to the demand for new methods of publicity there were added revolutionary advances in the techniques of communication, and the latest discoveries in social psychology, mankind had to fear more than ever "the cold-blooded manipulation of popular impulse and thought by professional politicians." (p. 51)

Although he never used the word *propaganda,* preferring the phrase "the manipulation of popular impulse" (the word *propaganda* did not become part of common usage until after 1918), Graham Wallas was but one of many concerned with the future of democracy in a world in which propagandistic manipulation seemed to be increasing (Qualter, 1985).

In the United States in the early part of the 20th century, concern for the increasing potential of mass media to manipulate human emotions and behavior took a different form from that of the European philosophers who had developed the "mass society" theories. The important revisionist work of J. Michael Sproule (1987, 1989, 1991, 1997) provides us with a useful overview of the emergence of what he called "Propaganda and American Ideological Critique" (1991). Sproule pointed out that the American intellectual tradition was to treat public opinion as "enlightened discussion," rather than as the European intellectuals' concern about the "rise of the masses." This tradition came about because, in the United States, the alienation between the government and its citizens was far less than that found in European countries. Also, inherent in democracy was the faith that public opinion would ultimately be rational because it would be judged by an educated citizenry. Whereas European Marxist-based theories tended to treat social class and the political state as the prime shapers of ideology, the major

concern of the propaganda critique that emerged in the United States in the Progressive Era was for "the implication for democratic social organization of the new marriage between private institutions and the emerging professions of mass communication" (Sproule, 1991, p. 212).

The widespread and potent use of propaganda in World War I was clearly a watershed moment in the history of propaganda studies, in Europe as much as in the United States. Sproule (1991) suggested that

> while progressive propaganda criticism did not begin with the state as the archetypal source of ideological manipulation, the Great War did show that the American government was capable of pursuing an ideological hegemony. However, unlike Marxists, progressive critics treated state propaganda in the Great War as less a central problem and more a harbinger of how various private institutions and interest groups would compete after the war. Working from this perspective, American progressives developed a body of criticism focused on the array of social forces that competed for control of what Marxists would call the ideological apparatuses of civil society: education, news, religion, and entertainment. (p. 214)

In the period immediately after 1918, the concerns of the progressive propaganda critics were articulated in Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922/1960) and *The Phantom Public* (1925). Lippmann gradually shifted his concerns away from the potential for institutional manipulation to a more general concern about the ability of the public to be able to make decisions in the complex modern era. The philosopher John Dewey, in his books *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) and *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), also examined the new complexities of social interaction brought about by the increasing importance of the mass media in modern society. Many others were part of this movement. As Sproule (1991) noted,

> During the 1920s and 1930s, the progressive propaganda critics developed a wide-ranging program to combat the problem of partisan ideological diffusion through news, religion, entertainment, education, and government. In contrast to Marxist scholars, however, progressives were optimistic about the public's ability to withstand propaganda, especially since progressives believed they would turn the ideological apparatuses, particularly education, into weapons against the powerful propagandas.
>
> With its wide popular audience, progressive critique became the dominant school of thought on propaganda during the years between the two world wars. . . . Progressives had faith in the essential cognitive competence of the public, believing that all that was necessary to combat propaganda was to inform the public about how modern institutions diffused their ideologies through news, religion, entertainment, education, and government. (pp. 219–220)

Propaganda analysis was both an important journalistic and scholarly activity in the interwar period. (The role of propaganda analysis in the interwar period is examined in greater detail in Chapter 5.) Much of this scholarly activity was devoted less to pure theorizing than to analyzing the methods by which propagandists worked, often making this knowledge public in the hopes of affecting some type of reform. In one famous study, using Federal Trade Commission data, Ernest Gruening (1931) exposed the propaganda activities of the National Electric Light Association (NELA). The NELA had co-opted educators, subsidized the writing of textbooks, bribed news reporters and editors, and supplied classroom material for schools all in the hope of developing a favorable impression of the monopolistic activities of their member companies.

In Sproule's (1997) history of the "propaganda critique" movement in the United States, he pointed out that almost all forms of communication and entertainment came under critical examination as potential vehicles for propaganda. Thus, the new media such as movies and later radio, as well as the more traditional forms of journalism—newspapers and magazines—were all subjected to intense analysis in the period between the two world wars. The progressive propaganda critics also directed their attention to religious preaching and teaching, now more widely disseminated through the new media. In particular, they indicated a deep concern for the increasing role of federal government propagandistic activities in the aftermath of the Creel revelations about the extent of propaganda in World War I. (George Creel was an investigative journalist, a politician, and, most famously, the head of the U.S. Committee on Public Information, a propaganda organization created by President Woodrow Wilson during World War I). As Sproule (1997) noted, this group was concerned that "despite the demise of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), agencies of the federal government continued to spend the people's money to tell the people what to believe" (p. 45).

One exception to this activist position was the political scientist Harold D. Lasswell (1927; Lasswell & Blumsenstock, 1939), an important pioneer in the scholarly analysis of propagandistic activities. Although he did eventually take political positions, particularly during World War II, in this early period, Lasswell was much more concerned with developing a theoretical perspective of propaganda and less interested in public policy. As an example, his case study *World Revolutionary Propaganda: A Chicago Study* (in Lasswell & Blumsenstock, 1939) is a meticulously assembled collection of data on the precise methods of propaganda used by Communist Party groups in Chicago in the Depression years to instill in that city's workers a concept of *world revolution.* He stated his aims quite clearly: "We are interested in the facts. We have taken care to find them. But we are chiefly concerned with the meaning

of the facts for an understanding of the future" (p. v). For Lasswell, understanding and discerning patterns in the propaganda process would reveal its strategies and ultimate effectiveness. He also took the position that manipulation of the mass public was possible because individuals tend to react to emotional impulses rather than to sober analytic statements. As the various forms of mass communication developed into their powerful institutional structures, employing skillful manipulators of information, such views as Lasswell's would increase, particularly after the apparent spectacular success of propaganda in World War I.

The New Media

Each major form of mass communication that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries had its own peculiar set of strengths and weaknesses. What they all had in common was their ability to establish direct contact with the public in such a manner as to bypass the traditional socializing institutions, such as the church, the school, the family, and the political system. Because of this historically unique and very significant ability, the media were feared by those concerned with the moral welfare of society but welcomed by those who sought to use this "direct contact" to present their own cases to the mass audience, whether it be an advertiser trying to convince the public to purchase a new product or a politician "selling" policies.

Print Media

We noted earlier in this chapter how significant the penny press was in the early part of the 19th century in the creation of the first modern media publics. Throughout the rest of that century and into the 20th century, the mass press continued to grow both in size and in significance as a purveyor of information and as a shaper of ideas. During the fight for the abolition of slavery and the American Civil War, newspapers on both sides played significant roles as propaganda agents, and in the postwar years, the newspaper business grew spectacularly. Emery and Emery (1984) noted,

> Between 1870 and 1900, the United States doubled its population and tripled the number of its urban residents. During the same 30 years the number of daily newspapers quadrupled and the number of copies sold each day increased almost sixfold. . . . The number of English-language, general circulation dailies increased from 489 in 1870 to 1967 in 1900. Circulation totals for all daily publications rose from 2.6 million copies in 1870 to 15 million in 1900. (p. 231)

Another feature of the last half of the 19th century was the spectacular rise of magazines as important sources of information. Spurred on by inexpensive postal rates established by Congress in 1879, magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Saturday Evening Post* soon had circulations that exceeded half a million. These popular periodicals, though not blatantly propagandistic, nevertheless presented a particular perspective that proved to be a major influence in shaping domestic life in the United States. Particularly after 1899, under the editorship of George Horace Lorimer, the *Saturday Evening Post* became a major vehicle of mass culture in the United States (Cohn, 1989). As an example, in World War I, the *Saturday Evening Post,* which was read by nearly 10 million people a week, took a decided anti-German editorial perspective, and

> the constant repetition of these themes in editorials, articles, fiction, and cartoons worked to create a broad-based acceptance for the terms of Lorimer's Americanism. As Will Irwin, a major *Post* writer during the war years, cynically expressed it, "In pouring the plastic American mind into certain grooves, [Lorimer] had a great social influence." (Cohn, 1989, p. 103)

Smaller "literary" publications, such as *Harper's Weekly* (1857), *Atlantic Monthly* (1857), and *The Nation* (1865), though limited in circulation, nevertheless had a profound influence on public opinion. Many other magazines of political and social opinion also contributed to the shaping of the public agenda on issues such as poverty, immigration, business corruption, and public health (Tebbel, 1969). Magazines were and continue to be a very personalized medium, creating strong reader identification and association with their editorial tone and content. It was in magazines that most of the political and social muckraking took place.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the major daily newspapers in the United States had clearly established themselves as leaders and shapers of public opinion on a wide range of issues. This was the era of yellow journalism, in which the major New York dailies—Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*—competed with each other for the coveted circulation by seeing who could cover or create the most spectacular news. One famous example of the increasing potential of the press to create propaganda in this period was the battleship *Maine* incident. As a result of their direct intervention in a series of incidents fomenting the Cuban insurrection (1895–1898), the major daily newspapers in America were accused of having created an extreme war psychosis in the minds of the American people, leading up to the mysterious sinking of the *Maine* in the Havana harbor in 1898 and to the subsequent Spanish-American War of the same

year. A satisfactory answer has never been offered to why the *Maine* sank, but this did not stop Hearst's *New York Journal* from offering a $50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the alleged criminals while the paper's headlines screamed for war (Wilkerson, 1932; Wisan, 1934). Once war was declared, the newspapers spent enormous sums of money covering it, with the *Journal* proclaiming, "How do you like the *Journal*'s war?" (Emery & Emery, 1984, p. 295).

Although newspapers declined in readership in the 20th century, they still provide a continuous source of propaganda in our society. (The number of daily newspapers in the United States has declined in total from 1,878 in 1940 to less than 1,400 in 2010. Interestingly, the number of daily morning newspapers has increased during that period, with all of the decline coming from evening papers, which cannot compete with the other news media in presenting unfolding news ["Visualizations," 2009]). While total print newspaper circulation in the United States continues to remain surprisingly steady in recent years, there has been a shift in the sources of revenue as more and more readers get their news though online sources. However, the "digital revolution" for newspapers has been slow in coming, and print advertising losses continue to far exceed any gains from digital advertising. In 2012, the ratio was about 15 print dollars lost for every digital dollar gained, even far worse that the 10 to 1 ratio for 2011. It is expected that this trend will continue, putting increasing economic pressure on the newspaper industry as its searches for methods of survival (Edmonds, Guskin, Mitchell, & Jurkowitz, 2013).

During both world wars, newspapers were the major source of information for the general public and, as such, were used for propaganda purposes rather extensively. Despite the significant inroads made by broadcast journalism, newspapers are still read for in-depth information and perspectives on news and events; as such, under the guise of both straight news reporting, and editorializing, they do carry propaganda messages. Nothing in the U.S. Constitution forces a newspaper publisher to be totally neutral and objective in reporting the news, and thus whether it be in clearly labeled editorial opinions or in the particular slant of an "innocent" news report or in paid advertising, newspapers are a prime source of propaganda in our society. This is equally true for the large newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek,* in which the selection of the specific stories to be featured and the way those stories are constructed and shaped can be considered to be propaganda. Even an apparently harmless publication such as *Reader's Digest* can, in fact, be carefully constructed to be a propaganda vehicle for the values and politics of the owner (Schreiner, 1977).

The total U.S. book market, including educational and professional publishing, was $15.04 billion in 2012, up 6.9% from 2011. However, here too,

there are obvious inroads been made by digital publication methods that will fundamentally alter the way in which books are read and utilized. So-called "ebooks" are now a relatively stable force in the U.S. publishing industry, making up 20% of the trade (consumer) book industry in 2012. The revenue from ebooks in 2012 was $3.04 billion, up 44% from 2011, lending clear evidence that the reading public is moving toward this format (Owen, 2013a). It is estimated that by 2017, the consumer ebook market will be bigger than the print book market (Owen 2013b).

The continued popularity of books in the face of declines in sales for other forms of reading material such as magazines and newspapers speaks to the special needs of the consumer. The dramatic decline in magazine sales and number of publications is due largely to the emergence of newer media forms such the Internet, video, DVD, and cable television. The future of the printed word is still uncertain. New technologies, such as the Kindle (a product of online retailer Amazon), and Apple Computer's iPad allow the downloading of books without having to go to a bookshop and offer handheld storage of literally hundreds of books that can be accessed with ease and convenience. Although books are still an important source of propaganda, they are some-what limited in their circulation and, except for "best sellers," seldom have a mass audience. Nevertheless, they can and do have an impact far beyond their primary readership circle, as the opportunity to develop specific ideas in-depth makes the book a particularly potent source of propagandistic information. Throughout history, books have played a pivotal role in the shaping of ideas and attitudes on a large scale certainly beyond their actual primary readership. The Bible, even for those who do not read it, continues to be the source of social and cultural values that shape a great portion of our lives. Depending on the specific theological interpretation, the Bible also serves as the source of a great deal of religious and political propaganda on such issues as abortion and homosexuality. In the past, such books as Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859/1982) or Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852/1991) were the sources of major conflicts in our society. In our own age, books continue to have a major impact, but now this medium is forced to compete with the more instantaneous and accessible visual media. However, propagandistic ideas developed in books are often picked up and magnified by television and the wider "blogosphere" of the Internet, thus creating an audience much larger than a book itself could.

There are other examples of significant ideas disseminated through books. Although not deliberately propaganda, the work of Sigmund Freud cannot be ignored as an important factor in shaping 20th-century thought about the psychological nature of human beings. In 1962, Rachel Carson published her seminal book, *Silent Spring,* which, while not intended to be

deliberate propaganda, actually became the foundation for the emergence of the ecological movement so instrumental in raising the awareness of protecting the environment. Unfortunately, one of the most significant propagandistic books in the past century was largely ignored when first published. In fact, had the world taken Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) seriously in 1926, when it appeared in Germany, rather than waiting until the first English edition in 1939, the international diplomatic approach to Hitler's conquests throughout the 1930s might have been quite different.

In recent years, a spate of books has achieved great popularity by propagandizing the theme that American moral standards have declined significantly and that American society is in the state of a "cultural war" (see Davison Hunter, 1991, for a detailed history of this movement). The book *See, I Told You So,* by popular conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh (1993); *The Book of Virtues* (1994) and a whole industry of similar titles by William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education and former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities; and philosopher Alan Bloom's best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) are examples of such books that have achieved best-seller status by attacking such wide-ranging subjects as television, rap music, abortion, "humanistic" education, political liberalism, and even the "worldview" of the United Nations as being the sources for American cultural decline.

It is now common that in the years leading up to a presidential election, a significant number of books espousing varied political positions will appear in American bookstores. It seemed as if every week there was yet another best seller, often written by a television or radio talk show host, and heavily promoted on the cable news channels and the Internet. These books, usually produced very hastily, told the American public what was wrong with the country and how, by electing their candidate (or not electing the other one), they would make everything whole again. Most of these books are highly propagandistic, some bordering on outright lies or, at the least, containing unsupportable accusations aimed at discrediting the opposition. Thus, repeating the themes of his first election four years earlier, in the 2012 election campaign president Barack Obama was the subject of many books aimed at discrediting his apparent association with radical groups, his supposedly Muslim upbringing, and a continued questioning of his true birthplace. His opponent, Mitt Romney, was the subject of speculation about his net worth, his activities while the CEO of Bain Capital, a highly profitable private equity investment firm whose activities had caused the layoffs of thousands of workers, and even his Mormon faith. Building on the publishing trends since the 1990s, books had suddenly become a major battleground in the political and cultural wars of the 21st century.

These books, usually argued in a highly one-sided manner, have a significant impact on those readers who already subscribe to the notion that "something is wrong with our society" and are widely cited by their admirers as reliable sources. Attempts to "counterpropagandize" these arguments with a wider range of perspectives almost never make any inroads with those already converted to this position. Clearly, the commitment of time an individual makes to actually "read" a polemical book is a strong psychological base for increasing the potential success of the propaganda message.

Movies

It is rather surprising that, despite the enormous inherent appeal of the motion picture, this medium has never become the powerful vehicle of "direct" propaganda that its critics feared it would. In fact, perhaps precisely because of its popularity as one of the world's great entertainment forms, rather than as a medium of conscious information dissemination, it has failed to fulfill its initial promise as both an educator and a channel for the propagandist. Of all the mass media, the motion picture has the greatest potential for emotional appeal to its audience, offering a deeper level of identification with the characters and action on the screen than found elsewhere in popular culture. The motion picture can also make audiences laugh, cry, sing, shout, become sexually aroused, or fall asleep; in short, it has the ability to evoke an immediate emotional response seldom found in the other mass media. Yet, systematic attempts by governments or other groups to use the motion picture as a major channel for the delivery of deliberate propagandistic messages have not, on the whole, been very successful.

In contrast, the motion picture has been extremely successful in influencing its audiences in such areas as courting behavior, clothing styles, furniture and architectural design, speech mannerisms, and eating and drinking habits (Jowett, 1982). In these and other areas, the motion picture is an excellent shaper of subtle psychological attitudes and, under the right circumstances, can be a potent source of social and cultural information. In his famous study *Movies and Conduct,* social psychologist Herbert Blumer (1933), after examining hundreds of diaries kept by young moviegoers, noted,

> For many the pictures are authentic portrayals of life, from which they draw patterns of behavior, stimulation to overt conduct, content for a vigorous life of imagination, and ideas of reality. They are not merely a device for surcease; they are a form of stimulation. . . . [M]otion pictures are a genuine educational institution . . . in the truer sense of actually introducing him [the student] to and acquainting him with a type of life which has immediate, practical and momentous significance. (pp. 196–197)

One could argue that movies do, in fact, succeed as propaganda vehicles in a much subtler way by presenting one set of values as the only viable or attractive set. Over a period of years, these values can both reflect and shape society's norms. For instance, it has often been pointed out that Hollywood's ideological presentation of such subjects as racial equality and sexual freedom were substantially in advance of prevailing public values. By consistently being presented in an entertaining and nonthreatening manner, a good case could be made that over a period of time these "movie values" lead and encouraged a shift in public behavior.

Immediately after projected motion pictures were introduced in 1896, they were used for propaganda purposes in a variety of ways. Raymond Fielding (1972), in his history of the newsreel, recounted as early as 1896 there were fake news films of the Dreyfus Affair. Political events, especially conflicts, were popular subjects for early films, including fake footage of the charge up San Juan Hill and the sinking of the Spanish fleet in Santiago Bay in the Spanish-American War. The pure visual power of the motion picture can be seen in one of the first films to be made after the declaration of war against the Spanish. Made by Vitagraph Studios, it was titled *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* and simply showed a flagpole from which a Spanish flag was flying. The flag was abruptly torn down, and in its place an American flag was raised. In the words of Albert E. Smith, one founder of the Vitagraph Company,

> Projected on a thirty-foot screen, the effect on audiences was sensational and sent us searching for similar subjects. . . . The people were on fire and eager for every line of news. . . . With nationalistic feeling at a fever pitch we set out to photograph what people wanted to see. (Fielding, 1972, pp. 29–30)

The fear of the motion picture's power both to communicate and to educate resulted in early and consistent attacks on it from all those institutions and individuals who had the most to lose from its inherent appeal. Thus, throughout the world, clergy, social workers, educators, and politicians were all involved in trying to make the motion picture more responsive to their call for social control of this obtrusive new form of information (Jowett, 1976). In the United States, the Supreme Court refused to allow the motion picture the right of free speech granted by the First Amendment to the Constitution. In the landmark case *Mutual vs. Ohio* (1915), Justice McKenna, speaking for the unanimous Court, noted,

> [Motion pictures are] not to be regarded, nor intended to be regarded as part of the press of the country or as organs of public opinion. They are mere

representations of events, of ideas and sentiments published or known; vivid, useful and entertaining, no doubt, but . . . capable of evil, having power for it, the greater because of their attractiveness and manner of exhibition. (Jowett, 1976, p. 120)

Thus, of all the various forms of mass communication that have been introduced into the United States, only the motion picture has been subjected to systematic legalized prior censorship. This situation continued until the mid-1950s, at which time the Supreme Court began to strike down the various censorship restrictions against the medium (Randall, 1968).

During World War I, crude attempts were made to use the motion picture as a propaganda device, including such films as *The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin,* and *My Four Years in Germany,* but the most important of these propaganda efforts, aimed at molding public opinion in favor of the United States entering the war, was *Battle Cry of Peace* (1915), produced by J. Stuart Blackton (whose hand had earlier ripped down the Spanish flag in 1898). This film showed the Germans attacking New York by sea and reducing the city to ruins, but it also had a reverse effect, in that the pacifist movement used the film to expose the war profiteers and armament manufacturers who would benefit from U.S. entry into the war (Campbell, 1985). Before 1916, most American films were decidedly pacifist in tone, reflecting the mood of the American people; as an example, in *War Brides* (1916), the peace-loving heroine commits suicide rather than give birth to a future soldier (Furhammer & Isaksson, 1971). Once the United States declared war in 1917, encouraged by public sentiment, a flurry of anti-German films were made.

All the Allied countries made propaganda films, with the British government going so far as to import the great American director D. W. Griffith to direct *Hearts of the World* (1918), featuring the Gish sisters in a plot set against authentic war-shattered backgrounds from the western front (Reeves, 1986). In the United States, the Committee on Public Information, formed by the government to become the propaganda agency for the war effort, worked with the film industry in making films with patriotic content, including offering suggestions for stories and military expertise and props as required by the studios. The central role of the movies in World War I did much to establish and legitimate the movie industry as an integral part of American society. By the end of the war, President Woodrow Wilson and other high government officials were not averse to being seen in the company of movie stars at war bond drives and other social occasions—something that would have been unthinkable before 1916. This testified to the increased awareness of politicians about the potential power of the motion picture (Ward, 1985).

In Germany in 1917, Chief of Staff General Ludendorff sent a letter to the Imperial Ministry of War, in which he noted,

> The war has demonstrated the superiority of the photograph and the film as means of information and persuasion. Unfortunately our enemies have used their advantage over us in this field so thoroughly that they have inflicted a great deal of damage. . . . For this reason it is of the utmost importance for a successful conclusion to the war that films should be made to work with the greatest possible effect wherever any German persuasion might still have any effect. (Furhammer & Isaksson, 1971, p. 11)

By the time the German government got around to setting up its filmic propaganda arm in 1917, the war was nearly over, but this same organization, Universium Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA), survived to become one of the largest film studios in Europe, and ultimately a major propaganda agency for the Nazis during the 1930s and through World War II.

The period between the two world wars was known as the "golden age" of the commercial cinema, as the medium achieved heights of popularity not thought possible for an entertainment that had started out in cheap storefront nickelodeons. The Hollywood product dominated world screens as the European film studios were still recovering from their devastation from the war. Audiences were so used to seeing commercial escapist material that getting them to view anything that appeared to be educational was extremely difficult. The only propaganda films ever seen in commercial theaters were the often innocuous newsreels and the occasional documentary such as *Nanook of the North* (1926), which was a surprising commercial success even though it had originally been made as a propaganda film for a fur company. If audiences were being propagandized, then it was under the guise of entertainment, and they numbered in the hundreds of millions every week.

In 1928, the Motion Picture Research Council was given more than $200,000 by the philanthropic Payne Fund to conduct the most extensive research ever undertaken into the influence of the movies on American life. This research was conducted by a distinguished group of social scientists on a nationwide basis and aimed at determining the degrees of influence and effect of films on children and adolescents. The research was carried out over a 4-year period (1929–1933) and was eventually published in 10 volumes. The origins of the Payne Fund studies point out the shift that was then taking place in assessing the significance of media in shaping the lives of their audiences. Reverend William Short, the man most responsible for setting up the studies, wanted scientific evidence he could use to foster his campaign to place the motion picture industry under a more stringent form of social control. By the late 1920s, it was no longer acceptable to present evidence

that could not be empirically verified. The research itself became the center of a propaganda campaign when, in 1933, a popularized version of some of the research findings was published in the book *Our Movie-Made Children,* by journalist Henry James Forman. Forman had been employed to simplify and, in some cases, distort the research to arouse public concern in favor of the establishment of a national film censorship commission. Although this ploy did not work in the end, the findings of Payne Fund studies (usually as interpreted by Forman) were widely quoted in all types of media and formed the platform for launching many critical essays on the state and "influence" of the motion picture industry (Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996, pp. 92–121).

In the Soviet Union, films were controlled more firmly by the political authorities than anywhere else in the world (R. Taylor, 1979). The theme of revolution was fundamental to almost all Soviet films, with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the force behind the Russian Revolution, as the central figure. To achieve the maximum emotional impact, Soviet filmmakers developed a visual technique called *montage,* in which various film images were juxtaposed to create a specific response from the viewer. The idea was that the skill of the director could create a reality from the different pieces of film that would almost assault the visual sensibilities of the audience and achieve the desired psychological effect. The most important Russian propaganda films such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* (1928), and Alexander Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) all used montage as a central technique for eliciting the proper audience response.

But even in the Soviet Union, despite the achievements of the filmmakers of the early revolutionary period, authorities were not satisfied with the medium's role, and with the coming to power of Joseph Stalin in the late 1920s, the Soviet cinema began to concentrate on "socialist realism." This meant that all films were to be comprehensible to, and appreciated by, the millions, and their one aim was to be the glorification of the emerging Soviet state (Furhammer & Isaksson, 1971, p. 20). As a result of this edict, Soviet films were drained of their initial vitality, and they only regained their original powers of propaganda in the mid-1930s, after Hitler came to power and several successful antifascist films were produced. These included Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), which used the theme of a 13th-century battle as an obvious prophesy of what was to come.

After the war, the Soviet film industry turned its attention to making blatant anti-American propaganda films until the death of Stalin (1953), at which time a change in tone occurred. Until the period of *glasnost,* the Soviet cinema continued to be a mixture of politics and art, and there was little pretense about trying to achieve propagandistic goals. In its last few years,

with the relaxation of government control, the Soviet cinema industry began to explore themes (poverty, sexual dysfunction, domestic violence, political corruption) it would not have been allowed to examine during the previous hard-line communist regime.

With the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe after 1991, their national film industries faced an enormous dilemma. Ironically, the communist governments in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany, as well as the Soviet Union, had heavily subsidized their film industries not only to use them as propaganda vehicles but also to demonstrate a subtle "artistic superiority" to the crassly commercial cinema of the noncommunist world. Of course, it was well known that many of these films were, in fact, attacks on the communist system itself, although the governments seemed to ignore this reality. Such films were very often praised in the West for their artistry and "courage" and given international awards. They also quite often proved to be successful at the box office, bringing in much-needed hard currency from outside the communist bloc. With the demise of these paternalistic communist governments, filmmakers in these countries found themselves without funds and were forced, like their noncommunist counterparts, to seek funds from the private commercial sector.

At this point, some of these filmmakers have been more successful than others in altering their production style away from its original propagandistic perspective to the more audience-pleasing style favored by commercial film studios. For example, the Russian film *Burnt by the Sun* (1994), written and directed by Nikita Mikhalkov, examined the human side of betrayal during the Russian Revolution and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1995. Just a few years later, the Czech film *Kolya,* by director Jan Sverak, featured a much more sentimental story of the relationship between an old man and a young child, and in 1997 it, too, won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. Now free from state control, in recent years the European film industry has concentrated almost entirely on making films with a strong commercial appeal for the international market.

The enormous Hollywood film industry has never lent itself to overt propaganda on any grand scale, but at times, even commercial filmmakers have used their entertainment medium for promoting a specific idea. As an example, after several years of conspicuous silence, motivated no doubt by international marketing considerations and not wishing to alienate the important German market, Hollywood finally produced its first anti-Nazi film in 1939, more than 6 years after Hitler had come to power. (In fact, the Nazi menace was already surfacing in Germany by 1928.) This film, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy,* was based on the exploits of a former FBI agent who had cracked a spy

ring inside the German-American Bund. Once war broke out in Europe in 1939, Hollywood countered with a substantial number of light-hearted films such as *Devil Dogs of the Air, Here Comes the Navy,* and *Miss Pacific Fleet,* which were deliberately designed as recruiting films for the still neutral U.S. armed services by presenting this as an attractive lifestyle. These innocuous productions became known as the "preparedness films," and they immediately aroused the suspicion and anger of those who did not wish to see the United States become involved in a European war.

In 1941, the isolationist senator from North Dakota, Gerald P. Nye, recognized the potential power of the movies in a famous radio speech when he criticized the Hollywood studios for their role in bringing America "to the

Figure 3.3   A scene from *Confessions of a Nazi Spy,* showing George Sanders as the Gestapo agent rallying members of the German-American Bund. Released in April 1939, this film was the first out-and-out anti-Nazi film from a major American studio and immediately aroused enormous controversy, including precipitating a senatorial hearing into propaganda activities in the American motion picture industry. The film was based on a true series of events and suggested that spies, fifth columnists, and Bundists were a serious threat to American security. The last 10 minutes, involving a trial scene, was a direct blast at the menace of fascist ideology. It was the first film to name Hitler directly and was quickly followed by other anti-Hitler films.

verge of war." He was perceptive in his assessment of the movies' potential for successful propagandizing when he noted,

> But when you go to the movies, you go there to be entertained. You are not figuring on listening to a debate about the war. You settle yourself in your seat with your mind wide open. And then the picture starts—goes to work on you, all done by trained actors, full of drama, cunningly devised, and soft passionate music underscoring it. Before you know where you are you have actually listened to a speech designed to make you believe that Hitler is going to get you if you don't watch out. . . . The truth is that in 20,000 theaters in the United States tonight they are holding war mass meetings, and the people lay down the money at the box office before they get in. (Nye, 1941, p. 722)

Once the United States entered World War II in December 1941, the movie industry did contribute toward the total war effort, but not only by making war films, for less than one third of all the films released in the United States from 1942 to 1944 actually dealt with the war (Jowett, 1976). What the Hollywood industry did so well was to provide morale-building films for consumption on the home front and overseas, because during the war, entertainment was not only a luxury but also an emotional necessity. American films managed to develop a most potent combination of being able to entertain and propagandize at the same time, thus "getting the message across" while also attracting the large audiences that obvious propaganda and documentary films were seldom able to do.

In November 1941, a prominent and articulate Hollywood producer, Walter Wanger, noted that motion pictures should be used in the upcoming conflict "to clarify, to inspire and to entertain." He continued,

> The determination of what ought to be said is a problem for our national leaders and our social scientists. The movies will make significant contributions to national morale only when the people have reached some degree of agreement about the central and irrefutable ideas of a nation caught in the riptide of war. (p. 381)

Wanger was stressing the fact that although movies were merely a medium of entertainment, they were very popular and therefore had a powerful potential to gain the public's attention. For this reason, it was essential that the content of the propaganda "messages" carried in movies during this time of crisis should be based on national interests and not left up to the patriotic whims of the heads of the studios. Once the war did begin for the Americans in 1941, that is precisely the dictum that was followed.

Film was an important medium for propaganda during World War II but seldom in the way the official propagandists intended. In many cases, audiences

Figure 3.4 A still from the American movie *I Wanted Wings*, directed by Mitchell Leisen and released in March 1941. This was one of the most popular of the "preparedness films" in the prewar period. Filmed on location at Randolph and Kelly fields near San Antonio, Texas, with the cooperation of the Army Air Corps, this film followed the lives and training of three young men— a wealthy playboy (Ray Milland), a college athlete (Wayne Morris), and an automobile mechanic (William Holden)—seen here with Brian Donlevy (second from the left) as their training sergeant. The film was well received both critically and at the box office and undoubtedly was responsible for increasing enlistments.

were far more sophisticated than expected, and the result was a rejection of blatant efforts to bring about changes in existing opinions. When filmic propaganda was most successful, it was usually based on a skillful exploitation of preexisting public emotions, eliciting an audience response that closely matched public sentiment. A good example is the Nazi film *Baptism of Fire* (1940), which was a skillful compilation of documentary footage dramatically illustrating the supposed invincibility of the German armed forces as they battered the Polish army out of existence in less than 3 weeks. When this film was screened in those countries threatened with German invasion, it had a definite intimidation effect. American films, in contrast, were most successful when they stressed

positive themes, particularly as they depicted normal life on the home front. Hollywood studios, because of their prior experience at developing strong characterizations, were particularly adept in their war films at depicting the inner strength of ordinary fighting men, usually in groups carefully balanced to underscore the various ethnic origins of Americans such as Irish, Italians, Jews, and so on. In fact, many of the most successful American films during the war did not concern themselves with the fighting at all.

Figure 3.5   A still from Wake Island, showing Macdonald Carey, Robert Preston, and Brian Donlevy. This was the first major film about Americans at war and was released in September 1941. Few American war films aroused emotions as much as this one did when it was released. The story was based on the fictionalized account of a real event—the Japanese capture of the American base on that Pacific island, after the heroic to-the-last-man defense immediately after Pearl Harbor. The film succeeded as both wartime propaganda and as rousing entertainment and was an enormous hit with the public. This type of propaganda "entertainment" film was far more successful in reaching the public than most documentaries deliberately created for that purpose.
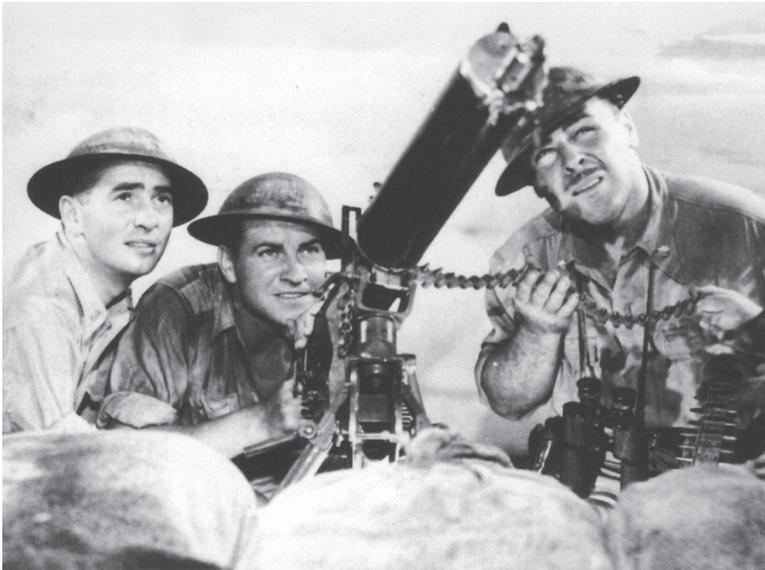
In a study of the contribution made by movies to the war effort, Dorothy Jones (1945), of the Office of War Information (OWI), found that between 1942 and 1945, only about 30% of Hollywood films actually dealt with the war itself. Although she was critical of the movie industry for "lacking a real understanding of the war," she ignored the established fact that, by 1943, having grown tired of war films, not only the home front audience but also the combat forces preferred to see the spate of musicals, comedies, and escapist romances the movie industry was only too happy to turn out. This blend of war films and escapist material, most of which tended to emphasize positive aspects of the "American way of life," combined to create a potent propaganda source for morale building during this difficult period in American history. Of equal significance was the appeal these domestic films had among both America's allies and conquered enemies, where their popularity was exceeded only by the demand for American food. Recognizing this fact, at the end of the war, the U.S. government made serious efforts to make available to the occupied countries only those films that showed the United States and its democratic institutions in a favorable light.

Since the end of World War II, little systematic use of film for propaganda purposes on a large scale has been made. Occasional commercial films propagandize in the sense that they espouse a particular point of view about a controversial subject. Examples of such films are *The China Syndrome* (1979), which dealt with the dangers of nuclear power; *Missing* (1982), which dealt with American complicity in the overthrow of the Chilean government; *Salvador* (1986), which detailed U.S. participation in the political upheaval in El Salvador; and *JFK* (1991), which put forward director Oliver Stone's personal vision of the assassination of President John Kennedy. Of all the current filmmakers, Oliver Stone has been criticized the most for openly "propagandizing" various political perspectives or causes. His film *Nixon* (1995) and his examination of "violence and the media" in *Natural Born Killers* (1996) have been the subject of much criticism and discussion. Stone publicly admits that his films are meant to present a biased examination of the subject matter, leaving the final judgments on the issue of "truth" to the audience. The ideology espoused in individual movies (particularly if they are successful and feature a glamorous star) can still capture the public's imagination, often resulting in specific behavior. As an example, director Tony Scott's very popular *Top Gun* (1986), which romanticized the rigorous training navy pilots undergo, significantly increased the number of applicants at naval recruitment centers. This film, made with the cooperation of the U.S. Navy, also had a strong propaganda theme that emphasized U.S. military "superiority" over vaguely "Middle Eastern" forces.

Figure 3.6   A scene from *The North Star,* showing Walter Huston exhorting his fellow Russian villagers to defend themselves from the invading German army. Released in November 1943, this film was written by Lillian Hellman and was reported to have cost producer Samuel Goldwyn more than $3 million in 18 months of production. The film was deliberately designed to increase American sympathy and understanding toward our Russian allies in their fight against fascism, but it eventually proved to be an embarrassment to the makers who attempted to "explain it away" at the House Un-American Activities Committee Hearings in 1947. However, when it was released, it received both critical and public acclaim.

There have been accusations that many recent Hollywood films are, in fact, subtle forms of propaganda for the U.S. government's ideological position on issues such as "the war of terrorism." Popular movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001), which dealt with the incident in Somalia that resulted in the death of 19 American Army rangers, has been described by one critic as "the bluntest imperialistic propaganda. . . . This time Hollywood absorbs local culture into its range of tools used to sanctify the racist massacre of

thousands during Washington's first post–Gulf War attempt to enter Africa via strategically important Somalia" (Denny, n.d.). Even the recent Academy Award–winning film about the Iraq conflict, *The Hurt Locker* (2009), has been described as being either prowar or antiwar, depending on the perspective of the viewer (Yogerst, 2010).

It is important to point out that the films mentioned above are not part of an organized campaign on behalf of a recognized propaganda agency. This was not always so, for in the most intense part of the Cold War period (roughly 1947–1965), the American film industry was actively solicited by the U.S. government to make commercial films that pointed out the dangers of communism. This contrasted wildly with the pro-Russian films that Hollywood had turned out once Hitler had marched into Russia in 1942, and the American public had to be convinced that we were all now allies. Previously exposed to films such as *The North Star* (1942), *Mission to Moscow* (1943), and *Song of Russia* (1944), the American film audience was now treated to *The Iron Curtain* (1948), which confusingly starred Dana Andrews, who only a few years before had been featured in a sympathetic role in *The North Star* as a Russian partisan; *The Red Menace* (1949), which cataloged the methods of communist subversion in the United States; *Whip Hand* (1951), which dealt with communists running a prison camp in a small town in the United States to test biological weapons; *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), which later became the basis of a television series; *My Son John* (1952), which examined the reaction of patriotic parents when they discover that their son has become a communist; and *Big Jim McLain* (1952), which featured John Wayne hunting communists in Hawaii. (It was no coincidence that the name McLain was used to identify the hero closely with noted anticommunist Senator Joseph McCarthy.)

The fate of the film *The North Star* in the postwar period is particularly interesting. The film was produced by Samuel Goldwyn from a script by the political activist author Lillian Hellman and distributed by RKO studios with a big-name cast and major studio production values, ostensibly to solidify Soviet-American relationships at the height of the war. The story dealt with a Russian village defending itself against the invading German forces, and although the inner strength of the Russian peasants was stressed, nowhere in the film were the words *communist* or *communism* mentioned. But even this was too much in the hysteria of the Cold War red scare. When the film was shown on television in 1957, the title was changed to *Armored Attack,* and comments were inserted into the film to repudiate the original sentiments, innocent though they may have been. A new ending was added showing Russian tanks invading Hungary in 1956, with the voiceover reminding viewers that the heroism of the Russian peasants in World War II

should not obscure the brutality of the communist leaders in the postwar period. At the very end, another voiceover apologizes for any pro-Soviet impressions the film may have given (Whitfield, 1991).

It was no coincidence that much of the focus of the House Un-American Activities Committee on communist subversion in the United States in the period after 1947 was on ferreting out potential communists in the Hollywood community. Not only did the committee gain national media attention by questioning entertainment personalities who were widely recognized public figures (who cared about anonymous government employees?), but there was a genuine fear that because the film industry was very powerful, it would be dangerous to allow communist sympathizers to use it as a propaganda tool. Much the same could be said for the attention given to both radio and television, for the commercial media were considered to be potent sources of propaganda disguised as entertainment, as Senator Nye had pointed out in 1941.

Since the breakup of the large Hollywood studios and the emergence of largely independent producers, little systematic attempt has been made to use the motion picture industry for organized propagandizing. (There is still cooperation between Hollywood and the Pentagon at times in the provision of assistance in the production of war movies. This fact provides much fuel for those who see in this cooperation the potential for covert government propaganda.) Show business personalities, in contrast, are increasingly using their media-obtained popularity to espouse political causes. The majority of the public seems clearly able to distinguish the on-screen persona of the actor from the off-screen political causes with which he or she might be identified. As an example, there was and continues to be considerable hostility toward Jane Fonda for her antiwar activities during the Vietnam War and subsequent support of liberal causes, but she still had an enormous number of fans willing to ignore her political stances and pay money at the box office to see her in such films as *Nine to Five* (1980) or to buy her fitness videos. (It is interesting to note that *Nine to Five* was a political film dealing with significant issues of feminism; however, audiences did not really perceive it as such.) When Jane Fonda made a comeback film in 2005, *Monster-in-Law,* there were independent movie theater owners who, 30 years after the events, were still not willing to exhibit this film, despite the fact the movie was the top box office draw the week it was released.

In recent years, such stars as John Travolta, Tom Cruise, and Kirstie Alley have actively propagandized, as private citizens and not in their films, for the Church of Scientology in the face of sometimes very hostile reactions. The propaganda value of such personalities lies mainly in their ability to gain media attention for their favorite causes; however, the public seldom sees them as credible sources. On the one hand, Fonda could create public

interest in the issues of Vietnam, but she was not considered to be an expert in foreign policy. On the other hand, both Travolta and Alley credit the Church of Scientology with giving them the spiritual comfort to revitalize their flagging careers and, in the case of Alley, to break her drug and later food addiction. In these cases, the public is likely to be much more receptive to such endorsements. In similar fashion, a popular actor such as Richard Gere can focus the public's attention on a sensitive international issue—the Chinese "occupation" of Tibet and destruction of Tibetan culture; the Dalai Lama has obviously learned that his cause will receive far more attention if he associates with glamorous movie stars and public personalities.

The difference between a star deliberately pushing a personal cause and merely being associated with a politician or political campaign is subtle but important. Richard Brownstein, in his detailed examination of the relationship between Hollywood and politics, *The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection* (1990), noted that the specific image a star projects can lend an aura to the politician who associates with him or her and that this association sends a cultural message to the audience. Brownstein continued,

> For their fans, these entertainers embody memories, lifestyles, places and times, shared experiences. They suggest a way of looking at the world, symbolizing not only experiences but also values; you can often tell a lot about someone by how they feel about John Wayne or Sylvester Stallone, or whether they prefer Bob Dylan to Elvis Presley. They are all part of the code people use to recognize others like themselves.
>
> These cultural messages can help politicians make themselves more three-dimensional, particularly to the many voters who pay little attention to elections.
>
> To play these cultural roles, stars need not be personally credible messengers on public policy, the way they must to push individual causes; what matters instead is how their image affects the way voters see a politician who associates with them. (pp. 369–370)

When Hollywood attempted to make so-called message films in the period after World War II, it quickly became obvious that most people do not go to the movies to have their consciences disturbed. Subsequent research has clearly demonstrated that movies, like other mass media, rarely bring about a major change of opinion; however, we also know that consistent exposure to a specific point of view when the audience has none of its own stands a good chance of making some impact. Thus, the cumulative effect of filmic propaganda is greater than any individual film. On one hand, foreign audiences, often knowing little about the United States, will, after

years of exposure to American films, develop very specific beliefs and attitudes about the American way of life. On the other hand, no single film can change an individual's racial attitudes ingrained after years of socialization.

The U.S. government is still very concerned about the potential for filmic propaganda from both inside and outside the country. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Justice labeled three documentary films produced by the National Film Board of Canada "propaganda." One of these films, *If You Love This Planet,* about the nuclear arms race, subsequently won an Academy Award (Rosenberg, 1983). This labeling issue was challenged in court, and on April 27, 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the federal law under which this decision was made, stating that the labeling was "neutral and evenhanded" and did not constitute an infringement of freedom of the press. (For an excellent, full account of this important case, see Gustainis, 1989.) American films being exported are also subject to censorship for propagandizing. Through a little-known program, under the Beirut Agreement adopted by the United Nations in 1948 to "facilitate the international circulation of visual and auditory material of educational, scientific and cultural character," the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) provided "Certificates of International Educational Character" to all films wishing to be exempt from export duties. Over the years, the many films that have been denied such certificates fall into one of three categories: (a) blatant promotion of a specific product or service, (b) offensive religious proselytizing, or (c) political propaganda. In 1983, *The Killing Ground,* an Emmy-winning ABC News documentary on toxic wastes, was denied a certificate on the basis that it was "emotional rather than technical" and because "the primary purpose or effect of the film appears to be less to instruct or inform in an educational sense than to present a special point of view" (Rosenberg, 1983, p. 40). John Mendenhall, who ran the program at the USIA at the time, said, "If we feel that the purpose of the film is to advocate a cause or is persuasive of one point of view, that's one type of propaganda, and we deny it a certificate" (Rosenberg, 1983, p. 41). The fact that no similar incidents of film censorship have occurred in the past 30 years indicates that a more enlightened perspective was subsequently adopted by the USIA and its successor agencies, but a change in administration ideology could alter that.

Michael Moore and Fahrenheit 9/11

In the midst of the heated 2004 presidential race between incumbent George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry, the possibilities of movie propaganda somewhat unexpectedly appeared in full force. The documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, who had previously made well-received but

contentious films on such subjects as General Motors's treatment of its workers (*Roger and Me,* 1996) and gun ownership in the United States (*Bowling for Columbine,* 2001), turned his attention to examining President George Bush's role in fomenting the Iraq War. Using a variety of old and new film clips, Moore constructed an incendiary version of the president's deliberate actions in bringing about this conflict while also raising questions about the president's service record. Overall, the movie appeared to be a devastating attack on the Bush administration and the president personally, and it was highly acclaimed by those opposed to the war and the president's reelection. However, there were others who were equally hostile in their opposition to the film, and it was quickly labeled as nothing but "left-wing propaganda" and a scurrilous character assassination.

The publicity surrounding the film and the passions associated with the upcoming election made the film into a significant box-office success. It subsequently become the largest grossing documentary film in movie history, making more than $222 million worldwide and winning several prestigious international awards such as the Palme D'Or at the Cannes International Film Festival. When released as a home video, just weeks before the election, it shattered all records for sales by a documentary (previously held by Moore's own *Bowling for Columbine*). In early 2005, there was additional controversy when the film was excluded from the Academy Awards documentary category, and questions were raised as to whether this really was a documentary at all.

There is little doubt that *Fahrenheit 9/11* is a skillful propagandistic construction. The psychologist Dr. Kelton Rhoads (2004), in his perceptive and detailed analysis of the film, noted at the end the following: "Call it what you will. For my part, I see a consistent, effective, and clever use of a range of established propaganda tactics. If only a few of these tactics were used, or if the attempt to deceive weren't as apparent, I might equivocate. But Moore has located many of the fundamental 'bugs' in the human hardware, and capitalizes on them with skill" (p. 27).

Just how effective was *Fahrenheit 9/11* as a propaganda weapon for the opposition to the president? There is substantial evidence, both anecdotal and by poll measurement, that this film very largely "preached to the choir," in that it garnered substantial support from those who already believed that the United States had been duped into the Iraq War and changed very few minds from the group who felt that the invasion was justified. A poll of those exiting the movie conducted by Opinion Works in July 2004 showed the following results:

Before you saw the movie today, how were you planning to vote this November?

Bush 2%

Kerry 86%

Nader 0%

Another candidate 2%

Undecided 8%

Not planning to vote 2%

After seeing the movie, are you more likely to vote for one of these candidates, or hasn't the movie made a difference?

More likely to vote for:

Bush 2%

Kerry 66%

Nader 0%

Makes no difference in how I will vote 33%

These data indicate that the main constituency for *Fahrenheit 9/11* were those already firmly in the John Kerry camp; only a relatively small number of the audience would have actually changed their minds after viewing the film.

Earlier in the year, another movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, directed by Mel Gibson, had also created considerable public comment. There were two central issues of concern: The first was the film's potential for spreading anti-Semitic feelings over the historical issue of who was responsible for the death of Jesus. The second focused on the possibility that the strong religious content of the film was a not so subtle comment on the normal "immoral" content of Hollywood films and could serve to galvanize evangelical forces for the Republicans in the upcoming election. *The Passion of the Christ* was the largest moneymaker of the year, grossing more than $370 million in the domestic market alone. It was inevitable that this movie would be compared to *Fahrenheit 9/11* in terms of their deliberate "propagandizing" of specific messages, each to apparently opposing ideologies. During the presidential election, the two films became symbols of the increasing cultural differences obvious in the United States. The final word was offered by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which did not nominate either film for major Oscars in March 2005.

In the 2012 presidential campaign, a full-length documentary titled *2016: Obama's America* was released to movie theaters across the nation. The film was based on the book *The Roots of Obama's Rage* by Dinesh D'Souza, and it featured the author at the narrator/investigator. The film traced Obama's background from his birth to the present and attempted to explore the

people and the places that had formed his views. The central point of the film was to establish that this background had left Obama with a distinctly "anti-colonial" philosophy that formed the basis of his policies during his first term in office. These policies, it was suggested were essentially "un-American" and would lead ultimately to changing the nature of American society and culture. As one critic put it,

> The film is well made and crafted to hold the audience's attention. Those who are already anti-Obama will cling to every frame of film and every reference that supports their feelings about the man. Those who are pro-Obama will be enraged by what they will see as a slanted view of the man and his policies.
>
> *2016: Obama's America* is a propaganda piece. It is perfectly timed to reach audiences during the frenzy of the Republican Convention. For those looking for further proof that Obama has to be defeated, the facts in this film will be like manna from Heaven. For those who are pleased with the job the president is doing and still find him the only one who can deliver "Hope and Change" this movie will be considered a worthless piece of trash. (Cooper, 2012)

These examples serve to illustrate several key points about the potential of the movies as propaganda vehicles. It is accepted that the inherent attractiveness and emotional appeal of the image on the large screen, combined with a compelling narrative, and displayed in a darkened theater welcomes a level of audience involvement (participation) that is still unequalled by almost all other media. (Some very sophisticated technologies such as virtual reality devices my someday prove to be more effective.) This level of audience involvement only naturally leads to a fear that, given the proper set of circumstances (such as political or civil upheaval, or individual emotional crises), the motion picture does, indeed, have the potential to become a powerful tool in the propagandist's arsenal. However, in the case of the commercial motion picture there are several factors, especially economic and psychological, that mitigate against such a possibility. Generally audiences pay their money at the box office expecting to be entertained, and naturally resist obvious and deliberate attempts to be "propagandized." Of course the subject matter of the film may be viewed by some as being, in fact, propaganda. As an example, the release of the animated film of Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (2012) evoked a great deal of controversy regarding its "liberal eco-friendly" agenda. (In this particular case, there is partial reality to this charge, and Theodore Geisel [Dr. Seuss], himself a major contributor to the United States propaganda effort in World War II, had once called *The Lorax* "propaganda.") Other recent mainstream films such as *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and *Dear John* (2010) have been called pro-Iraqi War propaganda, while *Green Zone* (2010) is anti-Iraqi War propaganda. Elements of

propagandistic intent can be detected in almost every film if one looks hard enough. In an age of intense ideological division, even a very successful animated film like *Wall-E* (2008) suffers from criticism. Talk radio host Lars Larson, appearing on the MSNBC cable news network show *Verdict*, said of the film,

> It's propaganda! We're talking about a movie that foists off on little kids the idea that human beings are bad for planet earth. And that's not true. Why are human beings bad for planet earth? . . . If you take your kids to this, understand they're going to come away with the idea that mommy and daddy are bad for the planet and the planet would be better off without them. (Frick, 2008, para. 4)

The key question is how much of this contentious content is recognized and internalized by the paying audience? Do children who have seen *The Lorax* come away from the film with a renewed sense of ecological responsibility? Do adults accept the version of the Iraqi conflict as interpreted by *Green Zone*, or are they more likely to buy into the heroics of the Navy Seals as depicted in *Act of Valor* (2012)? Clearly every film has a message, some more obvious than others, but only a detailed examination of the specifics surrounding the production of a film will reveal the extent to which propagandistic elements were deliberately worked into the narrative.

The motion picture is still a highly effective form of information dissemination, but its use as a propaganda vehicle is severely restricted by several factors. First, audiences worldwide have become used to large-budget films with high-quality production values, and this works against the use of low-budget productions. Second, the concept of the fictional story, complete with acknowledged stars as the basic attraction in commercial films, is so well established that generating a mass audience for anything else is very difficult. Third, the distribution system for commercial films is tightly organized and extremely difficult to break into for those outside the mainstream filmmaking community. Last, traditional filmmaking technology has been superseded by video technologies and computer "streaming" techniques that offer greater opportunities for dissemination of propaganda messages without the need for a large audience base to justify cost. Thus, the motion picture's effectiveness as a propaganda medium is largely limited to the values and ideologies that are an integral part of the plot structure. Such content, though subtle, is in its own right an extremely potent source of modern propaganda and is certainly more powerful in the long run than the deliberate and often clumsy attempts of the past.

Radio

The invention of radio in the late 19th century altered for all time the practice of propaganda, making it possible for messages to be sent across borders and over long distances without the need for a physical presence. Ultimately, radio has become the major medium of full-scale international *white propaganda,* in which the source of the message is clear and the audience knows and often eagerly expects to hear different political viewpoints. Despite the inroads made by television viewing on leisure-time activities in most industrialized countries, there is no indication of any decline in the use of radio for propaganda purposes, and large sums of money are currently spent on the worldwide dissemination of information from a variety of political ideologies.

The first known use of radio for international broadcasting was in 1915, when Germany provided a daily news report of war activities, which was widely used by both the domestic and foreign press that were starved for up-to-date news. Although these broadcasts were in Morse code, and therefore not available to all, they served their purpose. Radio was used dramatically by the Soviets in 1917, when under the call sign "To all . . . to all . . . to all . . . ," the Council of the People's Commissars' Radio put out the historic message of Lenin announcing the start of a new age on October 30 (Hale, 1975). The message stated, "The All-Russian Congress of Soviets has formed a new Soviet Government. The Government of Kerensky has been overthrown and arrested. . . . All official institutions are in the hands of the Soviet Government" (p. 16). This was an international call to all revolutionary groups throughout Europe, as well as to those inside Russia, and later broadcasts would be aimed specifically at foreign workers to "be on the watch and not to relax the pressure on your rulers." Soviet radio was quickly placed under the control of the government, for Lenin noted that radio was a "newspaper without paper . . . and without boundaries" and a potentially important medium for communicating his communist ideas to the dispersed workers and peasants in both Russia and the rest of Europe and, ultimately, the world (Hale, 1975, pp. 16–17). By 1922, Moscow had the most powerful radio station in existence, followed in 1925 by a powerful shortwave transmitter, which soon began broadcasting in English.

Interest in radio grew rapidly during the 1920s, and turning the radio dial in the hope of picking up foreign stations became the pastime of millions of listeners in many countries. In the United States, much of the pioneering credit can be given to station KDKA in Pittsburgh, which started the first regularly scheduled radio service in 1920. By the end of 1923, the station had successfully transmitted a special holiday program to Great Britain,

which was picked up and rebroadcast from a Manchester station, and later in 1924 and 1925, it broadcast programs to South Africa and Australia, respectively. These early broadcasts set the scene for a regular exchange of radio programs between countries during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and shortwave radio listening became a fascinating hobby for enthusiastic radio fans. The Dutch inaugurated the first regular shortwave broadcasts in 1927, sponsored by the giant electrical engineering company Philips; by 1930, this station was broadcasting to most parts of the world in more than 20 languages.

Radio Moscow started broadcasting in French in 1929. This action caused an outcry from the French press, which questioned the right of the Soviets to broadcast in a language other than their own, and the League of Nations was asked to consider the matter. Within a year, the French had seen the light and began their own international broadcasts. In 1930, the English-language broadcasts from Moscow had caused sufficient concern to warrant the British Post Office to monitor these on a regular basis. The success of these foreign broadcasts was not lost on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which in 1929 proposed to the Imperial Conference (where all parts of the British Empire were represented) that a worldwide service be established to maintain the links of the empire. In proposing this service, the BBC submission noted that, in presenting national cultures to other parts of the world, the "boundary between cultural and tendentious propaganda is in practice very indefinite" (Bumpus & Skelt, 1985, p. 13). The Empire Service was begun in 1932 in English only. One week after it opened, King George V delivered a Christmas message to his subjects throughout the world, and the *New York Times* ran the banner headline "Distant Lands Thrill to His God Bless You!" The BBC gained enormous publicity and prestige from this broadcast.

In 1929, Germany also started broadcasting to its nationals abroad from a shortwave transmitter outside Berlin, and Italy set up its service in 1930, broadcasting at first only Italian domestic programs. By 1932, even the League of Nations had its own station broadcasting news bulletins in three languages: English, French, and Spanish. Only in the United States did the government steer well clear of any involvement with international broadcasting, preferring to leave this to the large commercial networks then being established. These stations, of course, broadcast in English only and therefore did not have the same direct propaganda value in foreign countries.

With the coming to power of the National Socialist government in Germany in 1933, the role of international broadcasting was dramatically elevated to major prominence. (The use of radio by the Nazi regime is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.) Both Hitler and his propaganda minister,

Joseph Goebbels, had been impressed with the Soviet Union's German-language service and the development inside Germany of widespread and powerful listener groups for these propaganda broadcasts. By August 1934, the Nazi administration had reorganized German broadcasting, and programs were being beamed to Asia, Africa, South America, and North America. The Germans pioneered in the use of music as a means of attracting listeners, and by all accounts, the quality of the music was superb, with news bulletins and special programs interspersed. One German radio expert was quoted as saying, "Music must first bring the listener to the loudspeaker and relax him" (Grandin, 1939, p. 46). The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin provided the impetus to construct the world's largest shortwave radio transmitter facilities, and by the end of 1938, the Germans were broadcasting more than 5,000 hours a week in more than 25 languages. The Nazis also introduced medium-wave broadcasts for the neighboring European countries, especially those with pockets of German-speaking minorities.

Italy followed Germany's lead, increasing foreign and Italian broadcasts to both Europe and the Americas, including the provision of Italian-language lessons that cleverly used many passages from Mussolini's speeches as texts. Listeners were asked to send their translations to Rome for correction, and by 1939, more than 35,000 people had done so (Grandin, 1939, p. 30). Japan began its own foreign-language radio service in June 1935 as a means of informing the large number of Japanese living on the Pacific Rim about activities in the home country. This soon changed, for after Japan found itself internationally isolated following its invasion of Manchuria in 1936, Radio Tokyo was used as a propaganda medium for putting across the Japanese government's position on Japan's role in creating a new Asian alliance. Broadcasts were aimed at the United States and Europe, but the quality of these broadcasts was hampered by a lack of personnel trained in foreign languages. Interestingly, the Japanese government did all it could to discourage the ownership of shortwave radio sets to diminish the impact of broadcasts from outside.

By the beginning of World War II in the summer of 1939, approximately 25 countries were broadcasting internationally in foreign languages. The outbreak of war once again brought about an enormous expansion of international radio services. In particular, the BBC was charged with becoming a major arm of the Allied propaganda effort, so by the end of 1940, 23 languages had been added and more than 78 separate news bulletins were being offered every day, with special attention given to Germany and Italy. Governments in exile in London were also given the opportunity to broadcast to their home countries. By the end of the war, the BBC was the largest international broadcaster by far, programming in more than 43 languages,

and because of its earned reputation for total accuracy, even the German troops were tuning in to find out what was happening.

In the United States at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, only 12 shortwave transmitters were in action, all owned by private broadcasters. Under the guidance of the Office of War Information (OWI), these stations became collectively known as the Voice of America (VOA). Eventually, the U.S. government rented the stations, and all programs were prepared by the foreign operations unit of the OWI, under the control of playwright Robert Sherwood. By 1943, the number of transmitters had risen to 36, and VOA was broadcasting in 46 languages for some 50 hours a week. (A useful history of the early years of VOA is Shulman, 1990; a detailed examination of the later period is found in Alexandre, 1988.) There was some uncertainty about the future role of the VOA once the war was over, for the U.S. Congress has always been nervous about propaganda activities, whether domestic or foreign. (This fear stems largely from the concern that the administration in power will eventually use such activities to serve its own domestic ends.) Immediately after the war ended, the VOA was severely cut back, but with the start of the Cold War, Congress, believing that the U.S. response to increasing Soviet propaganda actions was inadequate, voted in 1948 to create a permanent role for the VOA as part of the information activities of the U.S. Department of State.

In the decades following World War II, the unprecedented expansion of international broadcasting activities took place. Immediately after the war, the main thrust of such broadcasts was toward Europe, but gradually during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, more attention was given to India, Arabic countries, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. As the dynamics of world politics were being played out, international radio broadcasts became a prominent weapon in the arsenal of propaganda. With the communist takeover in China in 1949, a new major world and radio power appeared while the Soviet Union, threatened with defections in the Soviet bloc, steadily expanded its broadcasts in an increasing number of languages. The noncommunist countries retaliated, with West Germany expanding its facilities, as did all three of the U.S. operations. (Radio Free Europe [RFE] began in 1951; Radio Liberation [RL] started broadcasting in 1953.) By the end of the 1970s, the use of radio as a major medium for international propaganda was greater than it had ever been.

Current International Radio Propaganda

No field of international propaganda has been so affected by the dramatic changes in world politics since the collapse of communism in Eastern

Europe than international shortwave broadcasting. Several distinct kinds of international broadcasting systems, however, can still be said to be clearly propagandistic. The most important by far are the national broadcasting organizations that are usually state funded or supported by a group of politically or religiously active citizens eager to reach a specific audience, usually in other countries. More than 80 nations were involved in this type of activity, some operating more than one such service (Bumpus & Skelt, 1985). The United States has the VOA, which is the main international service; RFE, that transmits to five countries in Central and Eastern Europe; Radio Liberty (RL; formerly Radio Liberation), broadcasting to the Soviet states; the newly created Radio Free Asia; and the politically sensitive Radio and TV Marti as a special service aimed at Cuba and other Caribbean countries. Russia has one main station, Radio Moscow, the national service, as well as many regional outlets. Germany has two, Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk. Although the United Kingdom has only one official station, the BBC's World Service, it has an extensive rebroadcasting network throughout the world.

The number of stations is not really important, for these national organizations have access to extremely high-powered transmitters that ensure a wide reception, and technological improvement occurs constantly. Of greater significance is the number of languages in which these international services are offered. Russia broadcasts nearly 2,100 hours a week in more than 80 languages (the number of hours differs for each language). Radio Beijing, of the Chinese People's Republic, broadcasts more than 1,400 hours in 45 languages; the combined American services broadcast more than 2,000 hours in 45 languages; the German stations broadcast more than 780 hours in 39 languages. The BBC once broadcasted more than 720 hours in 37 languages. Even such minor world powers as North Korea (593 hours), Albania (581 hours), Nigeria (322 hours), and South Africa (205 hours) all transmit their messages over the world's airwaves.

Other kinds of international broadcasters have far less impact as direct propaganda media. In recent years, the number of commercial shortwave radio stations has increased; these stations garner large audiences by targeting their broadcasts to specific listening groups attracted to popular commercial programming. The use of pop music (in a variety of languages) forms the staple content for such stations as Radio Luxembourg, Radio Monte Carlo, and Sri Lanka's All Asia Service. These stations perform a subtle but valuable propaganda role in the international transmission of popular culture. The United States has found that its popular music broadcasts on VOA, particularly jazz, have wide appeal throughout the world, especially in the former Soviet bloc countries.

In the past 30 years, another group of international shortwave broadcasters, devoted mainly to the promulgation of various Christian doctrines, has become a significant addition to the airwaves. Broadcasting more than 1,000 hours a week in a variety of languages, these stations seek to promulgate their own brand of religion to as wide an audience as their transmitters will allow. Usually financed by subscriptions, many of which come from the United States, they have brought a new type of propaganda to the international scene. Listening to these broadcasts, a person may often find it difficult to separate out the political content from the religious. Vatican Radio began its worldwide service in 1931, the first of the international religious services, and this number grew to more than 40 by 1975 (Hale, 1975, p. 124). In the United States, the seven worldwide religious operations include Adventist World Radio, World Radio Gospel Hour, and Voice of the Andes. One of Radio Cairo's channels was given over entirely to Islamic teaching—the Voice of the Holy Koran—that used to break off for 1 hour a day to broadcast the Palestine Liberation Organization's propaganda program. (This service has since been discontinued, a further example of the changes in propaganda priorities brought about by shifting political alliances.) Even the BBC uses the powerful lure of Islamic devotion to attract listeners in Arabic countries by broadcasting readings from the Koran in its Arabic service.

In the Iraq War, the Pentagon broadcast a radio propaganda assault using anti–Saddam Hussein messages. The purpose of the broadcasts was to weaken the resolve of Hussein's public supporters and also those in his military. In part, messages said things such as, "People of Iraq . . . the amount of money Saddam spends on himself in one day would be more than enough to feed a family for a year." Other messages were directed at soldiers, which reminded them that how, during the Iran/Iraq war, Hussein had sacrificed thousands of soldiers, and when those who were taken prisoner were returned, he cut off their ears "as punishment for being captured."

Who is listening to all this international flow of propaganda information, and what effect is it having? Here, we must be careful to examine the effects of international broadcasting within the specific historical, social, and cultural context in which it takes place. Of the more than 600 million radios in the world outside the United States, two thirds can receive shortwave broadcasts. In the United States, of the more than 300 million sets, only 3 million can tune in to the shortwave band. The transistor and the subsequent development of printed circuits have made it possible for radios to be made available in the smallest and poorest villages in the remotest parts of the world. From the rural areas of Latin America to the outback of Siberia and Australia, radio is still a major source of outside communication and information,

although the advent of the television satellite and the Internet has made these media increasingly popular for those who can afford a satellite dish, computer, or "smartphone." We must also keep in mind that much of the radio received in these areas originates from within the country itself; however, a great deal of international broadcasting that can clearly be labeled "propaganda" is still attracting audiences.

The main attraction for audiences listening to foreign-language broadcasts in the past was to get something they could not get from their domestic radio services. The most important of these alternatives seemed to be the desire for timely, accurate, objective information that the domestic media of many of these countries failed to provide. Often, internal control of communication for political reasons forced the population to seek outside sources of information, such as occurred in Brazil after censorship was imposed in 1968. At that time, the VOA and BBC became the most reliable sources of news on events in Brazil itself (Ronalds, 1971). The BBC in particular has earned a reputation for being fair and unbiased in its reporting of events, so much so that, during the British-Argentine conflict, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became angry because the service reported the truth about casualties and other information that she considered to be harmful to British domestic morale.

In August 1985, members of the news service of the BBC went on strike to protest government interference in the showing of a television documentary on terrorism that included an interview with a reputed leader of the Irish Republican Army. The government called the interview "dangerous propaganda"; the television news team called it "pertinent information." This strike gained worldwide attention because of the BBC's vaunted reputation for being unbiased. This reputation, earned during World War II, has continued to make the BBC a major international information source for hundreds of millions of listeners who have come to rely on its daily news reports. The VOA also has a reputation for objectivity, and this accounts for the strong reaction whenever presidents attempt to interject their personal political philosophies into the operation of the VOA. Only by maintaining an unblemished history of fairness do these stations carry any weight with their listeners.

In the United States, with its enormous variety of available news sources, all of which are unrestricted by government censorship, there is no clearly perceived need to listen to outside news broadcasts. For this reason, the U.S. population has never had a history of massive shortwave listening, and shortwave radio receivers are not normally found on domestic radio sets. It is estimated that about half a million people in the United States regularly listen to shortwave broadcasts, mainly the BBC and Radio Canada International.

Figure 3.7 International Broadcasting Bureau organizational chart.
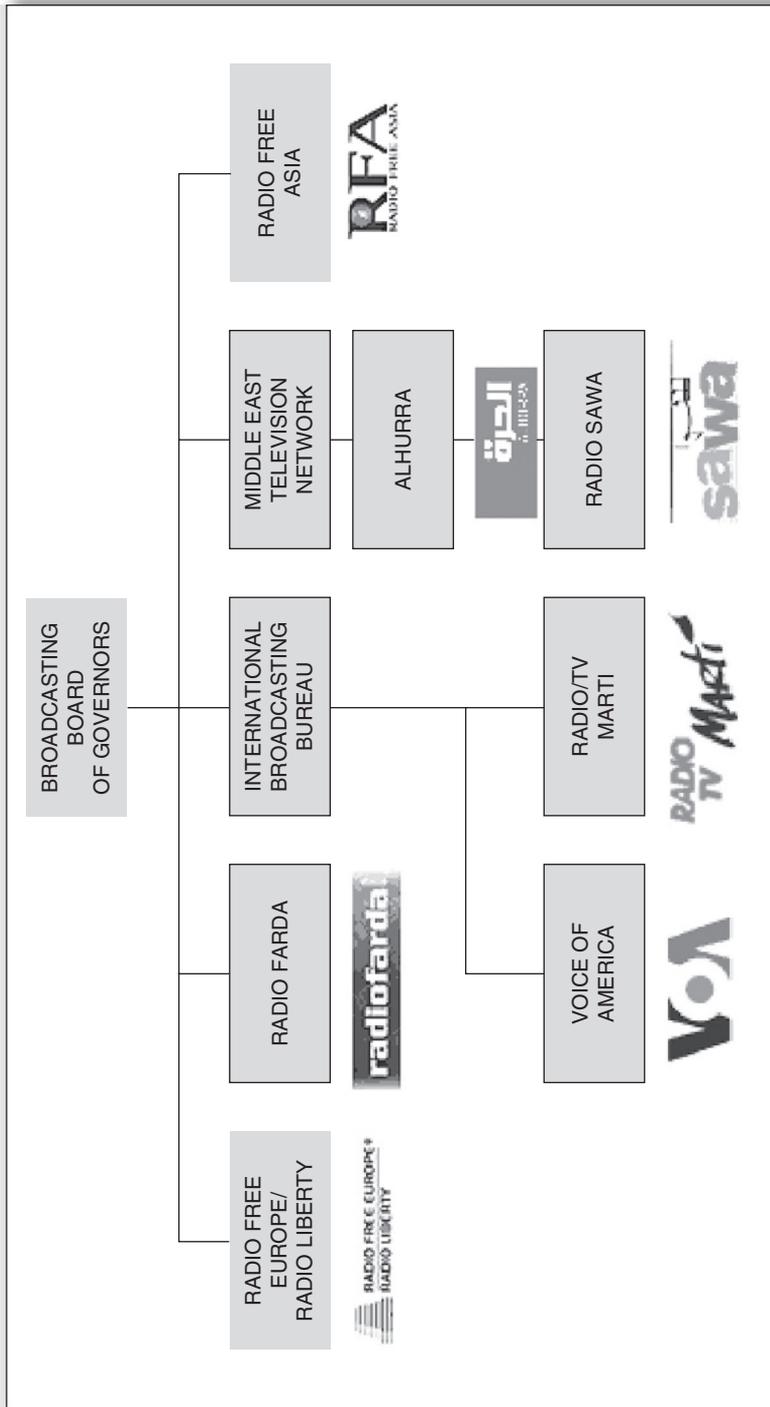
Those who do listen on a regular basis do so more out of curiosity and as a hobby than to seek out alternative news sources. Thus, international radio propaganda is essentially ineffective when aimed at the U.S. population, but such propaganda broadcasts are nevertheless routinely monitored by the government because, with careful analysis, they can reveal the strategies and political maneuvering of the originating countries.

International radio propaganda covers a wide spectrum: On one end is the osmotic effect of the BBC, which has, with patience and professionalism, carved a very special niche for itself as a reliable source of information and all the other nonaggressive national news and cultural services; at the other end are the aggressive, sometimes vitriolic broadcasts found on Arab-language stations in the Middle East, certain African countries, Radio Beijing at times, and wherever there is a need to proclaim "a struggle for freedom"; and somewhere in between are the more propagandistic broadcasts of the VOA, RFE, Radio Moscow, Radio Beijing, and other nationalistic services deliberately aimed at promoting a specific political perspective to audiences in other countries.

It is difficult to measure the exact impact of all this international propaganda broadcasting. Clearly, some of it is very effective, particularly when the domestic population is denied access to a variety of alternative news sources and they turn to outside channels of information. By all accounts, most listeners of international broadcasts are sophisticated enough to be wary of blatant propagandizing, although here again the emotional circumstances providing the content of such broadcasts must be taken into consideration. If the message is too much at odds with what the audience believes or suspects to be true, then the end result is less effective than it would have been had it concentrated on a modicum of reality. As Brown (1963) pointed out,

> The main lesson to be drawn . . . is how very resistant people are to messages that fail to fit into their own picture of the world and their own objective circumstances, how they deliberately (if unconsciously) seek out only those views which agree with them. (p. 309)

Despite the caution in claiming success for international propaganda broadcasts, however, the fact is that many governments in the recent past have been concerned enough about the provision of alternative news sources to resort to highly costly jamming of signals. (The People's Republic of China still occasionally jams VOA broadcasts aimed at its population.) The jamming of signals has been around since the beginning of radio itself, and many sophisticated and expensive techniques were developed. But in the

end, these proved to be largely wasteful exercises and were not always successful, especially in trying to cover large geographic areas. Thus, the USSR, despite its most strenuous efforts, could not prevent some of the signals of VOA, RFE, and RL from reaching target audiences during the Cold War. The United States has never had to resort to jamming signals because, as indicated above, the domestic audience for such broadcasts is not very large or likely to be negatively influenced.

International radio broadcasts have at times been a potent force in shaping the world of propaganda in the 20th century, and they are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future, but with a different emphasis. Clearly, the battle for the "hearts and minds" of listeners will not be the epic battles of the past between communism and capitalism, but probably on a larger world scale between the conflicting cultures of the industrially advanced countries and the less advantaged Third World countries. Since the beginning of the "War on Terrorism" and the ensuing Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, a new cause for international broadcasting has arisen in the Middle East, and now there are a significant number of clandestine radio stations vying for the attention of Muslim populations, broadcasting largely anti-Western messages. These stations may only exist for a few days or weeks at a time, but the availability of inexpensive, mobile equipment allows them to state their message and then disappear before they can be tracked down. (The interested reader is advised to log on to www.clandestineradio.com to track the mercurial nature of these radio stations.)

Between the start of the Cold War in the late 1940s and the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, the total number of listeners to foreign radio stations rose, partly as a result of the increase in radio sets but also because of larger populations and the increasing frustration with the inadequacy of the local media in many third-world countries (Hale, 1975). Responding to popular demand and a decline in censorship regulations, local stations in the former Russian satellite countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland are now free to broadcast whatever they wish. It is not surprising that, in many of these countries, what has emerged with the removal of governmental constraints (and funding) is a form of music-based radio firmly copied from the American commercial model.

The rise of the Internet has made significant changes to the world of international radio broadcasting, as an increasing number of broadcasters have ceased their shortwave transmission in favor of broadcasting directly over the World Wide Web. The BBC discontinued a significant number of services to Europe, North America, Australasia, and the Caribbean, while in the United States there was a drastic reduction in the number of hours of international English language broadcasting. Nonetheless, shortwave

listening is still very common and active in developing countries such as part of Africa and Asia.

U.S. Government Propaganda Agencies

With the collapse of communism in Europe, the future need for international shortwave propaganda broadcasting became very uncertain and, some politicians in the United States thought, unnecessary. All jamming of VOA and RFE in Eastern Europe was stopped, and VOA even opened an office in Moscow to monitor more accurately the dramatic changes then taking place inside the former Soviet Union. The sudden change of the world's political configuration in the late 1980s caught the propaganda broadcasters by surprise. Even though VOA, RFE, and RL each stepped forward to take credit for having contributed significantly to the collapse of communism by providing an alternative "truth" to its listeners, they were unprepared for a peacetime role. This was particularly true of RFE and RL, both of which had been specifically created to undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. (For a detailed history of Radio Liberty, see Critchlow, 1995, and Puddington, 2000.) VOA, which falls under the umbrella of the USIA, with its worldwide mandate, was less affected and had already begun to change the basis of its operations away from direct broadcasting to include a major effort at distribution of radio and television material through its "placement" program.

In 1994, the International Broadcasting Act consolidated all nonmilitary, U.S. government international broadcast services under a Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and created the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB). On October 1, 1999, the BBG became the independent, autonomous entity responsible for all U.S. government and government-sponsored, nonmilitary, international broadcasting. This was the result of the 1998 Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act (Public Law 105–277), the single most important legislation affecting U.S. international broadcasting since the early 1950s.

Every week, more than 100 million listeners, viewers, and Internet users around the world turn on, tune in, and log on to U.S. international broadcasting programs. While the "Broadcasting Board of Governors" is the legal name given to the federal entity encompassing all U.S. international broadcasting services, the day-to-day broadcasting activities are carried out by the individual BBG international broadcasters: the VOA, Alhurra TV, Radio Sawa, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and Radio and TV Marti, with the assistance of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB).

The United States prides itself on being a "democracy" and holds itself up to the rest of the world as a model to be admired and emulated. As was discussed in previous chapters, democratic governments have an uneasy

relationship with "official" propaganda activities, fearing that such institutions could be used domestically to enhance the fortunes of the party in power. Thus, the establishment of the VOA and other propaganda radio stations was accompanied by very strict rules of how and where these stations could be used. The first VOA broadcast took place on February 24, 1942, aimed at a war-torn world; it now broadcasts almost 1,500 hours of programming on shortwave and medium-wave radio to an estimated audience of 125 million each week. With more than 1,100 employees, VOA broadcasts in 44 languages, including English, as well as provides programming in 46 languages to more than 1,100 AM, FM, and cable-"affiliated" stations around the world. These additional outlets greatly expand VOA's audience beyond the 125 million who receive the broadcasts directly by tuning in on shortwave and medium-wave radio.

It is worth examining the VOA charter, which became law in 1976, to see how this agency positions itself as part of the mission of the U.S. government:

> The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating with the people of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America. . . must win the attention and respect of listeners. These principles will therefore govern Voice of America broadcasts:
>
> 1. VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.
>
> 2. VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.
>
> 3. VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies. (See the fact sheet on VOA at www.bbg.gov/our-mission.)

VOA's programming is heavily weighted toward news, but research has shown that listeners are equally drawn to the other features, such as call-in shows, English-teaching segments, and, most popularly, music. Perhaps the most blatantly propagandistic aspect of VOA's broadcasts is the "daily editorial" that states the U.S. government's position on various issues, which also fulfills VOA's obligation to "present the policies of the United States."

In all its activities, VOA adopts a strategy of reflecting the culture of target areas to best explain the culture of the United States. Much research is conducted to discover what audiences in these countries need, and this has led to programs with an increased emphasis on how democracies work, the

fundamentals of business enterprises, the workings of capitalism, and even export promotion.

Future technological developments, such as direct broadcasting satellites (DBSs), which will enable both listeners and viewers to receive signals directly into their homes from satellite dishes parked in space, pose additional problems that have already been the subject of international rancor. (For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Nordenstreng & Schiller, 1979.)

The recent events in the Middle East following the events of September 11, 2001, have required that the United States increase its propaganda presence in that part of the world. As a result, three new radio services have been started to provide Arab- and Persian-speaking populations with news and information designed to present the American perspective on developments in that region.

The first of these is Alhurra (Arabic for "The Free One"), which is a commercial-free Arabic-language satellite television channel for the Middle East devoted primarily to news and information. In addition to reporting on regional and international events, the channel broadcasts discussion programs, current affairs magazines, and features on a variety of subjects, including health and personal fitness, entertainment, sports, fashion, and science and technology. Alhurra is dedicated to presenting accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news.

The second is Radio Sawa, a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week Arabic-language network that is unique in the Middle East. It broadcasts an upbeat mix of Western and Arabic pop music along with up-to-the-minute news, news analysis, interviews, opinion pieces, sports, and features on a wide variety of political and social issues. Radio Sawa (www.radiosawa.com) originates its programming from Washington and is broadcast across the region, using a combination of medium-wave (AM) and FM transmitters, digital audio satellite, shortwave, and Internet. Radio Sawa has six streams tailored to specific parts of the region. Both Alhurra and Radio Sawa have been heavily criticized for not having established themselves as credible news sources. Both use "pop culture" as a means of trying to steer young Arabs away from "hate media," but in doing this, in the past they have often shied away from directly confronting many of the issues that are of real concern in the region. In the last two years, there has been an increase in more directed political messages, and both entities have recently established mobile sites making them more accessible and easier to share among information with others. In 2012, it was estimated that Radio Sawa had a weekly reach of approximately 31 million people (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2013).

Finally, the last of these new propaganda efforts is Radio Farda, which means "Radio Tomorrow" in Persian, a joint effort of two BBG entities:

RFE/RL and VOA. Operated from Washington, D.C., and Prague, Czech Republic, Radio Farda produces fresh news and information at least twice an hour, with longer news programming in the morning and the evening. Radio Farda also broadcasts a combination of popular Persian and Western music. The station operates 24 hours a day on medium wave (AM 1593 and AM 1539), digital audio satellite, and on the Internet as well as 21 hours a day on shortwave. Radio Farda complements the VOA's Persian-language radio and television broadcasts into Iran (Radio Farda, n.d.).

It remains to be seen how successful these new broadcast entities are in getting across a point of view that is often antithetical to that of Muslim tradition and culture and does not take into account long historical animosities and tensions. A separate study, commissioned by the BBG and conducted by the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy, found persistent problems with Alhurra. The center's report concluded in 2009 that the network failed to meet basic journalistic standards, suffered from poor programming, and was plagued by perceived bias (Linzer, 2009). Serious efforts have been made to correct many of these problems, and there has been a tighter control of editorial content in the face of increased anti-American sentiment in the Middle East.

If we agree that one of the first steps to achieving success with propaganda messages is to "know your audience," then the United States has not done a very credible job. The emotional issues that overwhelmed most Americans in the days and months following the tragic events of 9/11 have prevented us from fully engaging in a thorough, objective analysis of "why" these events took place. Even now there is resistance to acknowledging that, good or evil, we need to understand the reasons—historical, cultural, and political—that motivated the attack on innocent U.S. citizens going about their everyday affairs. Until we do fully understand these reasons and adapt our propaganda strategy accordingly, throwing messages at millions of unsympathetic listeners is unlikely to be successful.

Radio and TV Marti

The idea for Radio Marti originated in the Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba, which was established by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 to make recommendations on how the Reagan administration could "break the Cuban government's information monopoly" and "satisfy the Cuban people's thirst for reliable information about their own country" (Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba, quoted in Galimore, 1991, p. 2). The U.S. government was determined to undermine Fidel Castro's censorship barrier by making available to the Cuban people news

about world affairs, as well as news about what was going on in Cuba itself. President Reagan signed the Broadcasting to Cuba Act on October 4, 1983, and Radio Marti went on the air on May 20, 1985, broadcasting to Cuba from studios in Washington, D.C., and relayed from a transmitter in Marathon Key in Florida. Named after a famous hero of the Cuban Revolution against Spain, Jose Marti, thus further angering the Cuban government, this station broadcasts continuously on both medium wave (AM) and shortwave. The Cubans jam the AM, but 90% of the Cuban population has access to shortwave. In 1989, Radio Marti's Office of Audience Research confirmed that 85% of the Cuban population older than age 13 were regular listeners to the station.

Radio Marti has proved to be a particularly difficult internal propaganda problem for the U.S. government, in that factions within the large Cuban expatriate community in Florida have continuously pressured for Radio Marti to become more aggressive in encouraging a Cuban revolution against Castro. This tactic would violate the specific guidelines established by the advisory board, which stated that Radio Marti "must not encourage defections nor offer assistance to do so and that its broadcasts must avoid unattributed polemic, argumentation and sweeping generalizations and evaluations, and there must not be incitement to revolution or violence." The aim of the station was to present "the truth, hard facts and dispassionate analysis" (Advisory Board for Cuba Broadcasting, 1989, p. 7). The power struggle for the ideological control of Radio Marti continues as the political situation within Cuba itself becomes more unstable with the collapse of international communism. In 2013, Radio Marti had a staff of 119 and an annual "official" budget of $27.9 million. (TV Marti is discussed later.)

Opinions about the success of the radio propaganda aimed at Cuba differ, of course. John Spicer Nichols, who has studied the history of clandestine radio propaganda for many years, suggests that the original anti-Castro radio stations run by "shadowy exile groups" broadcasting gray and black propaganda in the 1970s and 1980s were quite successful in establishing connections with the Cuban people. These stations were largely replaced by "professionally produced programs" (essentially, white propaganda) on commercial shortwave stations broadcasting from New Orleans, Nashville, and Miami (Nichols, 1997, pp. 111–112). As Nichols (1997) noted, two factors caused this to happen: First, the Cuban exile community itself gradually moved from being on the political fringe to the political mainstream, and second, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was eager to silence all clandestine transmitters on U.S. soil. In the end, virtually all clandestine radio broadcasts to Cuba disappeared, to be replaced by the institutionalized broadcasts of Radio and TV Marti and the other "official"

programs. Nichols's assessment of the current political validity of these broadcasts gives us much to think about:

> Separated by 90 miles of water and 35 years from their homeland, the Cuban-American leadership is becoming decreasingly relevant in Havana despite its increasing relevance in Washington. The broadcasts that Cuban exile groups produce and air on licensed commercial stations or are aired on Radio and TV Marti at the exile's behest are similarly rooted more in the U.S. political reality than in the Cuban political reality. (p. 113)

In early 2009, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that noted that for the past 18 years the U.S. government had spent an estimated half billion dollars broadcasting TV and radio programming into Cuba. However, the U.S. government had yet to find a way to stop Cuba from jamming the signal of TV Marti, and even though the radio signal had better reception, both TV and Radio Marti had audiences of less than 1% of Cuba's 11 million residents. There were also questions about the quality of the journalism being practiced, and the frequent editorializing and the use of personal opinions as news. "In the old days Radio Marti really did break the information monopoly of the communist system," said Phil Peters, a Cuba expert at the Lexington Institute who writes the Cuban Triangle blog. "Now in Cuba everyone has DVDs and flash drives, and information changes hands more easily." Peters suggested that removing the ban on travel to Cuba for U.S. citizens would accomplish much better results in increasing the flow of information into Cuba (Adams, 2009).

Television

The Nature of Television

Because television is essentially a domestic medium, it has not been extensively used as a means of direct international propaganda (with the exception of TV Marti, discussed later). This may change with the introduction of the DBS technology indicated previously, but it is unlikely that many countries would allow the cultural disruptions caused by such daily doses of foreign propaganda. Of far greater current danger is the immense amount of indirect propaganda presented under the guise of entertainment that forms the basis of the worldwide trade in television programming. Much as the motion picture industry has done, the giant television industries of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany have dominated the international market for television programs. Most third-world countries are unable to produce sufficient programming to meet their own needs, and the voracious

appetite for television entertainment is met by importing programs from elsewhere. The United States alone sells more than 150,000 hours of television programs annually. (This problem is analyzed in some detail in C. Lee, 1980, and Negrine & Papathanassopoulos, 1990.)

The content of these programs clearly carries ideological messages, and often they create what is called "the frustration of rising expectations" in viewers from less developed countries by presenting an attractive lifestyle that is beyond their economic means. Ultimately, it is theorized, constant exposure to such a divergence in living conditions will bring about hostility toward the originating country. Schiller (1970) noted,

> To foster consumerism in the poor world sets the stage for frustration on a massive scale, to say nothing of the fact that there is a powerful body of opinion there which questions sharply the desirability of pursuing the Western pattern of development. (p. 114)

One major contributing factor in the collapse of the wall between West and East Germany was the daily dose of television images of "conspicuous consumption" that the East Germans could view in the context of their own relatively drab lifestyles (Hanke, 1990; see also Chapter 1).

In more sanguine times, it was often thought that the worldwide exchange of television programs would lead to greater international understanding and tolerance, but this has not proved to be the case. Today, we have the anomalous situation in which American television programs (particularly those that tend to glamorize the "California lifestyle," such as *Baywatch,* and even reruns of older shows like *Dallas*) are followed with almost religious devotion in many countries, while at the same time those same audiences express intense political hostility toward the United States as a symbol of capitalist oppression.

Television as Propaganda

Television does have a major propaganda function in the area of news reporting. Complaints have always been voiced about misrepresentation in the reporting of international (as well as domestic) news, but this issue has recently received an unprecedented amount of attention as a result of complaints from Third World countries that their images are being distorted in the Western press. The issue of the imbalance in the "free flow" of information between industrialized and developing countries became a major topic at international meetings and a significant issue on the agenda of the fundamental political and economic issues in contemporary society. In particular,

the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been the arena of many ardent discussions on the necessity to develop what has been called the New World Information Order (NWIO). At the General Conference of UNESCO in Nairobi in 1976, it was decided that a major study needed to be undertaken of the problem of international communication flows. The subsequent report of what became known as the McBride Commission (Irish statesman Sean McBride was president of the commission), *Many Voices, One World* (McBride, 1980), detailed the extent of the difficulties in reconciling widely differing philosophies on the issue of what constitutes a free flow of information. As the commission report noted,

> It has been frequently stated . . . that due to the fact that the content of information is largely produced by the main developing countries, the image of the developing countries is frequently false and distorted. More serious still, according to some vigorous critics, it is this false image, harmful to their inner balance, which is presented to the developing countries themselves. (McBride, 1980, p. 36)

Predictably, the response in the United States to a call for government involvement to ensure a more balanced flow of communication was negative and based on the historical notion of freedom of the press from all government interference. The issues are complex and easily open to misinterpretation, depending on one's political philosophy (see Nordenstreng, 1982, for a discussion of this issue). By the early 1990s, UNESCO had begun to downplay the great push for a NWIO in the face of more serious problems, such as worldwide famine and AIDS; this was also a deliberate political decision aimed at allaying any fears the United States had about the organization. Ultimately, the concept of developing a NWIO that would provide more balanced coverage to news from developing countries has not had wide acceptance in the West, and images of famine, corruption, and conflicts still predominate on our nightly news broadcasts. In this way, the powerful visual images are presented to television viewers—in broadcasts that seldom have enough time to develop the stories to provide adequate explanations. The "shorthand" nature of television news lends itself to such distortion, thus creating a form of indirect propaganda affecting our perceptions and shaping our attitudes toward a wide variety of issues. We learn to rely on the news media for information, and repeated frequently enough, these images become fixed beliefs, shaping our understanding of the world around us.

No solution to this problem of distortion is clear-cut; it is an inherent part of a free media system in which market forces dictate the content of the media. The difficulties in reconciling this free market media system—in which

the commercial mass media allow audience preferences to shape content—with the understandable desire by countries and individuals to present their "best" images are almost insurmountable. Clearly, all parties would like to use the media to propagandize favorably on their behalf, but if news agencies and television networks in the West think their audiences are more interested in learning about political coups, wars, and corruption in third-world countries than about increases in food production, educational advances, and stable political regimes, then that is what will be featured on the news. This type of indirect and unconscious propaganda is a major product of modern media systems.

Television, by its visual nature, is vulnerable to misuse as a propaganda medium because it places a premium on using only material with great visual interest to broadcast. The use of "talking heads" to provide expert analysis is only relied on as a last resort when visual support is inadequate. Thus, in the infamous TWA Flight 847 hostage crisis in Beirut in 1985, the American television networks were forced to rely on visual material largely generated by the Lebanese hijackers, almost all of which was aimed at presenting the case for the Shiite Muslims in a favorable light. The networks therefore served as unwitting propagandizers, caught by their desperate need to present whatever visual material they could find and in their desire to compete with each other for the viewing audience. The American public, as we have noted before, is not always receptive to such blatant propaganda messages, and the networks were constantly apologizing for presenting them. Here again, we witness the differences in conditions favoring successful propaganda in two cultures; the Muslim terrorists, in a heightened emotional state of conflict and influenced by years of propaganda for their cause, were naive to think that American television viewers would uncritically accept the images emanating from Beirut. It is also important to note that despite the public nature of the propaganda generated by the terrorists, this did not result in any shift away from the "no concessions to terrorists" policy of the Reagan administration. How much this has to do with the decline in the number of such deliberately staged propagandistic television events in the period since 1988 is unclear.

TV Marti

The most blatant example of television propaganda is the introduction of TV Marti, which began beaming programs into Cuba in August 1990. A specially designed antenna was constructed that guaranteed the signals could not be picked up within the United States or interfere with existing domestic or Cuban television reception. The antenna is housed in an aerostat balloon hovering 10,000 feet above the Cudjoe Key, Florida, and aimed at

delivering a "Grade A" signal into the heart of Havana. The Cuban government immediately retaliated by jamming the signal into Havana, but according to reports, the station is received on the outskirts of the city and in outlying areas. It has been reported that 28% of households in the potential viewing area receive the signals from TV Marti "at least occasionally." If the station is not seen by the majority of the population, then why is so much money being spent on it? The 1991 *Special Report on TV Marti* suggested several reasons for the need for both Radio and TV Marti.

> For example, wise contingency planning leads us to believe that unforeseen events causing instability in the Cuban government may precipitate a disruption of state broadcasts and/or jamming efforts, causing a disoriented Cuban society to be even more reliant on TV and Radio Marti as credible sources of news and information. . . . And still further in the future, both Radio and TV Marti will be indispensable elements in the U.S. government's efforts to educate Cuban citizens on the ways of democracy and its institutions following a democratic transition in Cuba. (Advisory Council for Cuba Broadcasting on TV Marti, 1991, pp. 7–8)

However, the success of TV Marti has been extremely limited and the entire enterprise is now under attack. Based upon the 2009 report by the Congressional General Accounting Office, there were calls for shutting down TV Marti. "At a minimum, I think TV Marti should be abolished," said Phil Peters, a Cuba specialist at the Lexington Institute who worked for the State Department under President George H. W. Bush. "It's a colossal waste of money, and it has no audience. It was born at the beginning of the Cold War, and now we're into the age of the Internet and Twitter. I'm just not convinced that radio and TV broadcasts are the best use of money to foster communications with Cuba," he said, noting as well that the "media environment within Cuba has changed." Indeed, the report itself stressed that the quality of domestic TV programming in Cuba had improved recently and included foreign entertainment programs, including popular U.S. TV shows such as *The Sopranos* and *Grey's Anatomy,* and that CNN Español was now being run on Cuban television.

"The idea that political broadcasts from the U.S. government is going to break through this is pretty far-fetched," Peters said (Lobe, 2010).

The Emergence of Cable News

Because of its inherent attractiveness and accessibility, television offers the ideal opportunity to propagandize in the guise of entertainment. Some countries, such as India and Mexico, have actively used soap operas on

television to deliver prosocial messages on issues such as breast-feeding, birth control, and consumer fraud. These programs, designed to be as involving to viewers as any regular soap opera, have been carefully crafted by script writers working with social scientists to ensure that these "positive" propagandistic messages are smoothly integrated into the plot.

During the Gulf War (1990–1991), the emergence of Cable News Network (CNN) and the invaluable role it played as the major disseminator of news throughout the world took many people by surprise. The Gulf War was the first major conflict of a global nature since the introduction of worldwide television satellite services, and the potential of these systems was dramatically illustrated by the instantaneous broadcasts of events from the embattled area. When CNN reporters remained in Baghdad after the war had actually begun, the world was witness to an unprecedented series of live broadcasts from within the enemy's capital city while it was actually under bombardment. CNN was criticized by some politicians and members of the public for playing into the hands of enemy propaganda, but on the whole, these broadcasts were well received and widely viewed. The question of CNN's unwitting role in "giving aid and comfort to the enemy" by showing the damage to civilian life within Iraq was widely debated at the time, with no clear public consensus emerging except that viewers found the service almost indispensable.

The reporting of the Gulf War also raised new questions about the relationship between the media and the military; it was obvious that the instantaneous technologies available for disseminating news from the battlefields had clashed with the military's need and desire to control what images would actually be seen. The result was that the military denied access to all but a few reporters whom it could control through the use of official "pool" coverage, with military escorts. Although this system was introduced in the name of safety (for troops and reporters), the end result was a great deal of dissatisfaction on the part of the media and a large segment of the public, with the appearance of deliberately manipulated coverage. It was later revealed that many reporters were, in fact, forced to create their own stories from CNN reports but without attributing this source. It was clear by the end of the Gulf War that new communication technologies had fundamentally altered the way all future wars would be reported, and the ongoing conflict between the media and government on how best to report wars continues without a clear solution.

By the time of the second Middle East conflict in 2001 (to be discussed in detail later), this time involving the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, CNN had a very lively rival with the emergence of the cable FOX News Network (FNN), heavily funded by owner Rupert Murdock as an alternative to the

"mainstream" media and sporting the rather audacious slogan of "Fair and Balanced." FNN was blatantly in support of the administration's actions and provided a largely uncritical evaluation of the events as they unfolded. It was a familiar story as reporters for all of the television networks were embedded with the troops, and this brought about similar complaints about the lack of objective reporting. However, the constraints of the battlefield do present real problems, and realistically, reporters cannot safely be allowed to run around in the middle of a firefight trying to get dramatic footage for the audience watching their television sets that evening. Once again, the use of new, more mobile technologies made coverage much more dramatic and personal, far outstripping the ability of the military to control what kinds of images were being sent out to what was now a worldwide audience.

The world of international satellite television, so long dominated by CNN, was also dramatically changed by the emergence of another entity, this time from the Arab world. Launched in 1996 and based in Doha, Qatar, Aljazeera today has more than 30 bureaus and dozens of correspondents covering the entire globe, bringing an entirely new perspective to international news coverage. Their audience is estimated to be somewhere between 40 and 50 million Arab viewers, while Aljazeera English, with bureaus in Kuala Lumpur, London, and Washington, D.C., has a reach of more than 100 million households. Aljazeera's objective, as stated on its website, is as follows:

> Free from the shackles of censorship and government control Aljazeera has offered its audiences in the Arab world much needed freedom of thought, independence, and room for debate. In the rest of the world, often dominated by the stereotypical thinking of news "heavyweights," Aljazeera offers a different and a new perspective. (Aljazeera, n.d.)

The station has not hesitated to broadcast programming, especially images, which are quite opposite to those distributed in the Western media, and this has given Aljazeera the reputation of being deliberately inflammatory and propagandistic. With programming focusing primarily on news coverage and analysis, the station has earned the loyalty of an enormous, mostly Arab-speaking audience and the enmity of various critics who argue that Aljazeera is deliberately sensational by showing bloody footage from various war zones as well as giving disproportionate coverage to various fundamentalist and extremist groups. Criticism from various Western (and sometimes Arab) governments has only served to increase its credibility with an audience that is used to censorship and biased coverage from official government outlets. Aljazeera is not likely to criticize its own benefactor, the

emir of Qatar and the government of Qatar. There is little doubt that Aljazeera has opened up the world of cable television news to a much wider audience and has served to heat up the propaganda wars now being fought through satellite television.

It was not surprising that given the sensitivity to anti-American expressions that most cable systems in the United States refused to carry the network fearing a backlash from their subscribers. In January 2013, Aljazeera's parent company make a dramatic bid to enter the U.S. cable television market when it purchased Current TV, a U.S. cable station, previously belonging to former Vice President Al Gore, for an estimated $500 million. The transaction created an instant controversy, and the cable station was immediately dropped by Time Warner Cable and Cablevision. The remaining cable networks still provided the new station, named "Aljazeera America," with an audience of 48 million cable-connected homes in the United States. (As this chapter is being written, Aljazeera America officially took to the airwaves today, August 20, 2013.) It remains to be seen whether the American public can get past the perception that this news network will not be a propaganda tool for Arab interests. The fact that Aljazeera has such strong financing behind it means that the network can afford to wait for a considerable time for American viewers to make a sound judgment about the quality and scope of its programming.

It is difficult to predict exactly how much of a role television will play in direct international propaganda in the future. It is doubtful that the use of DBS will be allowed in the same fashion as international radio broadcasting, and the methods of technological control (going so far as to destroy offending satellites) are much easier. It is very likely that we will see a continuation of the argument surrounding the misrepresentation of countries and groups in those countries in which the media are not too tightly controlled by the government. Where governments do have control of the media systems, however, television will continue to play a major role in propagandizing activities, as much through the ideological perspectives of so-called entertainment as through the management of images presented in the news. The potential use of the Minicam, and now smartphones and iPads, for the circulation of visual material has just begun to be explored for propaganda purposes. It was widely acknowledged that the circulation of illicit underground tapes in Eastern Europe, even though the number of privately owned VCRs was small, was a significant factor in coalescing opposition groups during the Cold War. In more recent times, the succession of tapes purportedly coming from Osama bin Laden, in which he made personal addresses to Western political leaders or to his own followers and other terrorist leaders being sought in the "war on terrorism," had served to act as quite potent

propaganda vehicles for his followers. On the other side, these taped messages only increased the desire to see him captured.

With the increased ubiquity of personal computers, cellphones, and the growth of the Internet, newsworthy material is now more widely disseminated than ever before to a potential worldwide audience. These visual messages, sometimes from the cellphones of ordinary members of the public, have often received wide coverage in the Western media, enough to occasionally require direct responses from government officials. This is the age of the "citizen propagandist." Whether it is privately originated, or the work of a government or corporate entity, we are entering an age where the televised image has increasingly become a major source of modern propaganda.

Advertising: The Ubiquitous Propaganda

There is little doubt that under any definition of propaganda, the practice of advertising would have to be included. *Advertising* is a series of appeals, symbols, and statements deliberately designed to influence the receiver of the message toward the point of view desired by the communicator and to act in some specific way as a result of receiving the message, whether it be to purchase, vote, hold positive or negative views, or merely maintain a memory. Also, advertising is not always in the best interest of the receiver of the message (refer to Figure 1.6 in Chapter 1).

The deliberateness of the intention and the carefully constructed nature of the specific appeal distinguish advertising from other forms of persuasive communication; also, in our society, advertising is generally communicated at a cost to the communicator. Whether paid advertising in the traditional sense or the production of leaflets or handbills on a small copier, advertising usually involves the cost of production and distribution. The advertiser (communicator), in turn, hopes this cost will be returned eventually in the form of some benefit, such as the purchase of a product, the casting of a vote, or positive or negative feelings. In fact, advertising is the most ubiquitous form of propaganda in our society. It is found everywhere we look and almost everywhere we listen, and its pressure is felt in every commercial transaction we make. The use of advertising as a means of informing the public about the choices and availability of goods and services is an integral part of the free enterprise capitalist system. Although there have been some exceptions (Hershey's chocolate bar became a big seller, although the company did not do consumer advertising until the early 1970s), advertising is the primary means of stimulating the sales of the products in our consumer-oriented society and, as such, has a direct influence on the economy. Many

critics of advertising, however, point out that vast sums of money are spent on promoting an increasingly wider range of choices for an already overburdened market. After all, does our society really need to choose from more than 30 brands of toothpaste? The debate about the actual economic utility of advertising is also echoed by economists, who disagree about whether advertising increases the costs of goods by creating a larger potential market and thereby lowering unit costs or merely adds to the cost of producing and selling these goods. These arguments have existed ever since advertising became an essential part of modern capitalist economies in the 19th century (Pope, 1983).

Advertising also serves as the financial base for our vast mass communication network, for the structure of our commercialized media system is totally dependent on the revenues from advertising. Even our public broadcasting systems depend to some extent on being underwritten by funds from the business sector. Although advertising may be considered an intrusion into our television viewing, magazine or newspaper reading, enjoyment of the radio, or increasingly our experiences on the Web, we accept its existence because we understand its role in making possible our enjoyment of these media. If we really consider the actual structure of the commercial media system, it is the audience that is being delivered to the advertiser and not the other way around.

Institutional Propaganda

In our society, advertising is institutional propaganda at its most obvious level. It serves as a constant reminder that we are being bombarded with messages intended to bring us to a certain point of view or behavior. Yet, we can only absorb so much of what we are expected to, and so we have learned to cope with this enormous information overload. We may look but not really see the television commercial, we may listen but not really hear the radio jingle, we leaf by print advertisements without paying attention, and we are absorbed in reading our Facebook page without paying much attention to all of the advertising directed specifically at us. But every so often, we do see or hear or read, and this is what is intended by the creators of advertising. From the more than 2,000 "messages" we are exposed to every day, we remember at most only about 80 (Heilbroner, 1985). More than 33,000 nationally advertised brands are for sale in the United States. It is the job of the advertisers (and their appointed advertising agencies) to make their brands stand out from the rest, and so we are inundated with advertising campaigns extolling the specific virtues of individual products, services, institutions, or individuals. In 2012, nearly $140 billion was spent on advertising

expenditures in the United States. This was for all types of advertising, and advertising services, from $1 million commercials on the Super Bowl telecast to the classified advertisements in the local neighborhood newspaper (Kantar Media, 2012).

Internet Advertising

The growth of the Internet has had a major impact on the manner in which advertising expenditures are being assigned, In 2012 Internet advertising revenues totaled $36.6 billion, a full 15 % increase over 2011. While the traditional advertising media such as direct mail and broadcast and print will still be more than twice as much as online advertising, there is little doubt that online advertising will continue to grow as advertisers learn how to use this new medium to its full potential.

Marketers now recognize that online advertising must be incorporated into any comprehensive advertising strategy, and the cost of reaching an active Internet user is less than half of what it would be through traditional advertising. Nonetheless, there is considerable debate on the effectiveness of online advertising, especially in assessing how interruptive such advertising can be. The use of pop-ups, contextual ads on search engines (which can be very misleading), flashing banner ads which float across the page, and other forms of distraction could have a cumulative negative effect on the receiver who is trying to work on his or her computer. Also, a contentious issue is "behavioral marketing" where the subscriber's online activity is monitored by using the past slipstream in order to tailor advertising for specific products known to be of interest to that individual. These are but a few of the many techniques available to online advertisers, some less ethical than others.

On the plus side, online advertising has the advantage of immediacy and is not limited in geographic location. But the most important and unique aspect of online marketing is the interactive capability of the Internet, which allows users and marketers to respond instantaneously. Also, consumers can research products and services at their own convenience before making a decision. Internet marketing ultimately allows a greater convergence of seller's products and buyer's interests. (Large stores like *Best Buy* are now known as "Amazon's Catalog" as consumers check out products in person before making an online purchase. These "brick-and-mortar" stores have had to offer to match online prices in order to stay competitive.) As the level of household computers and usage increases, there is little doubt that online marketing will become a very normal form of purchasing goods and services.

The Science of Advertising

In the late 1950s, the "science" of advertising became the subject of major public debate when Vance Packard published his best-selling book *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). Cultural historian Jackson Lears (1994) described this book as "a blend of plainspoken outrage at fraud and republican concern about mysterious conspiracies, updated to dramatize postwar preoccupations about mass manipulation" (p. 255). In fact, Packard's book was the culmination of a concern about public "manipulation" by "outside forces" that had begun in the aftermath of the "brainwashing" scare of the Korean War (see Chapter 5 for details of this conflict). At no other time in American history had there been such a close connection between the negative connotation of *propaganda* with advertising. The opening paragraph of Packard's book outlines these concerns:

> This book is an attempt to explore a strange and rather exotic new area of American life. It is about the large-scale efforts being made, often with impressive success, to channel our unthinking habits, our purchasing decisions, and our thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences. Typically these efforts take place beneath our level of awareness; so that the appeals which move us are often, in a sense, "hidden." The result is that many of us are being influenced and manipulated, far more than we realize, in the patterns of our everyday lives. (p. 3)

The American public had been alerted to the possibilities of such "hidden persuasion" in the spate of articles and books that appeared in the early 1950s in response to the growing fear that postwar America was becoming a "mass society" (see earlier in this chapter for a discussion of the emergence of mass society). Every aspect of the postwar economic boom that had brought about an unprecedented wave of consumerism was critiqued for contributing to a "sameness" in American life that seemed to threaten individuality. Encouraged by the introduction of that most potent of advertising media—television—the American public went on a giant spending spree that gave an enormous boost to the advertising industry but also precipitated concerns about its potential power to manipulate.

Thanks to the popularity of Packard's book (which went into more than 12 printings), as well as the journalistic fallout it precipitated, the American public's attention was alerted to the phenomena of "motivational research" and "subliminal advertising" as two potent and mysterious tools in the advertising agencies' arsenal of consumer research. *Motivational research* was the brainchild of psychoanalyst Ernest Dichter, president of the Institute for Motivational Research, Inc., who coined the term (as well as the term *depth interviews*) in the late 1930s and popularized it as an advertising

research technique in the postwar period. Essentially, motivational research used in-depth interviews to try to understand the psychological basis for consumer behavior. In 1958, Packard used the term *subthreshold effects* to describe attempts "to insinuate messages to people past their conscious guard" (p. 42). Later, this practice became more commonly known as "subliminal advertising, which involved embedding verbal or visual messages below the level of the buyers' conscious awareness, keeping them ignorant of being influenced" (Lears, 1994, p. 255). Although no real evidence indicated that subliminal advertising was being practiced on any large scale, the public outcry was strong, and the advertising industry responded that critics were just feeding public paranoia about such manipulation. But these concerns were reflective of the social and cultural situation during the 1950s and the tension of the Cold War. As Lears (1994) noted,

> Concerns about advertisers' abuse of motivation research converged with images of "brainwashed" GIs chanting Communist slogans in North Korean prisons. The overall effect of these perceptions was to reaffirm the assumption that the human mind was a pathetic lump of clay. Far more charming than the Communists, the admaker was nevertheless the American version of a devious master manipulator, orchestrator of a corporate system that to some nervous critics was beginning to work too well. (p. 253)

It is interesting to note that this concern about subliminal advertising has never really disappeared and continues today in such provocative publications as Wilson Bryan Key's series of books, most notably his first, *Subliminal Seduction* (1973). Key provided a series of photographs and other "evidence" of advertisements that he claimed contains subliminal messages or deliberately subliminal images designed to manipulate the unconscious mind of the viewer. A check of the Internet for the subject "subliminal advertising" reveals the continuous and extensive preoccupation with this subject.

These concerns about the manipulative nature of advertising, suggesting that the public was just a "pathetic lump of clay" readily molded to suit the advertiser's needs, were, in fact, just another variation of the outdated "magic bullet" or "hypodermic syringe" model of communications from the turn of the century. It took more sophisticated research in the next three decades to establish that advertising did not work in such a simple manner and that the public's perception of such messages was not monolithic but rather subject to a wide range of possible interpretations (see Chapter 4 for more details on the history of communications research).

In the process of product differentiation, advertising propaganda is selective and often distorting in what it tells the consumer. The desire to appear to be different, to be considered a superior product, or to provide faster, more

reliable service encourages the use of hyperbole and exaggeration, and this, in turn, has created a nation of skeptical consumers. To overcome this growing skepticism and to increase the chance of success in an already overcrowded marketplace, advertisers have resorted to a wide range of techniques from the most obvious to the very subtle to attract attention to their specific propaganda strategy. In the act of gaining consumers' attention, we are all too familiar with the blatancy of the bikini-clad woman on the car hood, but most of us are unaware of the effectiveness of the psychologically tested and then readjusted copy for a headache remedy seen on the nightly network news. Increasingly, advertisers are resorting to a variety of scientific testing methods to maximize the expenditure of their advertising budgets by increasing the potential of their message getting through the morass, and this includes close demographic analysis of their target audience, an understanding of the psychological framework of receptivity for their message and whatever adjustments might be necessary to improve this, and a study of the effectiveness of one specific message versus another specific message and even the application of the psychology of color to shape the mood of the audience.

Despite all this expensive scientific analysis, much of advertising remains ineffective, and the list of failed products continues to grow. As we have noted many times in this book, not all propaganda is successful, for a variety of reasons: The message may not be convincing enough to persuade the consumer to change existing behavior (or purchase) patterns, the product may not be seen as utilitarian or cost-effective, or there might just be plain old skepticism, for after all, advertising has a long history of being deceptive or distorting. Of course, advertising can also be extremely effective when the right combination of circumstances comes together, and we have seen many examples of advertising success stories. Despite advertising's proven effectiveness as a "mover of goods," or perhaps because of it, however, public attitudes toward advertising are often very negative. In many ways, a consumer's experience with advertising has made him or her suspicious of all propaganda, and this might prove to be a healthy trend in our society. It will force advertisers and other propagandists to improve the quality of their messages and diminish the possibility of negative propaganda influence. If consumers are aware that they are being propagandized, the choice to accept or reject the message is theirs alone.

The Role of Advertising

In his book *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion,* sociologist Michael Schudson (1984) suggested that advertising in the capitalist system serves the same function as the poster art of authoritarian socialism, the state-sanctioned

art that was pervasive in the former Soviet Union. We are all familiar with those realistic posters of sturdy men and healthy women working in wheat fields or factories and affirming the joys of socialism; in Schudson's interesting metaphor, advertising serves the same function, depicting equally healthy capitalists driving cars, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, or wearing designer jeans and essentially enjoying the materialist fruits of the free enterprise system. As Schudson noted,

> American advertising, like socialist realist art, simplifies and typifies. It does not claim to picture reality as it should be—life and lives worth emulating. . . . It always assumes that there is progress. It is thoroughly optimistic, providing for any troubles that it identifies a solution in a particular product or style of life. It focuses, of course, on the new, and if it shows signs of respect for tradition, this is only to help in assimilation of some new commercial creation. (p. 215)

Advertising in our society, therefore, has a symbolic and cultural utility that transcends the mere selling of merchandise, but "the aesthetic of capitalist realism" without a master plan of purposes "glorifies the pleasures and freedoms of consumer choice in defense of the virtues of private life and material ambitions" (p. 218).

Schudson's (1984) unique perspective on advertising provides us with insightful confirmation of precisely why advertising is the most plentiful form of propaganda found in today's society. Like the socialist-realist art it emulates, advertising serves as a constant reminder of the cultural and economic basis of our society. We do not always respond to all the messages we receive, but their pervasiveness provides a sort of psychic comfort that our socioeconomic system is still working.

In recent years, advertisers have been much more careful to "construct" audiences. As costs have increased, advertisers are obviously eager to maximize their potential for reaching the "right" audiences. Turow (1991) noted that companies spend a great deal of time and effort researching exactly how to attract their target audience. Thus, the general abstract concept of *the audience* is turned into a more concrete "construction of reality" in which "certain categories of the audience are chosen over other categories to describe a group of people" (p. 98).

In his very insightful book *Advertising and Popular Culture,* Jib Fowles (1997) provides us with clues to how integrated advertising has become as a part of modern culture. As he noted, "An advertisement or commercial does not stand alone but enters into a number of intertextual relationships, which supply further dynamics to the message" (p. 90). Fowles pointed out that a great deal of current advertising makes assumptions that the audience

already has the background to place the content of the advertisements into context. Thus, in the series of commercials for Apple computers featuring a young "hip" guy, and an older flabby "square" one, the audience had to be familiar with the public's image of Apple as a highly innovative company in comparison to the stodgy image presented by their chief rival Microsoft. Similarly, many commercials, such as those for Miller beer and Reebok running shoes, actively recognize and acknowledge the audience's familiarity with their competitors' products.

The integration of advertising with other forms of popular culture into a "seamless whole" has the potential of increasing the subtle effectiveness of propaganda messages contained in advertising. Advertising is not seen so much as a separate source of propaganda messages specifically created by sophisticated institutions (the advertiser-advertising agency) to affect behavior (making a purchase) but is accepted as merely another source of (entertaining) information. Nowhere is this integrative process in modern culture more obvious than in the peculiar phenomenon of the proliferation of advertising slogans, labels, and icons that consumers actually wear or display as they go about their daily lives. Such conspicuous display, especially the wearing of designer labels on clothing, can be used as a signifier of success or defiance or whatever specific message the wearer wishes to communicate. The fact that individuals so readily agree to become walking billboards for the designer and often pay handsomely for the privilege in the process is an indication of the success of the integration of advertising and popular culture. Under these conditions, it is little wonder that the majority of the public do not recognize that advertising is, in fact, the most ubiquitous form of propaganda in modern society.

In the final analysis, advertising as propaganda has been largely responsible for the creation of the massive consumer culture in the 20th century, as well as for the fundamental alteration of the nature of political practices in democratic societies. (This theme is developed at length in Qualter, 1991.) Together with the growth of the mass media and improvements in transportation and communication, it is one force that has contributed to the emergence of the mass culture discussed earlier in this chapter. Good or evil, honest or dishonest, economically vital or wasteful, advertising is with us as long as we choose to live in a capitalist economic system, the ultimate success of which is dependent on a high level of consumption of the products and services of this system. The real danger lies in the increasing use of the tactics of this consumer advertising to market dangerous substances (tobacco and alcohol) and political figures and ideologies. This has resulted in a public that is increasingly ill-informed to make important social and political decisions on a rational basis but that is, instead, becoming more reliant on the sophisticated manipulation of images and symbols.

Propaganda and the Internet: The Power of Rumor

Since the early 1990s, the unexpected growth of the Internet has created a whole new series of difficulties regarding the spreading of rumors as a form of both deliberate and unwitting propaganda. The major problem with rumor as a means of communication is it lacks the necessary control to ensure that the message content is not distorted. As Shibutani (1966) explained,

> Content is not viewed as an object to be transmitted but as something that is shaped, reshaped, and reinforced in a succession of communicative acts. . . . In this sense a rumor may be regarded as something that is constantly being constructed; when the communicative activity ceases, the rumor no longer exists. (p. 9)

Clearly, although rumors have been a highly effective way to circulate information with amazing speed, they are not a reliable means of disseminating propaganda. This strategy may work splendidly if a rumor continues to take the direction intended, but rumors have a life of their own, and they could just as easily turn on the original propagandists. Witness the difficulties that one of the world's largest manufacturers of household products, the Procter & Gamble Company, has had fighting a rumor that its trademark of the moon and stars was, in reality, a satanic symbol. Despite the enormous sum of money the company had spent on advertising trying to create a specific public image, this rumor was widely circulated, largely by fundamentalist Christian groups and independent operators under the umbrella of another company, The Amway Corporation. Ultimately, because of its failure to halt the economic damage caused by the continuance of this rumor, the company considered going as far as changing its trademark (Kapferer, 1990). Subsequently, after several court battles, the trademark was retained, but the belief that this image, which depicts the man in the moon and stars, is satanic continues to be the source of widespread Internet rumors.

The very "democracy" and accessibility of the World Wide Web has made it the most potent force for the spreading of disinformation yet devised. Tom Dowe (1997), in an article in *Wired* magazine, one of the many publications that have sprung up to meet the public's increasing interest in and use of the Internet, pointed out,

> The Net is opening up new terrain in our collective consciousness, between old-fashioned "news" and what used to be called the grapevine—rumor, gossip, word of mouth. Call it paranews—information that looks and sounds like news, that might even be news. Or a carelessly crafted half-truth. Or the product of a

fevered . . . mind working overtime. It's up to you to figure out which. Like a finely tuned seismograph, an ever more sophisticated chain of Web links, email chains, and newsgroups is now in place to register the slightest tremor in the zeitgeist, no matter how small, distant, or far-fetched. And then deliver it straight to the desktop of anyone, anywhere. (p. 54)

The Internet is now becoming an increasingly important source of information in our society and has begun to take over the role played by traditional journalism sources. This has been particularly true in the world of politics, where the power of the Internet has begun to play a major role in not only the electoral process, but by providing an ongoing forum for the display of public opinion, it is increasingly becoming a factor in shaping how administrations create and implement policy. In many ways, the Internet has become the future nightmare that all politicians dreaded—the source of a daily referendum on their actions. Now, on a daily and sometimes even an hourly basis, the actions of politicians are scrutinized, evaluated, commented on, and either praised or ridiculed. There are continuous updates on news websites, or "blogs" (personal columns written by anyone who wishes to act as a journalist on the democratic Internet), which are avidly read by a younger generation attuned to getting their news by reading screens rather than pieces of paper. The potential for propaganda in such a climate is infinite. Anyone can spread a message, true or false, or manipulate information or even alter a picture to suit his or her own ends. The possibilities for serious mischief are enormous and have already been implemented, especially on the political scene. But corporations and individuals are also vulnerable, and there have been some serious cases of damage done to reputations as a result of false information deliberately spread on the Internet.

It is in the realm of national politics that the most obvious use of the Internet for propaganda purposes has been achieved. For example, the administration of President Bill Clinton was under continuous pressure because of information that appeared on the Internet from the time of his inauguration in 1993. The many stories, as diverse as sexual intrigue in the White House and the alleged "murder" of one of his advisers, together with unsubstantiated stories about the Clintons' financial dealings while he was governor of Arkansas, continued unabated, forcing the administration to have to deny or clarify these accusations constantly. These "facts" were presented for everyone to see, but they were usually unsubstantiated and played on the successful propaganda technique of claiming to "confirm" what people are already predisposed to believe to be the truth. The mere appearance of information on the Internet, however, no matter how inaccurate, has the potential for giving the information a degree of veracity and legitimacy, which then has to be ignored, countered, or challenged.

In more recent times, the presidential election of 2004 was in many ways dominated by charge and countercharge largely fought out on competing Internet sites and cable news shows. These two new media forms complemented each other, often with the same personnel doing the speaking and writing. But it was the Internet sites that provided the detailed background analysis, and at times, the documentation fueled the intense hostilities and personal animus that characterized this election. Senator John Kerry's war records, his personal finances, and other details of his life were placed on websites for all to see; the same was true of president George W. Bush's National Guard service records and other documentation that questioned his fitness to serve. There were many questionable (or "black propaganda") sites created that served no purpose other than to propagandize by the spreading of false information.

The election in 2008 saw an intensification of the use of the Internet, not just by the parties themselves, but by a whole host of bloggers competing for online attention. The Obama campaign, staffed as it was by a much younger group of followers, was quick to seize the upper hand in using all of the amenities afforded by the Internet to convey its message of "hope" and push its slogan of "Yes, We Can!" The McCain campaign never did manage to find a way to effectively use online techniques to convey its message, and it ultimately paid the price for not fully understanding the potential of these new social media. The elections of 2004 and 2008 served to demonstrate clearly that the Internet is now a medium that must be taken seriously in the political arena. In the 2012 election, the use of the Internet was intensified, but the new social media of Twitter, Facebook, and text messaging was introduced into the media mix. It was widely agreed that President Obama's electoral team mastered the use of these new means of message dissemination far better than the team of challenger Mitt Romney. One reliable survey indicated that Obama's campaign was posting four times as many direct digital messages as Romney's was over the same 2-week period in June 2012. As this report noted, "In 2012, in short, voters are playing an increasingly large role in helping to communicate campaign messages, while the role of the traditional news media as an authority or validator has only lessened" (Pew, 2012).

The Internet is also the repository of many urban legends, which continue to circulate years after the event and after the stories have been debunked. (See www.snopes.com for a useful source of urban legends.) One prime example of a "story that will not die" is that of TWA Flight 800, a passenger plane that exploded shortly after takeoff in July 1996, killing all 230 people on board. The mysterious circumstances surrounding this tragic flight have proved to be the fodder for an enormous and ongoing series of rumors, conjectures, and ill will circulating among the media, government

agencies, and Internet posters about the cause of the mishap. The official government report from the Federal Aviation Administration, after an exhaustive and painstaking reconstruction of the wreckage, is that an electronic spark in a faulty fuel tank was the cause of the plane exploding. Despite this report (or perhaps precisely because it was issued by an official government agency), the propaganda on the Internet continues to offer a range of alternative scenarios for what may have happened. Most prevalent among these is the claim that the plane was accidentally shot down by an errant military missile fired from a U.S. naval vessel. Numerous websites offer up pages and pages of "proof" that this is what really happened. Any attempt to refute these claims is met with skeptical responses on these websites that "the government does not want you [the general public] to know the truth."

Many other "conspiracy theories" are available to those who wish to access them by "surfing the Web." For example, if you search for "Obama birth certificate" on Google, you would receive 50,300,000 results. Similarly, a search for "9/11 conspiracy" will yield 34,100,000 results. A particularly strong antagonism exists between the traditional media organizations and these new sources of information. This is understandable, as the older media, such as newspapers and network television, achieved their success when there was less competition for the public's attention. The advent of newer information sources (e.g., cable television, the Internet) has forced the traditional media to view their news operations more as "products" that are massaged, molded, dressed up, packaged, promoted, and delivered to the consumer as finished commodities. The Internet is perceived as a threat by the mainstream media even though it has, ironically, become a major source for information for these same mass media outlets. Because the Internet operates without any clearly defined rules of journalistic ethics or the need to satisfy the drive for a large audience base as an enticement to advertisers, it functions without constraint in the relatively uncontrolled world of cyberspace. The Internet needs almost nothing in the way of capital investment in expensive electronic equipment, paper, or highly paid on-air "talent." It provides, correctly or incorrectly, instantaneous news and interpretations of the news; it is generally open to immediate public feedback, and it does not rely on "the voices of authority" so prevalent in the mainstream media (the so-called pervasive talking heads with whom we are all familiar). In cyberspace, all voices are accorded equal weight, and, in fact, the very "subversive" nature of the Internet may even diminish the "source credibility" of these usually authoritative voices. Nevertheless, as use of the Internet as the primary source for daily news grows, so has the authority and popularity of various Internet voices and sites. As an example, there are some individuals who have already managed to rise above

the crowd and author websites that have achieved a level of credibility or notoriety (Daily Kos or Perez Hilton), as well as a few "news" websites that attract a substantial readership (or "hits") every day (*The Huffington Post,* or *The Drudge Report*). *The Huffington Post* attracts 40 million unique visitors to its site every month, while *The Drudge Report* claims to have 1.9 million unique visitors on an average weekday. Currently, 79% of American adults (18 and over) use the Internet, and 55% of American adults connect to the Internet wirelessly, either through a Wi-Fi or WiMAX connection via their laptops or through their handheld device like a smartphone (Rainie, 2010). This increasing ease of access and mobility is a strong factor in the growth of the Internet as a constant source of news. It also accounts for the increasing speed with which news and rumors are spread as individuals are constantly monitoring their electronic devices, be they laptop computers, smartphones, or the latest iPad, and responding accordingly. The enormous potential for pro-pagandistic activities of the Twitter phenomenon, where millions of Web users can offer their instantaneous thoughts in cryptic messages limited to 140 characters, is only now being appreciated. This new social medium is tailor-made for the spreading of rumors.

Of course, the Internet also offers the ideal opportunity for "positive" propaganda activities. Already, we have seen the creation of an enormous number of sites that offer much-needed health information to segments of the population either unable to afford a visit to a physician or living in remote areas. Organizations such as the American Cancer Society and American Heart Association have extensive websites providing much useful information. Other sites provide information on every conceivable service, from movie starting times to contacts with local, state, and federal politi-cians. In 1998, the birth of a baby was shown live on the Internet. Although not everyone approved of this incident, many families used this opportunity to provide a sex education experience for their children. Potential uses of the Internet are limited only by people's imaginations.

More specifically, the Internet, as noted previously, offers a unique oppor-tunity to all propagandists. While access to the World Wide Web is still restricted globally (in 2012 it was estimated that 34.3% of the world's popu-lation currently had access to the Internet; see www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm), the ability to disseminate information, seemingly without a con-cern for accuracy or the potential for damage, provides the ideal means in the "deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." (See the section "Jowett and O'Donnell's Definition of Propaganda" in Chapter 1.) Websites very often offer links to other sites or

opportunities to send messages to the parties or institutions being scrutinized, a form of direct feedback. The propagandizing potential of the Internet has become so significant that new companies have been created specifically to monitor what is being said on the network for other companies, institutions, or even individuals (e.g., entertainment figures, politicians, sports figures). Another recent development are sites aimed specifically at monitoring the news for signs of either conservative or liberal bias. Thus, www.Mediamatters .org examines in minute detail comments made by commentators and politicians that are erroneous or exhibit a conservative bias; the Media Research Center at www.mediaresearch.org does the same thing on the conservative side. In the middle is a rather more objective academic site set up by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, www .factcheck.org. To get close to the truth in a highly subjective arena, one usually has to read all three of these sources.

The issue of Internet monitoring became an important one in 2012, when it was revealed that the U.S. Government, through the National Security Agency (NSA) was engaged in monitoring all telecommunications in the country as part of its antiterrorist activities. It was estimated that the NSA had built a network that could access as much as 75% of all U.S. Web traffic. In the end, we are left to ask whether the Internet poses a serious threat to the orderly dissemination of information on which a democratic form of government depends. At the moment, slightly more than 81% of the American population uses the Internet at least once in 12 months, but this number increases daily. The following table indicates how the Web is used by the average viewer.

United States: Average Weekly Web Usage

Month ending May 2010	
Sessions/visits per person	56
Domains visited per person	86
PC time per person	54:52:08
Duration of a Web page viewed	00:00:55
Active digital media universe	198,007,044
Current digital media universe estimate	236,513,000

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Social media has also begun to dramatically alter the way in which we use other media. In particular, television watching is no longer a solitary activity. As the Nielsen Report notes,

> The skyrocketing adoption and use of social media among consumers is transforming TV-watching into a more immediate and shared experience. As of June 2012, more than 33 percent of Twitter users had actively tweeted about TV-related content. Some 44 percent of U.S. tablet owners and 38 percent of U.S. smartphone owners use their devices daily to access social media while watching television. In the Latin America region, more than 50 percent of consumers say they interact with social media while watching TV; in the Middle East / Africa region, more than 60 percent do. From global events like the Summer Olympics, to regional events like the Presidential debates in the U.S., consumers around the world used social media to engage with everyone from close friends to complete strangers, revolutionizing the television viewing experience. (Copyrighted information of The Nielson Company, licensed for use herein; 2012, p. 2)

The implications for such "interactive" use are important, as they provide a greater sense of a "shared community" in the audience. This in turn could lead to the formation of "publics" sharing information, discussions, and potentially collective action. This makes it possible for a disparate audience, tweeting their reactions to a vast network to the images they are all watching in real time, to agree to some form of collective action. This is what has happened in many countries as large crowds have gathered in response to such shared viewing and messaging. For example, the images of the Egyptian army dispersing members of the Muslim Brotherhood in August 2013, resulted in even larger crowds assembling in protest. In this specific case the results were negative and ended in even more violence. There are many examples where social media have been used to mobilize crowds, but with limited success. The availability of a viable social media network, however vast, is no guarantee that collective assembly and protest will succeed. A United Nations Report on this subject clearly states the complex set of circumstances required for such movements to be successful:

> **July 2009** - The global economic crisis has produced many predictions of mass mobilization in both Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. Yet, sustained mass mobilization has not materialized. Simply put, there are other political opportunity issues at stake when predicting mass-mobilization.
>
> Even a severe economic downturn in a country with average levels of trust, government support, and no internal political crises will not automatically trigger mass-mobilization of "ordinary people." However, severe economic downturns can compound existing crises and thus, the deeper the

crisis on both political and socio-economic terms, the higher the probability that mobilization will go beyond activists and opposition and acquire a mass character. (Onuch, 2009)

The use of social media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement for many Americans. Some 60% of American adults use either social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter and a new survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project finds that 66% of those social media users—or 39% of all American adults—have done at least one of eight civic or political activities with social media. From a propaganda (or persuasion) perspective it is interesting to note that 31% of social media users have used the tools to encourage other people to take action on a political or social issue that is important to them. Some 36% of social-media-using Democrats have done this as have 34% of Republicans. This compares to 29% of independents who are social media users (Pew, 2012).

All attempts to establish workable "controls" over the Internet, and social media have met with public and legal resistance, and the highest courts in the land have declared the new forms of communication to be well protected under the constitutional definition of free speech. These are a media now in their adolescence, but they have already indicated enormous potential power as propagandizing vehicles. They have demonstrated that they can play an important if relatively uncontrollable role in the electoral process, but as politicians and other professional "image manipulators" become more proficient in their use, we can expect them to become an integral and essential part of any modern propaganda campaign. Clearly, the Internet and the social media as they grow in sophistication and accessibility will bear close scrutiny because of their potential as a propaganda instruments in which sources can be disguised and deliberate disinformation spread with impunity.

In this chapter, we examined the way propaganda has gradually become institutionalized as a major factor of modern life. The emergence of the mass media in the 19th century afforded an opportunity for the spreading of messages over vast distances, to large audiences, and in less time than ever before. These new innovations in information dissemination were extremely useful to a wide range of institutions wishing to propagandize their messages, and each major media form was quickly adapted to this function. Thus, newspapers, movies, radio, and television have all been, and continue to be, used for the dissemination of propaganda, and advertising is now the most prevalent form of propaganda in our society. Finally, we examined how the Internet and social media have become an integral aspect of modern society and potentially potent propaganda tools.