Propaganda and the American Military Establishment:
How Television Influences Attitudes, Behaviours and Perceptions

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"Selling the war in the Middle East to the American people would not be easy. [George H.W.] Bush would need to convince Americans that former ally Saddam Hussein now embodied evil, and that the oil fiefdom of Kuwait was a struggling young democracy."

(Stauber & Rampton, 2004, p.168)

The scenario described above has been present to varying degrees in all contemporary, non-covert, military operations, including the contemporary War on Terror. This strategy of "winning the hearts and minds" is imperative, both at home and abroad, for the success of military operations (Clausewitz, 1976, p.89; as well as Stubbs, 2008).

Following the events of 9/11, the Bush Administration launched the Global War on Terror. Abroad, U.S. Forces aggressively pursued alleged terrorist organizations and supporters in Central Asia and the Middle East – beginning with Afghanistan and Iraq. These military operations coincided with a rise in anti-privacy legislation and government surveillance operations at home – see, for example, the Combating Terrorism Act, the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act), the Cyber Security Enhancement Act, Operation Terrorist Information and Prevention System, and the Total Information Awareness (TIA) tracking system – as well as a resurgence of wartime propaganda. News programs and television series covered the Global War on Terror in both domestic and international settings, bombarding the American public with images of war in the form of information and entertainment. Media thus performed a propagandistic function: limiting, censoring, and presenting war content in both fiction and non-fiction programs.

The purpose of this paper is to examine propaganda, in particular wartime propaganda, in a post-9/11 context in order to understand the complex role that television plays as a tool of social control and mass persuasion. In doing so, this paper begins with an in-depth study of propaganda which explores the target audience and scope of propagandistic campaigns, the functions and objectives of propaganda, and, finally, the techniques and features employed in such campaigns. In order to distinguish between propaganda and other forms of promotional discourse, a discussion on the ethics of propaganda is conducted.

After establishing a solid definition of the concept and techniques of propaganda, it is further examined in the context of wartime operations. An emphasis is placed upon the techniques and objectives of wartime communication campaigns in order to determine how war propaganda can be employed to influence attitudes and beliefs. In doing so, this paper will also explore how ideologies and values can be employed to promote particular agendas.

Finally, a case study focusing on the television series *24* is conducted to illustrate how patriotic and idealistic images can be used to mobilize support for the American military establishment and its strategic operations, including the acceptance of morally questionable conduct. This case study demonstrates the influential role that television can play in the context of wartime operations by encouraging support for the military and law enforcement agencies.

Ultimately, this paper strives to develop a nuanced understanding of wartime propaganda and the role that television – as well as others forms of media – can play in shaping culture and values in society. This paper does not suggest or endorse Orwellian-esque conspiracy theories of thought- and mind-control, but rather endeavours to examine and illustrate the more limited, yet nevertheless important, issue of how television can be employed by vested interests to promote particular agendas.

Examining Propaganda

The concept of propaganda is difficult to define. It is most commonly referred to in negative terms – as a tool for spreading false information and deceiving its audiences. Often, it is associated with military operations, training exercises, and wars (see, for example, Wolfgram, 2008; Ottosen, 2009; as well as Nohrstedt et al., 2000). In reality, the concept of propaganda first emerged in 1622, when the Roman Catholic Church was attempting to broaden the reach of its religious doctrine, and only became associated with deception and nefarious purposes following the First World War (Corner, 2007, p.670). This can be attributed to the fact that WWI was the first total war fought by Western nations. As such, a need to identify and stigmatize 'the enemy' existed and propaganda was therefore employed to ignite popular support for military operations on the home front of the warring nations.

Propaganda, at its core, is a form of mass communication. Its target audience is usually a large segment of a specified population, which can be defined in any singular or combination of global, national, or local terms. Global propaganda campaigns have been identified primarily in the context of war propaganda. This is a result of the extensive and increasing reach of both mediums of communications and the techniques employed in such scenarios. These campaigns can be transmitted to not only the home warring nation and its allies, but also to the countries in which the military operations are taking place. This transnational phenomenon has been observed by Wolfgram (2008) in his study of news coverage of the Kosovo conflict in 1998 and 1999 as well as by Winseck (2008) and Snow & Taylor (2006) in their respective studies of information operations during the Global War on Terror.

National examples of propaganda campaigns may be difficult to distinguish from international campaigns. Although the target audience of a campaign may be a particular nation-state, the rise of the contemporary information society and the increasingly globalized nature of media consumption have made it possible for audiences to gain access to specific nationalistic

messages. With this in mind, it remains possible to categorize instances of propaganda as a nationally targeted campaign. In their efforts to provide citizens with information about new or existing policies and programs, democratic governments engage in national propaganda campaigns to disseminate this information. A contemporary example of such campaigns may be found if one examines the Government of Canada's information efforts surrounding the Canadian H1N1 pandemic. Democratic governments utilize traditional and non-traditional communication mechanisms in their campaigns, including news releases, speeches, media advisories, social networking websites and Podcasts. In these instances, it may be difficult to distinguish between the content of messages that originated with non-partisan federal departments, as an example, and the politically-appointed Ministers responsible for them.

Local campaigns often target a particular community, region, or neighbourhood. Lowes (2002, p.58-91) illustrates a campaign launched by Molson Indy Vancouver to encourage the Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood to endorse the use of its park as the new location of the annual event and therefore to incorporate it into the park redevelopment plans. Stauber & Rampton (2004) also provide numerous examples of locally targeted propaganda campaigns including nuclear waste sensitivity and relocation campaigns in the United States (see, in particular, Chapter Eight: The Sludge Hits the Fan, p.99-122).

The Functions and Objectives of Propaganda

Propaganda functions as a form of promotional discourse, wherein it acts simultaneously as a source of information and as a tool of mass persuasion. As a promotional discourse, propaganda is employed to influence audiences and persuade them that the information and point of view presented in a particular campaign is both correct and just.

It is in this context, as a tool of mass persuasion, that propaganda is often referred to in negative, contemptuous terms. As an example, Stauber & Rampton (2004) examine numerous incidences of propaganda illustrating how it functions to undermine the public sphere, discourage whistleblowers, and co-opt grassroots community-led movements. They provide examples of organizations and business associations which superficially defend the rights of American citizens and appear to engage in socially responsible commercial practices, but are in fact working against these very ideals. These entities include the Global Climate Coalition – which lobbies against environmental protection – and the Coalition for Vehicle Choice – which lobbies against emission-control regulations for automobile manufacturers. Stauber & Rampton (2004) highlight the rise of such corporate front groups which give the impression of being community organizations, and the propaganda techniques which they employ in support of Big Business and other powerful, wealthy, vested interests.

Stauber & Rampton are not alone when they acknowledge propaganda as both deliberate and manipulative. Jowett & O'Donnell (as cited in Corner, 2007) define propaganda as "the deliberate and systemic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a [desired] response (p.671). Zilboorg (1938) and Rosten (1947) provide further context to this definition, arguing that such attempts to influence attitudes and behaviour must be conducted through nonviolent methods. These classifications, however, fail to distinguish between propaganda, advertising, public relations, and other forms of promotional discourse – which are also deliberate and utilized to manipulate the attitudes and behaviours of

its audiences. This notion of manipulating and influencing attitudes and behaviours is an important one, which will be revisited throughout this paper.

Some attempts to differentiate between propaganda and other forms of promotional discourse have argued that propaganda attempts to influence attitudes on controversial issues. Lasswell (as cited in Rosten, 1947) states that propaganda attempts to "influence mass attitudes on controversial subjects by the use of symbols..." (p.118). Yet, this argument fails to acknowledge two contingencies. First, that the notion of controversy is a subjective one, and, second, that other forms of promotional discourse – including advertising, social marketing, and even public relations – also attempt to influence attitudes on subjects such as smoking, drunk driving, women's reproductive health, and foreign policy, all of which could be considered to be controversial.

Catlin (1935) calls attention to a second function of propaganda: education. He legitimizes the use of propaganda as tool of openness and accountability, arguing that it can be used by democratic governments to provide information about its policies. He further notes that, in a democracy, all persons are entitled to present their opinions, views and policies (p.221). In doing so, Catlin also legitimatizes the use of propaganda by political parties and lobby groups, for, from this perspective, they are merely presenting information about their points of view. Although this argument blurs the line between information and persuasion, it demonstrates how propaganda – and other forms of promotional discourse – can easily perform these two functions simultaneously.

Constitutive Features and Techniques of Propaganda

In order to distinguish between propaganda and other forms of promotional discourse, it will be necessary to move beyond its functions and examine its constitutive features. Many features of and techniques employed in propaganda also overlap with those of other forms of promotional discourse. As an example, these include: selecting and maintaining a target audience; using visual, linguistic, and auditory signals; creating a relationship or rapport between the audience and the campaign; building and maintaining source credibility; repeating the campaign message across different mediums with slight variation; and, employing emotional and rational appeals to the audience.

Of these numerous techniques and features, selecting and maintaining a target audience, using any singular or combination of visual, linguistic, or auditory signals and vehicles, and employing both emotional and rational appeals establish the foundation upon which any communications campaign is based. It is important to recognize, however, that successful promotional discourses are those which can be recalled and identified as plausible. This is achieved through repetition and the use of techniques which promote credibility. Doob & Robinson (1935) acknowledge that these techniques are well known by propagandists themselves. They state that "[the propagandist] knows that if he repeats his stimuli sufficiently often, eventually more and more people will begin to notice his existence" (p.90). Repetition not only increases the likelihood of campaign exposure, but also functions to reinforce the message presented. They also illustrate the need to vary the campaign slightly in order to "furnish additional intellectual and emotional reasons for the beliefs that have now come to exist" as a result of the campaign (Doob & Robinson, 1935, p.92).

Credibility can be demonstrated through the use of various indicators, such as referencing authority figures and the availability of supporting evidence. Doob & Robinson (1935) recognize the use of prominent people as instruments of propaganda. This is further elaborated on by Sculman & Worrall (1970) who found that "source characteristics may be used only in determining [...] whether or not the content of the communication should be taken at face value" (p. 382). They found this to be particularly so when a source was perceived as 'credible' – as trustworthy, as reliable, or in a position of authority. As an example, Colgate Total advertisements are traditionally located in a dentist's office and often feature an actor wearing a lab coat. This advertisement implies that dentists, who are perceived as a trustworthy and reliable source of information on dental hygiene, use Colgate Total on their patients and it, therefore, must the best toothpaste for consumers to use.

As well, Wolfgram (2008) and White (1971) call attention to the importance of the appearance of accurate and credible information demonstrated through the use of multiple sources of information. In his study on the reporting of the Kosovo Conflict of 1998 and 1999, Wolfgram (2008) examined over 100 newspaper articles, drawing two primary conclusions. First, that journalists relied heavily on government sources for their information about the conflict, and that, in turn, governments often cited media accounts of the conflict as a source of independent confirmation. Second, that reports and information were often reprinted in numerous newspapers, without citation, thus creating the illusion of multiple sources. Wolfgram (2008) highlights the implications of his findings when he states that "even a responsible and critical reader of multiple media sources would have encountered the same story over and over again" (p.164). He calls attention to the manner in which misinformation functions to influence the academic world and therefore independent studies conducted on the military operation. This is significant because the illusion of independent confirmation by multiple sources increases not only the likelihood of message exposure, but also the extent to which the information is believed to be a substantiate account of the conflict.

Credibility and other features of propaganda, including repetition, are therefore employed to strengthen the point of view that is being put forward in a particular campaign. These, and other, constitutive features of propaganda will be discussed in further detail during the case study of the television series *24* in order to determine if the program can be classified as both a form of promotional discourse and as propaganda.

Ethics, Morality and Propaganda

If the techniques, features, and objectives of propaganda are virtually indistinguishable from those employed in other forms of promotional discourse such as advertising, social marketing, or public relations, what then differentiates propaganda? The answer to this question lies in the realm of morality and ethics. White (1971) calls attention to this when he acknowledges that "the core meaning of propaganda has become so overlaid with connotations of moral evil that one can hardly use it except in a context of disapproval (p.27). As propaganda is most commonly associated with deceit, dishonesty and falsehood, it must therefore involve the use of morally questionable practices.

White (1971) and Corner (2007) identified these practices as: lying, or fabricating and circulating false information; innuendo, or implying accusations; presenting opinion as fact;

exaggeration or stretching the truth; and, censorship or withholding and deliberately omitting information – in particular, information that is contradictory to the campaign. Although these practices have been identified as morally questionable, White (1971) raises the issue of legitimacy and urgency. He notes that there is legitimate controversy regarding the use of morally questionable techniques in instances where "the goal of persuasion [is perceived to be] urgent enough [that] even 'questionable' methods – short of outright lying – are justified" (p. 28). White fails to acknowledge, however, the subjective nature of this dilemma. Definitions of "morally questionable" versus "morally wrong" would vary from person to person, or from culture to culture, and, as a result, so would notions of justification and urgency.

Interestingly, White (1971) separates "outright lying" from other morally questionable techniques of propaganda, thus suggesting that it is amoral. I call attention to this distinction merely to suggest that all forms of morally questionable techniques identified by White and Corner could be viewed as a subcategory or form of lying. As an example, deliberately omitting information – especially information that is contradictory to a particular campaign – could be viewed as lying to both oneself and to others. In his discussion of the conduct of U.S. Soldier during the Vietnam War, White (1971) illustrates such an occurrence when he states that "atrocities on the anti-communist side, including the torture of prisoners, were underplayed at least until the Mylai incident was fully publicized in 1971" (p.33). Such instances of omission have been echoed during the contemporary War on Terror with regards to Abu Ghraib and, more recently, emerging reports of the torture of Afghan detainees who were transferred by Canadian Forces to Afghan authorities.

War Propaganda

Propaganda is employed during times of war or military engagement for many reasons. As an example, it can be used to create support for a particular mission, promote strong negative emotional responses to notions of the 'enemy', and encourage military enrolment in a particular warring nation. Ottosen (2009) illustrates this when he calls attention to the manner in which computer and video games have been used as both an instrument of recruitment – through the use of modeling and simulation technology in games – and "as a tool in the global battle for hearts and minds" – for the content of the games reflects particular vested interests (p.123). Andersen (2005) also highlights how video games and flight simulators function as both training apparatuses for the military and vehicles of entertainment (p.357). In doing so, she emphasizes the partnership that exists between the two sectors.

This partnership is not a recent development, but rather the most recent phase in the evolution of the military-industrial complex. In his 1960 speech on the military-industrial complex, then-President and former General Dwight D. Eisenhower argued that "the alliance between the arms industry, the armed forces, and influential segments of the political elite represented a threat to democracy" (as cited in Ottosen, 2009, p.122). In the current, post-9/11 environment, the threat posed by the military-industrial complex identified by Eisenhower has been augmented and superseded by an emerging partnership between the military-industrial-complex and the media – for much of the media is in fact owned by the political elite – which has resulted in the rise of the military-information-media-entertainment complex.

It is in this context that the American military establishment functions as a primary of resource for media outlets. The materiel and equipment that is used in films is often the property of the United States Military, and, as well, the financial support for the research and development of warfare video games is often the result of a partnership between private companies and this institution. As such, the American military establishment often retains a certain level of power over the finished product. Projects may be and often are screened at various times throughout the production and post-production process, resulting in a pressure for the content to conform to the interests of the military. Winseck (2008) illustrates some of the military-friendly policies promoted in Hollywood referencing official sources from the Department of Defense. He notes that branches of the DoD maintain "offices in Los Angeles to make it easy to make 'military-friendly' movies and television shows. The offices offer access to resources in return for content that supports national interests, recruitment and retention policies, and a favourable image of the US at home and abroad" (p.426). Winseck (2008) also highlights that these offices offer scriptwriting and technical assistance, but that "scripts must be approved and arrangements made for 'an official DoD screening in Washington, DC, before... public release" (p.426). This screening is done to ensure that film and television content is consistent with the interests of the DoD and to create an opportunity for military officials to demand changes if it is not. This system may ultimately result in not only institutional censorship, but also in self-censorship on the part of media producers in order to maintain a favourable image of the American military which in turn ensures material and economic support from this institution. Ideological censorship therefore occurs at a self-censorship level in that some cinematographers will instinctively avoid particular subjects or issues to maintain institutional support (Metz, 1968, p.23).

A second form of censorship that has been present in wartime propaganda exists in terms of the uniformity of information that is reported back to the home front of warring nations via news outlets. In his study of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) war in Kosovo, Wolfgram (2008) found that newspaper articles were repeated in multiple sources without citation thus creating the illusion of credibility. As well, Nohrstedt et al. (2000) concluded that the discourse conveyed in news media during the Kosovo conflict by four countries – Greece, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom – was contingent upon particular national or local interests. Each perspective of a conflict, then, relies on its news media to frame propaganda according to its national and local interests as determined by the political elite and therefore omit contradictory information.

In times of war, propaganda ultimately functions to provide justification for military operations and tactics. Following 9/11, the Bush Administration framed the Global War on Terror as a war for national survival (Snow and Taylor, 2006, p.397). In their discussion on the rise of disinformation tactics employed to deliberately mislead, Snow & Taylor (2006) note that "in a war of national survival – whether that war is real or imagined – all weapons are considered usable (except perhaps nuclear weapons) by democracies" (p.398). This suggests that war in turn justifies and legitimizes the use of morally questionable propaganda techniques such as deception. Information Operations thus became an essential element modern, post-9/11 warfare. Winseck (2008) describes information operations as "surveillance, control and destruction of communications networks, psychological warfare and propaganda, and more routine methods of public affairs and media relations" (p.419). What is particularly relevant for this paper are the latter two methods identified by Winseck, for they function as tools of soft power – "a means by

which a nation projects itself in an attractive manner, where its values and principles are subsequently desired by others because they are perceived to be universal" (Joseph Nye as cited in Snow & Taylor, 2006, p.395). It is through this dissemination of Western, and in particular American, ideology that the Bush Administration had hoped to win the hearts and minds of the Middle Eastern people. Instead, the hearts and minds of Americans were won in this manner, perhaps unintentionally, thereby reaffirming their support for the war effort. Winseck (2008) identifies this phenomenon as information operations 'blowback' wherein, as a result of the increasingly globalized nature of communication, campaigns targeted abroad spill over to American audiences.

Modern warfare then includes both military and media operations. Media wars, not unlike physical wars, divide the conflicting parties into two categories: good versus evil. This creates a dynamic where, from both perspectives of the conflict, "you're either with us or against us." This suggests that, propaganda during times of war invokes moral values of right and wrong, as well as notions of good versus evil. In his study of the values of war propaganda, Eckhardt (1965) found that such values were embodied in attitudes and beliefs which emphasized that "one's own nation was believed to be on the side of moral values, especially those of peace and freedom" (p.357). In doing so, wartime propaganda discourse "[denounces] opposing nations [...] as enemies of these values" and endorses any means of military aggression employed to implement such values in these newly occupied nations (Eckhardt, 1965, p.357).

The use of carefully and strategically selected discourse in wartime propaganda is a mechanism for emphasizing moral values. As an example, the discourse employed by proponents of the War on Terror positions Western nations in opposition to those of the Middle East. This is done through the use of particular discourse and terminology, such as the Axis of Evil. Similar terminology was used in the Second World War to refer to Nazi Germany and its allies, but also to confuse and frighten society into action. Taylor (2003) calls attention to this use of historically-significant and emotional appeals when he states that speechwriters for the Bush Administration "had deliberately chosen the phrase [Axis of Evil] to evoke memories of World War II when the Allies battled the German-Italian-Japanese axis" (p.73).

Wartime propaganda therefore combines several oppositional ideologies into a single major threat, which is often expressed using a simple slogan to facilitate recollection and association. It creates a self-other dichotomy, wherein two or more parties are placed in conflict with each other. It also suppresses information and points of view that are contradictory to those of the political elite. And, as noted by Zilboorg (1938), war propaganda is most effective "if events 'strike home,' [for that is] when fear and hatred come as natural reactions to an increasing sense of insecurity" and that is when a desire for and retribution often clouds the judgement of individuals and groups (p.122). As these strong emotions undermine the importance of objectivity and credibility, they eliminate the need to seek out dissenting information about a conflict and the retaliatory actions which should be taken. They also serve to reinforce existing ideologies and stigmatize all ideas that may differ.

Influencing Attitudes and Behaviours Through Propaganda

Propaganda is used to strengthen particular world views and ideologies. It is also driven by specific vested and ideological interests. The definition of ideology is one that is often taken for

granted and is often discussed from a particular perspective. As an example, much literature has been written on the concept of political ideologies – such as conservatism or liberalism – but then fails to define ideology outside of the realm of politics. For the purpose of this paper, a deeper understanding of ideology is required in order to explore how ideologically-driven propaganda influences, and shapes, attitudes and behaviours.

Ideology, in its simplest form, refers to a system of interrelated thoughts and ideas. Social psychologist L. B. Brown (1973) posits that ideology is formed by attitudes and beliefs which are acquired through the processes of learning and socialization. The constitutive features of ideology include not only attitudes and beliefs, but also values and culture, rituals and myths, symbols and images. In fact, Aronoff (1980) highlights how these features overlap when he notes that ideology refers to "an ordered system of cultural symbols" (p.10). He calls attention to the use of summarizing symbols in ideology, which include emotionally powerful objects such as a flag. Doob & Robinson (1935) have also called attention to the use of such symbols in propaganda. As an example, they argue that "a flag, a quotation from the Bible, an authority, a sentimental reference to the glorious past – these are some of the typical values which help propaganda" (p.91). The constitutive features of ideology, including symbols, can be communicated through and shaped by many forums, including by previous experience, social and authoritative influence, social interactions, and through "the materials of popular culture" (Brown, 1973, p.12). Ideologies ultimately convey notions of normalcy, and, once in place, can shape both social and individual behaviour.

Ideologies have been employed to perform a variety of functions, including that of reaffirming existing notions of normalcy. Gardner (2008, p.17) draws attention to this in his discussion of the process of confirmation bias. That is, a person who holds a specific ideology will likely censor the information that he receives, the activities in which he engages, and the groups with which he associates himself in order to ensure that his beliefs remain unquestioned and, therefore, perceived as correct. An ideology, then, legitimizes and naturalizes the attitudes and beliefs of which they comprised. Jost et al. (2005) argue that stereotypes are the result of this system-justifying ideological process. For, "stereotypes serve to justify 'actions, committed or planned, against outgroups' and to increase 'positive differentiation of the ingroup from selected outgroups" as well as "to maintain ideological support for the prevailing social system by justifying and rationalizing inequality" (Jost et al., 2005, p.306). Brown (1973) also recognizes this influential role of stereotypes in shaping responses to other or alien societies, cultures, and ideas.

An example of the effects of stereotypes in shaping responses to societies, cultures, and ideas can be found in an examination of the representation of Arabs in Western media. Shaheen (2003) conducted an extensive study of more than 900 films, and found that Arabs are most often demonized and depicted in a xenophobic manner. He describes Arabs as the "cultural other" in films, and calls attention to the use of enemy management and stereotyping techniques to represent Arab persons as "Public Enemy #1" (p.172). Shaheen notes only a handful of Hollywood films, produced mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, which depict Arabs in a heroic or more favourable manner. Arabs are traditionally portrayed as villains – as murderers, rapists, and religious fanatics. As well, he calls attention to "a dangerously generalized portrayal of Arabs as rabidly anti-American" and highlights more than fourteen films which credit the Department of

Defense for their assistance in these projects thus suggesting that "the Pentagon seems to condone these Arab-bashing ventures" (Shaheen, 2003, p.177).

Such a representation of Arabs in Western entertainment media parallels a similar vilification of Serbs in news media leading up to and during the Kosovo conflict. Brdar & Vukovic (2006) call attention to the rise of anti-Serbian discourse which, as an example, compared Slobodan Milosevic to Adolf Hitler (p.435). In support of this argument, they make reference to allegations of the existence of mass graves containing the bodies of 350 Albanians thought to have resulted from Serbian ethnic cleansing operations that was reported in *The Washington Post* in 1999 (p.437). These allegations were later determined to be false. The term 'Serb' nevertheless became a contemporary embodiment of evil and genocide which, in turn, justified the use of force by NATO during the conflict.

The repetition of stereotypes – be they of Serbs, Arabs, or other groups – in media functions to create and reinforce such attitudes both on- and off-screen. Stereotypes strengthen a particular ideology in that they reaffirm the self-other dichotomy present in war propaganda. It is, therefore, through the use of stereotypes that audiences of propaganda are able to easily differentiate between themselves and others – the heroes and the enemies. Such stereotypes are often portrayed from the perspective of heroic individuals, thus presenting a singular perspective of a conflict.

It is especially true that, in the context of war, no single representation of a conflict offers an objective account. Rather, each account is shaped by particular vested interests. This is noticeable in what Gates (2005) refers to as the new Hollywood. Gates calls attention to how contemporary war films focus on individualistic moral choices and self-sacrifice rather than fostering debate on the morality and politics of the military operation in question (p.302). She highlights this phenomenon in films such as *Saving Private Ryan, Black Hawk Down,* and *Pearl Harbour*, wherein "...U.S. military intervention [is no longer] questionable, because the grunts that put their lives on the line for their country are fighting for the 'right' reason" (p.302). Ultimately, contemporary films succeed in eliminating the need for debate on the ethics, implications, and conduct of wartime operations insofar as these debates are superseded – and undermined – by invocations of patriotism and idealism. The individuals who sacrifice their lives and well-being in order to protect and promote the democratic values of peace, freedom, and security become the focus of contemporary films, and these individuals in turn become idolized both on-screen and off as the ideal and all-American hero.

24: A Case Study on Mobilizing Support for the American Military Establishment

For the purpose of this paper, the seventh season of the television series *24* has been selected as a case study to illustrate how television can be employed to perform a propaganda function in times of war and, in doing so, how the use patriotic and idealistic images can be used to mobilize support for the American military establishment and its strategic operations. This particular season of the series has been selected because it is the most recent season of the program that has completed airing. It was broadcast from January 11th to May 18th, 2009 in Canada and the United States.

In order to determine if the seventh season of *24* performs a propaganda function – in particular, a wartime propaganda function – the series will be examined according to the sections laid out in this paper. In doing so, five questions will be addressed:

1) Does the series perform the functions and fulfill the objectives of propaganda?

2) Are the constitutive features and techniques of propaganda present in *24*?

3) Does the series utilize morally questionable practices to convey its messages?

4) Do the messages communicated through the series qualify as war propaganda? And,

5) Does the series present a particular ideology, using stereotypes and patriotic images, which functions to eliminate the need for a debate on the politics of war and, instead, idolizes self-sacrificing, heroic ideals?

Prior to addressing the five questions outlined above, a brief synopsis of the seventh season of *24* will be provided for informational purposes. The seventh season begins at 8:00am with former Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) agent Jack Bauer appearing before a Senate Committee investigating the use extreme interrogation techniques by CTU agents during the course of their previous operations. He is called out of the hearing by FBI agent Renee Walker who informs him of an imminent national security threat and requests his assistance to prevent it from occurring. Bauer is subsequently informed that the threat is being orchestrated by another former CTU agent, Tony Almeida – who was believed to be deceased.

Upon apprehending and interrogating Almeida, Bauer is given a CTU emergency phone code. Two characters and former CTU agents are reintroduced – Bill Buchanan and Chloe O'Brian – and Jack is informed that Almeida, O'Brian, and Buchanan are working a covert operation to uncover widespread corruption in all levels of the Government, including the President's administration. Bauer, Buchanan, O'Brian, and Almeida work to uncover this conspiracy, enlisting the assistance of FBI agent Renee Walker. Although General Juma, the dictator of Sangala – an African country whose people have been subjected to genocide under his rule – is believed to be behind the threats, it is later learned that it is in fact an American private military company which is responsible.

In exchange for the testing of a weaponized nerve gas in Sangala, the private military company Starkwood funded the Juma regime. This weapon is brought to Washington and used to threaten American citizens in an attempt to coerce to the President to grant Starkwood immunity and decision-making power as an executive branch of the military. Another conspiracy involving multiple unnamed private associations is exposed, and Bauer thwarts a final threat to the people of Washington. Season 7 ends with Jack Bauer in a coma, having been exposed to the nerve gas.[i] Season 8, however, begins in January 2010.

Ultimately, two themes underpin the seventh season of the television series *24*. First is a question of morality and ethics, surrounding a debate about the justification of the employment of morally questionable practices during times of war and crises of national security. Second is the notion that military operations and agencies which lack government oversight pose a larger

threat to national security than enemies abroad. Both messages function to further reinforce the role of and need for Jack Bauer and government agencies such as the Counter Terrorism Unit.

Although the synopsis provides a general overview of Season seven of the television series *24*, further details and examples will be used below in addressing the five questions previously outlined in this paper to illustrate how the fictional program performs a propagandistic function.

Q1) Does the series perform the functions and fulfill the objectives of propaganda?

Propaganda is a form of mass communication which targets large segments of a specified population. It acts simultaneously as a tool of mass persuasion and as a source of information. Propaganda is a deliberate attempt to influence attitudes, perception and behaviours through nonviolent methods.

Any television program, irrespective of genre or whether it is a non-fiction or fiction program, functions as a form of mass communication. The target audience will vary from program to program and from network to network, but will reach many segments of the population both within a particular nation and abroad. Television, like many forms of communication, may be employed by powerful vested interests to inform about a particular point of view. It may also be used to persuade audiences that a particular perspective or ideology is more accurate or more correct then others. In doing so, television and all television programming may be classified as a deliberate attempt to influence attitudes, perceptions and behaviours through nonviolent methods. Furthermore, although many characters of the series *24* resort to violence to achieve their particular objective, the medium of a televised fictional program should still be considered to be a nonviolent method of communication.

Q2) Are the constitutive features and techniques of propaganda present in *24*?

The constitutive features and techniques of propaganda, as outlined in this paper, include: selecting and maintaining a target audience; using visual, linguistic, and auditory signals; creating a relationship or rapport between the audience and the campaign; building and maintaining source credibility; repeating the campaign message across different mediums with slight variation; and, employing emotional and rational appeals to the audience. Source credibility and repetition are used to strengthen the point of view presented in a particular campaign. These two techniques have been identified as significant tools for message exposure and reinforcement.

Season seven of the television series *24* employs all of the constitutive features and techniques of propaganda. Each television program has a specific target audience, and *24* is no exception. The finale of the seventh season of *24* attracted over 20 million viewers, and the season averaged 11.6 million viewers per episode (Wiki 24)[ii]. It can therefore be argued that the series has successfully maintained a target audience. The fact that the series acquires a substantial viewing audience also suggests the existence of a relationship between the audience and its characters – for, in the case of fictional television programming, it is the characters who represent the communications campaign.

24 employs many visual, linguistic, and auditory signals to communicate its message. Most notably, the series is recognized for its use of the ticking clock. Each season of the series takes place over twenty-four hours, and each episode represents one hour of time in the day. Episodes open and close with the image and sound of the ticking clock, thus providing a visual and auditory clue that an episode is either about to begin or that the hour has been completed. The clock also continues counting down throughout the commercial breaks, insofar as the viewer is privy to approximately 42 minutes of footage for each hour that takes place. The clock imposes a sense of urgency on both the characters and the viewers. It can be argued to provide a justification for the actions that are being taken on-screen by the characters.

In his discussion on morally questionable techniques of propaganda, White (1971) called attention to the issue of urgency suggesting that it could employed to function as a justification for morally questionable techniques if the objective of these techniques was deemed to be sufficiently urgent. In the context of *24*, Jack Bauer is fighting against not only terrorism, but also the clock. As there is a fixed amount of time in each season and within each episode, Bauer's actions become justified as necessary to avoid an unfavourable outcome – usually the loss of many innocent lives. This notion of justification is reiterated throughout the series by many characters, including the protagonist himself. As an example, White House Chief of Staff Ethan Canin explains the rationale for granting Bauer a Presidential pardon for his previous actions as a Counter Terrorism Unit agent in a discussion with Senator Mayer – who is leading the Senate Committee investigation of CTU. Canin states that, "Jack Bauer saved lives today, plain and simple, including [the President's] husband." (7.10). In doing so, Canin emphasizes that extreme situations require extreme solutions, and, implicitly, acknowledges that Bauer's actions are necessary, and justifiable to protect innocent lives.

Source credibility is present in the seventh season of *24*, but it was not established only in this season. Jack Bauer functions as a source of credible information in predicting and preventing terrorist attacks. For the audience, this is the result of the cumulative success of Bauer over the course of the six previous seasons. Chloe O'Brian, a CTU agent who has worked with Bauer since the third season of the series, exemplifies this by defending his actions during a conversation with FBI agent Larry Moss, stating that "Jack Bauer is the most honourable, trustworthy man I know" (7.9). Bauer's years of service are also referenced by President Taylor, who notes that "[he] has served [officially] under 3 Presidents" not including herself, suggesting that his experience as a CTU agent and his close relationship with previous Presidents imbue Bauer as trustworthy and reliable. White House Chief of Staff Ethan Canin further emphasizes Bauer's credibility and experience when he states "If Bauer says there is going to be an attack, I believe there is going to be an attack" (7.10).

During the seventh season of *24* two messages are repeated through different characters with slight variation. The first message suggests that, during times of war and national crises, morally questionable interrogation techniques may be justifiable. This then functions to reinforce the second message, which is that granting authority to the government, anti-terrorism agencies, and the military is the sole manner in which one can prevent a terrorist attack. Morally questionable interrogation techniques are justified through the actions of the protagonist. In doing so, this reinforces the credibility and importance of government agencies.

Finally, the series employs both emotional and rational appeals in communicating its message to the audience. It relies on the use of summarizing symbols to evoke emotions such as fear and sympathy. An example of this includes focusing of the American flag after a terrorist attack successfully collides two planes in view of the White House, resulting in high civilian casualties. The seventh season of 24 re-presents specific American post-9/11 fears through the use of images of exploding planes as well as the notion that a terrorist could gain control of air traffic control. In doing so, the series endorses post-9/11 notions of good versus evil and, in turn, justifies the use of morally questionable techniques to eliminate further attacks.

Q3) Does the series utilize morally questionable practices to convey its message?

Morally questionable practices of propaganda have been identified as: lying, or fabricating and circulating false information; innuendo, or implying accusations; presenting opinion as fact; exaggeration, or stretching the truth; and, censorship, or withholding and deliberately omitting information. It is important to note that there exists legitimate controversy regarding the use of morally questionable techniques in instances when the objective of the techniques is considered to be urgent.

The seventh season can be argued to engage in morally questionable propaganda techniques, specifically those of censorship and lying. First and foremost, *24* silences or eliminates characters whose ideology does not conform to that of the protagonist. While many characters question the notions of right and wrong, most acknowledge that the terrorist threats were or could have been averted if morally questionable techniques had been undertaken. In a discussion between Jack Bauer and Bill Buchanan on the necessity of interrogating Ryan Burnett about a pending terrorist attack in Washington, such an ideological exchange occurs:

> *"Bill: I'm not trained in coercive techniques.*
>
> *Jack: This isn't a maybe. Ryan Burnett is an accessory to a terrorist attack. If you don't do this, people will die.*
>
> *Bill: I'm not arguing with what needs to be done, but, I can't do this. It's not me."*
>
> *(7.11)*

24 therefore acknowledges the controversy regarding the use of morally questionable techniques, particularly in instances when the objective of such techniques is considered to be urgent. However, characters that do not support or acknowledge Bauer's actions as necessary are terminated during the course of the season. As an example, Senator Mayer, who opposed Bauer's use of torture, is assassinated by a hired gun hunting for the protagonist. Larry Moss, who refused to circumvent the chain of command and cede control to Bauer, is deceived and then murdered by Tony Almeida. And, finally, Bill Buchanan, who, as was just demonstrated, refused to torture a suspect, sacrifices himself during a military siege on the White House. This would suggest that only those who subscribe to Bauer's ideology endure the season, and, consequently, that this ideology is not only correct, but necessary for survival. Even the protagonist himself, who is infected with a deadly pathogen, will live on to fight another season.

Throughout the season, the characters of *24* repeatedly deceive each other. As an example, Jack Bauer is deceived by Tony Almeida numerous times. First, into believing that he is a terrorist, then that he is working a covert operation with other former CTU agents, only to find out that he actually has his own agenda – to avenge the death of his wife orchestrated in the fifth season by the leader of the private corporation alliance. The widespread corruption of government agencies and the President's administration is yet another example of deception that occurs throughout the series. Interestingly, the audience is often, but not always, privileged to the truth in such instances of deceit. Nevertheless, characters engage in lying and deception to achieve their particular objectives.

Q4) Do the messages communicated through the series qualify as war propaganda?

War propaganda in its simplest form is propaganda employed during times of war. It can be used, as an example, to create support for a particular mission, promote strong negative emotional responses to notions of the 'enemy', and encourage military enrolment. In war propaganda, censorship often occurs on the part of the cinematographer – in order to ensure institutional support – and in terms of the uniformity of information conveyed to the home front.

Ultimately, war propaganda functions to provide justification for particular military operations. In such instances, the conflicting parties are often placed in direct opposition to each other, thus creating a self-other dichotomy. Moral values are present in wartime propaganda, where an emphasis is placed upon notions of good versus evil. It is most effective if events strike at home, for that is when emotions such as fear and revenge cloud objectivity and credibility.

The messages conveyed during the course of the seventh season of *24* can be qualified as war propaganda. The season takes place with the United States of America preparing to invade the fictitious African country of Sangala to restore its elected leader and eliminate the genocide and human rights violations that are occurring under its current dictator. It is in this context that the United States of *24* is at war. U.S. action is seen as "the only way to prevent mass murder in Sangala at the hands of General Juma" (7.1) The United States and its government agencies are portrayed as being on the side of moral values and in direct conflict to the Juma regime and its supporters.

Through the threat of terrorist attacks, and more importantly through the success of committed attacks on American soil, the series is able to justify the morally questionable techniques employed by its protagonist. Although CTU has been disbanded, and the FBI strives to work within the law, Jack Bauer successfully convinces FBI agent Renee Walker that the questionable acts that they commit are necessary to avoid further casualties. As an example, Bauer suggests that they use the family of a government conspirator as leverage to gain information about the location of a hostage. When Walker objects, Bauer notes that "no one else ['the bad guys'] is following your rules" (7.8)." Upon a successful rescue, Walker in turn informs her supervisor that the ends justified the means. She too legitimizes – and eventually internalizes – that the use of questionable techniques can be justified in order to save innocent lives.

Q5) Does the series present a particular ideology, using stereotypes and patriotic images, which functions to eliminate the need for a debate on the politics of war and, instead, idolizes self-sacrificing, heroic ideals?

Propaganda is used to strengthen and spread a particular ideology through the use of symbols including emotionally powerful objects such as a flag or an authority. Through the representation of an ideology, propaganda attempts to convey and reaffirm notions of normalcy. Stereotypes are an example of an influential ideological process which can be employed to convey normalcy and to justify actions committed or planned against a particular group. It is through stereotypes that audiences are able to distinguish between different groups – including villains and heroes. As well, contemporary military conflicts are most often portrayed from the perspective of the hero, focusing on his or her moral choices and self-sacrificing actions rather than encouraging and providing an avenue for debate on the military operation in question.

The seventh season of *24* begins with Jack Bauer appearing before a U.S. Senate Committee which is investigating the use of extreme interrogation techniques – including torture – by government agencies in the course of their operations. This ideological dilemma of what is necessary in times of war and, at which point it becomes justifiable to override the rights of the individual is repeated throughout the season. This on-screen dilemma and political debate is paralleled by one occurring off-screen, wherein newly-elected President Barack Obama, campaigned for office on a platform denouncing Guantanamo Bay and the use of torture. He pledged to close Guantanamo Bay and thus, put an end to the use of extreme interrogation techniques. Similarly, in *24,* newly-elected President Allison Taylor campaigned against the use of torture and other extreme interrogation techniques by government agencies.

Although *24* suggests the possibility and validity of a debate regarding the issue of extreme interrogation techniques, the protagonist frequently employs these techniques in the pursuit of terrorists during the season. The actions are justified explicitly by Jack Bauer, and others characters as necessary, as well as implicitly by an increasing loss of human life when he is not able to intervene. Testifying before the U.S. Senate Committee, Bauer admits to violating the Geneva Convention on torture, but argues that he "was doing what [he] deemed necessary to save innocent lives" (7.1).

While new main characters are often in opposition to Bauer in the ideological conflict on torture – including FBI agent Larry Moss and Senator Blaine Mayer – it is evident that Bauer's action are portrayed in a favourable and necessary manner. Discussing the Senate investigation, an unnamed FBI agent tells him "What they're making you go through at the Senate hearing is wrong. [...] You don't deserve to be treated that way, not after everything you've done for our country. And I'm not the only one who thinks so" (7.2). This implies then that Bauer's actions are indeed supported on an individual basis by many agents within the FBI, and, as well, through the invocation of patriotic duty, that both he and his actions are viewed in a favourable manner.

The necessity and correctness of Bauer's ideology is further exemplified during the attempt to circumvent the final terrorist attack, lead by Tony Almeida, against the city of Washington. Almeida successfully smuggled a canister of the weaponized nerve gas off of the Starkwood compound and plans to deploy it in the subway system. Bauer interrogates the head of the private military company Starkwood and learns not only that another terrorist attack is

imminent, but that the plan is to offload the blame from the private companies to parties with known terrorist ties. Bauer asks for access to the decommissioned CTU computers and servers, which hold specific and detailed databases on terrorist organizations. Meanwhile, Almeida and his team work to fabricate evidence that would implicate an innocent Muslim man as the terrorist.

Interestingly, it through the use of post-9/11 racial stereotypes that Jack Bauer and the FBI are able to track Almeida. At the Washington Office of the FBI, Bauer demands that analyst Chloe O'Brian "run a check on every Muslim in the D.C. area [targeting] anyone who's working in a sensitive Government area or in a place that might get hit, [...] to pull the files on every political activist working in the Muslim community [...along with] a list of every recent immigrant from Islamic countries" (7.21). It is through the morally questionable technique of racial profiling and the employment of stereotypes that Bauer is able to track Almeida and avert the final terrorist attack. This legitimizes the use of such techniques, and provides evidence to suggest that during times of war and crises these techniques are not only necessary, but effective.

Conclusion

After conducting an in-depth study on the concept of propaganda, this paper posits that television programming can indeed function as a form of propaganda, including war propaganda, in support of particular vested interests. As a case study, this paper examined the seventh season of fictional television program *24*, and found five indicators in support of this argument.

First, that the medium of television performs the objectives and functions of propaganda – providing information about a particular point of view and persuading audiences that the information presented in a campaign is correct. Second, that the constitutive features and techniques of propaganda were present in the series *24*. Third, that the program engaged in censorship – silencing or eliminating ideologies which did not conform to that of the protagonist – and other morally questionable propaganda techniques including lying – for, although the audience was privy to the truth, many characters in the series were not. Fourth, that the messages conveyed through the series qualify as war propaganda as they invoke moral values of right and wrong, and suggest that the possible success of terrorist attacks against the United States provides a justification for the use of extreme interrogation techniques. And, finally, that the series presented a particular ideological point of view – on issues including the use of extreme interrogation techniques – using stereotypes and patriotic images, which in turn functions to eliminate the need for a debate on the politics of war, and, instead, idolizes self-sacrificing, heroic ideals.

This study reaffirms the importance of seeking out objective information about military conflicts, matters of national interest, and political decision-making. It also suggests that fictional television programming presented as entertainment may serve an ulterior purpose. Although the seventh season of the series *24* calls attention to matters of national and international interest – including the stigmatization of Muslims, the use of torture and other questionable interrogation techniques, as well the rise of private military companies and their lack of government oversight – it also functions to trivialize these matters by making them entertainment.

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i For citations and direct quotations from the series *24*, the reference notes the season and episode from which they are taken. As an example (7.1) refers to the seventh season, episode one. The notes and references to *24* have been made through direct observation of the television series by the author.

ii The precise demographic details of the viewing audience are not known. It is reasonable to assume that it does not include viewers who have access to On-Demand services or individuals who purchased the DVD box set. This figure is merely meant to illustrate that the television series has successfully maintained a 'live-to-air' viewing audience.