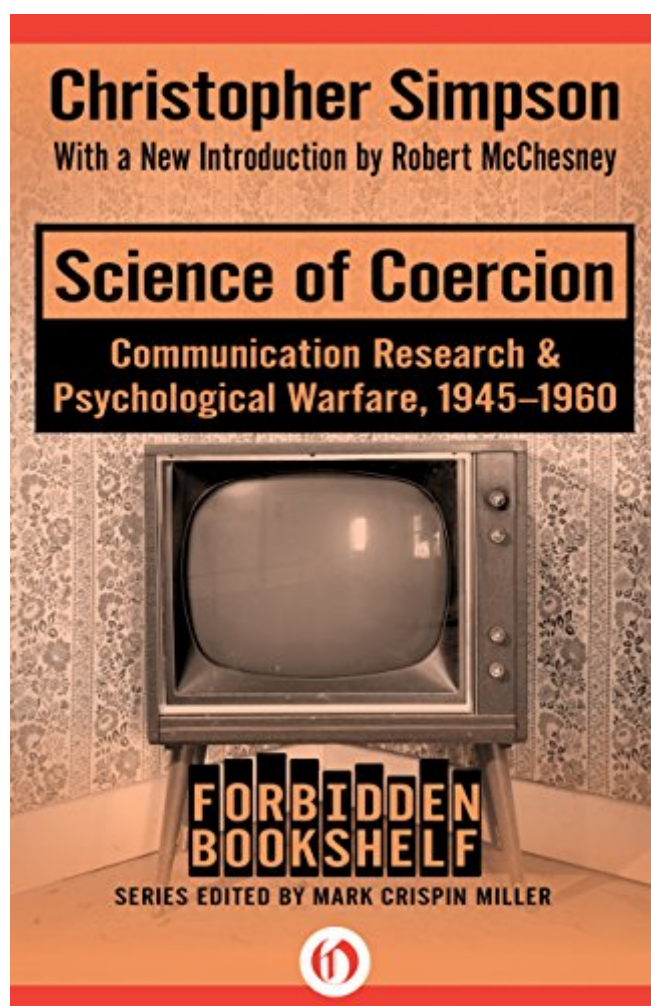


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Science Of Coercion: Communication Research & Psychological Warfare, 1945-1960 (Forbidden Bookshelf)



Synopsis

A provocative and eye-opening study of the essential role the US military and the Central Intelligence Agency played in the advancement of communication studies during the Cold War era, now with a new introduction by Robert W. McChesney and a new preface by the author. Since the mid-twentieth century, the great advances in our knowledge about the most effective methods of mass communication and persuasion have been visible in a wide range of professional fields, including journalism, marketing, public relations, interrogation, and public opinion studies. However, the birth of the modern science of mass communication had surprising and somewhat troubling midwives: the military and covert intelligence arms of the US government. In this fascinating study, author Christopher Simpson uses long-classified documents from the Pentagon, the CIA, and other national security agencies to demonstrate how this seemingly benign social science grew directly out of secret government-funded research into psychological warfare. It reveals that many of the most respected pioneers in the field of communication science were knowingly complicit in America's Cold War efforts, regardless of their personal politics or individual moralities, and that their findings on mass communication were eventually employed for the purposes of propaganda, subversion, intimidation, and counterinsurgency. An important, thought-provoking work, *Science of Coercion* shines a blazing light into a hitherto remote and shadowy corner of Cold War history.

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Customer Reviews

Back in 2002 I was just beginning to add reader\listener\viewer comments online. Among the first books I chose to comment on was Jacques Ellul's mid-1960's seminal study of state systems of propaganda, titled as it was translated from the French as PROPAGANDA: THE FORMATION OF MEN'S ATTITUDES. Ellul's analysis of the history of this "discipline" that he observed across the spectrum of governments and regimes from totalitarian and fascistic to socially democratic took an interdisciplinary approach emphasizing sociology and psychology in analyzing trends pervasive across the historical disruptions occasioned by new technologies. Meanwhile, I spent more time in that review discussing Christopher Simpson's more current SCIENCE OF COERCION and the collection of essays he edited not long after titled UNIVERSITIES & EMPIRE: MONEY & POLITICS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES DURING THE COLD WAR, in part because I thought Ellul's still useful study of PROPAGANDA needed one more discipline within its toolbox, namely that of the study of Mass Media or Mass Communications, which was Simpson's focus. These interdependent deficiencies were evident to me even as I felt Simpson's narrower study of that particular discipline would've benefited from filtering his primary source documentation and research through Ellul's areas of expertise in socio-psychological identity formation.

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