

Propaganda vs. Political Persuasion in Politics: Public Beware

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This article observes the differences between propaganda and political rhetoric, primarily by examining the campaign tactics of Newt Gingrich during his rise to power to become House Speaker in 1994. Readers are made aware of the importance of distinguishing these differences in order to make informed political decisions based on logical reasoning rather than on irrational appeals that stem from political propaganda.

The crowd on Capitol Hill exploded into cheers. Smiles erupted on many faces, while others nodded their heads in energetic agreement. The words that evoked this reaction had come from Newt Gingrich:

We are here because we are taking the first steps, and we are taking them in a contract with the American people. We've already told the incumbents and the candidates that if we have a majority—if the American people accept this contract . . . we are going to get to the final recorded votes in the first 100 days on every item. (“CNN”)

Thus former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich presented to voters his “Contract with America” on 27 September 1994. The “Contract,” which will be discussed later, is one example, among many others that will be examined, showing that politicians will cross the line between what is ethical and what is downright manipulative. In this paper, Gingrich’s political campaigns are scrutinized after first discussing the definitions of propaganda and political persuasion. Although Gingrich provides the primary examples, it would have been easy to choose from an array of politicians: looking back at the campaign tactics of former presidents alone, from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, all the way up to President Barack Obama, it is obvious that campaign strategies have been negatively driven for quite some time. When we analyze the propagandistic strategies of Gingrich and others, it becomes evident that propaganda has become ever more effective and advanced. Think, for a moment, about the ads on television for the 2012 presidential election. They are full of propaganda, yet unlike past ads from politicians such as John F. Kennedy, George H. W. Bush, or Bill Clinton, they are much more fine-tuned and effective today. The public must beware of this in order to have the power to make informed political decisions free of clouded judgment and deception. This article aims not to attack the strategies of specific parties or candidates, but rather to analyze the facts of the past in order to be better able to make decisions in the future. With the 2012 presidential election right around the corner, and Newt Gingrich running for office, voters need to be in a state of increased political awareness. Moreover, voters need to be able to decipher what politicians say and do and be able to determine what those words really mean and the purposes behind those actions.

Propaganda vs. Persuasion

Politicians are among the most successful deceivers. Irrational, emotional, far-fetched, manipulative—these are all words that can be used to help describe the term *propaganda*. In his extensive definition of propaganda in *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction*, Nicholas O’Shaughnessy explains that propaganda is a means of mass communication that is used to manipulate the public by evoking “irrational” emotions (17). This is a vital word in the definition of propaganda, for without it, propaganda could be confused with the term *persuasion*. Persuasion is not propaganda. Although these two concepts are extremely similar, there are slight but important differences in their meanings. Persuasion is used to logically convince someone of something, using rational arguments (18); propaganda, on the other hand, manipulatively uses irrational and emotional appeals to convince someone of something. Propaganda can resemble a rhetorical approach, but it is different in that it is taken to far-fetched extremes. Propaganda is everywhere, but few U.S. voters are aware of it. The fact that most people don’t realize that particular content is propaganda is in itself the reason the content can be considered propaganda. For instance, a poster advertising war bonds might portray a soldier in bandages, and the text might say something like, “Save this soldier. Buy war bonds.” Many people would be drawn in by the emotional appeal of the poster: however, they may not realize that their emotions are irrational and evoked from manipulation, nor that they are not literally going to save that soldier by buying war bonds. The poster is far-fetched—hence it is propaganda. If you walked up to stranger reading that war bonds poster and explained to him/her that the poster was aiming to manipulate him/her into buying war bonds, the odds of the stranger buying war bonds would probably diminish. This is not to say that just because someone is aware of the propaganda that the propaganda is not effective in all circumstances. It is safe to say that U.S. voters in general are aware that many political campaigns are negative and often stretch the truth. Many U.S. voters can identify that political campaigns are “dirty,” yet they still do not stop to analyze what parts of a campaign are true and what parts are far-fetched. Party loyalties often act as an “excuse” for many voters to turn a blind eye.

But, in many cases, the more consumers can identify propaganda, the less effective it is. Take, for example, writer Paul Weber’s online article in the *Pure Water Gazette*. Weber gathered information through interviews to compare propagandistic techniques and their effectiveness in various countries. Weber asked people from countries whose governments had been under dictatorships at one time or another how the state controlled public opinion during dictators’ reigns. He had this to say about their responses:

Propaganda in those countries was really done quite incompetently. If you really want to know propaganda, they said, you need to study American propaganda technique. According to them, it is, undeniably, the best in the world. . . .

Propaganda in those countries was too obvious, they told me. As soon as you read the first sentence you knew it was a bunch of propaganda, so you didn’t even bother to read it. If you heard a speech, you knew in the first few words that it was propaganda, and you tuned it out.

Though Weber’s participants, having lived under dictatorial rule, might have been more aware of propaganda, his interviews with them sum up the idea that propaganda is sneaky, irrational manipulation. It has to be sly to help its effectiveness, as demonstrated by the war bonds example. This conclusion is the basis for the idea that propaganda is a questionable choice. Even if the propaganda was made in support of what most people would consider a “good cause,” it is still unethical to manipulate people into supporting that cause through irrational appeals. The “good

cause” *should* speak for itself; it shouldn’t *need* sneaky tactics to make its case. Unfortunately, this isn’t usually how it works. Using logical reasoning (persuasion) to promote a product or idea that is not logical or potentially not realistic is not nearly as effective as using propaganda. Voters, given that they are consumers of this propaganda, should understand how it works and how to question it.

Political Rhetoric and Negative Campaigning

Because logical reasoning isn’t always effective, *political* persuasion (political rhetoric) comes into play. Politicians carefully study the best and most effective ways to present platform issues to the public to gain support, especially among particular audiences. They present this information either through propagandistic means or by way of political rhetoric; propaganda is dependent on emotional and unsupported premises, and political rhetoric is constructed through reasoned argument (persuasion). As demonstrated above, there is a big difference in effectiveness depending upon which way politicians choose to promote themselves: through propaganda campaigns or by campaigns focused on political rhetoric.

Politicians understand these concepts well. Although propagandistic campaigning is not a new concept, the tactics politicians use are becoming more advanced. It is not enough to use simple political rhetoric anymore. No longer is it effective enough for Senator Jane Doe to simply compare the black-and-white facts of her voting record and political and professional background to that of Senator John Doe. It isn’t enough for Jane Doe to just give the public the facts and let *them* make assumptions as to how John Doe may act in the future, considering his voting records and actions of the past. These days, Jane Doe must cross the fine line between political rhetoric and propaganda to be successful. She must plant ideas in the minds of the public of what John Doe might do in the future based on what he has voted for or done in the past. She must pervert the simple, factual, truthful record to make it seem like John Doe’s past will lead to frightening and catastrophic decisions in the future. Not even that is enough. She must go further, as far as to paint a picture for the public of what those frightening and catastrophic situations could be, and *will* be. This is negative campaigning at its finest, and now we see politicians perfecting this approach.

The Effects of Media

David Mark, political news editor, journalist, and analyst, highlights some of these approaches in an excerpt from his book *Going Dirty*. He offers important observations on negative campaigning and its growth over the past few decades. To demonstrate exactly how powerful propaganda can be when disseminated through media, Mark cites a significant specific example of a negative campaign—that of Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson in his presidential candidacy against Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964. During his campaign, Johnson ran a television advertisement referred to in pop culture as the “Daisy Girl” ad, which manipulatively and effectively suggested that his opponent would be apt to start a nuclear war. Mark gives the rundown of the advertisement:

The 30-second ad showed a little girl in a field picking petals from a daisy. As she counted, the camera moved closer, finally freezing on a close-up of her eye. At the same time, an announcer started to intone a countdown. Suddenly, the screen erupted in a nuclear mushroom. The voiceover of Lyndon Johnson then admonished: “These are the stakes; to make a world in which all God’s

children can live, or to go into the darkness. Either we must love each other or we must die.” (“Going Negative” 509)

Then words appeared on the screen: “On November 3rd, vote for President Johnson.” This ad was in response to comments Goldwater had made in two of his speeches regarding nuclear weapons. In no way did Goldwater indicate that he intended to start a nuclear war. However, Johnson cleverly made that assumption and broadcast it, planting that seed in the minds of the public. This campaign is highly propagandistic, in that Johnson took factual information (Goldwater had, indeed, made mention of nuclear weapons in his speeches) and stretched it to a far-fetched and manipulative extreme. Never before had a political ad received so much additional media attention, and it is exactly this sort of attention that makes propaganda successful. The ad aired only once, but it made headlines and was talked about on nightly news programs.

The media are prime components of promoting propagandistic practices. The media are so concerned with reporting “who is ahead of whom” or “who is attacking whom,” that they quite often fail to mention the “why” component of the story (the issues at hand). According to William Benoit et al. in “A Functional Analysis of Presidential Campaign Discourse,” studies have found that in past elections, Americans learned more about the issues at hand from the candidates’ television advertisements than they did from the national news stations. Benoit et al. cite Kern as saying, “By a ratio of 4 to 1, Americans received the majority of their information about candidate positions on issues from ads rather than the news” (4). If Americans are relying solely on propagandistic television ads to inform themselves on the issues, it becomes all too easy to fall for the propagandistic content that they promote. “Voters must rely on candidates’ campaign messages for much of the information they have about the candidates; it is a mistake to assume that the news media provides a comprehensive understanding of candidates’ policy positions” (6), writes Benoit et al. They also note that “Research makes it clear that voters cannot and should not depend on the news media to provide voters with information on which to base their voting decisions” (4). For Benoit et al., the media are not going to inform viewers of John Doe’s new policy idea or stance more than once or twice. After it has been reported once, it is no longer “news.” Unless a dramatic development within that policy occurs, there is no further reason for the media to continue to report on the issue. However, if John Doe is ahead in the polls, or if he made a racial slur, that is news (4–6). Good-bye, policy talk—make room for evaluation of rankings and character.

As Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro state, “Although news reports largely represent the genuine contours of American politics, the media’s organizational, financial, and professional incentives prompt them to exaggerate the degree of conflict in order to produce simple, captivating stories for their audiences” (437). Their observations illuminate/explain how the media feed off of negative and propagandistic campaigning. The media are enablers of this behavior, a “service” politicians appreciate. If a politician wants to get his or her name in the headlines, he or she cannot “play nicely,” using standard, truthful, political rhetoric while campaigning. The media want emotional and outrageous stories to report—terms that describe propaganda. This is not to say that the media are feeding us lies. Propagandistic content does not necessarily contain a lie. As Mark points out, “I want to distinguish negative campaigning—charges and accusations that, while often distorted, contain at least a kernel of truth—from dirty tricks or cheating” (506). In the case of Johnson’s “Daisy Girl” ad, the propaganda relied on assumptions that *could* have eventually come true. However miniscule the “truthful kernel” was, its quivering presence was all that was needed for Johnson’s ad to develop into arguably one of the most well-known and effective negative campaign (propagandistic) ads of all time.

This historical example provides a comparison for the approach of current politicians. Although campaigns have changed tremendously since 1964, politicians have continued Johnson's tactics and have perfected the art of propaganda as technology becomes an increasingly important component in society. From the Nixon/Kennedy ads to Reagan criticizing Jimmy Carter through the heated Bush/Clinton campaign, propaganda continued to play a central role. Newt Gingrich's campaign and rise to power as House Speaker is a prime example demonstrating the extent to which propagandistic campaigns have evolved in recent years. By analyzing past political campaigns, voters can gain insight as to how politicians accomplish their goals by means of propaganda, and they can learn to identify propaganda so that they are not "fooled" by it in the future.

Newt Gingrich: A Political Propagandist

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House, is among an elite group of master propagandists. The campaign that brought him to power offers the most focused example of effective propaganda. Gingrich used several forms of propaganda during his own election campaigns to the House of Representatives in the 1990s. However, the most notable propaganda he employed was in the service of the congressional elections of 1994. Through three major tools of propaganda—the Republican "Contract with America," the C-SPAN television network, and a memo titled "Language: A Key Mechanism of Control"—Newt Gingrich successfully contributed to the resulting Republican majority in the House of Representatives.

In 1994, the U.S. House of Representatives was under the majority rule of the Democratic Party and had been for forty years. According to Patrick McKinlay, professor of political science at Morningside College, Gingrich was the leading force in turning this around to bring the House under Republican control after the elections of 1994. In a personal interview, McKinlay explained that Gingrich felt that the Republicans had grown to accept the fact that they were a minority and had become resigned to that position. Gingrich was determined to change that status, leading to his relentless propaganda campaigns during the congressional elections.

His first step was to create something tangible that people could refer to as "proof" that electing Republicans to the House would guarantee changes that the electorate desired. He needed to prove to the people that the Republicans should be, and needed to be, the majority in the House in order for the problems of the United States to be resolved. Gingrich, along with several fellow Republican politicians, created a document entitled the "Contract with America." This document stated specific reforms the Republican candidates promised to make and legislation they promised to bring to the floor if they were elected and the House became a Republican majority. The Republicans released the document to the media during the election campaigns.

Altogether, the "Contract" listed eight specific reforms that were intended:

On the first day of the 104th Congress, the new Republican majority will immediately pass the following major reforms, aimed at restoring the faith and trust of the American people in their government: First, require all laws that apply to the rest of the country also apply equally to the Congress; second, select a major, independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive audit of Congress for waste, fraud or abuse; third, cut the number of House committees, and cut committee staff by one-third; fourth, limit the terms of all committee chairs; fifth, ban the casting of proxy votes in committee; sixth, require committee meetings to be open to the public; seventh, require a three-fifths majority

vote to pass a tax increase; eighth, guarantee an honest accounting of our Federal Budget by implementing zero base-line budgeting. (“Contract with America”)

After listing the reforms, the “Contract with America” specified ten bills that would be brought to the floor. The document read, “Within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress, we shall bring to the House Floor the following bills, each to be given full and open debate, each to be given a clear and fair vote and each to be immediately available this day for public inspection and scrutiny.” The bills included were the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Taking Back Our Streets Act, the Personal Responsibility Act, the Family Reinforcement Act, the American Dream Restoration Act, the National Security Restoration Act, the Senior Citizens Fairness Act, the Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act, the Common Sense Legal Reform Act, and the Citizen Legislature Act (“Contract with America”). All but two of the Republican incumbents of the House signed the document, showing their support for the reforms and bills.

When asked why he considered this document propaganda, McKinlay responded, “It was like saying, ‘Look here, this document will solve all of these complex problems America is facing.’ That’s not realistic—it’s not that simple.” The document was intended to make Americans think that all of their problems had simple solutions, all listed on that piece of paper. All of the bills listed on the contract had to have at least a 60% public approval rating, and no wildly controversial issues, such as abortion, were mentioned. The bills had major loopholes, but as long as Republicans promised to bring the bills before the House and the public focused on the bill titles rather than their content, the politicians knew they would be in the clear. The titles of the proposed acts themselves functioned as propaganda. No American would oppose something titled “The Senior Citizens Fairness Act,” although many Americans might oppose the actual provisions of the act. All the American public had to do was elect the Republican candidates, and all of the nice-sounding titles would be enacted. Propaganda such as this is not asking voters to think, it is asking voters to believe. To ensure that real change happens, voters need to think through the promises politicians make.

While in the process of establishing the “Contract with America,” Gingrich was looking for other ways to promote Republican candidates and sway public opinion. McKinlay explained that Gingrich realized the potential of the C-SPAN television network, which broadcasts the activities of the House and Senate. Although the majority may have the power in terms of votes, the minority has the power of speech. There is time allotted to members of the minority part in Congress to talk about whatever they wish, for however long they want. Gingrich used this advantage to promote Republican ideas, and especially the “Contract with America,” on the C-SPAN network. Most, if not all, politicians have the tools and means to make and promote propaganda. Gingrich, among so many other politicians, knows how to use his tools effectively, which makes all the difference, as widespread dissemination of information is vital to successful propaganda.

A speech Gingrich made in the House on 22 March 1994, which was aired on C-SPAN, demonstrates very clearly how Gingrich combined the “Contract with America” with his access to media to promote Republicans. Gingrich states, “We will make a checklist, which we hope we could raise money to put in *TV Guide* and *People Magazine* that will literally be something you could tear out. And on the first day of 1995, if you elect a Republican majority . . . people would literally be able then to sit and watch C-SPAN and check-off the checklist” (“Newt Gingrich”). The “checklist” Gingrich referred to was the “Contract with America.” This was one of the earliest speeches Gingrich gave on C-SPAN, while the “Contract with America” was still being formed and before it had an official name. Now that the foundation for this propagandistic con-

tent had been laid out on C-SPAN, Gingrich made it clear that he intended to broaden its reach to *TV Guide* and *People Magazine* as well. As the “Contract with America” developed and became a single collection of Republican objectives, Gingrich continued to promote its content on C-SPAN and in *TV Guide* and *People Magazine*. This was an important and innovative move in his campaign because it was a way to use pop culture to his advantage. This further shows how propaganda had grown immensely by the 1990s—politicians were seizing endless opportunities to promote their purposes in innovative ways unheard of before then.

Gingrich’s ability to speak with conviction in his C-SPAN speeches proved to be effective—he was able to draw people in. Realizing that other Republicans could benefit from his methods of “crafted talk,” Gingrich’s team of staff, referred to as GOPAC, sent out a memo to Republican politicians across the nation. Entitled “Language: A Key Mechanism of Control,” the memo discusses the art of language in politics. Simply choosing to use certain words over others in speeches can have a profound impact, something voters must be aware of as they consider who to vote for and why.

The document gives two lists of words. The first list is called “Optimistic Positive Governing Words.” The memo states, “Use the list below to help define your campaign and your vision of public service. These words can help give extra power to your message. In addition, these words help develop the positive side of the contrast you should create with your opponent, giving your community something to vote for!” The sixty-four words on this list include: activist, choice, commitment, passionate, reform, unique, and vision. The second set of words is titled “Contrasting Words.” Describing when the use of these words is appropriate, the memo says, “Often we search hard for words to define our opponents. Sometimes we are hesitant to use contrast. Remember that creating a difference helps you. These are powerful words that can create a clear and easily understood contrast. Apply these to the opponent, their record, proposals and their party.” Some of the words included in this list are: anti, crisis, excuses, liberal, spending, taxes, and welfare. These are words with powerful negative connotations, ones Gingrich hoped voters would not question even when they should. He relied on the fact that his followers would listen without question, taking in every word. The words would essentially have no effect on those who were not loyal followers; they would stick out as being “planted” and odd sounding. For example, in an interview Gingrich gave in 1994, he stated, “I think I am a transformational figure. I think I am trying to effect a change so large that the people who would be hurt by the change, the liberal machine, have a natural reaction. . . . I think because I’m so systematically purposeful about changing our world . . . I’m a much tougher partisan that they’ve [the Democrats] seen . . . much more intense, much more persistent, much more willing to take risks to get it done” (“Newt’s Quotes”). Notice some specific words that he uses to describe himself and his own goals: *transformational*, *change*, *purposeful*, *persistent*. These words would likely calm those in his party who were disappointed with the political and economic status; they’d want a persistent politician who sought purposeful changes. Also take note of the words *liberal machine*, which he uses to create a contrast between Republicans and Democrats—a contrast that allows him to emphasize his promise to make purposeful change. He is going as far as to call the other party, the “liberals,” a *machine*. Those two words together reek of negativity and reinforce the positive image of himself and his politics. These words were not being used to gain new followers, but rather to strengthen the base of followers he already had.

“Language: A Key Mechanism of Control” is a powerful tool of propaganda. Notice how the mind subconsciously picks up on vibes of inspiration and hope when reading the first list of words, compared to the negativity that seems to permeate the second list of “contrasting words.” Even

stronger than the propaganda within the document itself is the propaganda that could be created *from* it. It gave Republican politicians everywhere “words of propaganda”—words that manipulatively draw emotional responses from listeners. These politicians were discreetly trying to sway public opinion, demonstrating the need for sly campaigning. Given their discussion of these words, it is clear they were fully aware of the potential of such a tricky campaign strategy (propaganda). During a campaign speech in 1978 at the Atlanta Airport Holiday Inn, Gingrich stated, “I think one of the great problems we have in the Republican Party is that we don’t encourage you to be nasty. We encourage you to be neat, obedient, loyal and faithful and all those Boy Scout words, which would be great around a campfire but are lousy in politics” (“1978 Speech”). Gingrich was fully aware, even then, that the power of words should not be overlooked or underestimated. He understood the contrast between “Boy Scout” and “nasty,” as he knew his audience would too, and he wanted Republicans to be able to distinguish gray areas in between. Words can be highly manipulative and deceptive. If a promotion has to be manipulative to work, it is unethical. If it is unethical, it cannot be justifiable. This is why Gingrich’s propaganda techniques cannot be justified in any way and why voters must ask critical questions of the messages they hear.

His “Contract with America,” along with the techniques used to further promote this form of propaganda, was misleading, making it unethical. One of Gingrich’s campaign posters read, “A campaign promise is one thing. A signed contract is another” (Davis). This poster makes it sound like the contract is an official, legally binding document. The poster created the illusion that all of the proposed changes listed in the document were definitely going to be passed. The actual document made it seem like all of the bills were not only going to be passed, but they would be passed in a timely manner. In reality, passing bills is a painfully slow process, and there is no guarantee that they will even make it through the Senate, or avoid veto by the president. Ironically, veto by the president actually did happen in the budget bill, further demonstrating the risk in believing campaign promises without understanding the complexity of the problem or proposed solution.

Further promotion of the “contract” on C-SPAN was also unjustifiable. The network provided time for the minority to promote its ideas, but not equal time for the majority. This resulted in unfair and unequal coverage of the Democratic and Republican campaigns. Instead of hearing both sides of the arguments from both Democrats and Republicans, the C-SPAN network enabled the Republican opinions to be heard much more frequently. This had never been an issue in the past, because Gingrich was the first person to truly make use of this advantage of the minority and use it as a promotional platform directed at the public.

Republicans ended up gaining fifty-four seats in the election of 1994, making them the House majority. Considering this large shift in House seats, it can be concluded that the forms of propaganda used were definitely effective. Given this conclusion, voters must analyze these results to make themselves better aware of just how convincing propaganda really is. It can affect, and will continue to affect, election outcomes, unless the public begins to realize its dominating powers on the campaign trail.

With their newfound power, the Republicans did introduce several of the bills and reforms—however, most of them died in the Senate or were vetoed. Whether or not the “Contract” was actually “fulfilled” is interpreted differently by people, since technically the “Contract” only promised to bring forth the bills before the House and leave them open to debate. Yet again, the power of wording is demonstrated.

Conclusion

Inspired by, and built from, unjustifiable propaganda (“Contract with America” and its pro-

motion on C-SPAN), the memo “Language: A Key Mechanism of Control” gave politicians across America the tools to create even *more* propaganda. The memo made it very clear that its purpose was to manipulate the public, bringing us again to the idea that propaganda is most effective when it is sly. Good causes should speak for themselves and therefore should not need to use propaganda.

That being said, advertisements that are not considered propaganda and use logical arguments and rational appeals are much more difficult to promote successfully. Would Obama have been as successful in his campaign if he had specifically outlined his ideas for change? Everyone wanted change. “Hope and change” draws a much larger response than logic and fact. This is why politicians all too often stoop to using propagandistic campaigns—because they are effective. The public eats up political propaganda so easily, even if people are suspicious that it is bogus, due to the existence of such fierce party loyalties. However, if members of the public were aware of the techniques being used to manipulate them, the odds are that they would not be pleased. And if the public wouldn’t approve of the ways in which ideas are being advertised, it is safe to say these techniques are unethical and therefore cannot be justified.

Newt Gingrich created a series of pieces of propaganda in attempts to win a Republican majority in the congressional elections of 1994. Through the creation of the “Contract with America,” his use of the television network C-SPAN, and circulation of a memo on the power of political language, that goal was achieved. Misleading and manipulating were key components in the campaign efforts. Though his dream for Republicans was reached, it was not reached by ethical or justifiable means.

Propaganda is dangerous, skewing the judgment and perceptions of citizens. And as the political world becomes increasingly technological, opportunities for propagandists blossom. Gingrich has been accused of inappropriately using one of the most influential social media, Twitter, for propaganda purposes. According to CNET.com, Gingrich paid firms to create hundreds of thousands of “dummy” Twitter accounts made to look like followers of his own account. He has since used the “fact” that he had over 1.3 million followers as a selling point for his bid for president in several speeches. Gingrich denies this report, but PeekYou search engine, after extensive research, estimates that he has only around 100,000 real followers (MacManus). This is a new, innovative means of propaganda—selling a campaign 140 characters at a time.

Though propaganda appropriately carries a negative connotation, its threat is not fully understood by the public at large. Citizens must take steps to understand the differences between propaganda and political rhetoric so that society is not full of constituents blindly following politicians who slyly drag them further and further away from their original goals and beliefs. Newt Gingrich’s 1994 campaign, and even the Johnson commercial discussed early on, demonstrates that propaganda is entirely unethical, yet very easy to disguise.

The public must beware and recognize these deceptions. It is up to the electorate to take action to become informed citizens. One reason the campaigns of both Johnson and Gingrich were so effective was the public’s limited access to the facts. But now, as Mark points out, “In the Internet age, with news sources legion, voters have no excuse for not finding sufficient information to make decisions on whether to support or oppose political candidates” (514). Citizens must take away the effectiveness of propaganda by recognizing it for what it is. But once they have done so, voters should in no way turn a blind eye to the propaganda. As explained earlier, most of the information about candidates and their stance on issues can be summed up from the propaganda. The difference is that an informed voter is able to cut through the misinformation

and manipulation and get to the issues. Take control, recognize the difference, become educated, and vote accordingly.

When this article was first drafted, it was not yet known that Gingrich even planned to run for president in the 2012 election. Now that his candidacy is announced, it is all the more important to understand political rhetoric vs. propaganda. Sadly, his tactics haven't changed much since 1994. At a campaign speech given at Morningside College on 20 September 2011, Gingrich repeatedly used words from his pamphlet when describing Democrats. The words "liberals and welfare" especially were thrown around. Speaking about President Obama's "downfalls" during his presidency, he used the phrase, "We need to get Americans off food stamps and on to paychecks" (Republican Town Hall Meeting). It seems as though what was not perfected the first time around may have been this time. Propaganda is still a developing art, after all. This is why the importance of learning what it is and how to identify it becomes increasingly important as time passes. The rumor that Gingrich is already setting up a new team to create a new "contract," to see if lightning could strike twice, has recently been confirmed. During his speech at Morningside College, among the first things Gingrich uttered was, "We are planning to draft a new 'Contract with America' next week." The crowd immediately erupted in applause. People in the room nodded their heads in approval. Some even gave a standing ovation to show their support. The public had better beware. After all, as a wise man once said, "History always repeats itself."

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