

1-1-1997

Making sense of the 1994 right-wing revolution in the United States: How the Christian right, the grand old political action committee (GOPAC), and talk radio unknowingly collaborated

Andrew F. Wood

San Jose State University, andrew.wood@sjsu.edu

Tyrone Adams

University of Louisiana, Lafayette, theswampboy@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comm_pub

 Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Andrew F. Wood and Tyrone Adams. "Making sense of the 1994 right-wing revolution in the United States: How the Christian right, the grand old political action committee (GOPAC), and talk radio unknowingly collaborated" *Speaker and Gavel* (1997): 51-63.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication Studies at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

- Schubert, G. (1964). Jurisprudence and judicial behavior: Introductory note. In G. Schubert (Ed.), *Judicial behavior* (pp. 9-13). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company.
- . (1977). Political culture and judicial ideology: Some cross- and subcultural comparisons. *Comparative Political Studies*, 9, 363-408.
- Seibert, T. M. (1987). The arguments of a judge. In F. H. van Emmeren, R. Grootendorst, J. A. Blair, & C. A. Willards (eds.), *Argumentation: Analysis and practice. Proceedings of the conference on argumentation 1986* (pp. 119-122). Providence, USA: Fortis Publication.
- Shafer, C. B. (1981). Think like a lawyer: Valid law school admonition? In G. Ziegelmüller & J. Rhodes (Eds.) *Dimensions of argument: Proceedings of the second summer conference on argument* (pp. 242-267). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Sheppard, S. A., & Rieke, R. D. (1983). Categories of reasoning in legal argument. In D. Zarefsky, M. O. Sillars, & J. Rhodes (Eds.) *Argument in transition: Proceedings of the third summer conference on argument* (pp. 235-249). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Snedaker, K., & Schuetz, J. (1985). Storytelling in opening statements: Framing the arguments of the trial. In R. J. Cox, M. O. Sillars, and G. B. Walker (Eds.) *Argument and social practice: Proceedings of the fourth SCA/AFA conference on argumentation* (pp. 465-482). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Snedaker, K. H., Van Cott, Cornwall, and McCarthy (1987). The content and structure of appellate argument: Rhetorical analysis of brief writing strategies in the Sam Sheppard appeal. In J. W. Wenzel (Ed.), *Argument and critical practices: Proceedings of the fifth SCA/AFA conference on argument* (pp. 315-323). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Soeteman, A. (1987). Deduction in law. In F. H. van Emmeren, R. Grootendorst, J. A. Blair, & C. A. Willards (eds.), *Argumentation: Analysis and practice. Proceedings of the conference on argumentation 1986* (pp. 102-118). Providence, USA: Fortis Publication.
- Songer, D. R. (1992). Integrating alternative approaches to the study of judicial voting: Obscenity cases in the US court of appeals. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36, 963-982.
- Tate, C. N. (1981). Personal attribute models of the voting behavior of US Supreme Court justices: Liberalism in civil liberties and economics decisions 1946-1978. *The American Political Science Review*, 75, 355-367.
- Tate, C. N., & Sittiwong, P. (1989). Decision making in the Canadian Supreme Court: Extending the personal attributes model across nations. *Journal of Politics*, 51, 900-916.
- Toulmin, S. E. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ulmer, S. S. (1964). Homeostasis in the Supreme Court. In G. Schubert (Ed.), *Judicial behavior* (pp. 162-180). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company. (Original work published 1961)
- . (1964). The political party variable in the Michigan Supreme Court. In G. Schubert (Ed.), *Judicial behavior* (pp. 279-286). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company. (Original work published 1962)
- . (1970). Dissent behavior and the social background of supreme court justices. *The Journal of Politics*, 32, 580-598.
- Vines, K. N. (1964). Federal district judges and race relations cases in the south. *The Journal of Politics*, 26, 319-357.
- Walker, T. G. (1972). A note concerning partisan influences on trial-judge decision making. *Law and Society Review*, 6, 645-649.
- Wallinger, M. J. (1985). Argumentation in utility rate hearings: Public participation in a hybrid field. In R. J. Cox, M. O. Sillars, and G. B. Walker (Eds.) *Argument and social practice: Proceedings of the fourth SCA/AFA conference on argumentation* (pp. 497-510). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Werling, D. S., & Rieke, R. R. (1985). The path of legal reasoning in sex discrimination cases. In R. J. Cox, M. O. Sillars, and G. B. Walker (Eds.) *Argument and social practice: Proceedings of the fourth SCA/AFA conference on argumentation* (pp. 445-464). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Wiethoff, W. E. (1985). Critical perspectives on Perelman's philosophy of legal argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 22, 88-95.

MAKING SENSE OF THE 1994 RIGHT-WING REVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES: HOW THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT, THE GRAND OLD POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (GOPAC), AND TALK RADIO COLLABORATED

Andrew Wood
Ohio University Athens

Tyrone L. Adams
University of Arkansas at Monticello

Political campaigns are designedly made into emotional orgies which endeavor to distract attention from the real issues involved, and they actually paralyze what slight powers of cerebration man can normally muster.

James Harvey Robinson
The Human Comedy [1937]

The overwhelming GOP victory in the 1994 midterm elections represents a seismic shift in the American political structure. Tacit House passage of the Contract with America is evidence enough, alone. After gaining eight seats in the Senate and fifty-one seats in the House in midterm elections (Staff, 1994), Republicans positioned themselves to dominate political discourse through the 1996 elections. Indeed, in spite of President Clinton's lopsided victory over his GOP challenger, Republicans have managed to maintain their control over the House and Senate and dictate much of the legislative agenda. No longer considered the majority party, Democrats now struggle to make sense of the frightening, chaotic, and bleak political landscape. To date, most analyses of the 1994 elections found in the popular press have focused exclusively on Newt Gingrich and his much-celebrated Contract (Rosenthal, 1995a; Feldmann, 1995). However, our article seeks to provide a more panoramic investigation into the GOP's successful campaign to retake Capitol Hill. Withstanding Gingrich's obvious draw as a media caricature, it is our position that he could not have independently fomented such a massive shift.¹

While an explication of every trend that contributed to the Republican victory—including the swelling anti-incumbency sentiment, concerns over immigration and crime, and theories of complacency within the Democratic party—is beyond the scope of this article, we examine three significant rhetorical forces that merged to shape the November 1994 elections: the Chris-

¹ It may be argued that the era of the so-called "therapeutic speakership" (Peters, 1990) may be over. While House Speaker Newt Gingrich promised during his inauguration to conduct a dialogue with Democrats, the partisanship that has divided the post-reform House grows unabated (Rohde, 1992; Sinclair, 1983). This phenomenon is reflected by the "guerilla warfare" employed by Gingrich to destabilize the Democratic majority of the eighties and secure his rise to power (Rohde, 1991).

tian Right, the Grand Old Political Action Committee (GOPAC), and talk radio. We do not seek to personify these factors as Ralph Reed,² Newt Gingrich, and Rush Limbaugh, however. We instead regard them as co-dependent and ultimately convergent forces that will influence a generation of America's political, economic, and cultural life. In short, we feel that the sum of many rhetorical efforts is greater than its representative parts. Thus, we introduce the concept of propaganda convergence.

What is Propaganda Convergence Theory?

To explain and demonstrate propaganda convergence theory, it is necessary to first review the trends in propaganda research preceding this article. Our general critique addresses the tendency towards an overly narrow focus in many of these essays. A specific example of this issue emerges in a theme, suggesting that domestic propaganda is an oxymoron. We find, however, that a certain international impulse historically guides propaganda research in speech communication. For example, the Nazi Party's uses of propaganda during World War II have received attention in various textbooks and publications (Bytwerk, 1978; Dower, 1986; Rhodes, 1987; Nagy, 1990). Numerous scholars have dissected the Kremlin's use of "mind-control" propaganda, especially during the Reagan years (Orwant, 1972; Symms and Snow, 1981; Leventhal, 1984; Marlin, 1987; Bugajski, 1987; Kampf, 1987; Wozniuk, 1989). Speech communication scholars have also analyzed propagandistic appeals in: China (Wang, 1972); Europe (Bytwerk, 1988; Gross, 1989; Jakubowicz, 1992); Iraq (Jowett, 1993); Latin America (Ignasias, 1971; Kieh, 1990); North and South Vietnam (Hoffer, 1974); and South Africa (Washburn, 1989). Our international tendencies are also evidenced not only by artifact, but also by method. Lindahl (1983) and Drescher (1987), for instance, provide detailed procedures for academicians interested in international propaganda analysis. Perhaps this emphasis may be attributed to an assumption on the part of United States (US) speech communication scholars, and therefore their journals, that international events are somehow more intriguing than domestic phenomena. Indeed, some might argue that international propaganda provides a more stimulating site of analysis. We hold that an increase in domestic study and discipline-specific publication must counterbalance this bias.

Of course, some studies on domestic propaganda activities do exist. However, most of these works are either timeworn (Weatherly, 1971; Rogers and Clevenger, 1971; Wolvin, 1971; Clark, 1975; Gunter and Taylor, 1973), or while being recent, reflect an overly historical perspective (Sproule, 1989). Our communication journals of late provide little insight into the domestic propaganda perspective. Accordingly, this article repeats the enthusiastic call to domestic propaganda research previously expressed by Jowett (1991), McKerrow (1991), and Jowett (1987). Propaganda is a pervasive form of communication that does not exist solely in countries undergoing political turmoil.

² Since the completion of this essay, Ralph Reed has left his leadership position in the Christian Coalition.

While scholars must fill this domestic void, we must avoid the common flaw of artifactual unidimensionality. None of these works evaluate propaganda from the multi-perspective of a convergence or unity of efforts. Cutting against this habitual convention apparent in the literature, we argue that propaganda, generically defined as "the propagation of ideas and actions" (Combs and Nimmo, 1993, 12), can be a collective effort. We believe that the intrinsic criteria used to evaluate a singular entity's propagandistic rhetoric can be exploded to include the rhetorics of several organizations acting consciously or unconsciously in tandem.³ In other words, we believe that more than just one agency or rhetor may participate in a synthesized campaign of propaganda.

The Propaganda Convergence Thesis

Because the propaganda convergence theory is without a formal precedent, we faced the challenge of reviewing the various literatures on propaganda to detect what elements were common in speech communication definitions of propaganda. As a result of this inquiry, three basic elements which define propaganda clearly emerged: the intentional use of information to promote a cause (criterion A); the intentional use of information to injure an oppositional cause (criterion B); and controlling or attempting to gain control over the medium through which these two strategies are propagated (criterion C). Our propaganda convergence thesis holds: that one or more agencies must fulfill all of the above elements of propaganda for true propaganda to exist. A synthesis of efforts would, indeed, satisfy these specific criteria. Accordingly, we next detail the propagandistic convergence of the Christian Right, GOPAC, and Rush Limbaugh's paralleling political agendas in the 1994 elections.⁴

Explaining the Republican Revolution: The Christian Right, GOPAC, and Talk Radio

To honor criterion A of propaganda convergence theory, at least one of the agencies taking part in a co-mingled propaganda campaign must frame information so that it promotes a positive agenda or cause. Voters must have something virtuous or altruistic to which they can gravitate. The positive agenda, ethically referred to as the highroad approach, is an essential component of political propaganda; without it, propaganda cannot exist. One cannot distinguish the negative without the positive; good and evil are propagandistic counterparts and necessities.

³ This effort is informed by Baxter's (1992) dialogic understanding of communication which rejects monological approaches towards communication research. Drawing from Bakhtin, Baxter proposes a perspective that "is comprised of both fusion with and differentiation from, both centripetal and centrifugal forces" (p. 335). Rather than dissect agents as isolated factors to be studied and manipulated by traditional methodologies, we attempt to unpack the convergence of forces created by their multi-dimensional interactions.

⁴ Recalling that Connelly and Piney (1994) predicted that "the right constellation of forces" would be necessary for the GOP to win an outright majority in November 1994, the authors believe this application of the propaganda convergence theory to be appropriate.

The Christian Right, GOPAC, and talk radio all offered their versions of the Truth. All of these groups used positive appeals and negative attacks to operationalize these visions of Truth. However, of the three primary rhetorical agencies actively participating in the 1994 Republican campaign to take the House and Senate, none were as pronounced with their proactive appeals to the electorate than the Christian Right.

The Christian Right: Foot Soldiers for God and the Republican Party

The 1992 presidential election represented a mini-epiphany for the Christian Right—a powerful force in US politics that had been growing since the Reagan Revolution of the early eighties. The race provided this group the opportunity to make explicit a good versus evil dichotomy and, in the process, define themselves in broad strokes as a mainstream alternative. Later in this article, the unique nature of that concept will be further addressed. Because of their fundraising prowess, get-out-the-vote drives, and middle class demographics, local, state, and regional candidates joined them to stand on a solid pro-life, pro-“family values” platform. Admittedly, they had little choice in the matter—the Christian Right had become the most creative, organized, and dependable source of votes in the Republican party. Despite conjecture that a small group of ideological Christian extremists rhetorically “hijacked” the 1992 Houston convention and consequently derailed the Bush campaign’s bid for the presidency, their influence only grew (Daley, 1994; Feldmann, 1994; Shogan, 1994). During their September 1994 strategy conference, members of the Christian Coalition (the most vocal and well organized force in the Christian Right) pledged to move into mainstream politics without losing voters over divisive issues like abortion. At the convention, a flock of Republican presidential hopefuls attended to increase their visibility with this segment of the party “because its members are among the most loyal Republican voters and foot-soldiers” (Keeping the faith, 1994).

Their efforts translated into an extraordinary campaign. In its “most ambitious voter outreach ever for a midterm election,” the Chesapeake, Virginia, based Christian Coalition distributed thirty-three million voter guides covering each Senate and gubernatorial race and 350 House races and phoned two million homes in their election day drive to get out the vote (Goodstein, 1994, A1). On the state level, the Texas Christian Coalition deluged their state during the 1994 season with more than two million brochures called the “pro-family voting guide” (Ratcliffe, 1994). These guides predominantly focused on secular issues like taxation and term limits. The national campaign to distribute voters’ guides and maintain phone banks cost the Christian Coalition approximately two million dollars (Fulwood, 1994). However, the strategy of issue-rather-than-candidate advocacy gave the Coalition remarkable flexibility and was essential for the group to avoid certain federal campaign restrictions.

Though there was little evidence of the kind of stealth-campaigns that the Coalition ran in 1992, its methods—particularly its voters’ guides—continued to garner controversy. Rather than explicitly support candidates, the Coalition’s “guides and get-out-the-vote campaigns are ostensibly nonpartisan, meaning the amount spent does not have to be disclosed to the Federal

Election Commission” (Carney & Barrett, 1995, 32). While Coalition representatives compared their campaign with strategies practiced by the League of Women Voters, Democrats claimed that they were misleading and illegally partisan (Foskett, 1994; Christian Coalition runs into flak, 1994). And for the first time, the coalition faced an organized religious opposition from another clergy group, the Interfaith Alliance (Goodstein, 1994).

Any doubts about the effectiveness of the Christian Right’s campaign methods were dispelled as election results poured in. Ralph Reed, executive director of the Coalition, was quick to claim credit for much of the Republican Party’s stunning performance in the November elections (Stevens, 1994). Indeed, a Coalition survey found that “religious conservatives accounted for one third of the national vote, overwhelmingly for Republicans” (Keeping the faith, 1994). Additionally, the Christian Coalition claims that forty-four House electoral victories could be attributed to “pro-family, pro-life” groups (Washington, 1994). McGraw (1995) cites a University of Akron study which found that the Christian Right “played a significant role in 120 congressional districts” (p. 54).³ While the actual impact may be smaller, there is little reservation that the GOP and the religious right have discovered common ground in accusing Democrats of ignoring the economic and spiritual needs of the middle class. Here the larger theme of this article gains support. By employing nontraditional, issue-oriented methods, the GOP’s campaign outflanked the Democratic Party through the construction of a proactive platform and gained a commanding lead in shaping the national agenda. This platform meets the primary criteria required for propaganda synthesis.

Criterion B of the propaganda convergence theory states that an agency must also use information in a strategically detrimental fashion against an opposing cause. In order to distinguish the propagandistic agency’s advocated truth from other competing, lesser truths, political organizations frequently employ negative attacks. Argumentum ad hominem, argumentum ad populum, the intentional use of disinformation, and demonization are just a few of the derogatory methods employed by the propagandist. As with criterion A (positive appeals), each of the rhetorical agencies possessed their own arsenal of injurious rhetoric. Yet, none were as naked with their verbal aggression as GOPAC.

GOPAC: An Intellectual and Financial Armory

GOPAC played a significant role in the 94 elections by recruiting, educating, and funding Republican candidates at the local, state, and federal level. Gingrich began using the political action committee as a platform to advance his vision of a GOP revolution after its founder, former Delaware governor Pierre “Pete” DuPont, left it to launch his 1988 bid for the presi-

³ Dr. John Green, the researcher responsible for this study, reminded us in personal correspondence that “quantifying Christian Right involvement in campaigns is very difficult because so much of it is at the grassroots, highly informal, and information about it is closely held” (1995, p. 1).

dency.⁶ Before the explosion of press coverage concerning Gingrich and his Contract With America, GOPAC sponsored seminars and mailed thousands of text and tape-based lessons to aspiring candidates "instructing them on how to do in liberal opponents" (Barrett, Carney, & Tumulty 1995, 31). Using his organization to funnel nearly \$8 million since 1991 to Republicans who preach his kind of conservatism, Gingrich has called GOPAC "the Bell Labs of GOP politics" (Balz and Kovaleski, 1995, 13). Using all manner of media, Gingrich has created a virtual cult of personality—not with the general electorate—but within his own party's farm of contenders. We hold that Gingrich's strategy of providing support to potential GOP candidates was essential for his successful run for the Speakership at the beginning of 1997. Indeed, one can argue that his beltway support is more important than that support found in his home district.

As polling data suggests, Gingrich's rapid ascendance (Russakoff, 1995) and consolidation of power (Hook, 1995; Staff, 1995) are due less to his mercurial rhetoric and confrontational style than to his work behind-the-scenes as a conduit to power for Republican hopefuls. Borger (1995) illustrates the results of Gingrich's efforts by noting that "of the 75 new GOP members, 33 have been fed talking points by Gingrich's GOPAC" (29). Since Gingrich was elected Speaker of the House, the impact of his political action committee has been felt even more. After directing more lines of power through his offices and promoting GOPAC allies to powerful positions in the House, "congressional scholars believe that Mr. Gingrich has arrogated more power to himself than any speaker since Joseph Cannon" in the first years of this century (Staff, 1995, 24). Cannon served between Nov. 9, 1903 and March 3, 1911. Rather than being shaped by the institutional setting of the House of Representatives (Peters, 1990, 287), Gingrich has used GOPAC to reshape the institution.

As a means to power for Republican hopefuls, GOPAC bypassed both traditional financial requirements and rhetorical guidelines. Despite repeated pleas from House colleagues, Gingrich refused for years to reveal the PAC's financial backers (Cummings, 1994a). He argued that the unique nature of the organization precludes the need for public accounting: "Mr. Gingrich's aides argue that federal campaign laws do not require GOPAC to disclose anything but the spending it undertakes on behalf of candidates for federal office—about 10 percent of its outlays" (Mr. Gingrich's stealth PAC, 1994, A20).⁷ GOPAC represents the future of political fundraising—it coordinates local, state, and regional elections along a national agenda, making the most junior candidate a standard bearer for the party's larger agenda.

⁶ It must be recalled that GOPAC is the culmination of efforts by the so-called new right which experienced its first zenith with the nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964 (Rae, 1989). From Goldwater to Reagan to Gingrich, this movement has leveled sharp criticism towards moderate Republicans.

⁷ Even though GOPAC eventually relented to releasing the names of their contributors, they did so with unique provisos. The list only included individuals who contributed from November 17, 1994 through the end of that year. Adding to this limitation, GOPAC "required those wishing to inspect the list to come to the group's Washington headquarters and refused to allow them to make photocopies" (Gingrich group, 1995).

Similarly, GOPAC has served as a training ground for the rhetorical methods of a new generation of Republicans. Rather than emulate the low-key, collaborative style of former House minority leader Bob Michel, GOPAC has taught its beneficiaries to define themselves in stark dichotomy against Democrats by using ad hominem attacks and divisive language (Adams, 1990; Oreskes, 1990). In fact, "a 1990 document entitled 'Language, a Key Mechanism of Control,' offered a list of . . . negative words 'to define our opponents.' The first word was decay" (Balz and Kovaleski, 1995, 13). A St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial (A sling it yourself manual, 1990) printed another quotation from the document that noted, "the words and phrases are powerful . . . Read them. Memorize as many as possible" (C2). GOPAC designed this strategic use of emotion-laden language to strengthen the resistance of the faithful against the allegedly "liberal media" (Adams, 1990, 56–58). In advocating this tactic, GOPAC advocates a rhetorical trait common to the three forces examined in this essay: it bypassed traditional media and methods to reach an alienated audience. Further, the group satisfies the second component of our propaganda convergence theory by promoting an injurious means of rhetoric.

Criterion C of the propaganda convergence theory holds that rhetorical agencies create, possess, or will attempt to gain control over the mediums through which their positive and negative messages travel. This ensures propagandists that their message is being transmitted purely, without competing interference. While "feeding soundbites" to independent reporting agencies was an effective strategy (Adams, 1990), many preferred the direct route to mass exposure offered by talk radio.

Talk Radio: The Mouth that Roared

Talk radio was the medium that amplified the collective message in 1994, and its biggest mouth was Rush Limbaugh (O Neil, 1994; Kurtz, 1994). A self-styled entertainer who states, "my success is not determined by who wins elections, my success is determined by how many listeners I have" (1992, 22), Limbaugh was, in that election year, a significant player in national politics. Former Congressman Vin Weber says that Rush "is as responsible as anyone else for the GOP victory" (Corliss, 1995, 22) while during a December 1994 dinner for new Republicans coming to Congress, Limbaugh was hailed as "the Majority Maker" (Seelye, 1994). While he is not the only conservative talk show host with national influence, Limbaugh represents the convergence of forces this article seeks to examine. His close connection to GOP heavyweights translates into considerable political power. For example, after Limbaugh warned on his syndicated radio show that Republican resolve [to pass a balanced-budget amendment that required a three-fifths supermajority to raise taxes] was waning, Gingrich called him privately to reassure him—and his fifteen million listeners—that the Contract With America would be honored (Rosenstiel, 1995b).

However, as stated above, Limbaugh is only a metaphor for the larger theme, an alternative to traditional media that addresses a large and angry segment of the electorate. David Nyhan notes that "radio talk show hosts tend to draw callers who are male, frustrated and angry at blacks, immi-

grants, liberals, welfare mothers and Hillary Clinton among other things" (1994, 19). Culver adds that Christian radio broadcasting has entered the arena to represent people frustrated with "big government, President Clinton and public education" (1994, 12). Though Ralph Reed ties Republican success to his Christian Coalition, he is quick to state that "talk radio was one of the reasons for a power surge . . . by white evangelical born-again Christians" (Lambrecht, 1994, B5). Beyond political classifications, the influence of this medium is immense. According to a 1993 poll by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, 44% of Americans named talk radio as their chief source of political information (Corliss, 1995).

The empowering influence of talk radio flows both ways. As listeners use the medium for political education and edification, Republican strategists strive to harness the collective anger of millions of middle class Americans. Newt Gingrich, in particular, routinely rejects overtures by mainstream television news programs and even his hometown newspaper while "turning to talk radio, cable TV and proven conservative allies whom he trusts to faithfully convey his message" (Cummings, 1994b, 5b). Since assuming the Speakership, Gingrich has extended credentials and even floor space in the Capitol building for talk radio hosts to broadcast their programs (Dowd, 1995a). The symbiotic relationship between Gingrich and what he calls the 'alternative media' was sealed in September 1994 when the Republican National Committee organized 300 talk-radio interviews for Contract with America signatories and "many hosts read [pro-Contract statements provided by the GOP] verbatim on the air" (Corliss, 1995). Here again, the Republican Party bypassed traditional methods by appealing directly to the voters, using the emotional language, spiritual values, and high technology.

GOD, GOPAC, and GAB—The Postmodern Trinity?

By now it is well known that Newt Gingrich considers himself a futurist. He has taught the principles of Peter Drucker, extolled the optimism of John Naisbitt, and even developed "policy" with Alvin and Heidi Toffler. Thus, it is no surprise that he has recently turned to the much-touted bypasser of bureaucracy, the internet, to reach his voters of the 21st century (Dowd, 1995b). Fineman argues that "Newt propounds a world in which blast faxes, modems, satellite feeds and talk radio are the dedicated lines to the voters they wants to reach" (1994, 41). His vision for America is illustrated by the concept of hyperdemocracy—an information-driven society that risks confusing knowledge, wisdom, and passion in the blender of cyberspace discourse (Cole, Dickers & Reingold, 1995). However, the lessons of 1994 center on power and how the GOP benefited from a convergence of forces to gain it.

The Christian Right, GOPAC, and talk radio played essential and complementary roles in the Republican Congressional victory. This is not to suggest that some grand overarching strategy was responsible for the outcome in 1994. Indeed, the independent nature of these parties would render such a conclusion most suspect. The question emerges: how shall we understand this convergence? We note that several dimensions provide common ground among the three elements of this propagandistic convergence: interpersonal

relationships that inspired collaboration, shared need that inspired logistical coordination, and a sense of cultural conflict that inspired philosophical alliance. Yet, no single political agent could expect to create such a convergence, only to exploit one for limited aims. Claims otherwise merely serve the purpose of simplification. We propose, instead, that propaganda convergence is made possible by the overlap of rhetorical spaces—unique senses of marginality experienced by specific groups—that form a brief center. Various individuals may claim ownership of the center, as they did in the 1994 Republican victory, but none could maintain it. Part of the power of this convergence is the sense of alienation felt by each group. The Christian Right defined itself as distinct from a cultural wilderness. GOPAC sought to revitalize a relatively weakened party. Talk radio provided a voice to individuals who felt disenfranchised.

The sense of alienation that provided common ground to these elements provided a space in which individual voices received validation in a shared context. However, victory in the midterm elections eliminated much of what motivated that context. The struggles experienced by each of these groups is a testament to the ephemeral nature of the propagandistic center. Speaker Gingrich, to be sure, is aware of the limited power of immunity provided by the temporary nature of his popular acclaim. While discussing the separate agendas of Ralph Reed, Newt Gingrich, and Rush Limbaugh was necessary, this article has argued that the unique convergence of their collective efforts required closer scrutiny than the individual accomplishments of these people. As GOPAC drew strength from disenfranchised Christian voters who gained inspiration from talk radio that has earned the respect of Beltway insiders, the cycle that has led to a revolution is vicious or virtuous—depending on the reader's political persuasion. Partisanship aside, powerful forces and individual voices clearly found a shared space of discourse in 1994. And while the vote counters have defined the political ramifications, we are only now discovering the social implications of this powershift.

From this effort, a clear implication emerges. Unpacking this powershift, along with similar shifts, demands a macro-level, broad approach that is sensitive to the interconnected nature of agents which contribute to movements. A clear limitation to this study is that it was, perhaps, too comprehensive in scope; missing critical details which, on the whole, were as influential as the proposed rhetorical totality. In response, we note the difficulty that follows an attempt to develop guiding themes in a complicated phenomenon such as a political campaign. Theoretical attempts to pull strands from the fabric risk unraveling any sense of coherence, often resulting in conclusions which lack utility. While we sought to ground our meta-approach in the exigencies and strategies of the campaign, we take responsibility for the necessarily interpretative nature of our conclusions. Surely, other uses of this approach will address this methodological quandary more directly. A fruitful direction for inquiry might examine the use of propaganda in literature and media to perpetuate dominant positions or resist them. Either way, we suggest that further research into the nature and application of propaganda convergence take these questions as challenges: Can we view propaganda as the organic result of multi-layered structure and connection, or must persuasive messages be assumed to emit from explicitly individual

sources? Must the selection of elements studied in propaganda convergence research emerge from a deductive method, or can the selection emerge from a grounded reading? Finally, should the interpretations which follow this kind of analysis attempt a process of prediction and control, or can we find value in their ability to make sense of divergent purposes? By now we have made our intention clear; rather than assume a managerial approach towards the explication of propaganda, we believe that communication scholars view this phenomena as a process defined by co-creation and transcendence.

Literature Cited

- Adams, T. (1990, August). *An historical-critical, content, and grammatical analysis of GOPAC's buzzword strategy*, unpublished masters thesis from Florida State University, 1-133.
- A sling it yourself manual. (1990, September 14). *The St Louis Post-Dispatch*, p. C2.
- Armstrong, C. B., & Robin, A. M. (1989). Talk radio as interpersonal communication. *Journal of Communication*, 39(2), 84-94.
- Balz, D., & Kovalski, S. F. (1995, January 9-15). Dividing the GOP, conquering the agenda. *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, p. 13.
- Barrett, L. I., Carney, J., & Tumulty, K. (1995, November 7). Bringing down the house. *Time*, 31.
- Borger, G. (1995, January 16). The majority of one. *U.S. News and World Report*, 29.
- Boyd, D. A. (1990). "Radio warfare: OSS and CIA subversive propaganda" by Lawrence C. Soley and "global television" by Cynthia Schneider and Brian Willis. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 34(4), 500-502.
- Bugajski, J. (1987). Soviet block propaganda: The glasnost factor. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 4(4), 309-315.
- Bytwerk, R. (1988). Official satire in propaganda: The treatment of the United States in the GDR's "Eulenspiegel." *Central States Speech Journal*, 39(3&4), 304-314.
- . (1978). The rhetoric of defeat: Nazi propaganda in 1945. *Central States Speech Journal*, 67(1), 44-52.
- Carney, L., & Barrett, L. I. (1995, November 7). Help from a silent partner. *Time Magazine*, p. 32.
- Christian Coalition runs into flak over its election guides. (1994, November 3). *The Boston Globe*, p. 15.
- Clark, T. (1975). Rhetorical image-making: A case study of the Thomas Paine-William Smith propaganda debates. *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 40(3), 248-261.
- Cohen, E., & Menache, S. (1986). Holy wars and sainted warriors: Christian war propaganda in the middle ages. *Journal of Communication*, 36(2), 52-62.
- Cole, W., Dickers, J. F., & Reingold, E. M. (1995, January 23). Hyperdemocracy. *Time Magazine*, 145, p. 146.
- Connelly, W. F., & Pitney, J. J. (1994). The future of house republicans. *Political Science Quarterly*, 109, 571-593.
- Corliss, R. (1995, January 23). Look who's talking. *Time Magazine*, pp. 22-25.
- Cormack, M. (1990). Postmodernism, ideology, and politics. *Media, culture, and society*, 12(4), 545-553.
- Culver, Virginia (1994, November 6). Talk religion. *The Denver Post Magazine*, p. 12.
- Cummings, J. (1994a, August 19). Gingrich urged to reveal GOPAC's backers. *The Atlanta Constitution*, p. A9.
- . (1994b, November 20). Gingrich takes power, potshots. *The Atlanta Constitution*, p. B1.
- Cunningham, S. B. (1992). Sorting out the ethics of propaganda. *Communication Studies*, 43(4), 233-245.
- Daley, S. (1994, September 18). Coalition finds spot with GOP. *The Chicago Tribune*, p. A3.
- Dowd, M. (1995a, January 5). Speaking for house speaker and enjoying the trappings. *The New York Times*, pp. A1 & A24.

- . (1995b, January 11). King Newt and his court explore virtual America. *The New York Times*, p. A1.
- Dower, J. W. (1986). *War without mercy: Race and power in the Pacific war*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Drescher, D. (1987). A typology of international political communication: Factual statements, propaganda, and noise. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 4(2), 83-91.
- Ellul, J. (1981). The ethics of propaganda: Propaganda, innocence, and amorality. *Communication*, 6(2), 159-175.
- Feldmann, L. (1994, September 19). Christian right rebounds to sway GOP in campaigns. *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. 1.
- . (1995, January 6). Traditions fall as house GOP speeds reform. *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. 4.
- Fineman, H. (1994, November 21). Revenge of the right. *Newsweek*, 37-41.
- Foskett, K. (1994, November 3). Christian coalition voter guides attacked. *The Atlanta Constitution*, p. A1.
- Fulwood, S. (1994, November 5). Interest groups firing up the electorate. *The Los Angeles Times*, p. A16.
- Gingrich group discloses first list of contributors. (1995, January 19). *Wall Street Journal*, via internet: DowVision.
- Goodstein, L. (1994, November 3). Christian coalition has big plans for suncay. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.
- Green, J. C. (1995, March 14). Personal correspondence.
- Gronbeck, B. E. (1992). Negative narrative in 1988 presidential campaign ads. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78(3), 333-346.
- Gross, P. (1989). Exercise in cynicism and propaganda: Law, legality, and foreign correspondence in Romania. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 6(3), 179-190.
- Gunter, M., & Taylor, J. S. (1973). Loyalist propaganda in the sermons of Charles Ingles, 1770-1780. *Western Speech*, 37(1), 47-55.
- Hiebert, R. (1993). Public relations, propaganda, and war: A book review and essay on the literature. *Public Relations Review*, 16(3), 39-54.
- Hoffer, T. W. (1974). Nguyen Van Be as propaganda hero of the North and South Vietnamese governments: A case study of mass media conflict. *Southern Communication Journal*, 40(1), 63-80.
- Hook, J. (1995, January 7). Republicans take the gavel in historic turnover. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, 122.
- Ignasias, C. D. (1971). Propaganda and public opinion in Harding's foreign affairs: The case for Mexican recognition. *Journalism Quarterly*, 48(1), 41-52.
- Jakubowicz, K. (1992). From party propaganda to corporate speech? Polish journalism in search of a new identity. *Journal of Communication*, 42(3), 64-73.
- Jowett, G. (1993). Propaganda and the Gulf War. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 10(3), 286-300.
- . (1991). Propaganda critique: The forgotten history of American communication studies. *Communication Yearbook*, 14, 239-248.
- . (1987). Propaganda and communication: The re-emergence of a research tradition. *Journal of Communication*, 37(1), 97-114.
- Kaid, L. L., & Johnston, A. (1991). Negative versus positive television advertising in U.S. Presidential Campaigns, 1960-1988. *Journal of Communication*, 41(3), 53-64.
- Kampf, H. (1987). The challenge of Marxist-Leninist propaganda. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 4(2), 103-122.
- Kanpol, B. (1990). Political applied linguistics and postmodernism: Towards an engagement of similarity within differences. A reply to Pennycook. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 238-250.
- Kieh, G. K. (1990). Propaganda and United States foreign policy: The case of Panama. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 7(2), 61-72.
- Keeping the faith: conservative christians showed their growing role. (1994, November 13). *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, B5.

- Kurtz, H. (1994, November 10). Talk radio hosts, waking up on the right side of the bed. *The Washington Post*, D4.
- Lacayo, R. (1995, January 16). Master of the house. *Time Magazine*, 26.
- Lambrecht, B. (1994, November 13). Radio activity. *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, p. B1.
- Leventhal, T. (1984). Terror and propaganda: The two pillars of Soviet policy in Afghanistan. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 2(3), 277-282.
- Lewis, T. (1993). Triumph of the idol—Rush Limbaugh and a hot medium. *Media Studies Journal*, 7(3), 51-61.
- Limbaugh, R. (1992). *The way things ought to be*. New York: Pocket Star.
- Lindahl, R. (1983). Analyses of international propaganda broadcasts. *Communication Research*, 10(3), 375-402.
- McGraw, D. (1995, March 13). The Christian Capitalists. *U.S. News and World Report*, 53-62.
- Marlin, C. L. (1987). Space race propaganda; U.S. coverage of the Soviet Sputnik in 1957. *Journalism Quarterly*, 64(2&3), 544-549, 559.
- Martin, J. (1982). Disinformation as a form of propaganda: An instrumentality in the propaganda arsenal. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 2(1), 47-64.
- McKerrow, R. (1991). Critical rhetoric and propaganda studies. *Communication Yearbook*, 14, 249-255.
- Mr. Gingrich's stealth PAC. (1994, August 1). *The Washington Post*, p. A20.
- Mumby, D. K. (1992). Communication, postmodernism, and the politics of common sense. *Communication Yearbook*, 15, 571-581.
- Nagy, A. (1990). Word wars at home; U.S. response to World War II propaganda. *Journalism Quarterly*, 67(1), 207-213.
- Nyhan, D. (1994, November 9). Hello Rush, I'm a he-man, and I've had it. *The Boston Globe*, p. 19.
- O'Neil, T. (1994, November 10). Limbaugh sends 'gloatmeter' well into red zone. *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, p. B11.
- Oreskes, M. (1990, September 9). For G.O.P. arsenal, 133 words to fire. *The New York Times*, p. A30.
- Orwant, J. (1972). Effects of derogatory attacks in Soviet arms control propaganda. *Journalism Quarterly*, 49(1), 107-115.
- Peters, R. M. (1990). *The American speakership: the office in historical perspective*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Phillips, K. (1995 Spring). Virtual Washington. *Time*, Special issue: Welcome to cyberspace, 65-68.
- Pollay, R. (1990). Propaganda, puffing, and the public interest. *Public Relations Review*, 16(3), 39-54.
- Rae, N. C. (1989). *The decline and fall of the liberal republicans from 1952 to the present*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ratcliffe, R. G. (1994, October 30). Coalition offers voters guided tour of candidates. *The Houston Chronicle*, p. D4.
- Rhodes, A. (1987). *Propaganda: The art of persuasion—World War II*. Secaucus, NJ: Wellfleet Press.
- Rogers, J., & Clevenger, T. (1971). "The Selling of the Pentagon": Was CBS the Fulbright propaganda machine? *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 57(3), 266-273.
- Rohde, D. W. (1991). *Parties and leaders in the postreform house*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- . (1992). Electoral forces, political agendas, and partisanship in the House and Senate. In R. H. Davidson (Ed.), *The postreform congress*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Rosenstiel, T. (1995, January 16). Newt's show and tell. *Newsweek*, 16.
- Rosenstiel, T. (1995, January 23). Twists and turns on the road rightward. *Newsweek*, 23.
- Russakoff, D. (1995, January 2-8). The Search for Newt Gingrich. *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, p. 6-8.
- Seelye, K. (1994, December 12). Republicans get a pep talk from Rush Limbaugh. *The New York Times*, p. A16.
- Shogan, R. (1994, September 18). GOP has pulpit at meeting of religious right. *The Los Angeles Times*, p. A1.

- Sinclair, B. (1983). *Majority leadership in the U.S. House*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sproule, J. M. (1997). Propaganda and American ideological critique. *Communication Yearbook*, 14, 53-64.
- . (1989). Progressive propaganda critics and the magic bullet myth. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6(3), 225-246.
- . (1987). Propaganda studies in American social science: The rise and fall of the critical paradigm. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73(1), 60-78.
- Staff. (1994, November 12). Incoming! incoming!. *The Economist*, 29-32.
- . (1995, January 7). The odd couple. *The Economist*, 24.
- Stevens, C. (1994, November 10). Religious right, social conservatives take credit for wins. *The Detroit News*, p. A6.
- Suber, P. (1990). A case study in ad hominem arguments: Fichte's "Science of Knowledge." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 23(1), 12-42.
- Symms, S., & Snow, E. (1981). Soviet propaganda and the neutron bomb decision. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 1(3), 257-268.
- Wang, K., & Starck, K. (1989). Red China's external propaganda during Sino-U.S. rapprochement. *Journalism Quarterly*, 49(4), 674-678.
- Wasburn, P. (1989). The counter-propaganda of Radio RSA: The voice of South Africa. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 33(2), 117-138.
- Washington wire: The religious right. (1994, November 11). *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A1.
- Weatherly, M. (1971). Propaganda and the rhetoric of the American Revolution. *Southern Speech Journal*, 36(4), 352-363.
- Wolvin, A. (1971). The Pentagon propaganda machine. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 57(2), 234-236.
- Wood, R. V., Bračac, J. J., Barnhart, S. A., & Kraft, E. (1970). The effect of learning about techniques of propaganda on subsequent reaction to propagandistic communications. *Speech Teacher*, 19(1), 49-53.
- Wozniuk, V. (1989). The propaganda campaign for a new orthodoxy in Soviet social science. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, 6(4), 249-268.