

Propaganda Techniques

Remember, the purpose of propaganda is to cause strong emotional reactions. The goal is to promote feeling, NOT thinking. Propaganda only works when people take it at face value and don't think about and analyze the accuracy and meaning of the message.

The questions to ask are:

How does this serve the interests of those propagating the propaganda?
What is being left out of the message and why?

Some Common Propaganda Techniques

Name Calling/Stereotyping
Appeal to Fear
Big Lie
Artificial Dichotomy
Diversion/Deflection

Fake News
Cause and Effect Mismatch
Stalling and Ignoring
Repetition

Below are some of the most common propaganda techniques.

Once these techniques are understood, it becomes easier to identify their use.

Name Calling/Stereotyping Using negative words to turn you against a person or ideas without giving evidence or facts. Examples: socialist, fascist, tree-hugger, environmentalist, special-interest group.

Appeal to Fear Plays on deep-seated fears. Propagandist warns the audience that disaster will result if they do not follow a particular action. Ex. To prevent terrorism here, need to prevent immigrants from many Muslim countries from coming here.

Big Lie A false statement of outrageous magnitude employed as a propaganda measure in the belief that a lesser falsehood would not be credible. Ex. Pres. Trump claims landslide victory. (Reality, his election is in the bottom 1/4 of Electoral College winners.)

Artificial Dichotomy Someone tries to claim there are only 2 sides to an issue and that both sides must have equal presentation in order to be evaluated. This is used to dupe us into believing there is only one way to look at an issue, when in fact there may be many alternative viewpoints. It simplifies reality and therefore distorts it, often to the advantage of the speaker. Ex. EPA regulations kill jobs.

Diversion/Deflection When a major issue comes up that is embarrassing or threatening, diversion is created away from the issue. Ex. US Intelligence Agencies conclude Trump victory came with the aid of Putin. Trump's response—"These are the same people that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction." Trump—"I know a lot about hacking. And it is hard to prove. So it could be somebody else..."

Fake News Fabricated content designed to fool readers and subsequently made viral through the internet to crowds that increase its dissemination. Ex. As a result of Fake News, a man entered a Pizza Place with a gun to save abused children.

Cause and Effect Mismatch Confuses the audience about what is really cause and effect. Most situations are complex. Ex. I am a successful businessman therefore I will be a successful president.

Stalling or Ignoring Used to play for more time to avoid answering pointed questions. Ex. "More research is needed, "a fact-finding committee is working on this issue", "I am calling for an investigation".

Repetition Same word or phrased used over and over. Ex. Trump tweeted, “In addition to winning the Electoral College in a **landslide...**” Trump in an interview, “We had a massive **landslide** victory in the Electoral College, as you know...” interview. Kellyanne Conway repeats with, “**Landslide. Blowout. Historic.**”

Additional Commonly Used Propaganda Techniques

Appear to be Common Man-Plain Folks attempt to convince the audience that a prominent person and his ideas are “of the people.” Ex. Politician photographed eating at McDonald’s

Bandwagon makes the appeal that “everyone else is doing it, and so should you.” Ex. Trump-“I wish these cameras could spin around and show the kind of people we have here, the numbers of people here. You know what the silent majority isn’t so silent any more...”

Misuse of Statistics Trump says he wants to stop immigration into the US in order to increase American wages. Recent studies show this to be untrue.

Transfer A device by which the propagandist links the authority or prestige of something well-respected and revered, such as church or nation, to something he would have us accept. Ex: Person is patriotic because he/she wears an American Flag lapel pin.

Testimonial Public figure or a celebrity promotes or endorses a product, a policy, or a political candidate. This is used to convince us without examining the facts more carefully. Ex. an actor speaks at a political rally

Loaded Word/Slanted Word Intended to inspire emotion, used to degrade others, or to gain a political foothold. Ex. Tax on inherited wealth is renamed a “death tax” by those who want to end inheritance taxes for the wealthy.

Glittering Generality It is a vague emotionally appealing phrase so closely associated with highly valued concepts and beliefs that it carries conviction without supporting information or reason. Ex. Democracy, patriotism, family

ad Hominem/Deflection You attack the messenger, instead of the argument or evidence that is presented. Ex. Generalizing views of a political party as an insulting argument. “Well it is pretty obvious that your party doesn’t know how to be fiscally responsible, so I would expect you to be either.”

Bully and Intimidate If someone resists him, Trump Big Lie, he attacks. “Meryl Streep, one of the most overrated actresses in Hollywood...just more dishonest very dishonest media.”

Preemptive Framing “Frame an issue before other people get a chance to” (George Lakoff-On the Media 2017). Ex. “The only reason the hacking of the poorly defended Democratic National Committee is discussed is that the loss by the Dems was so big that they were totally embarrassed.”-Donald trump.

In fact the Dems did not lose big, nor was it their fault they got hacked.

Source: Many Internet sites on propaganda.

Kellyanne Conway Specialties.

Mothersplaining When Pres. Trump says something outrageous and Kellyanne Conway responds by saying, “We should judge what’s in his heart”

Ice Queening Conway acting angry or stern. “Well he is the president-elect, so (reference to an action of trump), so that’s presidential behavior”.

Subtracting from Viewer’s Understanding Kellyanne Conway’s speed in delivery. She rarely pauses at the end of a sentence. Its digression. And it’s range. She’s able to package entire arguments-whole scripts-into short sentences. Ex. Conway offered an uncharacteristically straight answer, “the White House response is that he’s not going to release his tax returns.” (Which she would retract the next day). She followed that unadorned response on the call for Trump’s tax returns, with a dizzying series of justifications that pivoted seamlessly into a complaint that the Democrats aren’t ratifying Trump’s nominees quickly enough.

Concept Scrabble Kellyanne takes words from a question and recombines them. It gives impression of straightforwardness. “Most Americans are very focused on what their tax returns will look like while Pres. Trump is in office, not what his look like.

Imply Bad Faith This is when Kellyanne uses this response: “and you know fully well that Trump....”

Conflating Victory Kellyanne’s buried logic “Trump won, so any issues that arose during his campaign are off the table. Ex. “People didn’t care. They voted for him.”

Source: Lili Loofbourow, THE Week, “*How Kellyanne Conway became the greatest spin doctor in modern American history*”. January 31, 2017.

<http://theweek.com/articles/675240/how-kellyanne-conway-became-greatest-spin-doctor-modern-american-history>