



Modality, Persuasion and Manipulation in Canadian Conservative Discourse

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DONNA L. LILLIAN

East Carolina University

lilliand@ecu.edu

Abstract

*Modality as a linguistic device encompasses a variety of forms, including (but not limited to) modal auxiliaries, modal verbs, modal adverbs, and modal adjectives. The present paper focuses specifically on the use of modal auxiliaries in two political texts. The first text, *Beyond Greed: A Traditional Conservative Confronts Neoconservative Excess*, is by Hugh Segal, who might be described as a ‘mainstream’ Canadian conservative, and the second, *The War Against the Family*, is by William D. Gairdner, who represents a far right neoconservative position in Canadian politics. Fowler (1985) proposes five categories of modality: validity, predictability, desirability, obligation, and permission. Following Fowler, I classify the modals in Segal’s book of approximately 35,000 words and in a representative 35,000 words segment of Gairdner’s book. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming number of clauses in both texts fall into the categories of validity and predictability, which are, to some extent, the default modalities of (quasi) academic non-fiction texts. Interesting differences arise, however, when one considers the deontic modalities of desirability, permission, and obligation. Using the data obtained through this analysis, I argue that Segal’s writing constitutes persuasion, whereas Gairdner’s constitutes manipulation.*

Keywords: *Modality, persuasion, manipulation, conservatism, Canada*

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analyses of Canadian texts are rare in the body of critical discourse literature, yet many of the same social forces are at work in Canada as in more well-studied countries such as the U.S.A. and Great Britain, and the same techniques of discursive manipulation are used by those who would obtain and retain political, social, and economic power. This paper is one in a series in which I apply the methods of critical discourse analysis to Canadian data (see also Lillian 1996, 1997, 2005, 2007, forthcoming). While these papers focus on a variety of discursive techniques including lexical choices, metaphor, transitivity, and syntax, the present paper rounds out this set of studies by focusing on modality as a tool of manipulation.

The distinction between manipulation and persuasion is important to my argument and is discussed further in section 6, below. The same linguistic devices that can be used illegitimately, for manipulation, can also be used

legitimately, as tools of persuasion and information. As van Dijk notes, ‘...as *such*, discourse structures are not manipulative; they only have such functions or effects in specific communicative situations’ (2006: 372). Thus, when I argue, below, that William Gairdner’s use of deontic modality renders his discourse manipulative, I do so in part in the context of my other analyses of his discourse as sexist, racist, and homophobic, in part in the context of what may be seen as a ‘normal’ or default style of informative writing, and in part in the context of a comparison between Gairdner’s use of modals and the use of modals by another conservative Canadian writer, Hugh Segal.

2. Defining Modality

The term ‘modality’ subsumes a range of concepts within the fields of philosophy, morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse analysis. Philosophy deals with modality primarily as it applies to categories of logic and to logical reasoning, and while some of the terminology used in philosophical studies of modality is borrowed into other disciplines, these terms are not always used in the same ways or for the same purposes in other disciplines. As Sulkunen and Törrönen explain, ‘for linguists, the logical treatment of modalities is too narrow, because it is centered on truth values of propositions. Linguistic analysis of modalities presents much more diversity in its problematics and approaches’ (1997: 45). For their part, linguistic studies of modality can be located in a variety of linguistic sub-disciplines. Specifically, morphology describes the lexical forms in which modality is manifested in different languages, syntax describes the complex syntactic configurations in which modality may be manifested, and semantics identifies modal meanings and explores the variety of ways these meanings may be expressed morphologically, syntactically, phonologically, and pragmatically. This paper, however, takes a discourse analytic approach, specifically a critical discourse analytic approach, employing the concept of modality to characterize the political orientation of two sample texts.

Within critical discourse analysis, modality is understood as encompassing much more than simply the occurrence of overt modal auxiliaries such as *may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, must, and ought*. Rather, modality concerns the writer’s (or speaker’s) attitude toward and/or confidence in the proposition being presented. In Halliday’s system, modality is primarily located in the interpersonal component of the grammar and choices in this component are independent of grammatical choices in other components, for example, choices of transitivity in the ideational component (Halliday 2002a: 200).

Modality may be expressed through certain types of main verbs, as well as through adjectives, adverbs, and certain nominalizations. Fowler (1985) provides a brief list to illustrate these categories of modals.

Modality is signified in a range of linguistic forms: centrally, the modal auxiliary verbs *may, shall, must, need*, and others; sentence adverbs such as *probably, certainly, regrettably*; adjectives such as *necessary, unfortunate, certain*. Some verbs, and many nominalizations, are essentially modal: *permit, predict, prove; obligation, likelihood, desirability, authority*. (Fowler 1985: 73)

While recognizing the range of ways in which modality can be expressed in English, this paper focuses solely on the presence or absence of overt modal auxiliaries and on their nature and distribution in the two texts under consideration.

Although there are broad categories of modality recognized by all scholars in the field, there are nevertheless differences in the ways in which modalities are classified and categorized. For example, linguist Otto Jespersen (1924) makes a broad division of modalities into two categories: those that contain an element of will and those that contain no element of will. Philosopher Georg von Wright (1951) postulates 4 modes: alethic (necessary, possible, contingent, impossible), epistemic (verified, undecided, falsified), deontic (obligatory, permitted, indifferent, forbidden), and existential (universal, existing, empty). Palmer (1986) focuses on epistemic and deontic modalities, which corresponding roughly with Jespersen's two categories, while Palmer (2001) reorganizes categories of modality such that the first division is between Propositional modality on the one hand, encompassing both epistemic and evidential modality, and Event modality on the other hand, encompassing both deontic and dynamic modality. Propositional modality is concerned with the speaker's attitude to the truth value or factual status of the proposition, while Event modality refers to events that are not actualized, events that have not taken place but are merely potential (Palmer 2001: 8).

Fowler (1985) proposes 5 categories of modality which indicate speakers' or writers' attitudes to the proposition they utter.

The attitudes fall into the areas of validity – the speaker expresses greater or lesser confidence in the truth of the proposition; predictability – the future events referred to are more or less likely to happen; desirability – practical, moral, or aesthetic judgments; obligation – speaker's judgment that another person is obligated to perform some action; permission – speaker allows addressee to perform some action. (Fowler 1985: 72)

The first two categories, validity and predictability, correspond roughly to von Wright's epistemic category and to Jespersen's category 'containing no element of will', while the remaining three, desirability, obligation, and permission correspond roughly to von Wright's deontic category and to Jespersen's category of 'containing an element of will'. In the analysis that follows, I employ Fowler's categories of modality as those particularly well suited to the analysis of power in specific texts.

The connection of these last two modal meanings [obligation and permission] with power is obvious, but the first three are also significantly implicated: Frequent and confident judgments of validity, predictability, and (un)desirability are an important part of the practices by means of which claims to authority are articulated and legitimated authority is expressed. (Fowler 1985: 72-73)

3. The Data

The two texts examined in this study are *The War Against the Family* by William D. Gairdner (1992), and *Beyond Greed: A Traditional Conservative*

Confronts Neoconservative Excess by Hugh Segal (1997). Gairdner and Segal are both contemporary Canadian writers. Both are writing texts outlining their political perspectives in the hopes of persuading Canadian readers to support their points of view. Both define themselves as conservatives; however, they represent significantly different positions on the political continuum. Segal represents what might be described as mainstream, traditional Canadian conservatism. His position falls to the right of centre, but he still embraces the social responsibility signified by 'progressive' in the name of the (now-defunct) Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, of which Segal was an active member and one-time leadership candidate. Gairdner, on the other hand, represents an extreme neo-conservative position on the Canadian spectrum. At the time he wrote *The War Against the Family*, his position reflected and influenced that of the Reform Party of Canada, a short-lived federal party which attempted to turn Canada's politics sharply to the right, more in line with Reaganism in the U.S.A. and Thatcherism in Great Britain than with late 20th century Canadian political sentiment.

Segal's is a relatively short book of approximately 35,000 words. In his introduction, Segal divides North American conservatism into two major streams. The first he refers to as 'Tories, Mainline Republicans (the Old Right)' (Segal 1997: 3), and then he later identifies this position as 'civil conservatism' (1997: 9). His short description of this stream of conservatism, the one which he supports, shows it to be both conservative and pluralistic.

While for limited government, this group does not denigrate or dismiss the importance of government and other institutions like religion, the military, or the business sector in the larger cause of equality of opportunity and some measure of fairness. This group favors a broad pluralism in society, eschews liberal naiveté about big government, and in its interest in law and stability has no illusions about the need to control the worst aspects of human nature. (Segal 1997: 3)

The second group he identifies as 'Neoconservatives, Reformers, Nativists (the New Right)' (1997: 3), and it is into this group that he would place Gairdner. The negative terms in which Segal describes their position makes it clear that he does not support them.

Taking their inspiration from the excessive classical exaltation of the "individual" in nineteenth-century liberalism, this group values freedom as the core value – far more than responsibility to each other or to the common good. Their approach is to diminish the apparent efficacy of any expression of common interest that emerges through the use of democratically elected government. They prefer policies and decisions that significantly favor individual freedom in all areas except when in conflict with their moral code. And in that regard, they view too much pluralism in terms of lifestyle and values as a threat to a moral code they are prepared to use the state and laws to impose. (Segal 1997: 3-4)

In contrast to Segal's fairly short book, Gairdner's, *The War Against the Family*, is 655 pages long (an estimated 271,000 words). In order to have a text comparable to the length of Segal's for analysis and comparison, I took the equivalent of approximately 35,000 words from Gairdner's book,

consisting of chapters 1, “The State versus the Family”, 18, “Turning Wrongs into Rights: The Law vs. the Family”, and 19, “A Call to Action: The Choices Before Us”. Most of the other chapters in this book deal with specific topics such as feminism, gay rights, religion, sports, schools, sex education, abortion, euthanasia, ‘the Swedish lesson’, and what Gairdner presents as ‘the ten popular illusions’. While all these chapters deal with aspects of his ‘family values’ political orientation, each individually is too narrow in focus to compare with Segal’s text. Furthermore, several of those chapters have already been the focus of other studies I have done on Gairdner’s discourse (Lillian 1997, 2005, 2007, forthcoming). In contrast, the chapters I selected for analysis more broadly outline Gairdner’s overall political and social ideology, and they have not been the focus of any other analyses. These chapters therefore provide an appropriate equivalent to the broad political outlines of Segal’s text.

4. Methodology

I began by reading through Segal’s book and the three selected chapter from Gairdner’s book, highlighting every occurrence of modal auxiliaries, omitting those which appear in the Preface of Segal’s book, written by Peter Lougheed, and those which occur within quotations from other authors. Next, I attempted to classify each occurrence of an overt modal according to Fowler’s five categories. Classifying the modals is by no means unproblematic, since individual modals may function in more than one category. For example, borrowing examples from Palmer (2001: 10), *can* conveys permission in the sentence, ‘John can come in now’, but conveys ability in the sentence, ‘John can speak French’. It is therefore necessary to consider the context in which each modal auxiliary appears and to attempt to interpret which possible meaning is the most likely one. Because interpretation and judgement are involved, the classifications arrived must be regarded as being open to some differences of opinion should another scholar examine the same data. Nevertheless, most cases were clear and unambiguous, and even if reinterpretation of the data resulted in the shift of one or two examples from one category to another, the overall patterns are robust enough that minor variations in the classification of ambiguous cases would not substantially alter the findings of this study. After each modal had been classified first as representing either epistemic or deontic modality, and then within the deontic category as conveying desirability, obligation, or permission, a tally of modal use was made for each author. This methodology is similar to that followed by Piqué-Angordans, Posteguillo and Andreu-Besó (2002) in their study of the use of epistemic and deontic modals in three varieties of academic English.

Following the initial classification by semantic category, a second tally was made of the modals *ought*, *should*, and *must* and the semi-modal *have to*, since these are the modals which primarily signal desirability and obligation. Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish with certainty whether an occurrence of one of these expresses desirability or obligation, as in the following example, which forms the last line of Segal’s introduction: ‘This is why the debate must be joined’ (Segal 1997: 10). Is Segal expressing a sense of obligation to join the debate about Canadian conservatism, or is he merely

expressing a strong desire in that regard? And who is the intended agent in the clause? The agentless passive construction certainly implies that the reader may be included, a hypothesis that is strengthened by the fact that Segal elsewhere uses first-person pronouns when he is referring specifically to himself. As for the question of whether obligation or desirability is being conveyed, I would argue that while a sense of obligation is conveyed with respect to the author himself, it is less clear that the reader is implicated as being obligated rather than just encouraged to join this debate. Thus, in addition to interpreting and classifying the modals according to their functional category, I also made a count of which particular modal auxiliaries were used by each of the two authors, with interesting results.

5. Results

5.1 Epistemic Modality

The overwhelming majority of clauses in both books fall into the categories of validity or predictability, and particularly in the case of validity, many of these clauses contain no overt modals at all. Since English does not require that each clause contain a modal, the absence of one is generally unremarkable. Furthermore, I would suggest that for the genre of (quasi) academic non-fiction in which authors make assertions about what is, what has been, and what will be, epistemic modalities, with or without an explicit modal auxiliary, are the default modalities. In the data, Segal uses overt epistemic modals a total of 224 times, while Gairdner used them a total of 223 times. The equivalence of these numbers makes further examination of the epistemic category unnecessary and uninteresting.

Table 1: Totals of Epistemic and Deontic Modals

	Segal	Gairdner
Epistemic	224	223
Deontic	54	117

5.2 Deontic Modality

More interesting is how the two authors employ the deontic modalities of desirability, obligation and permission. Here strong differences emerge. If we aggregate the results for the three deontic categories, we get a total of 54 deontic modals used by Segal, versus 117 used by Gairdner (including 5 occurrences of *have to*, which functions as a modal auxiliary in this context).

Particularly given the nearly identical figures for epistemic modals, a clear difference emerges between the two authors. Taking the categories one at a time, the figures for desirability are Segal 22 versus Gairdner 18, for obligation Segal 31 versus Gairdner 78, and for permission Segal 1 versus Gairdner 21.

Table 2: Deontic Modals by Sub-Category

	Segal	Gairdner
Desirability	22	18
Obligation	31	78
Permission	1	21

5.2.1 Permission

The category of permission is perhaps easiest to deal with, so will be discussed first. The only occurrence of a modal of permission in Segal is shown in (1). In this and in all subsequent examples, I have underlined the modal or modals of interest.

- (1)
It is not too much to ask those who run for office to have a plan for how that office may be and should be used ...(Segal 1997: 92)

I am interpreting *may* as signaling permission here because the context suggests that Segal refers to what is permitted by law.

Gairdner's uses of modalities of permission include examples of *may*, *may not*, *can*, *cannot*, and *could not*. Most of these involve statements about what the law does or does not permit, as examples (2) – (5) illustrate.

- (2)
Until recently, a husband and wife could not testify against one another. (Gairdner 1992: 541)

- (3)
At this point, the law, instead of simply telling you what you cannot do, increasingly tells you what you must do. (Gairdner 1992: 557)

- (4)
To add insult to injury, if Miss Jones gets a job, she can hire her partner to care for the children while she is working, and get reimbursed for her daycare costs – which she could not do if she married him. (Gairdner 1993: 564)

- (5)
... a mother ... may enslave the father to the child's support for 18 years; yet a mother alone may decide to kill her unborn baby. (Gairdner 1992: 592)

Example (6) shows Gairdner's use of permission for something other than a matter of law.

- (6)
It's because reason, like a shovel, is but an instrument – not a moral faculty. You may use it to dig a foundation for a home, or to beat someone to death. (Gairdner 1992: 543-544)

Gairdner frequently expresses objections to and recommendations concerning Canadian laws, particularly in the realm of family law, and the statements he makes using a modality of permission almost always serve this preoccupation, which is one apparently not shared by Segal.

5.2.2 Desirability

Segal and Gairdner are closer in their tallies of modalities of desirability than they are in either of the other deontic modalities, with Segal using 22 and Gairdner using 18 of these. The particular modal most often associated with the category of desirability is *should*, but on occasion other modals such as *would* can be interpreted as signaling desirability, as illustrated in (7).

(7)

This essay is about taking back the battlefield of political debate from those who would carpet bomb with arrogance, insensitivity, and the language of division. (Segal 1997: 9)

In this case, *would* conveys something about the desire of Segal's political opponents, as he sees it. Furthermore, not all occurrences of *should* necessarily signal desirability. Some may signal obligation (see examples (12) and (13) below), and, of course, some have an epistemic function, as in the hypothetical example, 'Should you want more coffee, you may signal the server, who will bring it to your table'. Examples (8) – (11) show representative examples from both Segal and Gairdner of their use of modalities of desirability.

(8)

Tools of government should be used sparingly and the state should defer when community, family, and private sector options can sort out areas without government presence. This should be a majority of the time, but the hard truth is that in areas of order, stability, democratic process, fairness, and social justice, there is a role that government should and can play. (Segal 1997: 91)

(9)

The politics of greed and a society based on that politics is no politics or society at all. Which should trouble not only mainstream conservatives but all citizens of democracies where hope, confidence, freedom, and opportunity truly matter. (Segal 1997: 176)

(10)

Government should never attempt to manage or control the people's morality, or engineer their behaviour. Rather, it should create an environment in which each person, subject to the same rules, will control himself [*sic*]. (Gairdner 1992: 15)

(11)

For this reason, we should restore our Judea-Christian roots and allow prayer in any school that wishes it. (Gairdner 1992: 597)

5.2.3 Obligation

The most interesting contrast between the two writers concerns their use of modalities of obligation. The prototypical modal of obligation in the data is *must*, and both authors use it. Gairdner also uses variations on *have to*. I have classified *ought* as signifying obligation, rather than desirability, because contextually it seems to function that way. Palmer argues that past tense forms of both *ought to* and *should* signify obligation, but weaken the force of deontic *must* (2001:73). Palmer contrasts ‘He ought to/should come, but he won’t’, with ‘*He must come but he won’t’, to illustrate that *ought to/should* admit the possibility that the event may not take place. Furthermore, *ought to* and *should* may refer to past events, whereas *must* cannot. Palmer explains that ‘the explanation for these two points is that *ought to* and *should* are essentially conditional – referring to what would occur or what would have occurred’ (Palmer 2001: 74).

Palmer presents the following glosses of examples using *ought*:

You ought to come
 ‘You have an obligation to come, and you would come if you fulfilled it’
 You ought to have come
 ‘You had an obligation to come and you would have come if you had fulfilled it’
 (Palmer 2001: 74)

I would argue that *should*, however, does not function in a manner parallel to *ought* in Palmer’s example sentences and that the two modals are therefore not as functionally equivalent as he implies. ‘You should come’ could mean ‘You have an obligation to come and you would come if you fulfilled it’, but it could just as easily mean ‘It would be good if you came’, or ‘It is desirable that you come’. Hence, I will concur with Palmer’s characterization of *ought* as indicating obligation, but maintain that *should* functions as signaling either obligation or desirability, and that only an examination of the textual context of its use can begin to disambiguate it. Example (12) illustrates *should* being used to signal obligation, in this case the obligation to follow the law, and (13) illustrates *should* being used to signal desirability, in this case, Gairdner’s preferences with respect to the tax system.

(12)
 Egalitarianism, a first cousin and natural companion of collectivism, originally meant that all citizens, without regard to class, race, sex, or any other personal characteristic, should be treated equally by the law of the land. (Gairdner 1992: 12)

(13)
 A proper federation should not allow the central powers to tax the people directly. Rather, the states, whose incomes are controlled by the people via the referendum, should in turn fix an annual proportion of their incomes for the central power. (Gairdner 1992: 590)

Table 3: Counts for Modals of Obligation

	Segal	Gairdner
should	29	31
ought	1	24
must	23	39
have to	--	5

A further differentiating characteristic of deontic *should* and *ought* is that *ought* has a more prescriptive edge than *should*, at least as it is used in these texts. Coates (1983) presents a different interpretation of *should* and *ought*, however, based on her study of two large corpora. Specifically, she argues that *ought* is somewhat weaker than *should* on a continuum from offering advice, through conveying moral obligation, to conveying obligation of the sort typically communicated by *must*. Of *should*, Coates writes,

At its strongest, SHOULD takes on the meaning of moral obligation, or duty (defined in moral or legal terms). At its weakest, it merely offers advice, if subjective, or describes correct procedure, if objective. (Coates 1983: 59)

In contrast, Coates argues that ‘Root OUGHT expresses weak ‘Obligation’; it offers advice rather than gives a command’ (Coates 1983: 70).

Coates also notes that *ought* is used relatively rarely, particularly in written texts, in which she found it to occur on average only once per 10,000 words (1983: 23). In my corpus, Segal uses *ought* only once throughout his text, whereas Gairdner uses *ought* a total of 24 times in the data. The 24 occurrences of *ought* in approximately 35,000 words of Gairdner’s text represent a rate between 6 and 7 times the average rate of usage in Coates’ data. The frequency of its use by Gairdner may in part account for the apparent strength it conveys in his writings. It is foregrounded because of its unusual frequency and this effectively then foregrounds the propositions he is asserting with *ought*. This written modal may also borrow even greater prominence from its prosodic status in speech.

OUGHT occurs infrequently but is more common in speech where it is distinguished from SHOULD by prosodic features: examples of OUGHT are commonly stressed (80 percent of all cases) while examples of SHOULD are only rarely stressed (28 percent of all cases). (Coates 1983: 247)

I would argue that notwithstanding Coates’ conclusion that *ought* is somewhat weaker than *should*, in Gairdner’s texts, the unusual frequency of *ought*, coupled with the possible carry-over of emphasis from the spoken language, puts it somewhere in between the category of ‘desirability’ typified by *should*, and that of ‘obligation’ typified by *must*.

Below, (14) gives Segal’s only use of *ought*, (15) – (17) give representative examples of Gairdner’s use of *ought*.

(14)

Whatever the problem – high taxes, medical system stress, high prices, unemployment, traffic tie-ups, family violence, the insanity of Serbia and Bosnia – government ought to, it is deemed, usually after a question from an opposition spokesperson, have a solution. (Segal 1997: 74, discussing what he calls ‘the solutionist bias of the press’)

(15)

And how can the law, which ought to protect human society, end up as chief agent of its downfall? (Gairdner 1992: 540)

(16)

The real subject at issue here is not whether a woman has said no, but *when* she ought to say it. (Gairdner 1992: 562)

(17)

There is an obsessive thrust in this document to the effect that women of the world ought to leave their families and enter the workforce full-time as autonomous economic units, fully protected by the State. (Gairdner 1992: 579); referring to the United Nations Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)

Obligation is most often signaled by *must*, but Gairdner also employs the quasi-modal *have to* to signal obligation. Examples (18) and (19) illustrate Segal’s use of *must*, while (20) and (21) illustrate Gairdner’s use of *must* and *have to*.

(18)

It is not immediately clear why for the neoconservatives such choices must always exclude investing in leveraging people out of poverty ... (Segal 1997: 45)

(19)

But a conservative must also stand against those strains on the far right of the spectrum that would unalterably prove the ideologues on the far left not only right but resoundingly so. (Segal 1997: 167)

(20)

That is why Canadians - for that matter, all those living under welfare regimes - must realize that if they have any desire to preserve the cherished life of a free society for their children and grandchildren, they first will have to recognize, then take up moral arms against, all those who wish to destroy the family. In particular, they must challenge the welfare State itself. Every citizen will have to become a family activist; will have to learn why the family is the most important natural social institution; will have to fight to defend the family. (Gairdner 1992: 5)

(21)

The error of egalitarian democracy is that in order to garner votes and deliver not freedom, but equal outcomes, it must subordinate such freely formed groups to its own project of controlling individuals through the promise of equally apportioned rights. (Gairdner 1992: 540)

5.3 Summary of Results

To sum up, then, Segal and Gairdner use almost identical numbers of overt epistemic modal auxiliaries (Segal 224, Gairdner 223), but they use strikingly different numbers of deontic modal auxiliaries. Specifically, Segal uses just 54, while Gairdner uses 117. Breaking this down by semantic category, for the category of 'permission' Segal uses just 1, while Gairdner uses 21, for 'desirability' Segal uses 22 while Gairdner uses 18, and for 'obligation' Segal uses 31, while Gairdner uses 78. Breaking the deontic modals down by specific modal auxiliary, *should* is used 29 times by Segal and 31 times by Gairdner, *ought* is used once by Segal and 24 times by Gairdner, *must* is used 23 times by Segal and 39 times by Gairdner, and *have to* is used 5 times by Gairdner and never by Segal. The next section discusses the possible significance of the two authors' differing patterns of modal use.

6. Discussion

Epistemic modality (validity, predictability) is unremarkable in academic discourse or in argument-based non-fiction discourse which is meant to inform and persuade a non-academic readership. Both Segal and Gairdner use overt epistemic modals more than they use deontic modals, and furthermore, they use epistemic modals at the same rate in the texts examined. Where differences arise between the two authors, it is in the rate at which they use deontic modals (desirability, permission, obligation) and in the distribution of those modals. Both authors are trying to persuade readers, and ultimately voters, to endorse their brand of conservatism, so both use modals of desirability. There is a marked difference, however, between the two authors in their use of modals of permission. Segal only uses a modal of permission once in the entire corpus, in contrast to Gairdner's 21 times. Since both authors use modals of permission principally to refer to what the law does or does not permit, this difference in rate reflects more the interests of the two authors than anything necessarily about their writing style.

Where writing style seems to become salient is in the two authors' use of modals of obligation. Gairdner uses such modals at more than two and a half times the rate Segal uses them, with the result that Gairdner's text conveys a decidedly scolding tone. Rather than inviting the reader to make up his or her own mind, Gairdner appears inclined to tell the reader what s/he should think. Lillian (1996) argues that Gairdner's prose shares characteristics typical of evangelical preaching discourse, and his use of modals in the present corpus is consistent with that analysis. In the first of his popular books, Gairdner characterizes his purpose as being 'to change minds' (Gairdner 1990: 1). Both that book and the book under consideration in the present paper end with chapters entitled 'A Call to Action'. There can be no doubt that Gairdner is seeking to persuade his readers to adopt and pursue his agenda. Likewise, Segal is trying to persuade his readers that his political and social vision is one they should support. Nevertheless, the different use of modality by these two conservative authors suggests that while Segal is engaged in constructing persuasion, Gairdner is engaged in constructing

something Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) might classify as propaganda and van Dijk (2006) might classify as manipulation.

Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) distinguish between informative discourse that counts as persuasion on the one hand, and propaganda on the other hand. Both informative discourses and persuasion share a focus on the recipient (reader or hearer) 'by allowing them to acquire information, understand the environment, and learn' (Jowett & O'Donnell 2006: 30). While the speakers/writers of persuasive messages clearly have an interest in having recipients come to agree with their point of view, their interests do not supercede those of the recipients (Jowett & O'Donnell 2006: 31-32). In contrast, propaganda is meant to secure the interests of the propagandist, whether or not those interests coincide with those of the recipients (Jowett & O'Donnell 2006: 7).

The propagandist is very likely to appear as a persuader with a stated purpose that appears to promote interactive dependency. In reality, however, the propagandist wants to promote his or her own interests or those of an organization, sometimes at the expense of the recipients, sometimes not. The point is that the propagandist does not regard the well-being of the audience as a primary concern. The propagandist is likely to be detached from the recipients. (Jowett & O'Donnell 2006: 44)

Part of the problem in identifying propaganda is that like persuasion, propaganda utilizes informative communication (Jowett & O'Donnell 2006: 30). The line between responsible persuasive discourse and propaganda may be difficult for the ordinary reader to recognize, especially if they believe that the source of the communication is trustworthy, and readers may consider Gairdner trustworthy for a number of reasons. First, his books are marketed using his credentials of having a PhD from Stanford University, a highly respected institution. The average reader who may have a high-school education or at most a Bachelor's degree may assume that a man with PhD is both knowledgeable and credible. Second, Gairdner purports to be an average family man, simply out to protect his and everybody else's family. Readers who are not aware that he grew up and lives with wealth and the privilege that accompanies wealth may easily be taken in by his 'average guy' persona. Third, Gairdner's books are published by a respectable mainstream publishing company, not by a vanity press or a known extremist group. Thus, readers may not be inclined to evaluate the source and his interests as critically as they would a source they considered inherently untrustworthy.

What Jowett and O'Donnell categorize as propaganda is similar to what van Dijk characterizes as manipulation. Van Dijk stresses that "manipulation" is a typical observer's category, e.g. of critical analysts, and not necessarily a participant category: few language users would call their own discourse "manipulative" (2006: 360). His analysis is consistent with the characterization of propaganda as using power to persuade the audience to do or to believe things that are in the best interests of the manipulator and his/her group but not of the manipulated (van Dijk 2006: 360). Moreover, manipulative discourse does not necessarily have the same effect on all recipients.

Obviously, the boundary between (illegitimate) manipulation and (legitimate) persuasion is fuzzy, and context dependent: some recipients may be manipulated by a message that is unable to manipulate others. Also the same recipients may be more or less manipulable in different circumstances, states of mind, and so on. (van Dijk 2006: 361)

Furthermore, recipients of manipulative discourse are no more likely to be conscious of the linguistic structures affecting their perceptions than are speaker/hearers of any other forms of discourse. As Halliday notes, ‘... speaking and understanding are, as Boas and Sapir always insisted, among the most unconscious of all the processes of human culture. The conscious task is that which falls to the linguist, when he [sic] tries to find out how the text is organized’ (Halliday 2002b: 246). Rigotti makes this point explicitly with reference to manipulation, when he states that ‘a manipulative strategy must largely escape the awareness of the manipulated subject’ (Rigotti 2005: 64).

A further characteristic of manipulative discourse and propaganda is that they are effective only in contexts in which there is an imbalance of power which favours the manipulator. *‘[M]anipulation is illegitimate in a democratic society, because it (re)produces, or may reproduce, inequality: it is in the best interests of powerful groups and speakers, and hurts the interests of less powerful groups and speakers’* (van Dijk 2006: 363-364, italics in original).

Gairdner is very passionate in what he writes and he claims to be promoting the interests of families and ‘ordinary people’; however, as I argue elsewhere, his discourse is homophobic, racist, and sexist (Lillian 2005, 2007, forthcoming). The policies he advocates would reduce or curtail the rights and freedoms of gays and lesbians, francophones, non-White, non-Western immigrants, women, and couples living in common-law marriages. Furthermore, the fiscal and taxation policies he advocates would severely disadvantage single people, single parents and their children, low-income individuals and families, and people living in regions in which seasonal unemployment is widespread. Those same policies would benefit him and his peers, however, because they would help solidify their wealth and privilege. For example, he will always have enough money to pay for his and his family’s health services, so he wants to eliminate the public health system and make everybody pay the full cost of their health care. The result would be that he would always get premier health care and he would have his income tax bill reduced, while many of his readers would no longer be able to afford even routine medical care for themselves and their children.

This paper focuses on modality, particularly deontic modality in two persuasive texts, and Bliss highlights the manipulative potential of deontic modality:

The deontic linguistic form alone may have a manipulative effect. If something is ‘a must’ that presupposes a moral or belief system that supports it and therefore suggests strongly that ‘the must’ has to be accepted. Because of that presupposed moral system deontic mood can be manipulative. (Bliss 2005: 185)

I am not arguing that Gairdner’s comparatively heavy use of deontic modals alone causes his discourse to be manipulative or to be propaganda while Segal’s more moderate use of the same forms renders his merely persuasive.

Rather, I am arguing that Gairdner's use of deontic modals may be one manifestation of a discourse that has crossed a line from persuasion to manipulation. Furthermore, I speculate that heavy use of deontic modality may be a linguistic feature of manipulation and propaganda in general, not just of Gairdner's particular brand of neo-conservatism. Van Dijk (2006: 373) lists a number of strategies manipulators might use in structuring their discourse, but modality is not among them. My analysis of Gairdner's and Segal's texts suggests that modality should be included as another possible linguistic strategy manipulators might employ.

The analysis presented in this paper is at best suggestive, not conclusive. Nevertheless, further research on this topic is warranted to establish how widely it applies to conservative discourses, but also and particularly, to determine whether distribution of modal auxiliaries distinguishes mainstream left from extreme left discourse, in a manner parallel to the way it appears to distinguish mainstream right from extreme right, as illustrated in this paper.

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