

## From "Gay is Good" to the Scourge of AIDS: The Evolution of Gay Liberation Rhetoric, 1977-1990



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*The capacity to get free is nothing; the capacity to be free, that is the task.*

ANDRE GIDE, *THE IMMORALIST*

These words of Gide are given voice by Michel, who is beginning a narrative describing his awakening to his homoerotic desires and, more generally, to the joys of life and sensuality. Though the statement evinces a universal wisdom that places it beyond the claim of any single group, it is very nearly prophetic as a description of the course of gay liberation efforts in the United States over the last two decades. What began in the early 1970s in the giddy rush by a newly radicalized movement to *get free* is now absorbed in the unglamorous and often disheartening struggle to *be free* in a hostile environment. The rhetoric of gay liberation in the United States from 1977, the beginning of Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign, to its current concerns over AIDS is an important source of data in our efforts to understand rhetorical movements dealing with sociopolitical and rhetorical constraints. It forms a critical and as yet unchronicled chapter in the rhetorical history of a significant American social movement.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

As Suzanne Riches and Malcolm Sillars suggest, students of rhetoric and related studies widely agree that the longitudinal, comprehensive study of a social movement is the paradigmatic ideal.<sup>1</sup> Such studies have the potential to provide fundamental insights into relationships between rhetoric and history, between rhetoric and its antecedents, among competing rhetorics within a movement, and among opposing rhetorics. The perspective is evolutionary; it emphasizes rhetorical change, an element that is essential to the very definition of movement.

For all these advantages, though, and for all our commitment to such a model, we have few studies of the kind described.<sup>2</sup> They are, as Judson Crandell noted in proposing them more than forty years ago, "cumbersome."<sup>3</sup> The undertaking of the comprehensive study of a rhetorical movement may be the scholarly equivalent of triathletic training, an act of overall stamina as much as skill in any particular event. The critic must sift through discourses that may span years or even decades, that may emanate from a staggering array of organizations and individual rhetors, resulting in a polyglot that somehow must be represented adequately and typified. For historical movements, those that have run their course, the critic must decide when they began and when they ended. To what extent must the antislavery rhetoric of the American Revolution be comprehended in a study of abolitionism or abolitionism in a study of the modern black civil rights movement? Does women's

liberation begin in the 1960s, or is it continuous with the suffrage movement of the nineteenth century? Which, if any, among these movements might be said to have ended? Ongoing movements demand the critic's continuing attentions, at least periodically; they refuse to be fossilized and retired to the display case.

And for all this effort, the rewards may be unsatisfying, especially if we take the view represented by those such as Hart who believe the primary goal of our scholarship should be theory building. Many of these studies will be part of the slow, steady accretion of confirming evidence for some large hypothesis, a journeyman's labors.<sup>4</sup> Yet while the emphasis may be on those who create the hypotheses and those who fail to find confirmation, meaningful generalization in this decidedly social-scientific model is not the product of any single study, no matter how competent or careful. The researcher's effort is interpretable only as part of the aggregate.

Removed from the requirements of theory building, the energy required merely to characterize the data for these studies may force their authors to content themselves with achieving accurate and precise description, a kind of rhetorical chapter to a book someone else will edit.

This case study is offered as a kind of second chapter in a continuing rhetorical chronicle of the gay liberation movement in the United States. This chapter, which examines gay liberation rhetoric from 1977 to 1990, is an addition to an earlier study that examined the rhetoric of this movement from its 1948 inception as a sustained movement for social reform in the United States to 1977 when the study was completed.<sup>5</sup> This ongoing effort might be justified by the uniqueness and inherent worthiness of the body of discourse,<sup>6</sup> and I have argued elsewhere that the rhetoric of gay liberation is unique in being perhaps the most thoroughly postmodern of reform discourses.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, this effort might be justified, as suggested above, by its potential contribution to our understanding of the rhetorical behavior of social movements and of rhetoric in general: The gay liberation movement in the United States may be especially useful for theory-building studies. It has no confusing antecedents; it has a well-defined point of origin; it is of short enough duration that we can make a relatively complete inventory of its organizations, publications, and spokespeople; and there are significant archives containing rich rhetorical records. It is, in short, like Sprague-Dawley or Whistar rats, possessed of a kind of purity that allows researchers to discount confounding variables in explaining observed interactions and effects.

On the basis of the characteristics of the movement and of data that represent coverage of more than forty years of rhetorical history (a combination of this study with the earlier study that ended in 1977), the final section of this essay presents some tentative conclusions with respect to what Andrews has identified as the "real questions" confronting the student of rhetorical movements: "What circumstances *stimulate* rhetorical behaviors? And what rhetorical behaviors are *chosen* within the range of behavioral possibilities?"<sup>8</sup> Even tentative answers to these questions may seem to argue against the uniqueness of any one movement. Still, definitive conclusions about what might be extrapolated from the discourse to social movements in general and conclusions regarding the unique features of this rhetoric depend equally on an accumulation of studies "examining in detail the *rhetorical progression* of particular historical movements."<sup>9</sup> For the moment, we must content ourselves with a modest contribution to rhetorical history, a necessary building block in the

"foundation for mature, empirically grounded theory,"<sup>10</sup> an investment whose theoretical dividend awaits the accumulation of case studies such as this one.<sup>11</sup>

### CATALYTIC EVENTS AND RHETORICAL MOVEMENTS

The rhetorician who studies social movements diachronically must find grounds for talking about rhetorical periods or eras, that is, eras in which discourses exhibit both significant distinctiveness from others occurring in adjacent periods and some central defining concerns within. In a too-little-appreciated essay, Joe Munshaw offers a helpful starting point for articulating relationships between time and discourse. "To succeed in adopting a process viewpoint for structuring his studies," writes Munshaw, "the rhetorical historian must develop a clear conceptualization of the relationship of time to history and rhetoric."<sup>12</sup> Munshaw's enterprise involves looking at history as change in public discourse instead of as a series of events punctuated by wars, changes of government, and technological innovations.

The rhetorical historian's unique contribution lies in the development of structures that treat history as rhetoric. Sometimes structures borrowed from other types of historians adequately serve his purposes of analysis and explanation. Often, however, the rhetorical historian will need to develop his own structures because the questions he hopes to ask are different from those of other historians.<sup>13</sup>

The Cold War era, for example, would be a useful designator for a large-scale rhetorical analysis of the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. Its usefulness would be determined not by its conformity to divisions that historians have used to divide time, but by its ability to define a distinct era in the history of American foreign policy discourse. Again citing Munshaw: "Events belong in a period because of their similarity. When events change drastically, usually the historian perceives that a new period different from the older period is created."<sup>14</sup> In many, perhaps most, cases, there will be no predetermined categories for the rhetorical scholar, and the problem becomes one of isolating natural divisions in the unfolding of discourse over time.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, one key to identifying natural divisions in discourse is when situations and exigencies change dramatically. Toward that end, I have developed a methodology around *catalytic events* as useful markers of rhetorical eras and partitions for rhetorical sampling. Catalytic events are moments in the life of a movement that provide the appropriate conditions for discourse. As such, they are events that (1) are historical rather than rhetorical, (2) are nontactical (either extraneous to the movement in origin, spontaneous in origin, or both), (3) achieve tremendous significance for the movement, and (4) precede rhetorical responses that constitute demonstrably discrete, internally homogeneous rhetorical eras.<sup>16</sup> There can be little doubt, for example, that colonial rhetoric changed substantially after the Boston massacre. Similarly, abolitionist rhetoric changed after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, labor rhetoric after the outbreak of the two world wars, black rights rhetoric after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, women's liberation rhetoric after the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and gay liberation rhetoric as a result of AIDS. Each of these is only one example within its respective movement.

The complete rhetorical study of a movement would chart its entire history with respect to such events. Even when considering *social movement* as meaning rather than a phenomenon, there must be some sense of stages in the progression of meaning, and those stages must be marked by some conceptual device.

### CATALYTIC EVENTS AND THE RHETORIC OF GAY LIBERATION, 1977-1990

The identification of catalytic events is a problem in criticism in the same way that the identification of relevant features of discourse is a problem in criticism. The critic must bring all he or she knows about rhetoric, social movements, and the movement being considered to the problem of identifying catalytic events. In this case, and in its antecedent, the hypothesis was forwarded that particular events provided meaningful divisions in the discourse. That hypothesis was tested statistically, and the results were supportive.

As a conceptual device, catalytic events (in this case the ones isolated) provide meaningful divisions that aid the critical task. As Lucien Goldmann puts it, though structures are realities, they also are concepts of research; structure "originates from the solution of practical problems encountered by living beings."<sup>17</sup> In the final analysis, the evaluation of any particular structure and of all criticism must be pragmatic. "Is this understanding helpful and useful?" That is the proper question. As Goldmann goes on to remark, with each problem we solve through the imposition of structure, the structures themselves are adapted a little, and we thus renounce the possibility of an ideal solution.<sup>18</sup>

In the forerunner of this study, seven catalytic events and five significant rhetorical periods were identified in the gay liberation movement in the United States.<sup>19</sup> The first period in the life of the movement, which followed the publication by Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, was primarily organizational. Whatever discourses may have been produced were likely for in-group consumption, were primarily social in content, and had few vehicles for preservation. Consequently, there is little evidence of rhetorical activity in this earliest period of the movement's history. The first significant rhetorical period for the U.S. gay liberation movement, characterized as *establishing groundwork*, corresponded roughly to the time of Joe McCarthy's political prominence from 1950 to 1954. This was followed by a period characterized as *educating and encouraging* in the aftermath of the censure and decline of McCarthy and the near simultaneous publication of a model penal code in which, among other reforms, homosexual acts between consenting adults were decriminalized. In 1961, Illinois became the first state in the United States to adopt, essentially unchanged, the American Law Institute's Model Penal Code and Franklin Kameny, after losing a discrimination case that went to the Supreme Court, was inspired to create the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. In the wake of these catalytic events, the gay liberation movement achieved a period characterized as a move *toward strength and independence*. This third rhetorical era lasted until 1969 when a New York City riot now known as the Stonewall rebellion ushered in a period of *aggressive self-identity*, a rhetorical stance characterized by offensive strategies and activism that, in about 1973, gave way to a period characterized as *uncertain maturity*. The original study ended at the point at which discourse began in response to a 1977 Dade County, Florida, referendum. In that referendum, voters rescinded an ordinance passed by the county board

prohibiting discrimination against gay people in housing, employment, and public accommodations. Anita Bryant was the key opposition figure, and in retrospect, it seems clear that for several years thereafter the gay rights movement was put in a defensive position as it focused on referendum battles over similar ordinances across the country.<sup>20</sup>

The current study, then, begins with the era catalyzed by Anita Bryant and posits two additional catalytic events and corresponding rhetorical eras. The referendum campaigns inspired by Bryant held public attention and were the primary preoccupation of the gay rights movement from 1977 to 1980. By 1980 and the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, the intensity of combat had lessened, and the movement's devil figures became more diverse and amorphous. Anita Bryant was replaced by Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority, neoconservatism, and right-wing evangelicalism in general. Many of the concerns remained the same, but the style changed considerably. Finally, by 1983, two years after the *New York Times* reported the original story on a rare form of cancer being found in homosexual men, AIDS and the medical, political, and social threats it poses had come to color all gay discourse. Indeed, the underlying thesis of more than one text (including the recent and acclaimed film "Longtime Companion") has been that AIDS, in essential ways, has changed the meaning of what it is to be gay in the United States. As one figure in Rosa von Praunheim's film trilogy "AIDS Update" says when asked about the impact of AIDS on gay life, "Everything has changed."

As in the original study, discussion is focused by the findings of a value analysis of selected samples of discourse with attention usually limited to the five most frequently coded value appeals in each period.<sup>21</sup>

#### Period VI: Defending Fragile Achievements

By 1977, *homophile liberation* had been a presence in America for thirty years, the visible and activist post-Stonewall wing of the movement for nearly a decade. In the congenially liberal afterglow of an era in which popular political action had ended American involvement in an unpopular war and brought down two U.S. presidents, gay liberationists began to talk with pride of their achievements and of the increasing social and legal acceptance of homosexuality. Everything seemed positive for the movement, but then Dade County, Florida, passed an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals in housing, employment, and public accommodations. In this environment of sunny tolerance, the surprise was the vocal, religiously fueled popular reaction against the ordinance led by singer Anita Bryant, a reaction that resulted in a referendum battle that reached far beyond Dade County.

Bryant's successful campaign against the Dade County ordinance and its expansion into the nationwide Save Our Children movement served notice on the gay community that history did not have an immutable, liberal-progressive direction, that it could not be trusted simply to run its course. From 1973 until Bryant's emergence, the gay liberation movement had been in a stage characterized as uncertain maturity. The dramatic gains of the early seventies had given way to quiet lobbying such as letter writing, the mundane processes of conventional political influence carried out by groups like the National Gay Task Force. Many gay people had lost interest; organizations atrophied; no credible devils existed to threaten the peace; and the *movement* was threatened with dissolution. Then a series of events beginning with the battle in Dade County served as a sobering antidote to complacency.

**Unity** is the most prominent value appeal in this period. Gay rights supporters had to regroup and regather those who had wandered away from the party when it had begun to get dull. Beyond this most general and perennial sense, unity is as difficult for the gay rights movement as it is for any movement where the constituency is a national rather than a regional or local community. Issues that may be defined geographically, a local ordinance for instance, must be ideologically transformed into a common cause. It is a problem that has plagued social movements in America from the Revolution onward. Gay liberation in the United States has an advantage here in that it historically has been the political facet of a subcultural milieu, and that subculture has been defined nationally. It is a largely urban subculture in which there are certain centers widely recognized as the province of gay people wherever they may live. Gays in Idaho and gays in Kentucky may share, as a part of their common cultural currency, a knowledge of bars in Greenwich Village or a repertoire of experiences from "the Castro." Newspapers in the gay community encourage this identification. In the papers surveyed for this study, the best example was a lengthy feature in the New York *Native* on California's Russian River resort area, a favorite vacationing spot for gays. Gay publications, though identified with their places of origin, often have a national circulation and provide national and international coverage.<sup>22</sup> This kind of transgeographical consciousness encourages references to the gay community as a national phenomenon and a corresponding mentality in which any threat is a threat to the whole.<sup>23</sup>

An editorial from the Philadelphia *Gay News* is illustrative. "Bryant Threatens All GAYS!" read the headline. Referring to the anti-Bryant forces in Dade County, the editorial admonished the reader: "Florida gays are doing all they can, but that is not enough. We must all help. Otherwise, Anita Bryant and friends might show up in your town."<sup>24</sup>

Unity also became a concern in the crisis posed by the Save Our Children movement as the debate over proper strategies of response intensified. The period preceding the uproar over Bryant and her following had been a period of quiet respectability, gay lesbian lobbyists in suits carrying leather attachés. Indeed, this presentation has been much more typical of the gay rights movement throughout its history than the colorful glimpses of gay counterculture provided each June as evening news programs cover Pride Day marches.<sup>25</sup> Many in the gay community encouraged continuation of moderate and reasoned tactics in 1977. David Goodstein of the generally conservative *Advocate* couched his preferred strategies in the mantle of professionalism, and he praised this virtue at every opportunity. Peter Goodman, then newly appointed director of the Human Rights Foundation, led a "most professional" organization, and the successful fight against a referendum to overturn gay rights protections in Seattle was "a tribute to professionalism."<sup>26</sup>

Bryant's national tours, though, also were met with angry scenes of near violence and at least one pie-throwing incident, suggesting that not everyone in the gay community was of the same mind as Goodstein. As "Angry as Hell" put it in the *Gay Community News*: "Let's not feel awful about bustin' Anita's chops . . . We can try to be cheap Christ imitators or we can be real."<sup>27</sup> *Gay Community News* later found itself part of "A House Divided" over its role in organizing a rally against Bryant in Boston. In the face of threats and recriminations from within the gay community, the editors at *GCN* responded: "Instead of a much needed coming together and a necessary supportive effort, many politicians and gay businesses retreated to a stance of fear and non-activism masquerading as 'respectability.'"<sup>28</sup>

Again, the problem itself is not unique to the gay movement. The battle over tactics, especially violence and civil disobedience, has been an important feature of almost every significant social movement in U.S. history.

A combination of appeals to **work**, **determination**, and **strength** constitute the second most prominent value cluster in Period VI. The dominant member of this cluster is determination (26 appeals compared to 16 for work and 4 for strength). The ratio suggests the defensive state of a movement working against the odds. So many appeals to determination give the discourse the tone of things spoken through clenched teeth. "Strong people, led by the indomitable Nancy Roth . . . were determined to make SOHR a viable organization," editorialized the *Advocate*.<sup>29</sup> Gays talked of themselves as living in a climate where simple viability required the combined forces of strength, indomitability, and determination. The *Gay Community News* began to sound melodramatic when the editors proclaimed the strength of their determination:

In the face of economic blackmail from within the community, lack of commitment from political allies, and violent homophobic terrorism, we must reiterate our mandate and the principles by which we abide. *Gay Community News* is committed to providing a forum for all of the diverse and opposed elements and perspectives within the gay community, and to maintaining open lines of communication between us all.<sup>30</sup>

**Achievement** is the third most prominent appeal in this period, and there is a sense in which it is at the center of this discourse. If it can be characterized by any one thing, the rhetoric of gay liberation in the period spawned by the Dade County campaign can be characterized as defending fragile achievements; it was about the recognition that gains, once made, are not guaranteed for permanence, a painful iteration of the hoary saw "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." In some of the referendum campaigns that followed Dade County, gays saw rights taken away. At the same time, a demoralized constituency made for an ineffective movement, and the gay community wrestled with maintaining an awareness of what good had been wrought in the years since Stonewall. An editorial in the Philadelphia *Gay News* presented one formula in its title, "One step back, two steps forward."<sup>31</sup>

It became important to the movement to stress what achievements it could find in this period. One editorial from Boston's *Gay Community News* congratulating the National Gay Task Force for its role in the historic White House meeting with Carter staffer Midge Costanza, heavy on achievement appeals, was reprinted in an issue of the Philadelphia *Gay News* that also happened to be in the current sample.<sup>32</sup> If there were not enough achievements to go around, we obviously would have to share.

Combined appeals to **safety** and **security** constitute the fourth group in Period VI. What gay rhetoric was acknowledging was that the times were turbulent and uncertain, that what had been achieved could become unachieved quickly, that the climate was changing from one in which liberalism had a certain presumption to one in which conservatism did. These developments threatened not just the social and legal security of gays, but also their physical safety. "Kill a Queer for Christ" bumper stickers were no joke. The sampled editorials contain reports of fire-bombed automobiles, threats to life, vandalization of property, and physical attacks on gay men.<sup>33</sup> Editorial cartoons, though not coded, were obsessed with the theme of violence being done to gays by Anita Bryant and right-wing and religious extremists.<sup>34</sup> The

most ominous editorial in this sample probably is the one that features a reproduction of a Ku Klux Klan calling card that reportedly had been left at the newspaper office. "You have been paid a **Friendly Visit** by the Ku Klux Klan," it said. "Should we pay you A REAL VISIT?"<sup>35</sup> Compared to earlier periods, there is a high number of aggression appeals in Periods VI and VII. Most of these are contained in descriptions of aggression against gay people rather than acts of aggression by gay people. The influence of this hostile climate was pervasive, and it manifests itself in a preponderance of metaphors of war and violence in gay rhetoric. The radical right was accused of "murdering" the ERA, for example, and all political actions became "battles."<sup>36</sup>

Finally, **tolerance**, which had been a major concern in each of the first four rhetorical periods of the gay liberation movement but which had received only incidental attention in Period V (1973-1977), reemerges here as a predominant appeal.

### Period VII: Fortifying against a Conservative Tide

Anita Bryant gradually faded from prominence, her contract with the Florida Citrus Growers unrenewed, her marriage in disarray. But unlike McCarthy's fall in 1955, Bryant's decline did not remove what seemed to be the single stubborn barrier to enlightenment. Bryant was the forward-running crest of a wave of conservatism that, as it declined in intensity, also became more pernicious in its apparent ubiquity. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States with the vocal and much publicized support of the Moral Majority and other groups loosely allied under that umbrella. Conservatives were in the White House and in the Congress; they were in Lynchburg, Virginia; and they were in a renascent Klan and an increasingly visible Nazi party. If it had lost its poniard, the political right had gained in its ability to conquer the opposition by division.

Talking out of both sides of his mouth, a talent normally reserved for politicians, David Goodstein provided a perfect example of the confusion in the gay community in an editorial in which he provided reasons, for every candidate running for president in 1980, that gays should become involved in their campaigns. Ronald Reagan, for example, was to be "rewarded" by the gay community for his statement against California's Proposition 6 in 1978. "Our best chance for success after this next election," wrote Goodstein, "is to be known to *whoever* [sic] [emphasis Goodstein's] wins, Republican or Democrat."<sup>37</sup> The example admittedly is extreme, but it exposes a movement without unifying principle or direction, a movement simply hedging its bets.

In this setting, it seems predictable that **unity** would be a primary appeal in Period VII, this time sharing the number one spot with the combined appeals of **work**, **determination**, and **strength**. Most movement leaders, unlike Goodstein, recognized that gay power did not have sufficient reserves to survive diffusion. Among the editorials sampled for this period, three dealt with specific political races. Only Goodstein's failed to urge unified gay support of specific candidates.<sup>38</sup>

In fairness to Goodstein's position (or lack thereof), unity is a special problem for a movement based on its own right to diverge from the norm. The gay rights movement constantly courts the embarrassing charge that it does not really advocate diversity, but only a wider circle of conformity. In asking for tolerance from the surrounding straight culture, the movement is forced to exercise it within its own ranks. The perennial debates over the place of *leathermen* and *drag queens* in Pride Day parades is one example of this tension between the value of tolerance and that



of practicality. Responding to an article by novelist John Rechy in which he argued, in the editor's words, that "sodomasochism is a blight on our community and an impediment to the political action we so desperately need," the editors of *Gay News* came down on the side of tolerance and diversity: "We applaud the differences in our community because that diversity is our basic strength."<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee of New York City seemed almost proud of its "turbulent, often tumultuous, 13 year history characterized by much internecine strife" as it noted of its endeavors: "Unanimity was never expected as a goal but a diverse representation of many individuals and groups from the New York gay and lesbian community who would work together to ensure a successful March and Rally was hoped for."<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the gay movement's history, and indeed throughout the history of social movements in the United States, one debate that centers on the value of unity is the question of coalition building. Virtually every major movement for social change in this country, at some point in its career, has fought fierce internal battles over the increase in strength and resources gained by coalition building versus the dilution of identity, program, and purpose. Within the gay movement, the calls for coalition building usually come from the left, Marxist groups whose vision of a union of the oppressed stems from a unitary idea of the root of oppression. In the present sample, the call to build coalitions was represented in two editorials, one dealing with gay response to the Ku Klux Klan, the other with gay response to the Nazis. Sara Bennett and Joan Gibbs argued for "strong autonomous movements . . . which take up the struggles of *all* issues which affect women, lesbians and gay men whether or not they affect *only* women, lesbians and gay men. This means not only fighting sexism and heterosexism but also fighting racism and classism—all the institutions that maintain the patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism."<sup>41</sup> Writing for the Spartacist League, Tom Dowling, a self-identified former member of the Red Flag Union, dismissed as "suicidal" "a strategy for a narrowly gay-centered mobilization against the Nazis, as put forward by the 'Stonewall Committee,' a hodge-podge of feminists, reformists, and liberals stage-managed by the Revolutionary Socialist League." Expressing his confidence in the basic decency of Chicago's heavily minority population (which obviously he had never had the practical experience of trying to coordinate), Dowling claimed that what was needed was "the will to forge a labor/minorities mobilization to bring out thousands of militant protestors to stop the Nazis."<sup>42</sup>

For all the talk about a common cause, even for the far left, as reflected in the titles of their essays, what truly is common is the enemy. It is an old rhetorical dictum that it is easier to get people to agree on what they are against than on what they are for, and it is confirmed in these examples. John Rowberry recognized it when he noted, "there are no differences between leatherman and the clone that matter when both are threatened by the same enemy, [sic] there are no differences between gay men and gay women that matter when both face annihilation."<sup>43</sup> It is not that there are no differences; it is that there are none that matter in the face of a grave and common threat. The qualifying phrases are critical.

As mentioned already, the combined appeals of work, strength, and determination became entwined with appeals to unity as the primary concern of Period VII. The profile would appear to look little different from Period VI, but a difference in distribution does reflect a difference in tone. While the combined work-determination-strength appeals in Period VI were dominated by determination,

suggesting a sharply defensive rhetoric, work and determination are almost equal in Period VII, with work barely edging out determination.

Social movement theory implies that groups struggling against oppression tend to assume the character of the oppressor. The revelation began to emerge that life would not continue to improve as a natural operation of history, that there were competing interests in the world (not all of which shared the same vision of the ideal future), and that the vision of the future that we, in fact, would institute would have much to do with the concerted efforts of self-interested groups. This revelation, stemming from the successes of Bryant's followers, inspired an almost neo-Puritan ethic among gay rights activists. One of the features of White's value-coding scheme is the ability to code certain equations of value, and one of the most prominent equations of this period is some variant of D-A or "determination leads to achievement." Some of the variations include "lack of determination (work) leads to lack of achievement (failure)." And "work (determination) has in the past led to achievement." In many cases the debt to the religious right for this lesson is explicit.

John Rowberry revealed an awareness of the difference between battling Anita Bryant and battling the New Right when he wrote:

We have recently seen our greatest enemy, the religious fundamentalists, rise to unprecedented [sic] levels of power. The seemingly overwhelming immediacy of an Anita Bryant pales by comparison to a grassroots movement that is as well organized and financed as these new harbingers of social temperance. They have brought into their self-proclaimed moral battle not only their hatred for all things gay, but their equal dislike for the liberal and progressive politics and policies that were our allies during the past decades.<sup>44</sup>

This paragraph captures most of the rhetorical characteristics of this period: the insecurity, the understanding of the fragility of achievement, the realization that the New Right may be less dramatic than Anita Bryant but more insidious. There is a lesson here for organizing as Rowberry makes clear later in his article:

Part of the problem that we face today is that we have never done enough for our own good. We greeted each local law-change as a major political victory, while the new right collected another million signatures and another million dollars for their war chest. We celebrated each political endorsement as the crown that would guarantee the kings [sic] reign, and the new right gathered another million names and got another million pledges.<sup>45</sup>

For several paragraphs, Rowberry continues in this vein, a long series of anaphora and epistrophe. To defeat the right, he is saying, gays must become more like them. That requires hard work, persistence, stamina, doggedness—all the dull, Protestant qualities that seem so antithetical to gay culture.

Rowberry was not alone in preaching this minatory tale. When Philadelphia was the only major American city that did not have a Pride Day celebration in 1980, the Philadelphia *Gay News* blamed it on the fact that "people in our community just didn't want to put in the time and effort, or figured that others would do it." David Goodstein's ever-avuncular voice counseled that continued progress "depends on all of you: if all of you sit out the 1980 campaign, those who have mobilized against gays could cause Congress to pass antigay legislation, could prompt the next

president to rescind the minimal federal gains we've made, and could encourage state legislatures to pass civil and criminal sanctions."<sup>46</sup>

As it had in Period VI, **achievement** follows unity and work-determination-strength as a frequently invoked value in Period VII. The period from 1980 to 1982 consolidated a change in the way gay people looked at the achievements that began with the Dade County battle. Achievements had been looked upon as permanent fixtures, as monuments to be housed in the gay pride museum and celebrated each Pride Day, as the irrevocable work of history. As Rowberry admonished: "We treated the defeat of the Briggs Initiative as proof that justice would always prevail," but now we had even the indomitably melioristic Goodstein writing about the possibility of rescission. Others, including Rowberry, were less charitable still. "We can start over, because we are, in 1981, at ground zero," Rowberry wrote, making twenty to thirty years of movement activity a surreal joke.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, it was as erroneous to say that nothing had been achieved as it was to think about what had been achieved as being in a class with the Roman viaducts. Peter Frisch, David Goodstein's colleague at the *Advocate*, put a materialistic, decidedly eighties yuppie twist on gay achievement when he wrote of the skyrocketing number of gay-owned or gay-identified businesses around the country and the consequent increase in gay economic muscle.<sup>48</sup> Frisch, in keeping with the commercial concerns of his publication (a BMW ad appears on the same page as Frisch's editorial) and the values of his time, saw money as the route to influence and thought gay men had achieved recognition as an economic force larger than their numbers would suggest.

The appeals to **truthfulness, justice, and safety-security**, the three categories that tied for third place as concerns of Period VII, already are apparent in the concerns over unity, achievement, and work-strength-determination. The three-way tie perhaps was predictable since these groups of appeals often occur in various combinations. In an equation straight from classical liberalism, truth is thought to be the guarantor of justice and security, and when justice is threatened, security often is threatened along with it.

That the appeal is to truthfulness rather than to knowledge is a manifestly nonpositivistic, rhetorical stance and reflects some of those postmodern tendencies in the gay rights movement alluded to earlier. Every oppressed group, in significant ways, is alien to its oppressors, unknown, mysterious, exotic; that is a primary vehicle to oppression. We find it difficult to oppress ourselves or those in whom we recognize ourselves. It is in the interstices abandoned to ignorance that fear and loathing fester, and it is a concomitant burden of the alien group to make themselves familiar. For gays and lesbians this is the significance of the banners and placards reading "We are your children" that are staples at Pride Day marches. But as long as the alien is represented by an oppressive other or through the other's media, the truth is a political battleground. Gays, as others before them, have struggled against damaging, sometimes incendiary misconceptions spread knowingly or unknowingly on network television, in magazines, in films, and in newspapers. It was during Period VII, in fact, that there was prolonged and often bitter debate within the gay community on the proper response to the film "Cruising[!]" starring Al Pacino. Though no editorials on this subject were included in the coded sample, a number of articles and letters to the editor were noticed in different publications. Notice also was taken of a lot of *media watch* material in gay publications, including a regular column by that title in the *New York Native*.

Of the materials included in this sample, the most poignant instance of the struggle against unfair representation by major media concerned coverage of the 1981 Atlanta murders in which the disappearance and murder of young children, especially black boys, was rumored to have homosexual overtones. The coverage was poignant because the movement has had to fight the same battle so many times before, as the editorial acknowledges in its opening line: "It's like so many similar stories in the past."<sup>49</sup> The editorial cites several instances of conflicting evidence and criticisms of coverage from nongay sources.

Related to the unity appeal, a major form of the truthfulness appeal in this sample was the unattractive result of internecine squabbles, one group or faction charging another with all manner of mendacities.<sup>50</sup>

Justice historically has been defined by gay rights advocates in narrow legal terms.<sup>51</sup> This is one of the primary reasons the movement never has emerged as a genuinely radical force in American politics; it never has challenged root assumptions underlying the law.<sup>52</sup> This tendency continues in Period VII, where the courts are looked to as the last bastion against conservative popular sentiment and mounting legislative and physical attacks on gay people. "This year," expostulated the *Gay News*, "we'll be voting for judges of the various courts in the city and commonwealth. The winners will be the people who will preside over courts which decide cases affecting lesbians and gays, as well as non-gays." The editorial went on to counsel that votes should be decided based, first, on qualifications and, second, on whether or not a candidate's view of the law was "in our best interests."<sup>53</sup> John Rowberry, basing his arguments largely on the Bill of Rights, warned that the "new christian [sic] right" supports "racism . . . tax exemption for the church without following the separation of church and state doctrines that *are* clearly in the constitution," at the same time opposing "equal rights for racial and cultural minorities." It had expressed a willingness, Rowberry wrote, to violate "rights of privacy in one's home" and "the rights to lawful public assembly."<sup>54</sup> Other editorials expressed concerns regarding either the judiciary or the police.<sup>55</sup>

The appeals to security and safety in Period VII represent a continuation of the siege mentality developed in Period VI. Assaults continued on the precarious gains made by gay people in the previous decade, a halt to further progress was a threat, and antigay violence rose, part of the rise of what now has been federally recognized as a special type of crime, the hate crime. Sara Bennett and Joan Gibbs warned that "the current growing size and boldness of the Klan is a direct outgrowth of a more widespread and visible rise in racism and other reactionary stances as evidenced by the attacks on the limited gains of Third World people, women and lesbians and gay men."<sup>56</sup> The editors of *Gay News*, finding a common root beneath anti-Semitism and homophobia, found a lesson in Jewish history regarding the fragile nature of "surface tolerance."<sup>57</sup> In 1977, when the previous study ended and this case study began, the polling firm of Yankelovich, Skelley, and White reported that 56% of those polled said they would vote for legislation guaranteeing the civil rights of homosexuals.<sup>58</sup> Half a decade later, gay rights advocates were fortifying the fortress walls against the possibility of all-out attack.

### Period VIII: AIDS—Battling the Hydra

Just before the Independence Day holiday in 1981, the *New York Times* announced the occurrence of a rare cancer among gay men. The following week, the New York

*Native*, on its cover and as its page eight headline, heralded "Cancer Hits the Gay Community." Though worrisome, the cancer could not be recognized in 1981 as the devastating epidemic that we all would come to know as AIDS. Over the course of the next two years, as death tolls rose and the multifarious forms of the disease were identified as having a common provenance, AIDS became the obsessive concern of gay rights activists, coloring all activity concerning the welfare of gay men and lesbians in the United States. AIDS presented the gay community with not only a public health crisis, but crises in the social, legal, and psychological spheres as well. AIDS catalyzed a shift in the rhetoric of the gay movement.

The shift is reflected in the coverage by papers like the New York *Native* whose readership included large numbers of those directly affected. Almost a year after the breaking of the original story, the *Native's* coverage still was restricted largely to newsbrief items like the one in the June 7-20, 1982, issue regarding the establishment of a health hotline in New York City through which "Questions about the year-old outbreak of diseases linked to a mysterious collapse of immune defense among urban gay men will be referred to members of G[ay] M[en's] H[ealth] C[risis]."<sup>59</sup> A year later, 15 of 40 news pages (ads, classifieds, and arts and entertainment excluded) featured AIDS in a significant way.<sup>60</sup>

Combined appeals to **work-strength-determination** again share the top rank for the most frequently appealed to values, though this time it is **justice** consuming equal attention rather than **unity**. The form of many of the work-strength-determination appeals is familiar from earlier periods. Gays often urge each other to exercise their influence in the political arena by voting, lobbying, and writing to elected representatives. Period VIII provides continuing evidence of this approach. "I'm not political. Will this be heard while candidates for public office are being asked to swear allegiance to the Bible (as interpreted by the fundamentalists), rather than to the Constitution?" asked David Steward of California writing in *Gay Community News*.<sup>61</sup> Steward's implicit faith in the power of the vote and the Constitution reflects the same basic respect for the process of American politics that we have seen as a recurrent characteristic of gay rights rhetoric.

At the same time, there is a healthy and well-earned suspicion of government. There is little faith that government, left to its own devices, will look after the best interests of gay people. A number of the work-strength-determination appeals in this period reflect this cynicism in their assertion that the government is not working, is not doing all it could and should, especially with respect to AIDS.<sup>62</sup> In fact, 1987 saw gay men, lesbians, and their supporters march on Washington, D.C., in numbers that some have estimated to be as high as 500,000, more than the number who gathered to hear Martin Luther King, Jr., deliver the "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. The march was inspired largely by what the *Windy City Times* called "the Reagan government's shameful and callous nonresponsiveness" to the AIDS crisis.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, many of the work-strength-determination appeals in this period reflect the gay community's determination to take care of its own in the face of AIDS.<sup>64</sup>

The government role in the AIDS crisis is one of the major foci of the justice appeals in this period. Rep. Henry Waxman is quoted as saying, "It is clear that if this disease were hitting members of the American Legion or Chamber of Commerce, Ronald Reagan couldn't ask for money fast enough."<sup>65</sup> Waxman was not the only one suggesting that the government's response to AIDS was shaped by the fact that gay men and intravenous drug users were the population hardest hit. The editors of the *Windy City Times* expressed their belief "firmly and unequivocally, that if AIDS were

a disease that struck primarily white, heterosexual men, these and other solutions would long ago have been implemented."<sup>66</sup>

Again connected with the work-strength-determination appeals, there also are a number of warnings of the injustices that will occur if gays do not involve themselves in the political process and elect candidates who will be sympathetic to gay issues.<sup>67</sup> Even in the face of AIDS, justice continues to have a narrow legalistic coloring for gay activists rather than the broader moral coloring given it by other radical and reform movements in the United States.<sup>68</sup>

The reemergence of **truthfulness** as a major concern reflected in the rhetoric of the movement in Periods VII and VIII is peculiar given the long hiatus since it had last been a major factor. In Periods II and III (1955–1960 and 1961–1968), as gays were becoming increasingly visible while still shrouded in misconception due to lack of accurate knowledge, there was a great premium in the gay press on finding the truth about homosexuality and on using the truth to combat senseless discrimination and fear. Periods VII and VIII provide a parallel as gays were forced into the public consciousness by AIDS, a mysterious and frightening disease for which it was difficult to find the cause, the cure for which eludes us still. There is a renewed emphasis in the rhetoric of Period VIII on correcting general misconceptions about gays perpetuated by the mainstream media, but most of the truthfulness appeals in this period are connected to AIDS specifically.<sup>69</sup>

That gays always have had the option of passing, that they, unlike women or blacks, for example, do not wear their stigma on the surface has made the question of gay identity itself a matter of truthfulness. One editorial in this sample called the remonstrance to "come out" "the oldest message of the lesbian and gay movement" and "the most basic."<sup>70</sup> The appeal is double-edged. It asks gays to be truthful with themselves and in their relationships with others about who they really are, and it rests its political agenda on the sanguine assumption that direct knowledge of gay people effectively will combat harmful myths and misconceptions: To know us is to love us. In Period VIII, an unusual but significant variation on this theme appeared as presumably nongay political figures, including Roy Cohn and Terry Dolan, began to die of AIDS. The present sample contained a meditation on the intestate mess left by Rep. Stewart McKinney (R-CT).<sup>71</sup>

AIDS also accounts for the rank order and the tenor of the **safety-security** appeals in Period VIII. For the first time in the period coded for this study, safety (a concern for one's physical well being) appears more often than security (a concern for one's psychological or economic well being) in the combined appeal. And, for the first time across all eight periods, health, though not ranked in the top five appeals even here, makes a more than incidental appearance in the discourse. The most common form for these appeals was the recitation of statistics. By 1983, the numbers affected by AIDS had begun to rise geometrically. "The City Health Department reports 16 city residents with AIDS since September 1981," reported the Philadelphia *Gay News*, continuing "EIGHT OF THEM HAVING BEEN REPORTED IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS."<sup>72</sup> By 1988, it was the number of panels in "the Quilt" that were being counted, and those numbers made the numbers reported from Philadelphia in 1981 seem innocuously small.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, **tolerance** rounds out the roster of top-ranked value appeals for Period VIII. It always is one of the in-group functions of social movement discourse to provide an outlet for commiseration over the sorry state of the world and the particular group's poor place in it. From its beginnings, the rhetoric of gay liberation in the

United States has featured indictments of the lack of tolerance shown for gays by straight society and warnings that the situation will get worse unless gays act. Period VIII continues this tradition. There is one account of a gay man fired from his job, and the Roman Catholic church received more than incidental recognition in the three periods coded here as a bastion of bigotry.<sup>74</sup> But intolerance, though Lenny Giteck was correct in pointing out that it did not begin with AIDS, did achieve a new intensity and a new focus as the result of AIDS.<sup>75</sup> As one writer put it, "the conservative right has launched a new cold war, with a new cast of demonized 'others,'" a play in which gay men become "diseased-ridden infectious carriers."<sup>76</sup> In a sense, AIDS and the heightened intolerance that accompanied it pervade Period VIII, so much so that the intolerance often seems to exist beyond the individual coding unit or even the individual piece of discourse. Understood this way, it illustrates something of the text-context relationship that it has been the burden of this study to illustrate: the relationship between catalytic events and the resultant discourse.

### CONCLUSION

This detailing of key value appeals in gay rights rhetoric for the thirteen-year period from 1977 to 1990, coupled with the results of my earlier analysis of gay rights rhetoric from 1948 to 1977, allows us to make some observations about changes in this discourse over more than four decades. In addition, it allows us to speculate as to how the nature of these changes might apply to social movements generally. Moreover, since historical events are integral to the method employed here, we have the opportunity to raise hypotheses about the ways in which history and rhetoric interact.

Social progress, often expressed as an appeal to justice as it is in the current case, is the self-professed but elusive goal of all social movements. By that measure, the one clear picture that emerges from careful study of a movement in the interim stages between inception and success is that progress is neither clear nor unidimensional.

If progress may be defined rhetorically as rendering unnecessary the expenditure of argumentative energy or attention on certain claims, then the gay rights movement indisputably has progressed in some areas, primarily those areas that are internal, addressed to movement members themselves. Concerns with naturalness, adjustment, and self-regard, for example, which were prominent in the early rhetoric, have all but disappeared in the later periods. The abatement of those appeals suggests that the movement has enjoyed some success in convincing its constituency that they are not inherently abnormal in some pejorative sense, maladjusted, or sick. To borrow from Richard Gregg's work, the movement appears to have been most effective in fulfilling "ego-functions."<sup>77</sup> This reconstruction of the components of gay self-identification was a necessary propaedeutic to vigorous political action. From 1977 to 1990, as the emerging prominence of work-determination-strength appeals suggests, there is little of the old hesitation among gays in asserting that better and more equitable treatment is deserved from society.

Ego-functions, though, are not wholly an internal matter subject to adjudication within the group. It was only when the American Psychiatric Association officially removed the stigma of sickness from homosexuality in its 1973 revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* that the gay rights movement finally could claim

clear presumption on the question. The event indicates the degree to which subcultures are dependent on the cultures of which they are a part, even on matters essential to defining the lines of demarcation between them. No amount of self-persuasion regarding, in this case, the essential health of gay people could withstand widescale criticism as long as that criticism appeared to have the blessing of the psychological and psychiatric establishment. Dominant cultures have ultimate control over vehicles for legitimation, one of the key factors in defining dominance. The dominant culture also controls agenda setting, which makes any movement of social reform that falls short of complete revolution reactive. This point is acknowledged in the definition of *catalytic event* forwarded here as "something that arises outside the bounds of movement strategy but that shapes the subsequent discourse of the movement."

Still cultures, perhaps especially the culture of the United States in [the] late twentieth century, are not homogeneous, univocal entities. For everything given by the liberal left, something may be taken away by the reactionary right. There are paradoxes of progress in the lives of social movements. Gay rights activists, from the beginning, have struggled against the invisibility that has been both a curse and a blessing. One editorial characterized the imperative to "come out" as "the oldest message of the lesbian and gay movement," and "the most basic."<sup>78</sup> Early appeals to knowledge and truthfulness often concerned the representation of gays to the surrounding straight culture, and, in Period IV (1969–1972), recognition emerged as a major value in itself.<sup>79</sup> The achievement of recognition and visibility has been viewed by the gay rights movement both as an end in itself and as a vehicle for further gains.

It has been the movement's success in this arena, though, that has helped to create a backlash that is signaled by increased appeals to safety and security. That trend becomes obvious only when the data for 1977–1990 are combined with the data for 1948–1977. There are no significant appeals to safety or security until Period V (1973–1977), when safety appeals were ranked second. From that time to the present, combined appeals to safety and security are prominent in gay rights rhetoric as increasing concerns are expressed over antigay violence and discrimination. This analysis of the discourse suggests that as a result of their "success" gays may be subject to more overt forms of hostility than when, as one writer describes it, "They crouched in their closets, took girls to company parties, and waited, hoping that if only we'd be good and do as we were told, they'd get tired of persecuting us and leave us alone to lead our quiet little respectable lives."<sup>80</sup>

If progress has been a tradeoff in some areas, in other areas, there seems to have been no progress at all. Though the overwhelming number of child molestation cases involve heterosexual men, gays still suffer under the public conviction that they pose a special threat in this area. Nothing serves better than a highly sensationalized sex crime with homosexual overtones to draw forth from the gay press fervent professions of gay solidarity with straight society against heinous behaviors. Such displays would be unremarkable except that the intensity of their self-righteous indignation is susurrous with a synecdochal urge for extermination that has been evident in gay rights rhetoric throughout its history in the United States. The apparent urge spans time from San Francisco Mattachine's 1954 announcement that it shared with straight society the goal of "reducing the high incidence of sex variation in future generations"<sup>81</sup> to Michael's query in "The Boys in the Band," "Who was it that used to say, 'You show me a happy homosexual, and I'll show you a gay corpse?'"



In the current sample, the editors of the Philadelphia *Gay News* in 1981, regarding the murders then being investigated in Atlanta, rhetorically posed the question, "What should the response of the community be?" Among their suggestions, the one deemed most important was that the gay community *should make* no excuses for the killings "if there is a homosexual aspect."

Let us join with others in calling for sure punishment for the guilty. Taking a life is the most vile of deeds. There should be no mollycoddling of the guilty, no matter what the circumstances, and no matter what his or her sexual orientation may be.<sup>82</sup>

Here is the overeager and bloodthirsty language of the lynch mob—the platitudinous moralizing, the disregard for circumstances, the ancient equation of vengeance with justice, the desire for resolution with at least the illusion of certitude—all with the understanding that it may be against some part of the self that it is turned.

More than the gay community's failure to dispel the myths of rampant child molestation and murder among gays, this reaction reflects how thoroughly gays have been inculcated with the values of straight society. The inculcation includes not only such questions as murder, but also, more subtly and insidiously, those values by which gay people comprehend themselves. It is not the murder of children that accounts for the severity of the above quotation; it is the desire to purify the self, to make amends for what one has been taught is odious in one's nature, to extirpate the sordidness within. There is no evidence in the clamorous statement just quoted that the standards for purity themselves have been scrutinized and questioned. In recent years gays may have come to feel better about themselves as individuals than they did in the 1950s, but it appears that this may be tied to their ability to eschew stereotypes in their own lives and to emulate the surrounding straight culture; it appears that there remain very real reservations about homosexuality in general precisely in the degree that it fails to share the values of the larger society. One article in the current sample treats these issues under the title "Reflections on Internalized Homophobia."<sup>83</sup>

It is still the exceptional voice that attempts, as John Rowberry does in his eulogy to John Wayne, to make "God-fearing, patriotic, [and] fundamental" "seem like nefarious qualities." Rowberry, writing in a magazine devoted to gay sado-masochism, thus already violating many taboos, wrote of Wayne that he "represented and will represent for some time to come a particular image of the American male that at least 10 million other American men think to be the height of admirable masculine sensibility." When Rowberry noted near the conclusion, "While he lived, not one breath of scandal was ever uttered about the Duke. Now, months after his final roundup or shoot-out, or whatever it is you want to call it; not one breath of scandal emerges," it seemed almost perverse.

Perhaps this is the fundamental question for any movement for social reform, the question of how to define success. How much do *we* become like *them* in order to enjoy the fruits of what they call success, and how much do *we* make *them* acknowledge that there are alternatives that must be respected? Bowers and Ochs use the terminology of "vertical" versus "lateral" deviance to describe this broad distinction between orientations to the dominant value system.<sup>84</sup> The present example makes clear that this cannot be separated from how thoroughly *we* have learned the lessons *they* have taught about *us*. I may feel that I deserve rights as an

individual, but I may have difficulty demanding those rights as a gay person. In fact, I may feel more deserving of rights the more distance I can place between myself and constructs I have absorbed about gay people.<sup>85</sup>

Although our study of the gay rights movement may help to clarify this rhetorical dynamic, it is, again, not unique. That movements for social reform are hindered or thwarted by the constructs members have absorbed about themselves is evident in the black rights movement's self-affirmation and in the women's movement. In this latter case, nineteenth-century women were so convinced of the inappropriateness of their activity that Abby Foster's husband, Stephen, was called upon to chair the Seneca Falls convention, and twentieth-century women have struggled to redefine *woman* in ways that simultaneously allow for both opportunities in a male-dominated world and the reassessing, revaluing, and potential remaking that world.

Of the findings of this study, one of the most important concerns the interplay of catalytic events and discourse. The danger is that the findings, because they comport with the dictates of common sense or seem to have face validity, should be deemed less valuable for that reason, that they may suffer from an excess of what one reviewer of the material from 1948 to 1977 identified as plausibility.<sup>86</sup> Given the contexts as described, the shape of each rhetorical period seems eminently reasonable, even predictable. Yet the model of interaction suggested here is not narrowly deterministic or materialistic. To say that the rhetorical choices that were made are consonant with surrounding events is not to say that other choices, equally consonant, were impossible. I think, rather, that catalytic events operate on the discourse on three levels: First, they operate to constrain the range of rhetorical action in the same ways Kenneth Burke talks about the place of "scene" in his account of motive; they form part of a "rhetorical situation," which, if it does not demand a response, certainly allows for a certain range of responses at the same time it limits the sheer numbers of possibilities for response. An event without the existence of those for whom it may be rhetorically made significant is only an event. It is not, in itself, a rhetorical situation. Ongoing social movements provide those interested constituencies. Gay people certainly could not ignore AIDS; it had to be addressed in some way, but not necessarily in these particular ways. American Legionnaires, on the other hand, were not obligated in the same ways by the mysterious deaths in Philadelphia in 1976. Events invite the imputation of meaning; they call out for narrative frames, for stories. The stories or acts, as Burke suggests in his account of the dramatic pentad, are shaped by the ideologies and beliefs held by the various storytellers, the vehicles of dissemination they have available to them, and so on through the other two or three elements, as well as by the events themselves. AIDS has been represented as God's curse against those who have transgressed holy ordinance, as a CIA-sponsored attempt at genocide, and as the terrifying consequence of implacable nature operating according to its own laws. Competing stories metamorphose from act to scenic element and, as much as the event itself, define the exigence.

In addition to operating scenically, catalytic events serve to punctuate the progress of movement discourse. A catalyst is a chemical that is used to speed up a reaction, a reaction that would have occurred anyway, only much more slowly. With slow reactions, as with evolutionary trends, the gradual quality of change often makes it difficult to distinguish discrete phases. Use of a catalyst, however, reduces transitory periods and thus dramatically juxtaposes changed states that otherwise would have been indiscernible. The analogy, of course, has limits. Social activity is

not reducible to scientific laws, and it is impossible to say what would have happened if some significant historical event had not occurred. The argument easily could be made in many specific cases that an event hastened the realization of nascent trends, though it also seems likely that the event colors the outcome in ways that a true catalyst does not. If catalytic events tend to forward existing trends rather than define entirely new directions, it probably is because they occur in the context of an ongoing agenda, and they are interpreted within that context. In addition to this qualification, it should be obvious that a catalytic event is not a manipulable variable in the way that the catalyst is for the chemist; the student of social movements cannot selectively apply such events to meet his or her needs; he or she only can look for them in the history of the movement and use them as they are found.

Finally, and most crudely, some catalytic events become incorporated into movement discourse, what Aristotle called "inartistic proofs." As inartistic proofs, certain claims that were problematic rhetorically may be transformed into warrants for further claims. One of the central issues for gay activists, for example, has been establishing the existence of significant discrimination against gays. Even after decades of visibility and activity, gays still struggle to make antigay discrimination understood. In 1982, Lenny Giteck found "a silver lining in the dark cloud of AIDS." That silver lining was that AIDS had done what gay rhetoric had failed to do: "shown the world that we gays actually exist." That Giteck includes the condition of oppression in gay existence is made clear when he constructs a dialogue with fictitious Irving Schertz, head of Plagues, Epidemics, and Famines at NBC news:

"Listen, Mr. Schertz," I began, "Doesn't Tom Brokaw know that homosexuals have been discriminated against for years? No, for *centuries*. It didn't start with AIDS!"

"Are you sure about that?" Schertz asked. "I don't remember our doing any documentaries on it. What kind of discrimination are you referring to?"<sup>87</sup>

History has an irrefragable quality. It happened; all of us saw it; therefore, it is fact.

Yet even history's assertions are not absolute. The events of history may be suppressed, or they may be forgotten. One might have thought, for example, that in the wake of the Dade County referendum battle when Robert Hillsborough was stabbed to death by four teenagers screaming "Faggot, faggot, faggot! This one's for you, Anita!" the case for antigay discrimination would have been established once and for all. Or even earlier, that the chronicle of ruined lives and spoiled careers left behind by the innuendo of McCarthyism would have given the point to gay activists. Most frightening, the events of history may be warped beyond recognition. Current projects dedicated to denying the Holocaust, an event that recent historical study has revealed to be as important to gay history as to Jewish history, are only the most egregious examples.

The urge to recover history is never entirely innocent; it contains not only the passionate desire to control or to liberate, to reveal the genetic code, to know who we are now by knowing who we have been, but also the yearning to know history itself, the precise nature of the past's claim on the present. The historical perspective is inescapable whenever the object of attention has a temporal dimension, five minutes or five hundred years. Rhetorical history is a variety of history, and it shares in these same motives as reflected in this installment in an ongoing account of the

rhetoric of gay liberation in the United States. There are specific insights here into the rhetoric of the gay liberation movement; a large body of discourse has been characterized broadly to allow the making of summary statements. There also are tentative statements about the larger issues, statements that can be made with confidence only when we have enough comparable studies to allow generalization. Certainly an aggregation of such studies could provide fresh ammunition for theoretical debates that currently seem to have more gun powder than shells, providing us with a great show of fire and smoke but few reasons for surrender, compromise, or resolution and little direction for the future.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Suzanne Volmar Riches and Malcolm O. Sillars, "The Status of Movement Criticism," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (1980): 281. See also Stephen E. Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 264.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to Sillars' and Riches' assessment, see Charles J. Stewart, "A Functional Perspective on the Study of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 77.

<sup>3</sup>S. Judson Crandell, "The Beginnings of a Methodology for Social Control Studies in Public Address," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33 (1947): 36.

<sup>4</sup>Roderick P. Hart, "Theory Building and Rhetorical Criticism: An Informal Statement of Opinion," *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976): 71, and "Contemporary Scholarship in Public Address: A Research Editorial," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 50 (1986): 283-295.

<sup>5</sup>James F. Darsey, "Catalytic Events and Rhetorical Movements: A Methodological Inquiry" (unpublished master's thesis, Purdue University, 1978). The bulk of the rhetorical analysis from this study was published as James Darsey, "From 'Commies' and 'Queers' to 'Gay is Good,'" in *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication*, ed. James W. Chesebro (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 224-247. Though published with the imprimatur of SCA and at a time when books from the discipline were more scarce than they are today, *Gayspeak* failed to garner a single review in any SCA-affiliated journal even though some contributors, myself included, made personal appeals to book review editors and secured review copies for them. Nor was the book included in an otherwise outstanding bibliography in the first edition of Stewart, Smith, and Denton's *Persuasion and Social Movements* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1984), an oversight corrected, again after a personal appeal, in the recently published second edition of that work. Outside SCA circles, in contrast, the volume received more than 200 reviews in places as diverse as academic journals like *Signs* and popular sources like the *Los Angeles Times*, and though many of those reviews contained sharp criticisms, citations in many places suggest that the volume continues to enjoy wide use. *Gayspeak* also has the distinction of being one of the few works published under the auspices of SCA that could be found on the shelves of local bookstores across the country. A recent trip to a new bookstore in Columbus, Ohio, revealed, much to my surprise, that this still is true nearly ten years after the book's original publication.

<sup>6</sup>Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 74-86.

<sup>7</sup>James Darsey, "Die Non: Gay Liberation and the Rhetoric of Tolerance," in *Gayspeak II*, ed. R. Jeffrey Ringer (forthcoming); James Darsey, *Vessels of the Word: Studies of the Prophetic Voice in American Public Address* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1985).

<sup>8</sup>James R. Andrews, "An Historical Perspective on the Study of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 68.

<sup>9</sup>Andrews, 68.

<sup>10</sup>Lucas, 264. See also James R. Andrews, "History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 274-281, and Ralph R. Smith, "The Historical Criticism of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 290-297.

<sup>11</sup>See James Andrews' call for such studies in the symposium that was, in part, responsible for the case study focus of this special issue: "An Historical Perspective on the Study of Social Movements."

<sup>12</sup>"The Structures of History: Dividing Phenomena for Rhetorical Understanding," *Central States Speech Journal* 24 (1973): 33. Perhaps a clue to the relative obscurity of Munshaw's essay is my belief that the time in which it appeared was concerned with theory as opposed to method. Compare Munshaw's essay with the essays from the first SCA seminar on social movements published in *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980). I recognize that these are not independent considerations. Methods often are theoretically laden, and empirically based theories, to a significant degree, are defined by the methods that have been used to gather the data upon which the theories are based. Nonetheless, one can make distinctions based on where the primary focus of discussion lies, and there is considerable difference between a Judson Crandell or a Leland Griffin or a Joe Munshaw engaged in an attempt to figure out how to go about the rhetorical study of a social movement and a Michael McGee and a Robert Cathcart facing off over whether social movements are phenomena or meaning.

<sup>13</sup>Munshaw, 30.

<sup>14</sup>Munshaw, 35.

<sup>15</sup>John Bowers and Donovan Ochs in their enormously popular text, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1971), have provided the most visible effort in this direction, but their schema is heavily theory-laden, assuming *a priori* the sequence of a number of specific strategies. In addition to presuming specific strategies, the claims for sequencing is susceptible to criticisms for what Sillars has identified as a problematic characteristic of contemporary theories, the assumption of linearity. In fact, at least one test case using Bowers and Ochs' schema revealed problems in precisely this area. James Darsey, "Escalation of Agitative Rhetoric: A Case Study of Mattachine Midwest, 1967-1970" (paper presented to the convention of the Central States Speech Association, Southfield, MI, April 1977, included in ERIC as ED 140 358).

<sup>16</sup>Like most other ideas that make claims at innovation, catalytic events as an analytical tool have a number of antecedents and historical analogs, both in practice and in theory. C. Wendell King has discussed "accidental influences" and their relationship to social movements, *Social Movements in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1956), 108-111. In discussing the inception of revolutions, Crane Brinton suggests the importance of events that escape the controlled parameters of tactics and achieve spontaneity, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, revised edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 77-86. Rhetorical scholars Charles Stewart, Craig Smith, and Robert Denton also have made suggestive allusions to the importance of events in the life of a movement. They note that, in addition to "skilled leaders, dedicated followers, satisfactory organization, a social system that tolerates protest, and a climate conducive to change," "[e]vents such as Three Mile Island, Kent State, and *Brown v. Board of Education* are essential for the progress of social movements," *Persuasion and Social Movements* 13. Later the authors refer to a "triggering event" that the social movement looks to "give birth to a new phase of enthusiastic mobilization" (p. 45). Most recently in rhetorical studies, David Proctor has proposed "dynamic spectacles," fusions of material events and symbolic constructions, as focal points for the discourse of communities in conflict. Reflecting concerns similar to those driving this study, Proctor writes: "Methodologically, then, the dynamic event provides a frame for studying the dynamic phenomenon of community. The frame functions not as a template to be pressed over the rhetoric, but rather works as a boundary for data collection and analysis." David E. Proctor, "The Dynamic Spectacle: Transforming Experience into Social Forms of Community," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 130.

<sup>17</sup>"Structure: Human Reality and Methodological Concept," in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donat (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 98.

<sup>18</sup>Goldmann, 98.

<sup>19</sup>Darsey, "Catalytic Events and Rhetorical Movements." It was primarily the substantive conclusions of this study, concerned with the rhetoric of gay liberation rather than with methodological questions, that was published as "From 'Com mies' and 'Queers' to 'Gay is Good,'" in *Gayspeak*, 224-247.

<sup>20</sup>See Darsey, "Catalytic Events and Rhetorical Movements," or "From 'Com mies' and 'Queers' to 'Gay is Good.'"

<sup>21</sup>Because this study is an extension of an earlier study, the decision was made to stick as closely as possible to choices regarding treatment of the discourse made in the first study. This includes choices regarding coding rules, statistical tests, and other matters. Value analysis, a content-analytic coding scheme developed in the 1940s by Ralph White, was used as a method of quantifying significant characteristics of the discourse. In the application of the value analysis itself, there is one important deviation from the original study that is worthy of note. Health, a value in White's schema not generally considered among the most useful for propaganda studies, was coded in the current study though it was not in the original study. In reviewing the discourse samples from the original study, only one editorial was found in which the value health was featured, an editorial on venereal diseases. The contrast between the relative lack of concern with health issues in the first seven rhetorical eras and the significant concern with such issues in the final era studied here, an era dominated by AIDS, is as dramatic as it was predictable.

Another alteration of the original research design that was made in the interest of improving the study without inhibiting comparability was doubling the sample size for each period from approximately 5,000 words in the first study to approximately 10,000 words in this follow up. The samples, as in the original study, are newspaper editorials and opinion pieces from gay presses, and a rudimentary form of stratified sampling was used in their selection in order to ensure representation geographically, organizationally, temporally, and ideologically. While lesbian voices were not systematically excluded from this sample and in fact there are a number of editorials by lesbians included, neither was there any attempt to include publications specifically addressed to the lesbian community. Given the rift that often surfaces between the gay male and lesbian communities and given that lesbians often have found the women's movement a more congenial home than the gay liberation movement, this study, as with the original one, should be taken as more representative of the gay liberation movement as it has been associated primarily with gay men than of gay male and lesbian interests. For examples of the debate over gay male and lesbian relations, see Jeffrey Escoffier, "Can Gay Men and Lesbians Work Together?" *Out/Look* 2 (Fall 1989): 1, and "Community Voices," [Letter to the editors] *Gay Community News*, 6 (April 28, 1979), 4. Within each stratum, the sampling was as random as it could be practically made without resorting to the formal apparatus of generating random numbers, etc.

More information on the method and its application can be found in Darsey, "Catalytic Events and Rhetorical Movements: A Methodological Inquiry," or in Darsey, "Catalytic Events and Rhetorical Movements: A Methodological Proposal" (paper prepared for the SCA seminar in social movements, November 1989).

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, Peter Frisch's November 15, 1979, editorial (p. 5) in the *Advocate* in which he reflects on the national nature of both the publication and the gay rights struggle. See also Bruce Voeller and Jean O'Leary, "In Praise of Lyn," [Community Voices] *Gay Community News* (April 2, 1977), 4.

<sup>23</sup>It also is true that the existence of gay centers of leadership and cultural definition contributes to the kind of condescension and snobbery that Rome exhibited toward the provinces. The provinces, in return, threaten the unity of the whole by becoming resentful and uncooperative. See Dennis Melbatson, "NGTF, the March and the Hinterlands," *Gay Community News* (April 21, 1979), 5. For some general and tentative thoughts on how the subcultural

nature of gay liberation influences identification, both in the Burkean, rhetorical sense and in the more common sense, see James Darsey, "Gayspeak: A Response," in Chesebro, ed., 58-67.

<sup>24</sup>[Philadelphia] *Gay News* (April 1977), 22.

<sup>25</sup>See Darsey, "Die Non . . .," in *Vessels of the Word*.

<sup>26</sup>"Opening Space," *Advocate* (July 26, 1978), 5; (December 27, 1978), 5.

<sup>27</sup>"Community Voice," *Gay Community News* (April 2, 1977), 4.

<sup>28</sup>"A House Divided," *Gay Community News* (September 16, 1978), 4.

<sup>29</sup>David Goodstein, "Opening Space," *Advocate* (July 26, 1978), 5.

<sup>30</sup>"A House Divided," 4.

<sup>31</sup>(January 1978), 22.

<sup>32</sup>"On to Washington," *Gay Community News* (March 26, 1977), 4; "Guest Editorial: On to Washington," (April 1977), 22.

<sup>33</sup>"Bryant Threatens all GAYS!" [Philadelphia] *Gay News* (April 1977), 22; "A House Divided," *Gay Community News* (September 16, 1978), 4; "Speak for Yourself," *Gay News* (May 18, 1979), 15.

<sup>34</sup>See [Philadelphia] *Gay News* (April 1977), 22; [Cleveland] *Gay News* (February 1977), 24; and *Southern Gay News* (February 1978), 22.

<sup>35</sup>"The right-wing threat: It's very real and dangerous," *Gay News* (April 20, 1979), 13.

<sup>36</sup>"The right-wing threat: It's very real and dangerous," 13; "Opening Space," *Advocate* (December 27, 1978), 5.

<sup>37</sup>"Opening Space," *Advocate* (February 7, 1980), 5.

<sup>38</sup>"A Secondary Primary? No," *Gay News* (May 1-14, 1981), 21; "Not Representative," *Gay News* (March 19-April 1, 1982).

<sup>39</sup>"S&M: Actually, an asset," *Gay News* (May 1-14, 1981), 21.

<sup>40</sup>"CSLDC Responds," *Gay Community News* (June 26, 1982), 5.

<sup>41</sup>"Liberation is Not in a Vacuum: Fighting the Klan," *Gay Community News* (March 15, 1980), 5. Though not officially part of the sample and not coded, a letter on the same page, "Unite to Fight," also is illustrative.

<sup>42</sup>"Gays and Nazis," *Gay Community News* (July 3, 1982), 4.

<sup>43</sup>"1984: The Countdown Begins," *Drummer*, Issue 42 (1981), 6. Issue numbers rather than dates are fairly common for gay publications, especially those in a magazine format. These publications often are unable to maintain a regular publication schedule because of financial and legal problems.

<sup>44</sup>"1984: The Countdown Begins," 6.

<sup>45</sup>"1984: The Countdown Begins," 6.

<sup>46</sup>"Gay Pride '81," [Philadelphia] *Gay News* (May 1-14, 1981), 21; "Opening Space," *Advocate* (February 7, 1980), 5.

<sup>47</sup>"1984: The Countdown Begins," 6.

<sup>48</sup>"Opening Space," *Advocate* (October 15, 1981), 6.

<sup>49</sup>"Thinking about Atlanta," *Gay News* (April 17-30, 1981), 19. In the study this one extends, there was a 1957 editorial regarding the Stephen Nash murders and their effect on perceptions of the gay community. See "From 'Commies' and 'Queers' to 'Gay is Good,'" 234. Another notorious case was that of John Wayne Gacy. There have been others of more strictly local interest.

<sup>50</sup>See "Not Representative," *Gay News* (March 19-April 1, 1982), and "CSLDC Responds," 5.

<sup>51</sup>Darsey, "From 'Commies' and 'Queers,'" p. 233, *passim*.

<sup>52</sup>Darsey, "Die Non . . ."

<sup>53</sup>"A Secondary Primary? No," 21.

<sup>54</sup>"1984: The Countdown Begins," 6.

<sup>55</sup>"Gays and Nazis," *Gay Community News* (July 3, 1982), 4; D. B. Goodstein, "Opening Space," *Advocate* (February 7, 1980), 5; "The Wisdom of Solomon," *Gay News* (June 27-July 10, 1980), 15.

<sup>56</sup>"Liberation is not in a Vacuum: Fighting the Klan," 5.

<sup>57</sup>"Anti-Semitism, homophobia have same root," *Gay News* (April 17-30, 1981), 19.

<sup>58</sup>As reported in *Time* (November 21, 1977), 44.

<sup>59</sup>*New York Native* (June 7-20, 1982), 6.

<sup>60</sup>*New York Native* (October 24-November 6, 1983). By 1985, in one typical issue the ratio was 20 of 28 pages. *New York Native* (September 30-October 6, 1985).

<sup>61</sup>"Gay Health and Well Being," *Gay Community News* (November 30-December 6, 1986), 5. See also "NATIVE Endorsements" and "Important Voter Information," *New York Native* (November 5-18, 1984), 5.

<sup>62</sup>See, for example, "Axelrod's Pig Blood," *New York Native* (October 7-13, 1986). The editorial in the present sample most suspicious of government is the one that insinuates that AIDS might be caused by a chemical agent unleashed by the Army or the CIA. The editorial, aware of the skeptical reaction it would receive, concludes: "For years, the U.S. Army has been trying to come up with a chemical that could destroy the immune system. That's not paranoia. That's the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD." "Acquired Industrial Dioxin Syndrome?" *New York Native* (September 12-25, 1983), 3.

<sup>63</sup>"Keep the March on Washington Alive," *Windy City Times* (October 15, 1987), 13.

<sup>64</sup>See, for example, "AIDS Update," *Gay News* (March 25-31, 1983), 13.

<sup>65</sup>"AIDS Update," 13.

<sup>66</sup>"FDA Protestors Combine Courage and Wisdom," *Windy City Times* (October 20, 1988), 11.

<sup>67</sup>For example, see "Ray Flynn and Lesbian/Gay Liberation," *Gay Community News* (September 29, 1984), 4, and "NATIVE Endorsements" and "Important Voter Information," 5.

<sup>68</sup>See, for example, Jackie Goldsby, "'O, Say Can You See' . . . As Far as We Tell You to Look," *Out/Look* (Winter 1990): 1. The entire editorial is devoted to examining the potential impact of upcoming Supreme Court decisions on the gay community.

<sup>69</sup>See Lenny Giteck, "Lenny," *Advocate* (December 24, 1985), 5, and "The Gay Press," *New York Native* (January 16, 1989), 13.

<sup>70</sup>"There is No Substitute for the Quilt and No Substitute for Coming Out," *Windy City Times* (October 13, 1988), 11.

<sup>71</sup>Dave Walter, "Tales of Congress," *Advocate* (September 26, 1989), 27. In the same commentary, Walter dealt with the fact that Barney Frank was advantaged by having "come out" before the revelations regarding his relationship with Steve Gobie surfaced.

<sup>72</sup>"AIDS Update," *Gay News* (March 25-31, 1983), 13. See also Cliff Amesen, "Veterans and AIDS," *Gay Community News* (February 25-March 3, 1990), 5.

<sup>73</sup>"There is No Substitute for the Quilt and No Substitute for Coming Out," 11.

<sup>74</sup>Lenny Giteck, "No Hope for the Pope," *Advocate* (December 23, 1986), 5; "Keep the March on Washington Alive," *Windy City Times* (October 15, 1987), 13.

<sup>75</sup>Lenny Giteck, "Lenny," 5.

<sup>76</sup>"'O, Say Can You See' . . . As Far as We Tell You to Look," 1.

<sup>77</sup>Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4 (1971): 71-91.

<sup>78</sup>"There is No Substitute for the Quilt and No Substitute for Coming Out," 11.

<sup>79</sup>In addition, recognition was the fifth ranked value for Period VIII.

<sup>80</sup>Phillip Bockman, "The New Respectability," *New York Native* (September 24-October 7, 1984), 14. Bockman's indiscriminate switching of person in his use of pronouns is confusing, but the careful reader will discern that those who are initially "they" become "we" (gay men) in order that straights may become "they."

<sup>81</sup>"The Mattachine Program," *San Francisco Mattachine Newsletter* (June 25, 1954), n.p., quoted in Darsey, "From 'Commies' and 'Queers' to 'Gay is Good,'" 230.

<sup>82</sup>"Thinking About Atlanta," [Philadelphia] *Gay News* (April 17-30, 1981), 19.

<sup>83</sup>Maryanne deGoede, *Gay Community News* (July 12-18, 1987), 5.

<sup>84</sup>Bowers and Ochs, 7.



<sup>85</sup>For some preliminary empirical evidence on how gay men and lesbians may separate their self-concepts from constructs they may have about homosexuals, gays, or lesbians, see Fred E. Jandt and James Darsey, "Coming Out as a Communicative Process," in Chesebro, ed., 12-27.

<sup>86</sup>Stephen O. Murray, "Review of Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication," *Advocate* (January 7, 1982).

<sup>87</sup>Lenny Giteck, "Lenny," 5.

## Domesticating Dissent: The Kennedys and the Freedom Rides



JOHN M. MURPHY

On May 6, 1961, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy told a Law Day audience at the University of Georgia, "You may ask: Will we enforce the civil rights statutes? The answer is: Yes, we will" (Kennedy, 1961a, p. 62). Unbeknownst to Kennedy, however, civil rights activists were already challenging that resolve. On May 4, white and black riders had boarded a Trailways and a Greyhound bus in Washington, D.C. with the destination of New Orleans, Louisiana[,] for a commemoration of the *Brown* decision on school desegregation (Garrow, 1988, p. 154). They were testing compliance with a recent Supreme Court decision banning segregation in waiting rooms and restaurants serving interstate bus passengers (Branch, 1988, p. 390).<sup>1</sup> James Farmer, executive director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), sponsor of the project, understood the difficulty the rides would cause for the Kennedys: "We put on pressure and create a crisis [for federal leaders] and then they react" (Weisbrot, 1991, p. 55).

Examination of Administration and press reactions to the crisis opens important questions concerning social control and social movements in the United States. To explore some of those questions, I shall examine the primary theoretical bases for the analysis of authority response to movements and elucidate an alternative perspective drawn from Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The case of the Freedom Rides illustrates the utility of this approach.

### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Traditional social movement theory offers little to help the critic interested in social control. One reason is simple: The rhetorical strategies of the movement have been the focus of attention. The rhetoric of the "establishment" is slighted.<sup>2</sup> As Lucas (1980) notes, "Like other scholars, rhetoricians have generally been more interested in studying social change than social maintenance. We need to learn much more about the symbolic processes of social control" (p. 265).