Island of Tranquility: Rhetoric and Identification at Brigham Young University During the Vietnam Era

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ISLAND OF TRANQUILITY: RHETORIC AND IDENTIFICATION AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY DURING THE VIETNAM ERA

by

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The author argues that beyond religious beliefs and conservative politics, rhetorical identification played an important role in the relative calmness of the BYU campus during the turbulent Sixties. Using Bitzer’s rhetorical situation theory and Burke’s identification theory, the author shows that BYU’s calm campus can be explained as a result of communal identification with a conservative ethos. He also shows that apparent epistemological shortcomings of Bitzer’s model can be resolved by considering the power of identification to create salience and knowledge in rhetorical situations. During the Sixties, BYU administration developed policies on physical appearance that invited students to take on a conservative identity, and therefore a conservative behavior. Relationships of power and hierarchy at BYU can be understood not as quantitative and oppressive matrices, but as rhetorical choices of students to identify with the character of school president, Ernest Wilkinson, and the administration. Power, then, is as Foucault envisioned it—as a field wherein identity and discourse are negotiated. This thesis argues for a more broad
understanding of identification, ethos, and power for explaining rhetorical behavior in communal situations.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Island of Tranquility ................................................................. 1

Chapter One

Uniting Souls: Epistemology and Situational Theory .................... 11

Chapter Two

Dress, Grooming, and Communal Ethos: Spiro Agnew Addresses BYU .... 26

Chapter Three

Questions of Power: Earnest Wilkinson and Group Identity ............... 39

Conclusion

The Moral Dimension of Identification ........................................... 65

Works Cited .................................................................................. 67
INTRODUCTION

The Island of Tranquility

In January 1969, *US News and World Report* ran an article about Brigham Young University titled “A University Without Trouble.” The summary heading read as follows:

No “hippies,” miniskirts or riots make the scene at Brigham Young University. The Mormon school is an oasis of calm amidst campus turmoil. Its secret: high standards, strict discipline. (58)

The article continued with a surprising revelation: “At a time when students everywhere seem to be on the warpath, Brigham Young University is undisturbed. It has never had a serious demonstration” (58). BYU’s tranquility, the report explained, was due to its connection to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the sponsoring religion) and the high admission standards required to attend: Students could not smoke or drink, they had to obey a dress code, and any student participating in a riot, *a la* Berkeley, would be suspended or expelled. The report then quoted Dr. and Mrs. Reeves who donated a million-dollar ranch in California to BYU after visiting the campus: “The young people at BYU were all clean-cut, good-looking. There was no beatnik atmosphere. Those students had their feet on the ground. Instead of finding fault, they were accepting leadership” (58). The school seemed to have its hiccups and its micro-rebellions (the article indicates that 13 students were expelled for marijuana use or sale in 1967), but generally speaking, *US News* decided that Brigham Young University was “a peaceful university in a time of turbulence” (59).

In spite of the tendency for media, then as much as now, to exaggerate the “turbulence” of the Sixties, with burning campuses filled with students everywhere “on the warpath,” and in spite of the concession that there were thousands of universities besides BYU that did not have large-scale disturbances as did Columbia or Berkeley, there must have
been something starkly unique about the atmosphere of BYU during the Sixties that set it apart from the other relatively mild schools. *US News and World Report* was not the only news source that noticed. Media heavy hitters like *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* ("As the dust settles at some campuses and others prepare to meet their own unmakers," wrote the Tribune, "it is refreshing to take a look at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah..."), also carried stories about BYU’s almost religious patriotism and the absence of agitation and revolt on its campus.

Religion, however, does not completely explain BYU’s calm during the “days of rage.” At its core, Brigham Young University achieved a communal consensus unprecedented in the 1960s educational front, perhaps even unprecedented in the history of American higher education. Behind the tranquility was group cohesion and a common identity that dictated how the character of the university would be defined and how rhetorical discourse worked to create meaning, identity and action. How BYU’s students, faculty, and administration, functioning collectively as a unique religious polis and discourse community, managed the exchange of symbols during the Sixties says much about how they defined themselves and how that definition would direct (and, in this case, hedge) action. That core identity became the governing force behind much of what the BYU community said and did during the Sixties.

This paper is an attempt to explain the contextually strange calm at BYU during the Sixties using contemporary rhetorical theory. With the revival and scholastic triumph of rhetoric in the last half of the twentieth century, scholars have used its vocabulary and its constructs to inquire into a miscellany of subjects and texts, from landscape to scientific revolutions. It is appropriate, and quite enlightening, to seek from theory new explanations for old events, especially from the historical record. However, before rhetorical theory can
be used advantageously to discuss BYU in the Sixties, we must first look at the historical-rhetorical situation more fully. If it is true that, as Eugene White explains, all discourse should be explored as "historical configuration," or as the continuation of antecedent messages and events that make up the exigential flow of rhetorical situations (25), then we must precede our theoretical applications with the historical configuration.

Exploring the Sixties with even a modicum of objectivity seems impossible for scholars. Alan Kors has complained that scholarship of the Sixties (roughly from 1964-1974) is "our national Rorschach test" and tends to be "tendentious, partisan, ardent, and obsessive," sometimes even vengeful (1). Two keystone texts of the era, Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties* and Kenneth Heineman's *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels*, illustrate this polarity well. Gitlin's encomium of the New Left sees the radical social movement as a holy, though incomplete Reformation, while Heineman believes that we are still suffering from the Saturnalia of sex, drugs and violence that the radical counter-culture produced. Approaching such a loaded and polarizing subject as the Sixties with some fairness is the burden of contemporary scholars and theorists.

Not since the Civil War has there been a time in our history when conflicts both within and without polarized the nation and induced such fiery polemic, and continue to do so. In one commentator's words, the Vietnam Era "divided father and son, intellectual and hard hat, hawk and dove, peacenik mother and John Wayne father" (MacPherson 29). The polarization and fragmentation that came with the cultural vitriol of the Sixties was felt most acutely on college campuses, where all the tense abstractions like free speech, sexuality, human rights and peace were engaged by a strident leftist minority and then propelled (and eventually adopted) into mainstream communication. Universities became laboratories for democratic dialectic; widely accepted ideas about morality, militarism, race and foreign policy
were confronted with oceans of words printed in pamphlets and journals, aired on radio and television waves, and in the campus air, shouted from stepladders.

The exigential flow of the “Campus Wars,” as Heineman calls them in another work, picked up its mercurial energy from Berkeley in 1964 when students protested administrative action against fiery political speech on campus. At the time, the impetus of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement was not foreign policy (such as the US involvement in Southeast Asia) but campus policy, particularly the issue of *in loco parentis*, or the idea that the administrator was substitute for parental discipline. Heineman reports that twenty five percent of America’s colleges and universities experienced protests against the heavy-handed presence of school administration (*Bodies Upon the Wheels* 106). Students felt that the classical age of the college president as “the academic father and students as the dutiful children” must die (*Bloustein* 46). (I will address the concept of *in loco parentis* further in chapter three.)

In 1965, the year Lyndon B. Johnson began the bombing mission “Operation Rolling Thunder” against North Vietnam and sent the first two Marine battalions to South Vietnam, students and faculty at Michigan held a “moratorium,” the first of its kind, to protest the war in Vietnam and the university’s Department of Defense contracts. Similar stirrings began that year in Pennsylvania, and the next year at Wisconsin, Rutgers, SUNY-Buffalo and other universities, both students and faculty responding to what was believed to be an immoral and destructive conflict. During the Sixties, three hundred of the two thousand campuses in America experienced “sit-ins, building takeovers, riots, and strikes,” and that is only counting the more volatile and violent outbursts (*Heineman* 1). It is possible that every major campus in America experienced some kind of backlash or protest, some kind of antigovernment dialogue in its media organs, however small. In the spring of 1970,
1300 universities experienced protest of some kind, and 900 universities had to shut down until fall because of anti-Vietnam student strikes (Heineman 176).

Much of the foment was caused by young, upper-middle-class communists, the so-called “red diaper babies,” whose idealism and social consciousness led to the formation of SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, which then spread chapters across the nation’s campuses. By 1968, SDS had one hundred thousand members on three hundred campuses (Heineman 150). SDS rejected its liberal democratic forefathers (like Kennedy) and established a new political style both radical and participatory (Gitlin 135). In their ideology they taught that student activists must put their bodies on the line to stop the government war machine. In 1967, when forty-nine percent of students nationally favored escalation of the war in Vietnam, SDS and other student groups across the nation moved from protest to resistance.

It is easy to forget two points about campus protest that become marred by time and media hype: 1) The majority of university students did not protest, did not participate in sit-ins or teach-ins or death-ins (students painting their faces like skulls and lying down in groups like corpses), did not seek to destroy the campus ROTC presence, etc. (see Van Dyke 205); and, 2) Most of the students who did protest were educated, upper-middle class who felt no real threat of conscription to Vietnam because of the relative ease of getting a deferment (see Baskir and Strauss 20-23). This last point has much to do with the intensity of young male protest against the war: self-survival was the reason behind the rhetoric. As Neil Sheehan has noted,

the threat of being conscripted for a war that was the object of widespread moral revulsion made marchers and shouters out of young men who might otherwise have been less concerned over the victimization of Asian people or the turning into
cannon fodder of farm boys and the sons of the working class and the minorities. (717)

In terms of rhetoric, Sheehan's comment can be viewed as a direct application of situational orientation that theorist Kenneth Burke discusses in *Permanence and Change*. The chance and circumstance of the draft created a rhetorical situation "marked by conflict" and the "aggravated crises of conscience" that led to patterns of behavior in the students, that in turn revealed rhetorical motives (30). In terms of identification, we could say that many protesters identified against the Vietnam draft by joining the anti-war movement, rather than explicitly identifying directly with the movement itself.

Burkean scholars would recognize this rhetorical move as the irony of identification and dissociation (RM 34). When identification takes place, there is always an implied division (22). The flip side of what Todd Gitlin, once-SDS president, claimed was the "supercharged density" of the antiwar movement, where "lives were bound up with one another, making claims on one another, drawing one another into the common project," was the ultimate rejection of any identification with the "the system," which was the New Left's straw man for all that it despised, including the government, the war, school administration, or anyone over thirty (Gitlin 184). A great portion of the movement's most biting rhetorical discourse was directed at this straw man and identifying against it, rather than at uniting the disparate groups. Though activists "referred to their actions as part of 'The Movement'—not the civil rights movement, not the student movement, but a larger movement," it is clear that this unity was illusionary (Van Dyke 208). As the Sixties peaked, the "movement" became a hydra of competing and clashing groups ranging from Castroists, socialists, black militants, feminists and weatherman terrorists, who shared no commonality at all other than frustration with the war in Vietnam (see Collier and Horowitz 145).
Because of the scholarship of Burke, contemporary rhetorical theorists take particular interest in what Burke calls “consubstantiality” among groups—the substance or “common spirit” that communicating groups “share in common” (RM 21). Put simply, the best way to get something done rhetorically is to make clear the consubstantial elements shared by rhetors and audiences alike. Though I will discuss this in more depth in the next chapter, I find it fitting to introduce the concept in the context of the Sixties and “The Movement(s).” As noted above, there was, first, a schism between the activists and their government which made consubstantiality seemingly impossible, and second, an illusionary unity among ideologically disparate groups, which made consubstantiality tenuous at best. Much of the rhetorical tension of the Sixties, I believe, is due to this failure to identify and to articulate true consubstantiality within The Movement. (And, conversely, the rhetorical calmness of BYU during the Sixties is due to the success of the community in securing identification and consubstantiality. More on this later.)

1968 was the year in which all these tensions reached a critical density and exploded. During Tet, the Vietnamese celebration of the lunar new year, the communists launched a surprise attack on American installations in South Vietnam. Though American forces repelled the Viet Cong in the attack, the complete surprise and fury of Tet stunned Americans who watched the battle every night on television. The country had been led to believe that America was summarily winning the war, that the end of the bitter conflict was in sight, but the ’68 Tet Offensive snapped the credibility of the country’s leaders and cast doubt on inevitable victory. Having been informed of Tet, Walter Cronkite, who represented the enlightened moral strength of the country, asked, “What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning this war” (Gitlin 299). University students were then joined in their distaste of the war by a larger number of more moderate citizens who felt they had been lied to.
Also in 1968, both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. After the death of King, it seemed to Gitlin that “nonviolence went to the grave with him, and the movement was ‘free at last’ from restraint” (306). The student anti-war movement, though grounded initially in virtuous ideals like equality and peace, escalated into a period of violence and irrationality in some cases, and outright terrorism in others. From 1968 to 1970, students at some universities seized buildings and took teachers hostage, set off bombs and burned facilities, attacked police officers at conventions, terrorized Selective Service and ROTC offices, and launched strikes that shut down entire schools.

For many student protestors, the time for rhetorical exchange was over. Their willingness to rage and commit violence, sometimes just “for the hell of it” as Tom Hayden of SDS said, marked the end of their willingness to discuss differences through reasonable symbolic exchange. Wayne Booth recognized this breakdown of rhetoric at the University of Chicago where the student independent press contained “no hint that one might make use of argument” to explain the reasons behind the antiwar stance (4). Booth’s complaint was that dogmatic, almost thoughtless and animalistic, opinions had ossified to the point where public discourse was no longer an attempt to reason together but a battlefield where opponents mindlessly attacked each other (36-37). The students’ war of identification against “the system” was in Burke’s terms “a disease, or perversion of communion,” rather than a unified effort to act in accordance with shared ideals (RM 22). In other words, the disharmony and disunity among student protestors were glossed over by a tenuous communion against the war effort. Major ideological differences among activist groups could be set aside in favor of united rage.

Again, we must not fall into the all-too-convenient trap of thinking that all or even a majority of college students behaved this way in the rhetorical situation created by the
Vietnam War. Even at Columbia in 1968, when SDS and the militant Afro-American Society seized and occupied one dormitory and the university library, two-thirds of the undergraduates kept cool heads and opposed the outrageous militant actions (Heineman 141). However, by the late Sixties, and especially after Tet, it was obvious that the majority of American students, though opposed to the disruptive and violent acts of student protestors, did not support America’s war in Vietnam and favored withdrawal.

The uniqueness of Brigham Young University’s discursive practices during the mercurial Sixties lies in its almost unanimous identification with conservative leadership (embodied in the Nixon administration) and against student protest (embodied in SDS). During the Sixties, President Ernest Wilkinson and his administration cooperated rhetorically with the student body to create the calm, conservative atmosphere that captured media attention and established BYU as an “oasis of peace” amidst academic anarchy, as Wilkinson’s biographers noted (Deem and Bird 418). When interviewed about why there were no demonstrations or sit-ins or the like at BYU, Wilkinson said that the students there had been raised to be obedient, were more mature than students at other schools, and recognized that attending the highly selective, church-sponsored school was an honor and a privilege, not a right (Deem and Bird 421-422). However true those three characteristics may be, I suggest that they are not adequate for understanding the complete rhetorical forces at work on campus.

For the rest of this thesis, I will use Brigham Young University as a case study in the dynamics of Lloyd Bitzer’s revised situational theory and Kenneth Burke’s concept of identification to explain, in part, how it is that BYU experienced such quietude during the Sixties. It is my argument that throughout the rhetorical crisis of the Vietnam Era the administration, the faculty, and the students of BYU, both consciously and unconsciously,
identified themselves in their discursive practices as a conservative, obedient, patriotic and tranquil institution, opposed to the antiwar movement and the rebellious counterculture the movement spawned. In fact, identification worked so effectively at BYU that in the late Sixties the university attracted national attention from major news media like *US News and World Report*. In the next three chapters I will analyze three aspects of identification at Brigham Young University that contributed to the peaceful atmosphere in the “time [or situation] of turbulence.” In the first chapter I discuss Lloyd Bitzer’s situational theory, its philosophical weaknesses and its recent revisions, and I will explain how Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification makes a more realistic episteme in situational theory. In chapter two I explain the conservative identity BYU sought to achieve through its rhetorical dress standard. Finally, in chapter three I will look at how the administrative power to control discursive practices during the Vietnam Era led to the formation and solidification of group identity, opinion, and action.

The article about Brigham Young University in the *US News and World Report* concludes with a telling experience involving Ernest Wilkinson, the president of BYU during the Vietnam Era. In September 1968—the year the North Vietnamese communists launched a surprise attack during the Tet holiday and Americans began to lose their faith in the government and turn to protest and violence—in an opening assembly, Wilkinson asked all the students who were willing to maintain law and order to stand: “As far as could be determined, all stood. Then he called for dissenters to stand. None did” (59).
CHAPTER ONE

Uniting Souls: Epistemology and Situational Theory

Rhetorical theory has given us the tools we can use to explore how the BYU community's management of symbols created the tranquil atmosphere that captured media attention. Though, I must concede, theory probably will not yield any definite answers about why many other college students rebelled and BYU's did not, at least it presents a vocabulary with which we can view possible motives behind discursive practices. In this study I rely primarily on the situational theory of Lloyd Bitzer (and its revisions by later scholars) and the theory of identification by Kenneth Burke to explain some of the discourse that pacified the campus of Brigham Young University in the Sixties. I will argue that in rhetorical situations, such as the situation of BYU in the Sixties, where meaning and knowledge are created cooperatively, the most salient force for meaning and action is the identification of the rhetor with the auditors.

Bitzer explained his situational theory of communication in the seminal article “The Rhetorical Situation,” published in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* in 1968. The nature of the theory is context: discourse is rhetorical only when it is generated by a situation in time and space involving “persons, events, objects, relations” and an exigence that demands some kind of appropriate response (5). Bitzer uses the word *exigence* as “an imperfection marked by urgency,” or in other words, that which is “other than it should be” in a situation (6). The exigence invites the discourse that must be directed to a particular audience, and that audience must have the power to change the situation or fix the problem (8). Since the exigence occurs in a specific context, not any response will do; the rhetor is constrained by the “beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives” and any other conditions that exist in the situation that dictate, to the perceptive communicator, what
should or should not be said. In its entirety, the rhetorical situation, according to Bitzer, exists in reality as an objective and observable phenomenon (like a war) and is, therefore, “available for scrutiny” by the critic (11). (This theory corresponds quite well with the “scene-act ratio” of Burke’s dramatic pentad in *A Grammar of Motives*. There is a logical consistency between container and thing contained, between the nature of the acts and the nature of the scene that contains the acts.)

The continual interest in Bitzer’s situational theory in both rhetorical and communications studies is perhaps a result of its simplicity. It is easy to teach, easy to understand, and deceptively easy to apply to historical events (like the Sixties). However, there have been critics who have concluded for one reason or another that the theory is either incomplete or dismissive. Starting with K.E. Wilkerson in 1970, many scholars have added revisions to the theory—in some cases, improving it and rendering it more suitable for the postmodern discourse of the academy (see Smith and Lybarger 19). Wilkerson’s main objection to Bitzer’s theory is with its emphasis on historical circumstances over the discourse itself and, more importantly, over the rhetor (89). Bitzer seems to believe that events that evoke rhetorical activity are objective in nature, which ignores the “speaker’s perception of his social context and his preperception (anticipation) of the development of his communicative act” (92). To Wilkerson, rhetorical studies should rely much more on the creative act of the speaker rather than the context in which the message is conveyed.

Richard Vatz has voiced similar criticism of Bitzer’s model. Far from being an objective experience, the rhetorical situation is a fiction, or the “phenomenological perspective” of those involved, and does not exist independent of its participants (154). The exigence, or the thing that is other than it should be, has no “ethical imperative supposedly independent of its interpreters,” since meaning does not reside in events but in symbol-using
animals who then endow events with meaning (156). In Vatz's thesis, the rhetorical situation is the culmination of a creative act performed by rhetors who 1) choose the events to communicate in the first place, and 2) interpret those events for audiences (157). To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan, the *rhetor* is the reality: Vatz asserts that power to effect change rests not in the audience, as Bitzer suggests, but in the interlocutor who has metaphysical control of how the situation is presented: “Rhetors choose or do not choose to make salient situations, facts, events, etc. This may be the *sine qua non* of rhetoric: the art of linguistically or symbolically creating salience” (160).

Though the top-down episteme Vatz presents may improve Bitzer's rhetorical situation epistemologically, it seems to give rhetors too much power over both reality and their audiences. Rhetors cannot make anything exist or cease to exist. If the reality we understand and depend upon is a fabrication of a speaker's rhetorical creativity, how can we possibly be led to meaningful action to ameliorate exigence in rhetorical situations?

Considering the question from the other end, Farrell argues that the meaning of rhetorical experiences depends on the consensus of the audience and the way individuals cooperate to produce consensus and knowledge *independent* of how the rhetor understands the situation (6). Of these two epistemological theories, Farrell's offers a more accurate view of rhetorical situations and their cooperative nature; however, his assumption that the burden of knowledge rests solely with the audience is tenuous and not in tandem with contemporary rhetorical theory.

These are questions of epistemology, and they continue to churn up the discourse and invite argument about the way participants "know" situations. From its Greek beginnings, rhetoric has been an uncomfortable bedfellow with philosophy; the dialogue between the two camps has been, at times, unfriendly. Still, the relationship between
epistemology and rhetoric has not been explored fully nor resolved satisfactorily. The recent debate in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* between Cherwitz/Hikins and Schiappa *et al.*, attests to the topic's vitality and importance. Any discussion of the realities of the rhetorical situation is incomplete without some discussion of how knowledge is formed through rhetorical interaction.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, the central questions of epistemology include “the origin of knowledge; the place of experience in generating knowledge, and the place of reason in doing so; the relationship between knowledge and certainty . . . the possibility of universal skepticism; the changing forms of knowledge that arise from new conceptualizations of the world” (Blackburn 123). Discussions of epistemology over the centuries have generated two competing metaphors: 1) knowledge is like a pyramid with a secure, “given” foundation (foundationalism or objectivism); or 2) knowledge is like a fuselage whose strength is based on the interlocking parts, with no foundation (relationism or relativism) (123). Either knowledge is something that is already established and we need only find it, or knowledge is something that must be constructed by interlocking parts. Recently Jeffery Binsham has referred to the either/or of these two metaphors in rhetorical theory as the “Cartesian Anxiety” (44).

Both metaphors can be seen operating in rhetorical theory from the beginning. As early as 5th century BC the enterprising itinerant teachers, the Sophists, taught young Greek men that truth and knowledge were discovered through dialectic, persuasion, and a clashing of arguments (Herrick 38). For them, there was no foundational truth, no transcendental reality with which to connect. There existed, as Protagoras argued, only men and words, and with words the worlds were. In fierce opposition to the Sophists, Plato, through the Socratic dialogues, taught that there was indeed a truth and a true knowledge, and that reality
consisted of otherworldly Forms or Ideas beyond the sensible world that could only be discovered *a priori* through reason and contemplation. Plato had major disagreements with the Sophists’ epistemological model. In the *Gorgias* Socrates roundly (as always) defeats the Sophistic episteme by arguing that rhetoric, or “oratory” as he calls it, “doesn’t need to have any knowledge of the state of their subject matters; it only needs to have discovered some device to produce persuasion in order to make itself appear to those who don’t have knowledge that it knows more than those who actually do have it” (459c). To Socrates, the entire rhetorical enterprise is suspiciously similar to base flattery, wherein rhetors say only “what’s pleasant with no consideration for what’s best” (465a). Taken epistemologically, the Sophistic rhetorical tradition, to Plato, could be likened to a boat crew lost at sea who decide to vote which way is north. A vote does not decide it. True north is in only one direction, regardless of the efforts of the sailors to define it with their perception. Furthermore, the reality of things could be found freely by those willing give their lives to contemplation and reflection of the true Forms behind and above the world, as Socrates had.

Later, Aristotle bridged the epistemological rift between philosophy and rhetoric by postulating that Plato’s Forms were not in an invisible, unattainable realm, but in the here and now, in the particulars of daily existence. In terms of epistemology, Aristotle believed in *a posteriori* knowledge, or experiential knowledge based on data collected by the senses. To know something is to know it through the body. Furthermore, to know something is to know what it is in relation to other things rather than its relation to a more perfect transcendental Form. Knowledge is order, it is particular, it is class and genus and species, and truly persuasive rhetoric seeks to define things as what they are, in relation to what they are not (Hamlyn 13). It is the work of the rhetor to bring such definitions to light. Rhetoric
is merely a tool, a techne, for this process; it is amoral, in spite of Plato's arguments. It can be used for both good and evil purposes depending on the virtue of the rhetor.

From Aristotle to the present, rhetorical theorists (including Cicero, Locke, Campbell, and others) have perpetuated the same epistemological bias I see in Vatz—specifically, that it is the rhetor and not the audience that creates meaning through rhetorical discourse in rhetorical situations. However misplaced, the idea continues that knowledge created in situations is the work of rhetors who invent their message, craft it in a way that will persuade, and deliver it in a way that is pleasing. As we have seen, there are obviously shortcomings in Bitzer's rhetorical situation, but a theory that embraces a rhetor-heavy epistemology is incomplete, especially when considering postmodern rhetorical discourse and the prevalence of intersubjectivity, social construction, and social-epistemic theories of knowledge.

Strictly speaking, the revisionists' main objection to Bitzer's situational theory was its objectivist perspective—a perspective that lost its luster early in the twentieth century after the work of iconoclasts of the transcendental like Nietzsche and Heidegger, and later by antifoundationalists like Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty. Theorists began to see knowledge as something contingent, contextual, free-floating, constructed and dependent on time, place, people and even situation (which creates a subtle irony with Bitzer). Bitzer's claim that the situation "exists as a real thing apart from human perception, recognition, or interaction" has been dismissed, as we have seen (Jasinski "Rhetorical Situation" 696). It is not that contemporary scholars are solipsists: Things happen, out there in the real world, apart from the mind. Yet our understanding of objects or events (and the symbols we use to represent them) gives them meaning. It is the constraint of perception in individuals—both speaking and receiving—that ultimately makes meaning in rhetorical situations. "The
existence of a document,” explains Patton, “will probably be less constraining than what is believed about the document” (45).

Anticipating this epistemological dilemma in rhetorical theory, Robert Scott in 1967 wrote the groundbreaking essay “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic” that coined the rhetorical term, “epistemic rhetoric.” Sophistically, Scott argued that “man must consider truth not as something fixed and final but as something to be created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and with which he must cope” (17). In that sense, then, rhetoric “is a way of knowing; it is epistemic” (17). *A priori* knowledge and transcendental or fixed truth, hand-me-downs from Plato, were not useful concepts anymore. Human beings must use symbols to communicate and make sense of their world, and therefore the purposeful attempt to create meaning through symbols is both rhetorical and epistemic. Our use of symbols creates the meaning. Ten years later, Scott still preached this doctrine. If societies are to apply what they know to make life better, then rhetoric as a means of understanding social reality as well as a means of acting effectively within a community is assured. . . . [Rhetoric can be seen] as a human potentiality to understand the human condition. (“On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later” 266)

With these thoughts, Scott seemingly reversed rhetoric’s status as the handmaiden for truth and knowledge or the decorator of discourse and argued effectively that rhetoric was truth, made truth, constructed truth (Jasinski 221).

Scott’s work continued through the work of one of his students, Barry Brummett, who in a 1976 essay for *Philosophy and Rhetoric* made the connection between the indeterminacy and chaos of quantum mechanics (as opposed to the objective determinacy of Newtonian physics) and epistemic rhetoric. Relying on the process theory of Kuhn,
Brummett uses the word "intersubjectivity" to explain the phenomenon that "what and how people know is nothing more or less than the study of the nature of reality" (28). In other words, we can’t know what we do not know. Reality is wound up in our experience with it, but we do not make up reality: we participate in making reality (28). Rhetoric, essentially, is a purposeful construction of reality through symbols, and moreover it is essentially a social construction via communication that creates meaning: "only if reality is shared, that is to say created by discourse, can it be changed or altered by discourse" (31). This is not to say that everyone will have the same understanding of reality and situations. Hardly. But through the sharing of discourse and, as Brummett aptly puts it, "verification of experience" through symbolic exchange processes, communities (such as the scientific) can come to a consensus on certain issues and truths (33). Consensus becomes reality for the group. Consensus allows participants in rhetorical situations to respond to exigences and to change conditions in which they live—the crowning achievement of rhetoric.

At a symposium at Purdue, ten years after "The Rhetorical Situation," Bitzer himself conceded that there are such things as personal facts contingent on an individual’s "personal subjectivity," though he still maintained that there were truths which exist independent of human participation ("Rhetoric and Public Knowledge" 84). In this address it seems Bitzer rethought the objective nature of his situational theory (if, in fact, he had meant to be completely objectivist in the first place):

The public, as a collective body or community of persons sharing inherited elements of mental life, gives existence to personal or subjective facts in the same way as the individual. Purely factual conditions experienced by the public come into relation with shared sentiments, principles, and values that characterize persons not as
individuals but as members of the public; and the power of participation transforms those factual conditions into the public's personal facts. (85)

So like Brummett, Bitzer recognizes that (at least) some facts are socially contingent and, as in Kuhn's thesis, exist only as long as the community sustains them. Both Bitzer's (at least in the Purdue address) and Brummett's comments about meaning can be classified as social constructivist. Operating on the concept of social-epistemic, social constructivists take the middle ground between hard-line objectivism and individual relativism. The meanings of exigences in rhetorical situations are created through discourse within a community (Jasinski 221). Therefore, meaning in rhetorical situations is co-creative; in the words of James Berlin, the nature of reality is determined by “dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence” (488). Or, as Trimbur explains, social constructivists argue that groups “draw upon the linguistic resources available within particular cultures and specialized social milieux in order to constitute reality and to position themselves as speakers, writers, and actors in relation to these locally constituted realities, to each other, and to social institutions” (675).

However epistemologically sound social constructivists can be, there is still a sense that they are on that storm-tossed boat voting which way is true north. Critics of social constructivism have pointed out that the meaning we attach to an object does not change its ontological state (Jasinski 222). Put bluntly, all the “locally constituted realities” in the world will not make it possible to walk through a wall or turn north into east. Yet this seems a rather juvenile rebuttal, since no reasonable community will attempt to defy the laws of time, space, or physics with discourse. Rather, for social constructivists the purpose of rhetoric is to get things done in the world, together. When exigences emerge and threaten the stasis of community life, the most constructive and pragmatic way to approach the problem is
consensus and agreement. And both those conditions depend on the way the community understands the rhetorical situation as a collective body.

To sum up this discussion of Bitzer, I believe it is clear that his situational theory made an excellent and lasting contribution to the study of rhetoric; and, with a few modifications, it will continue to illuminate rhetorical discourse, particularly discursive practices in historical contexts. However, from its first appearance in 1968, the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of situational theory were underdeveloped and needed revision. We learn from the critics of Bitzer that clearly there can be no complete discussion of situational or contextual theory that does not consider the roles of rhetors and audiences in constructing the realities of the situation or context. Bitzer's main error was in placing too much emphasis on the objective, environmental phenomena that make up the situation and stimulate the players to respond with discourse. Furthermore, the "players" themselves are not the most reliable communicators of what is real, but are made up of multiple, fragmented "selves" that must then communicate through the imperfect symbol-system we call language. Therefore, there is little use in explaining a rhetorical situation from an event perspective without recognizing the perceptions, biases, recognitions, purposes, understandings—basically, the mortal and flawed souls—of both those who create discourse and those who hear and respond to it. It is the practice of discerning the souls of situations, I suggest, that is the actual *sine qua non* of rhetoric.

Ironically, then, we are back to what Bitzer calls "constraints." For if rhetorical discourse is best understood by examining the souls of those involved in the situation rather than the situation itself, then any attempt to apply rhetorical theory must take into account who is involved, rather than what. And that brings us to questions of identity in rhetorical discourse.
Whether they knew it or not, Bitzer's critics recognized the importance of identity in rhetorical theory. Much of their criticism, as has been shown, has much to do with the perception and purpose of the rhetor as an individual, or with the way the world view of the audience interacts with the world view of the interlocutors. What is said in certain situations can be explained more lucidly by recognizing a shared identity or the working rhetorical identity of those involved. Without this awareness, situational theory is incomplete—all the scholars who revise situational theory, from Wilkerson to Smith and Lybarger, attest to this, whether explicitly or implicitly. The souls of the situation make the situation.

We must then turn to Kenneth Burke and the principle of identification to complete Bitzer, or at least make his theory more tenable to postmodern criticism and the understanding of social construction. Burke, the brilliant twentieth-century language theorist, spent his long academic career searching for the ultimate theory to explain why humans do what they do. In his early work *Permanence and Change*, he argues that the power of communication depends on whether the rhetor and the auditor have a shared world view or orientation. A person's orientation becomes clear in certain situations "marked by conflict," and certain motives are manifest by reaction to the stimuli the situation creates (30). Burke treats motive and situation as synonymous terms (31). From a rhetorical perspective, this means that rhetors, if they wish to encourage action in a rhetorical situation, must cater the message to the orientation of the auditors. In other words, they must identify with their audience.

These concepts of orientation and situation correspond quite well to Bitzer's situational theory, though it seems no scholar (not even Benoit) has discussed the apparent connection. Furthermore, in *Permanence and Change* Burke can even be read to address the metaphysical discussion of the Bitzerean revisionists, particularly Benoit who pointed out the
stimulus-response weakness of the theory. Burke, too, uses the word *stimulus* for rhetorical situations, though he did not think stimuli had absolute meanings (PC 35). Rather, Burke favors the contingent, interpretive social-epistemic concept of reality in rhetorical situations:

Any given situation derives its character from the entire framework of interpretation by which we judge it. And differences in our ways of sizing up an objective situation are expressed subjectively as differences in our assignment of motive. . . . We discern situational patterns by means of the particular vocabulary of the cultural group into which we are born. . . . These relationships are not realities, they are interpretations of reality—hence different frameworks of interpretation will lead to different conclusions as to what reality is. (PC 35)

The only way, then, to effectively deal with reality (or the appearance of it) is to cooperate with others in symbolic exchanges, such as through metaphors, analogies, simplifications, etc. It is important to note that however “unreal” reality is, or how inaccessible due to various interpretations and slippery symbols, Burke believed that cooperation through symbols is a literal (as opposed to metaphorical) process that gets tangible things done in the real world (“Dramatism” 448). *Permanence and Change* concludes that “a system of ideal cooperation . . . would be a momentous material aid to the communicative medium” (xlix).

In later works, Burke revised his theory of symbolic cooperation in rhetorical situations to better reflect the identities of the participants. Fifteen years after *Permanence and Change* he had been led to believe that perhaps persuasion should be replaced by the word *identification*, a term “of wider scope,” in definitions of rhetoric (RM 20). In the *Journal of General Education* he made this shift explicit:

If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the “old” rhetoric and a “new” . . . I would reduce it to this: The key term for the old rhetoric was
"persuasion" and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the "new" rhetoric would be "identification," which can include a partially "unconscious" factor of appeal. ("Rhetoric—Old and New" 203)

In A Rhetoric of Motives he concluded that "we must think of rhetoric not in terms of some one particular address, but as a general body of identifications," which he took to mean commonly shared principles between or among bodies (26). Moving beyond Aristotle's teaching that the character of the speaker is the "controlling factor in persuasion" (38), Burke suggests that ethos must be a principle of commonality, not just a description of the speaker: "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (RM 55). I believe Burke is suggesting that we may substitute identification for ethos, for a rhetor has a persuasive character only as he or she demonstrates a character the audience not only appreciates but can identify with. "Only those voices from without are effective," argued Burke, "which can speak in the language of a voice within" (RM 39). (I will discuss ethos as identification further in the next chapter.)

In rhetorical situations, the players have "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes, that make them consubstantial" (21). This consubstantiality creates a common ground in the rhetorical field, and "common ground makes for transformability" or change (Grammar of Motives xix). Using a crafty metaphor based on alchemy, Burke theorizes that even seemingly opposing terms (and, it could be added, seemingly opposing identities) come from the same "central moltenness" and share a similar substance that should be used to more perfectly communicate (GM xix). One of Burke's interpreters has suggested that the struggle for identification is, for Burke, "the universal situation" and the only way to live and
communicate “purposefully” (Rueckert 43-45). Also it can be seen as one of the most effective and *creative* epistemes in rhetorical situations.

Recent scholarship suggests that Burke never intended identification to replace Aristotle’s persuasion, but rather understood “the act of discovering or creating the probable shared grounds or joined interests” as what makes persuasion possible in the first place (Youngdahl and Warnock 337). However, it has been said that identification, though clearly used for purposes of persuasion, is “less adversarial, less coercive, less individualistic, more collaborative, more mystical, and more feminist” than persuasion; also, it generally promises more “unity, cooperation, community, dialogue, equality” and peace (337). Furthermore, Jasinski and others suggest that identification can be “unconscious or preconscious,” making it an act of non-intentionality (306). (Whether or not an act of “non-intentionality” can be rhetorical in the purest sense is open for argument.)

In conclusion, I would like to propose that Kenneth Burke’s identification theory is the governing constraint of Lloyd Bitzer’s modified situational theory and the key to understanding epistemology in rhetorical situations. Quite simply, the rhetorical process of identification, whether intentional or not, creates a bridge between the rhetor and the audience, thus making a somewhat unified, analyzable entity—a communal *ethos*—from which many assumptions about motive and action can be made. As Burke has said, we can understand much of the reasons and motives behind others’ discursive practices and actions if we understand something of their orientations; and if we can detect consubstantiation between the rhetors and auditors we can know, to some degree, why groups say what they say and do what they do. Identification theory works particularly well in studying the discourse of voluntary associations like schools and businesses where there is a feeling of shared interests and goals—sometimes established long before crisis hits. In such instances,
identification can be said to be a collaborative process, or something that all (or most) of the participants want.

Having introduced Burke's identification theory as the answer to the epistemological debate in situational theory, I can now move from theory to practice, from ideas to history. In the next chapter I will discuss how a very simple speech addressed to the student body of Brigham Young University revealed an implicit process of identification and reflected the way BYU students and faculty thought and acted about the rhetorical situation of Sixties protest.
CHAPTER TWO

Dress, Grooming and Communal Ethos: Spiro Agnew Addresses BYU

I argue that the epistemological turn from the arguments of the rhetor to the identification of rhetor and audience, as I have discussed it in the last chapter, demands a more thorough discussion of ethos in rhetorical situations. As discussed in the introduction, the uniqueness of Brigham Young University’s discursive practices during the mercurial rhetorical situation of the Sixties is best understood using Burkean identification—specifically, in discussing BYU’s almost unanimous identification with conservative leadership (embodied in the Nixon administration) and against student protest (embodied in SDS).

During the Sixties, President Wilkinson and his administration cooperated rhetorically with the student body to create the calm, conservative atmosphere that captured media attention and established BYU as an “oasis of peace” amidst academic anarchy, as Wilkinson’s biographers noted (Deem and Bird 418). When interviewed about why there were no demonstrations or sit-ins or the like at BYU, Wilkinson said that the students there had been raised to be obedient, were more mature than other students, and recognized that attending the highly selective, church-sponsored school was an honor and a privilege, not a right (Deem and Bird 421-422). However true those three points may be, I suggest that they are not adequate for understanding the complete rhetorical forces at work. Let us look at one speech that was given at BYU during the height of the Vietnam Conflict that, to me, makes clear how identification and identity worked in BYU discourse and affected opinion and action.

In a forum address on 8 May 1969 Spiro T. Agnew, then vice-president to Richard Nixon, spoke to students of Brigham Young University about the nation-wide campus unrest. As part of the Nixon administration, Agnew had adopted a “no tolerance” policy
toward the counterculture offspring of the social protest movement. A good portion of the popularity of the Nixon administration depended on moderate America's distaste of the hippies, yippies, and weathermen—the brazen minority that always caught television air time. As mentioned before, the agitation against the war did not achieve its rhetorical goals of turning America against the war, but had certainly turned America against the antiwar movement. Gustainis and Hahn have pinpointed the rhetorical weakness of the movement:

it seems clear that the manifestation of counter-culture values by anti-war protestors (through dress, grooming, slogans, public nudity, and drug use, among other things) was a rhetorical error. The target audience for the antiwar protest, citizens of Middle America, found the counter-culture protesters distasteful, even threatening. (206)

Nixon and Agnew sought to capitalize on this souring public opinion. Agnew's BYU forum speech is an excellent example of that capitalization and illustrates the power of rhetorical identification as an inroad to rhetorical action.

Even at BYU, traditionally a strongly conservative institution after World War II, "the debate on campus over the merits of the Vietnam War passed from the exchange of ideas to more militant activism," even though that activism was barely noticeable (Bergera and Priddis 183). The stakes were high; the efficacy of words and protest ultimately became a matter of life and death to male students whose draft numbers were low enough. Yet in spite of the cross-country college protests, the capture of school buildings by student radicals, the sit-ins and die-ins and demonstrations and boycotts, BYU remained an "island of tranquility" and a bastion for conservative thought and patriotism. There is evidence in Spiro Agnew's speech that he understood clearly BYU's identity as a conservative institution that consciously defined itself through policy and through the currents of Mormon worldview and cultural. Whether intentionally or not, the Vice President capitalized on BYU's
identity by crafting his speech as an *epideictic*, or a celebration of the conservative culture and a condemnation of the radical student movements. The power of his speech to perpetuate obedience to the government and adherence to patriotic civility lies not in an argument or a call to action, but in overt evocation and praise of a shared ethos—a shared character or identity.

Again, it is Kenneth Burke who has given us the language to recognize the rhetorical experience a speaker like Agnew creates when he or she invites, through epideictic, a firm recommitment to group culture and standards. In Burke's vocabulary, when the rhetor identifies himself with his audience by speaking "in terms of some principle they share in common," then there is an act of *consubstantiality* or a solidifying of "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, [and] attitudes" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 21). In *Attitudes Toward History* Burke explains further that the idea of the autonomous "individual" is patently false, and that "identity is not individual, that a man 'identifies himself' with all sorts of manifestations beyond himself" (263). The act of identification, it turns out, is healthy and necessary and must exist in an environment where social goals require cooperation: "The so-called 'I' is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting 'corporate we's'" (264). Through our actions and speech we identify with business, corporations, families, institutions and the government; we wed our motives with theirs and share, through the concept of *consubstantiality*, a common substance.

Burke's identification theory is particularly useful when we discuss epideictic speeches, whose end-goal is not only to praise and blame, but to reinforce fundamental cultural values shared by the rhetorical community. Gerard Hauser has explained that in the Greek world,
the occasion for praising or blaming significant public acts and actors also afforded
the opportunity to address fundamental values and beliefs that made collective
political action within the democracy more than a theoretical possibility. (5)

In other words, epideictic (even for the Greeks) was not merely a ceremonial exercise meant
to entertain an audience at a funeral or after a battle. In the praising of the hero or the
condemning of the coward, the encomiast communicates “matters of mutual interest,”
identifying both speaker and auditor as a public, and creating a “viable public sphere in
which a people may engage in politics” (18). Far beyond saying, this is what we are, the
epideictic says emphatically, this is what we do. Hauser makes it clear that social action in a
defined public cannot take place without “first recognizing shared bonds of community that
transcend individual differences” (19). This is exactly what Burke means when he talks of
consubstantiality and identification.

Though we have recognized that epideictic encourages, however indirectly, social
action, it is important to add that epideictic is not necessarily concerned with what so
preoccupied Wayne Booth in Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent, namely changing minds
and opinions (12). In the epideictic genre, the encomiast assumes that there is automatically
some agreement, some shared opinions, that need only be brought to light eloquently.
Therefore, the process of identification, as Burke has said, is less about persuasion and more
about the unity of souls. According to Dale Sullivan, epideictic is a lot like preaching to the
choir. “In the final analysis,” he writes, “it is only believers who experience epideictic rhetoric
in its traditional sense, an observation that leads to a redefinition of epideictic rhetoric based
on audience reaction” (Sullivan 128, my emphasis). The auditors find themselves
participating in a “celebration of their vision of reality,” hosted by the encomiast (128).
Though “preaching to the choir” in a connotative sense suggests that the sermon falls on
deaf or saturated ears, in an epideictic speech the audience actively participates by reaffirming its faith in the status quo culture the encomiast celebrates. Therefore, epideictic serves as a tool of orthodoxy—it lauds and preserves the right (orthos) opinion (doxa) of reality already adhered to by the speaker and the spoken-to. For Sullivan, the encomiast assumes the auditors are “already within the pale and attempts to increase the intensity of their adherence to those values held in common” (126, my emphasis). As was seen in the last chapter, the group orientation or consubstantiation creates knowledge and meaning in rhetorical situations.

Ethos, then, is not as we commonly understand it when speaking of the rhetorical situation. We are used to speaking of ethos as we have been trained to by Aristotle, as the qualities that make a speaker “worthy of credence” (1.2.4). Or, in the case of epideictic, ethos can refer to the character of those praised, who in Aristotle’s Rhetoric are deliberate doers of selfless acts (1.9.19). Sullivan explains that though these two understandings of epideictic are valid, they are insufficient to understanding the full efficacy of an epideictic speech to evoke identification:

Ethos is not primarily an attribute of the speaker, nor even an audience perception:

It is, instead, the common dwelling place of both, the timeless, consubstantial space that enfolds participants in epideictic exchange. Things that are consubstantial share substance, and, if in some metaphysical sense, we can say that those who share a common mental or spiritual space also share a common substance, we begin to experience ethos as consubstantiality. (127)

We are talking here of group ethos, or the character and identity of both the encomiast and the audience—the character that the encomiast lights up in neon in the speech. The
common identity is re-evoked and reinforced, and through that channel social action is possible (though, once again, not explicitly advocated by the speaker).

Now, having established the role of identification, ethos, and social action in epideictic, we return to Spiro Agnew's speech at the BYU forum to glean from it a rhetorical tool that might have been only latent in Agnew's or the students' minds.

At the time Agnew gave this speech, the country was seething in contention over the ethics of the Vietnam Conflict. After 1967, when the war showed no signs of slowing or ending, the antiwar movement against Vietnam became, in the words of one historian, "the most successful antiwar movement in the history of the world" (Gitlin 293fn). College campuses across the nation bubbled with the rhetorical, ranging from the well-reasoned pro/con essay from the faculty to the highly symbolic "die-in," with students in black clothes with white faces. As was noted in the introduction, campus unrest became epidemic; students in a few prominent universities took militant action against an academic machine they believed perpetuated the power structure that made the Vietnam war so damning. In late 1969, the year of Agnew's speech to BYU, 69 per cent of college students labeled themselves doves (Gitlin 409).

But Agnew was approaching an entirely different crowd, and he knew it. Earlier that year, both the Chicago Tribune and US News and World Report had written about the "island of tranquility" in the sea of academic turbulence. During his vastly influential tenure, Ernest Wilkinson, president of BYU from 1951–1971, had "actively promoted a politically conservative image both for himself and his university," which had changed nearly fifty years of political neutrality at the school (Bergera and Priddis 193). While other campuses protested, BYU students inaugurated America Week and Military Week to show their support for the war. In 1968, over 75 per cent of BYU students did not think the war was
immoral (Larsen and Schwendiman 157). In a rhetorical sense, Spiro Agnew, the ferociously right-wing ex-governor of Maryland, had come to preach to the choir.

His sermon is quite telling of the kind of conservative culture Agnew believed he shared with Brigham Young University. In the very first minute of the speech, Agnew presented himself as an encomiast, overtly praising a particular shared culture—a communal ethos or consubstantial substance—and *mocking* a particular aberrant culture. After opening with a lame joke about the superfluity of the vice presidency, Agnew jumped right into his epideictic:

For me the Brigham Young campus offers a refreshing change of pace. Its virtues are readily apparent. Here the scenery is magnificent, the buildings are handsome, and you can still tell the boys from the girls. Now don’t misunderstand me, I don’t have anything against long hair, but I didn’t raise my son to be my daughter. (433)

When we consider the true focus of this speech and the identity Agnew wishes to evoke, the compliments about the physical aspects of the campus seem to be merely cadence for the punch-line, which turns out to be a reflection of the communal ethos. Beginning in 1965 (coincidentally, the year of Operation Rolling Thunder and the first American offensives in the Vietnam conflict), Wilkinson began to take great pains to object to the lax grooming standards of the student body, which resulted in new campus legislation focused on annihilating any personal appearances that were aberrations of the conservative and clean norm.

I may point out here that personal appearance, dress and adornment are rhetorical by nature. The social psychology of clothing, which has descended to the present from philosophers like George Herbert Mead, shows clearly a situational nature according to Susan Kaiser, who explains that people construct their outward identities “in relation to the
intentions of other communicators and to the nature of society” (15). Clothing symbols and standards have little meaning outside situational contexts like work places or religious sanctuaries (139). In these situational settings, identities are negotiated through feedback, interactions and perceptions in a rhetorical symbolic exchange (197).

So the way we look has much to do with the way we identify with others in context-based rhetorical settings. This is why we do not show up to funerals wearing baby-blue tuxedos or Bermuda shorts. Furthermore, clothing is more than situational—clothes can connote social organization and belonging, as with group uniforms such as sports teams or restaurant staffs. Uniforms permit organizations to define with precision their membership and, the corollary, aberrations from the group identity (Joseph 3). This is what Burke means when he explains that implied in every instance of identification is the concept of division or exclusion (RM 22). If you wear X jersey, you are on X team and, automatically, you identify against teams Y and Z. In this way, the uniform symbolizes “uniformity” and identification with a common cause or project against all others.

The clothing context in which Spiro Agnew addressed BYU was one, you could say, of hyperidentification and division. When the War and the protest movement intensified simultaneously, the Vietnam Generation’s attempts to identify with or against through clothing intensified as well. The sons and daughters of the counterculture, particularly, sent out blatant rhetorical messages with their deviations from acceptable clothing styles. In her recent work Dress Codes, Rubinstein explains the messages inherent in hippie dress: “Rejecting the Vietnam War and the draft, hippies adopted an appearance and clothing that reflected their ‘revolution’ against rationality, self-restraint, and goal directed behavior, the values underlining institutional discourse” (220). In contrast to the suit-and-tie niceties of suburban office workers, “they looked disheveled and unkempt. They wore their hair long,
and jeans and work shirts became their 'uniform' (220). Implied in the messages of hippie clothing was hippie morality: Since the politicians who perpetuated the war wore suits and ties, and since the affluent society had turned to nuclear and consumer madness, we will identify against the suits by looking like bums. (Jack Kerouac may be responsible for giving birth to this sensibility through his "darma bums" and "holy goofs.") We have seen how the dress and behavior of the counterculture led to its total rhetorical alienation from the moderate majority.

Agnew understood this division clearly, as did the administration he represented. "Today, our colleges are under siege," he explained to the BYU student body. The "small minority" of vigilantes, lawless demonstrators and long-haired delinquents stood in stark contrast against "a vast faceless majority of the American public" who sat in "quiet fury" over the situation (434). Later that fall, Nixon was to give his historic speech in which he consolidated his constituency into one great group he called "the silent majority." As Nixon's right arm, Agnew perpetuated the silent majority doctrine through what King and Anderson have called a "rhetoric of polarization," defined as "the process by which an extremely diversified public is coalesced into two or more highly contrasting, mutually exclusive groups sharing a high degree of internal solidarity in those beliefs which the persuader considers salient" (178). In order to create an environment of polarization, a rhetor must create a feeling of group solidarity against a perceived "common foe" which stands in opposition to the identity and values of the group. Agnew, like all rhetors of polarity, sought to undermine the group ethos of his competitors, the counterculture (178).

For certain, Agnew had an ally in Ernest Wilkinson. In response to the countercultural changes in dress in the mid-1960s, Ernest Wilkinson began to make clear that BYU and its students did not identify with the counterculture, even in the least. During his
administration, the BYU honor code transmogrified from a code about plagiarism and cheating to a code of public self-hood. Much of Wilkinson's public discourse reveals quite an anxiety on this matter. In his welcome address in September 1965, titled "Make Honor Your Standard," Wilkinson reminded the student body of their commitments to keep LDS standards in conduct and dress. "We do expect the boys to have civilized attire," he explained, "and we expect the girls to be modest and becoming in their dress." Making an explicit allusion to the emergence of counterculture dress in men he said, "we do not want on our campus any beatles, beatniks, or buzzards!" (9). To clear up any confusion there might have been about the definitions of beatles, beatniks or buzzards, Wilkinson summed up his attitude of the counterculture:

Certain kinds of people who seemed to be odd balls and had no regard for the culture or responsibilities of a civilized people were first characterized as 'deadbeats' and are now referred to as 'beatniks.' There is no place at BYU for the grimy, sandaled, tight-fitted, ragged-levi beatnik. If any appear on our campus we intend to 'tick them off.' (10)

As for the girls, Wilkinson concluded that "we want no 'go-go girls' nor their pseudo-sophisticated friends, nor will we tolerate any 'surfers'" (10).

What he meant by these strange titles is less important than what identity he wanted to solidify in the minds of the students. In a later speech, Wilkinson told the students that visitors frequently commended the "clean appearance" of the students—clean cut, modestly dressed—when compared to campuses elsewhere ("Welcome Address Sept 1967 p. 12). In the fall of 1968, he wrote to parents of incoming freshmen that they should be clean cut and clean shaven and, thereby, would resist "the emulation of undesirable contemporary characters" (Bergera and Priddis 108-9). The clean look, then, became a double-
identification: identifying with the conservative, war-supporting BYU character, and identifying against the “freak flags” of the insubordinate, “undesirable,” campus hippie element.

Wilkinson’s successor, Dallin H. Oaks, continued the administrative war against any form of dress identification with the counter-culture. In 1971 Oaks took more than half of his welcome speech to explain the dress code. Unlike Wilkinson, Oaks seemed to understand the historic context of the dress code and explained that the rules against beards and long hair were “contemporary and pragmatic” (“Welcome Speech” 12), meaning that there was nothing inherently wrong with beards and long hair—but “at this particular point in time” they represented far more than careless grooming habits:

In the minds of most people at this time, the beard and long hair are associated with protest, revolution, and rebellion against authority. They are also symbols of the hippie and drug culture. Persons who wear beards or long hair, whether they desire it or not, may identify themselves with or emulate and honor the drug culture or the extreme practices of those who have made slovenly appearance a badge of protest and dissent. (13, my emphasis)

Apparent to Oaks was the dangerous rhetorical game of identification; the symbolic message sent out by long hair linked the wearer with the counterculture and the rebellious ideology espoused by protestors and dissenters.

Identifying by not identifying with, as we have seen, is a Burkean concept which he calls “identification by antithesis” (“Responsibilities of National Greatness” 50). Both Agnew and Wilkinson recognized a common enemy to communal orthodoxy, and in Agnew’s words the enemy was “long on locks and lean on faith” (433). By antithetical identification, the corporate “we” Agnew wishes to re-evolve is both trimmed and true—not a
"strident majority," but a conservative, private school that "does honor to the public spirit" (433). Whether or not Agnew intended it so, setting up a bad guy to use as foil for communal ethos is a practice as ancient as epideictic and serves, ultimately, to remind the auditors of "the aesthetic vision of orthodox values" (Sullivan 118), in this case by ridiculing the sexually indistinguishable unorthodox. By further discussing the delinquent and disruptive behavior of "self-appointed vigilantes," Agnew seems to heighten the antithetical identification, saying *this is what we don’t do* (extra emphasis on the *we*).

Any discussion of *ethos* in epideictic rhetoric must take into account a community, rather than an individual (like the rhetor or the hero he or she lauds). When the encomiast praises the noble works of heroes of the culture, it is, in Hauser’s words, “a manifestation of their [the rhetor’s and the auditors’] communal aspirations” (15). The lauded acts of the hero are “exemplary of a larger commitment” of the orthodox community “to ethical bonds and moral rectitude” (16). This makes the epideictic a group effort, even though one man or one act may take the spotlight. In this way, Hauser explains, communities can act together in the public realm through “collective political action” (3).

So who is the lauded hero in Agnew’s epideictic tale of communal ethos? It is the collective body of Brigham Young University. In this instance, the audience itself is the hero the encomiast praises. If we can borrow Hauser’s thoughts for a moment, the speech can be explicated thus:

The lauded hero’s [BYU] life is exemplary of a larger commitment to ethical bonds and moral rectitude [the silent majority, the Republican party, the conservative orthodoxy] . . . To follow the story and, more importantly, to testify to its truth requires the ability to grasp it as a statement of communal ethos; . . . They [the points of reference for praise or blame] illustrate how we may offer the city [or campus]
images of civic virtue through comparison with traits of known actors [BYU students] and rival ways of life [long on locks, dissenting minority, Berkeley]. (16)

It is obvious now that Agnew was not seeking to change anyone's mind. He was not there to trump up support for or cosmetically improve a war that had gone sour in the public mind. He was there to remind BYU students of who they were and what they shared with the powers that be. So Wilkinson was concerned with the tendency of students to wear long hair and protest wars; that tendency concerned Agnew and the conservative leadership as well. So BYU felt it must identify itself with those locked in armed struggle against evil forces; Agnew shared that conviction. In his speech to the student body of Brigham Young University in 1969, Spiro Agnew sought to bring to light these consubstantial traits, morals, and values and recommit the students to imitate them.
CHAPTER THREE

Questions of Power: Wilkinson and Group Identity

We have seen how a university president can practically legislate identity through dress and grooming standards in order to present communal ethos. This fact may beg the question, Where does an administrator like Wilkinson get his rhetorical power and why, evidently, do students cooperate with this exercise of power?

It is probably not well known that much of campus protest in the early Sixties had little to do with Vietnam and everything to do with rhetorical power, or the power to make language work for special interests in the campus community (see Howe 389). The Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964 was basically a response to authority’s attempt to silence radical political discourse at the university. In campus exchange, as in most rhetorical situations in American life, there is a balance of power, or rather an imbalance of power, since one body will always have more control over the outcome of communicative exchange than the other, due to the hierarchical nature of organizations like universities. This imbalance of power, I believe, is the most important factor or constraint in the rhetorical situation we are addressing here, and one of the most fascinating reasons why students at Brigham Young University did not protest to the degree other students did. Not only did they foster a strong respect and fear of authority, but they did not even have the opportunity to fully identify with the New Left or any non-conservative ideology, as other student bodies had. In the case of BYU in the Sixties, Ernest Wilkinson, the school’s president, exercised great power over the discourse through defining administratively the limits of BYU identification and silencing any attempt to present an opposite view. However, since Burke’s identification can be seen as a collaborative effort—the student receiving “indoctrination” from without and completing the process willingly “from within” (RM 39), thus emphasizing
the sociality of rhetorical identity (Cheney 144)—and considering Foucault's theory that power is never concentrated in one body, then we can view the measures taken by Wilkinson to control the discourse on campus as a collaborative work in communal identification.

The epistemological and metaphysical shortcomings of Bitzer's situational theory have been reviewed here, but there has been no mention of order, hierarchy, and structure as constraints that shape identifying discourse. Asante and Atwater were the first scholars to suggest that Bitzer's attention to context seemed to overlook "the inherent structural constraints" that come in rhetorical situations (171). Structure, they argue, "becomes a form of discourse apart from its character in the words of a discourse," or in other words, the existing hierarchy of power and position represented in individuals in a situation is rhetorical in itself (171). Even such abstract practices such as literary criticism have inherent in their structures the idea, at least, that someone knows more or is in a more enlightened position than someone else, implying both authority, power, and place (174). This new revision of situational theory implies questions of power and authority in rhetorical situations, and invites further discussion of how power affects the way participants respond to exigences. In his discussion of order in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke explains the difference between "dialectical" and "ultimate" order in a manner that answers questions of authority and power in rhetorical situations, and compliments Asante and Atwater's discussion of structure. Dialectic, he says, too easily becomes "parliamentary conflict" where the field of communication is dissonant, with competing voices "in a jangling relation with one another." On the other hand, if there could exist an "ultimate" order in rhetorical practice, then the competing, jangling voices would be placed in "a hierarchy, or sequence, or evaluative series, so that, in some way, we went by a fixed and reasoned progression from one of these to another, the members of the entire group being arranged developmentally with relation to
one another.” In other words, there would be some kind of “guiding idea” behind “the diversity of voices” (187). This, he goes on to say, is why Marxism distilled so easily on the minds of the working class: they saw themselves as integral parts of a system or order that had an ultimate goal. The teleology of the shared goal informed and enriched their cultural discursive practices.

While careful not to wrest Burke’s text too much here, I can see how Burke’s “ultimate” order invites a “know your place” philosophy, much like in Plato’s perfect republic (King 90). Such a philosophy is always governed by some kind of sovereignty, somebody or something with power to call the shots, or, more importantly here, to organize and perpetuate the hierarchy—with lesser mortals falling dutifully into their places. In fact, elsewhere Burke has said that one of the most fundamental of human natures is to exist in hierarchy. This is not necessarily negative; in a democracy, the body sovereign is (or is supposed to be) the People, who have power to relinquish power and bestow it on representatives. In Burke’s terms, election time—if it is free and fair—can be seen as one step in an evaluative series or a sequence that determines sovereignty and authority. Order, then, is necessary for rhetorical action, though the ultimate goal in Burke’s thinking is to minimize or eliminate tyrannical hierarchies or hegemonies (Cheney, Doxas and Torrens 140).

The concept of power becomes essential in understanding any rhetorical situation, especially those situations involving hierarchical institutions like universities. In his work *Discourses of Power*, Barry Hindness argues that there have been two competing concepts of power in history, one seeing power as a quantitative capacity (such as electricity), and the other fixing power in a dynamic relationship, where power is a right made legitimate by consent, and not a quantifiable force (1-10). In the first instance we have power as Max Weber defined it: power (macht) “is the probability that one actor within a social relationship
will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (15). In a similar vein, Bertrand Russell defined power as "the capacity to realize our desires," in spite of resistance (in King 137). Preachers of this gospel of power, like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Marx, and Nietzsche, have ultimately been concerned with the way power can be used to bring into subjection weaker souls. The long and sad story of history, you could say, has been one of unequal power relations, the result of which has been human suffering (Hindness 2).

In rhetorical situations, this concept of power suggests that when the outcome will be some kind of action (as in deliberative or judicial rhetoric), participants with the most power can, if they want, carry out their own desire in spite of the good arguments of the weaker participant (think of the plea of someone who is to be executed by a monarch's decree). Rhetorically, conditions or constraints of power are all-encompassing and, as Weber explained, determine what subjects see and feel and, it could be added, say (Sennett 20). One could argue that, in extreme instances of such power, there is little or no rhetoric because the point of discourse is not to persuade at all, since the participation of the weaker agents is not necessary to carry out the act, since force can be used. In such extreme (and, sadly, common) cases, there is no consent, there is no argument with reasons, there is no deliberation. This is the kind of power that terrified the colonial fathers of the United States.

The concept of power as something that can be quantified and increased and exercised works well, as I have said, in hierarchical communities like colleges. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the culmination of campus dissent may have been war protest, but the root was dissatisfaction with what was seen as administrative tyranny *in loco parentis*, or administrator as surrogate parent. In 1969 Michael Walzer, intellectual of the New Left and editor of *Dissent* magazine, explained the problem in a way
that resonates with the structural concept of Asante and Atwater. Universities function, he
said, as “mediated corporate bodies” that, unlike the government of the state, have
authorities “rarely legitimized in any democratic fashion” (396). “These officers,” he
continued, “preside over what are essentially authoritarian regimes, with no internal electoral
system, no opposition parties, no free press or open communications network, no
established judicial procedures, etc. etc. . . .,” and therefore no legitimate power (396). We
allow systems like university administrations to rule over us by the theory of tacit consent,
wherein corporate subjects submit themselves to corporate rule (397). Tacit consent,
however, is no excuse in Walzer’s thinking to keep students from their civil rights. And the
more “private and autocratic” the university head was, “the more angry, perhaps violent, the
[student] revolt will be” (406).

So dissident students in the Sixties wanted a say in what they were learning, and they
weren’t getting any. It seemed the powers-that-were exercised all power over the education
the students were paying for. Not only did their superiors have power over what students
were taught, they also exerted power and control over how they lived their lives—where they
lived, how they dressed, and what they said on (and sometimes off) campus.

The idea of in loco parentis was not new in the 1960s. The governing bodies of the
earliest schools in America, like Harvard and Yale, had been based on a patriarchal didactic
system where the school president functioned as the dutiful father nurturing and controlling
his sons. (And at the time, they were all sons.) Students of these early systems could thank
John Locke for the concept of parental power, which posited that “children” were not equal
subjects, but were naturally and temporarily subjected to their parents (Locke 31). The
administration of the classical college functioned under Locke’s concept of parental power.
Administrators, Bloustein explains, “came to act in lieu of parents, empowered by law,
custom and usage to direct and control student conduct to the same extent a parent could” (46). The president of the classical college became the _pater familias:_

> The fitting image is of the college president as the academic father and students as the dutiful children of learning: wise in his choice of what the young ones were to study; dedicated and enlightened in his mission as moral guardian over them; stern but just as their disciplinarian; and yet a man sufficiently attached to life’s joy, to provide his youth with wholesome and healthy—necessarily nonsexual—outlets for fun and games. (46)

Bloustein may wax flippant here, but this is not much of an exaggeration. The student of the 19th century accepted this familial hierarchy of power, positioned himself into the role of child, the potter’s clay, or he did not stay in college. As part of the “orbital harmony” of the university where each person knew “their own place” (Bloustein 46), the submissive student entered a rhetorical field in which the “ultimate order,” in Burke’s terms, descended from the father (the administrator) to the son (the student).

Not surprisingly, in the 20th century this idea of _in loco parentis_ became noisome and intolerable to the modern student. Particularly in the Sixties when cultural trends were leading youth to a more libertarian lifestyle, the paternal power of the administration in the university had to go. In 1968 Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist, recognized in the rhetorical field of protest the “inherent structural constraints” spoken of by Asante and Atwater. Student rhetorical “hyperactivism,” so-called, was merely a response to the exigence of parental control: “Every detail of their lives—where they sleep, what they eat, what they wear—has been . . . subject to college authority” (171). In the mid-Sixties, over one quarter of America’s campuses reported some kind of protest against this type of control over students’ lives (Henieman 106). Carried to extremes, the way administrators kept students
under control and surveillance in the classical model had parallels with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison complex, which placed its subjects completely at the mercy of the surrogate parent (Sennett 58). Also using the panopticon in his theoretical discussions, Foucault has pointed out the didactic function of prison reform in the 19th century. State discipline shifted from torturing prisoners to supervising their every move, thus neutralizing the criminal tendencies and transforming them into socially safe creatures (*Discipline and Punish* 18). It was this form of paternal supervision and moral didactic discipline that so inflamed college students of the Sixties. Students both conservative and liberal united against it (Heineman *Campus Wars* 148).

As Asante and Atwater have shown, the hierarchies or systems of power in rhetorical situations are themselves rhetorical. The system of *in loco parentis* acted rhetorically, even without a specific discourse. The familial/patriarchal system was a discourse in itself, and indeed that is what Michel Foucault has discussed in his essays on power. Foucault has been criticized for reducing every social relationship, whether hierarchical or otherwise, to a struggle of power. However, recent scholarship argues that Foucault did not believe that all relations reduced to power, but simply “that power is present in all social relations” (Lynch 66). In Foucault's work we see explicitly what is found implicitly in Burke's discussion of order and rhetoric—that power is simply the modus of getting things done.

*Power/Knowledge*, a collection of Foucault's interviews and essays, deals directly with the operations of power in social situations. Though he does not speak directly in rhetorical terms, he is addressing precisely what I am addressing here: how power affects discursive practices in rhetorical situations (like college campuses). In every society there exists “manifold relations of power” which “characterize and constitute the social body,” and create within themselves rhetorical discourse (*Power/Knowledge* 93). Furthermore, there can
exist no order, no hierarchy, no relation of power without a correlating “economy of discourses of truth” (93). The best way to understand how power creates discourse, according to Foucault, is not to analyze a rhetorical situation through time, as Eugene White assumed with the historical neologism exigential flow, but through “the use of spatial, strategic metaphors” that call to mind relationships, location, place, order, position (70). In this sense, power is not a repressive force but a creative force: the way it is used in the hierarchy creates knowledge, “regimes of truth,” and group identity (131). “The university hierarchy,” Foucault explains, “is only the most visible, the most sclerotic and least dangerous form of this phenomenon” (52).

The connection of Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge to Burke’s concept of identification is significant here. When Foucault explains the shift from torture to surveillance, he explains that the focus of discipline conversely shifted from the offense to the individual, to correcting not only what criminals do but also “what they are, will be, may be” (Discipline and Punish 18). In an image that may seem violent, Foucault explains how power’s capillary form of existence “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Power/Knowledge 39). Identity is a product of “a relation of power exercised over bodies” (74). Foucault uses the word “bodies” to refer to the souls of subjects—their identities. It is not much of a stretch, then, to change Foucault’s power/knowledge compound to power/identification; in other words, power creates identity (or forces identity in an act of rhetorical work).

For example, implied in the university hierarchical power of in loco parentis is the idea of family identity. The administrator is the father and the students are the children. Their consubstantiality, though metaphorical, is formed in the family relationship of the university.
However, as in Locke’s paternal power theory, there is no equality of power in the family. The children in the relationship do not have equal opportunity to create communal identity. Obviously, we are still discussing the first theory of power presented by Hindess—that of power as a quantifiable, scarce commodity, unshared (or, at least, unequally shared).

While other student bodies across America protested first against *in loco parentis* and then next against seemingly corrupt foreign policy in Southeast Asia, Brigham Young University authorities perpetuated the classical college model, with no apparent opposition from the student body. In discourses and policies that might have set Berkeley or Columbia on fire, Ernest Wilkinson, one-time lawyer and devout cold warrior, seemed to remind BYU students over and over that they were not in control of the discourse and that they did not have the power to create identity through rhetorical exchange. In retrospect, it is apparent that Wilkinson and the school administrators controlled discursive practice during the Vietnam Era through the exercise of hierarchical power and, its corollary, identification and identity.

As discussed in the last chapter, it was the goal of BYU administrators and the board of trustees to reinforce an identity of conservatism, vehement anticommunism, patriotism and tranquility in the students during the Vietnam era. In order to ensure this identity, the Wilkinson administration enacted policies of control that illustrate the power principle in rhetorical situations. These policies, enacted in the authoritarian style that Walzer indicated, preserved that identity by hedging the discursive practices of the students. Each policy, coming from the top down, reinforced the way BYU identified itself rhetorically in the *power/identification* compound I have suggested.

During his welcome speech in September 1965, “Make Honor Your Standard,” Wilkinson reminded students of their commitment to accept LDS standards and “moral
ideals." As a response, no doubt, to alarming campus riots at Berkeley, Wisconsin, and Michigan, these standards included a new strict definition of a riot as “two or more persons getting together and doing something to breach the peace” ("Speeches of the Year" 8). Any student participating in a riot would be immediately dismissed. Wilkinson then explained that though rebellious behavior seemed harmless, the reputation of the university was at stake. “Had that [suspension of students] been done at the beginning of the University of California,” he explained, “there would have been no long, continuous riots” (9).

The process of identification through administrative policy and rhetoric continued throughout the era. In 1966, almost beyond belief, Wilkinson encouraged a handful of students to spy on teachers presumed to have liberal political views (Bergera and Priddis 207-209). Later Wilkinson explained that he had only been exercising prudence in demanding hard evidence to back up student complaints (Wilkinson and Arrington 775). The incident exploded. The teachers found out, started their own investigations and filed formal complaints, and a few students contacted radio and television stations and newspapers about the incident (Bergera and Priddis 214). The tightness or wrongness of this incident is not important here. Wilkinson’s later comment that the whole incident “resulted in bad publicity for the University and for [myself]” is most telling in terms of the anxiety the administration felt over the way BYU looked to the world and the way the institution as an entity identified itself rhetorically (775).

Also, Wilkinson increased his power and the rhetorical might of the administration by placing certain students under surveillance. Paralleling Bentham’s panopticon and Foucault’s theories of surveillance, Wilkinson in the late 1960s encouraged administrators to keep a close watch on apparent “radical” students who may have sympathized with communism (Bergera and Priddis 185). There is no telling whether the student body at large
was aware of such surveillance; one can speculate that there would have been plenty of resistance. Even at BYU, the important point is that the path to identification with conservative values was clearly hedged, and competing discourse or behavior (is there a difference?) was muffled.

In 1967, the year in which a BYU undergraduate pinned his draft card to his shirt to "protest against protesters," the administration announced an annual "American Week," and then later "Military Week" to show patriotic support for the country (Bergera and Priddis 181). The next year, after sixty BYU students came to a speech by conservative vice-presidential candidate Curtis LeMay with black armbands and sought to disrupt the speech, school administrators adopted a civil disturbance plan, which included a suggested riot squad and contingent plans for protection of campus radio and television stations against hostile takeovers (184). It is also interesting to note that during this later period of the Sixties, Wilkinson and the administration refused the invitation of certain speakers to address the student body. Speakers who had atheist or subversive tendencies, or who had any connection to Russia or who strayed from the path of "strict morality" were prohibited from speaking in the weekly forum. When presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy came to speak, the administration refused to cancel classes (199-200). 15,000 students showed up anyway. Regardless of these efforts, the majority of students in a poll responded that viewpoints contrary to the school and the Church should be represented on campus (see Bergera and Priddis 200).

In 1968 a request for a BYU chapter of Students for a Democratic Society was rejected. In 1969, the administration told undergraduates in the dormitories to remove peace signs from their windows—"Just do it," the administration wrote in the student newspaper, "You don't need a reason" (Bergera and Priddis 186). In 1970, the administration made
policies against the signing of political petitions on campus and halted a petition for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, though a few years earlier Wilkinson himself had signed a petition addressed to Lyndon B. Johnson supporting the war (Magdiel 12). Also that year, the administration ruled that political literature could not be distributed on campus and that a series of antiwar plays called “Guerilla Theater” be banned from campus (15-16). The university organ, the Daily Universe, also fell into administrative control during this era. It should not shock anyone to learn that a university sponsored by a conservative church would exert some control over what is said in its newspaper. Student newspapers in every college have been traditionally, in some degree, monitored and censored by faculty, and for good reason. However, with the rising revolt against in loco parentis the American Association of University Professors and other academic groups in June 1967 drafted a “Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students,” which included the provision that student newspapers should be independent from the university, both financially and creatively. Furthermore, the student press, according to the statement, “should be free of censorship and advance approval of copy” (373), which would add to the discourse an integrity valuable to the school and the country.

The Daily Universe began in an environment of independence. According to Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel, both editors of BYU student newspapers in the 1990s (and, in their work The Lord’s University, grinding axes to the nub), in 1921, under the name YNews, student editors boasted that they would “criticize wherever and whenever we deem it to be the most expedient policy, regardless of whose toes we might step on” (73). Early in his administration, Wilkinson himself recognized the importance of having a free press on campus. But as student protest discourse in the Sixties intensified its connections to communism, anti-Americanism, and the counterculture, BYU administrators sought to move
the *Daily Universe*, as it was then called, from student control to faculty control in the communications department. By 1972, under the direction of Dallin H. Oaks, the new school president, the paper had been formally moved (83).

The trend of tightening administrative control over community identification and student discourse at BYU is quite singular considering its historical context. During this time, other universities, though intolerant of violence and destruction, were moving away from *in loco parentis* and granting students more independence, more voice, more rhetorical power (a trend praised by critics like Michael Walzer and lamented recently by conservative scholars like Allan Bloom and Roger Kimball). BYU’s administration seemed to be moving in the exact opposite direction, and exulted publicly in that move. Brigham Young University had a divine calling; it was the Lord’s University. And as such, it had a unique identity to perpetuate in rhetorical exchange. In a letter to parents, Wilkinson explained, “There are many disturbing influences at work on college campuses against which BYU is determined to hold the line” (“Welcome Address” 1968). In an address to students in February 1970 called “The Unique Role of BYU Among Universities in America,” he said that the primary focus of education was building strong moral character—an idea lost by other church-founded institutions like Harvard, Columbia, and Stanford (“Speeches of the Year” 3-4).

Also in this address Wilkinson made explicit the group identity of BYU and the role of administrators and faculty as the loving parents away from home. As loving parents, administrators had a responsibility to look into the affairs of students, both on and off campus. “This attitude may seem old,” said Wilkinson, especially “in a day when great numbers of universities and colleges have abandoned any attempt to supervise the moral lives of their students” (Welcome address Sept. 1968, p. 11). However, the hierarchy of BYU
would continue to function during the crisis of the Sixties in a rhetorically familial pattern, as Wilkinson explained to students in February 1970:

Our BYU family allows us to choose whether or not to belong, but if we become members, our responsibilities are as real as to our families at home. Your own natural parents expect this of us, and as your *alma mater* we do not intend to fail them. If our emphasis on standards has an old-fashioned ring to some of you, parents always seem a bit behind the times. (9)

"It may be frustrating," he continued, "to have someone care about everything you do," but that was the nature of family. Then Wilkinson made the exclusionary nature of the BYU family very clear: "If there be any of you who reject this concept [of *in loco parentis*], you will be responsible for ostracizing yourselves from our society" (9).

Again, I am speaking here of the concept of quantifiable rhetorical power—power that one can wield over another, power that one can exercise to define terms of identification in rhetorical situations. Such power creates identity, identity suggests power. In Burkean terms the power of Wilkinson's analogy of family has to do with "familial" or "tribal" definitions of substance; the powerful rhetorician identifies with the subject by pointing to shared substance—consubstantiability—"in terms of ancestral cause" (*GM* 26). In the classical college, this rhetorical device—the administrator speaking of the college as a family—was accepted though perhaps not addressed specifically or publicly. At BYU in the Sixties, Wilkinson made the familial relationship concrete and public.

I have not yet covered the second understanding of power that Hindess discusses in *Discourses of Power*. It makes sense to make a transition here by asking the question, How did Wilkinson get such rhetorical power? For Wilkinson, the question is not as easy to answer as with other university heads. From its inception, BYU has been intimately connected to The
Church authorities are not elected; they are called by revelation and then accepted by a general vote by the laity. (However, church leaders are not answerable to the laity. I will address this below.) Therefore, Ernest Wilkinson was appointed to his position in 1951 by Church president and prophet David O. McKay. Since the Latter-day Saints are encouraged to support the policies and doctrines of the president of the Church, who acts under the direction of God, it was not a leap for BYU students to assume that Wilkinson’s appointment had divine origins. Assuming that connection, it is also no surprise to discover that during the Sixties, BYU was in lock-step with its board of trustees, the Twelve Apostles of the Church. Heading that group was President McKay (of whom it would be an understatement to say that he was no friend of communism). Other church officials in official pronouncements like General Conference sermons had either criticized communism or supported law and order and the Vietnam War effort (see for example Boyd K. Packer’s address, “The Member and the Military”). So naturally, Wilkinson both criticized communism and supported the war effort. “This war,” he said in 1968 to a battalion of army reservists, “is as ‘moral and just’ as any war in which we have been engaged” (Earnestly Yours 74). He then gave his opinion that any college student who thought the war was immoral or unjust did not know enough about American heritage to graduate from college (79-80). In the order of things, there was complete consensus between the Church and BYU officials. The hierarchy acted in tandem.

For BYU students, ninety-five percent of whom were LDS, the hierarchy itself was rhetorical: It made all the difference in the world when church official David B. Haight reminded students in 1968 that the school was run by a man who was called and enthusiastically supported by a “living prophet” (“Welcome Address”). A particular Burkean
“ultimate order” was established. Students were invited to find their place in its orbit and support the rhetorical creation of identity, which Wilkinson himself discussed in words of uncanny resemblance to this discussion of rhetoric and power:

While this University is a part of the Church, we need to understand that the University maintains an identity and a particular image as an oasis of learning in a turbulent world. In order to maintain this image, the University administration and the General Authorities [of the Church] have the responsibility of defining the standards which will properly sustain this image and the basic virtue of modesty, which we have done... I think you students are just as anxious as I to preserve that reputation, and I am sure that together we can say that there will still be no riots on this campus. (“Welcome Address” 1970, 10).

There were complaints, of course. Even to the US News and World Report, a few students said they resented “being treated like children” (58). In a letter to the editor of the Daily Universe, one student said he was “angry because of the invisible iron glove that keeps us in our place; angry with the kind of education that teaches us to ‘accept’ rather than discover; angered by words praising us for our silence, words that have undertones of warning” (Bergera and Priddis 186-187). Even at BYU the students could feel the flexing of power over their bodies, over their “acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior” (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 125). And yet, the students at Brigham Young University (and every other American school during the Sixties) chose to be there. They were not forced to go to the school, accept the rules, or succumb to the powers of Wilkinson and the administration. Attending BYU was for them an exercise of their agency; “By the very act of registering,” said Wilkinson, “[the student] agrees to abide by all rules” (“Welcome Address” 1970, 11).
other words, they chose to enter a rhetorical situation in which the balance of rhetorical power would not be in their favor.

This concept of agency, I believe, is the gadfly of any discussion of power as a quantitative and singular force. Power, it is assumed, can be increased until weaker bodies are brought into complete subjection. In their revision of Bitzer’s situational theory, Asante and Atwater seem to fall back on a discourse of “victimage” to explain power in rhetorical theory. According to these scholars, in rhetorical situations where the governing power oppresses the weaker power, there are only two courses of action the repressed bodies can take: 1) they can continue to represent the most logical and truthful course of action, and thereby gain victory by integrity and reasonableness, or 2) they can adopt a course of “guerilla rhetoric” which means “multifrontal verbal attacks on the structural symbol” such as “non-negotiable demands” (176). How non-negotiable demands can be rhetorical, Asante and Atwater do not say. Yet their theoretical weakness is not in their concept of rhetorical resistance, but in their dismissal of agency and choice in rhetorical situations, particularly in situations of voluntary association in democratic societies.

In voluntary political societies the members willingly relinquish some of their power to participate in the community. This is the Lockean concept of power upon which the United States government is based. It is also a principle of power, I would argue, partly understood by Foucault. As Bevir points out, Foucault may seem to imply that all bodies are victims of some kind of power and that the freedom to escape, muffle, reroute or disrupt that power and “truly make ourselves” is an illusion (354). However, Bevir believes Foucault’s theory of power leaves room for the agency of the subject: “To deny that subjects can escape from all social influences is not to deny that they can act creatively for reasons that make sense to them” (358). Furthermore Foucault, unlike his Marxist contemporaries,
did not ascribe to the State unlimited power, but taught that authoritative power could take hold only in “a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations” that subjects also help define (Power/Knowledge 122). While discussing discourses and situations of power it should be evident that even weaker subjects possess the capacity “to select particular beliefs and actions” that might affect the situation and bring about change (Bevir 358).

I hasten to add that this reading of Foucault is not shared by everyone. Sara Mills recently argued that post-structuralist thinking runs counter to the liberal humanist ideology and its notion “of individual self with agency and control over itself” (34). Since there is no “self” (in this reading), there can be no choice—only a constant flux of selfhood that is beyond the control of the subject. Though Mills makes this argument, she concedes that Foucault’s notion of subjectivity did not stay the same over time, but changed and evolved over the course of his scholarship (34). Furthermore, Mills modifies (or clarifies?) Foucault’s concept of subjectivity by arguing that subjects do in fact participate in the negotiation of power by constantly evaluating, considering, adopting, or criticizing their positions in discourses of power (97). Foucault himself, in an interview titled “Confessions of the Flesh,” bewilderingly renames power *apparatus*—to reflect, I suppose, multivalent and strategic facets of power’s application in institutions—and, through emphasizing the heterogeneous nature of power, concedes finally that “there has to be a capillary from below to above at the same time” there is a capillary from above to below (201). Apparently, Foucault believed that even the seemingly oppressed subjects participate in a “tete-a-tete” with the distributors of the apparatus (201). Scholars like Mills, as well as Foucault’s interviewers for “Confessions of the Flesh,” have realized the complexity and paradox of Foucault’s theory of power and its relationship among subjects, especially when the word “relationship” suggests potentiality to act evident in all participants (though Foucault may occasionally say otherwise).
I believe Mills tries to keep Foucault's theory from collapsing under the difficulty of agency by showing that power is something negotiated "in each interaction [between subjects] and is never fixed and stable" (39). How, then, can subjects negotiate power in voluntary rhetorical situations if there is no agency?

In other words, it is dismissive to discuss the power relationship at BYU as a totalitarian relationship. Students participated in the discourse of conservative identity by entering freely the region or domain (Foucault's words) of the University and, in the very act, exercised their power by relinquishing it to Wilkinson and the administration. In some sense, they had to know what they were getting themselves into; at some level, they had to recognize they were taking on a new identity, a communal ethos, which they could not completely control.

This is close to (but not exactly) the second, non-quantitative understanding of power discussed by Hindess. In this view, power is not just a simple capacity or "will to act," but a legitimate capacity granted to a body or bodies by other bodies (10). Therefore, in cases of apparent sovereign power, we must realize that the power of the sovereign is granted through consent, cooperation, and contract. It is a collaborative process contingent on many participants and a multitude of factors. On the matter of sovereignty itself, Foucault said, famously, that "we need to cut off the King's head" and get beyond the idea that one body holds the reins of power over many bodies without remedy (Power/Knowledge 123). In fact, Foucault does not believe that power is localized in one place at all, which he explains in Power/Knowledge:

Power must be analysed [sic] as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is
employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. . . . individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (98)

This should make sense in rhetorical situations. For, even at the least, power is inflected in the auditors who can listen, understand, and ultimately accept or reject what is being said. Even in uneven rhetorical situations, like the one we have discussed at BYU, power is not “inflicted” on those who have none, but in Foucault’s reasoning “invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them” (Discipline and Punish 27). And that even assumes that they want to resist; in many cases the auditors or weaker rhetorical bodies assent (in Booth’s words) to the will, arguments, policies or whatever of the greater body. Foucault is adamant that subjects have some degree of influence in the dance of power and, like prisms with light, can change the direction and dynamic of power in rhetorical situations (Power/Knowledge 72).

Acknowledging, now, that in voluntary organizations the exercise of power exists in relationships and not in individuals, perhaps it makes more sense to substitute the word authority for power when discussing Wilkinson’s rhetorical force (though that word too is loaded). Current definitions of authority diverge from traditional definitions of power and move more to a cooperative understanding: “Authority is the right to command, and correlatively the right to be obeyed. It must be distinguished from power, which is the ability to compel compliance, either through the use or the threat of force” (Wolfe 20); an authority is “someone who has strength and uses it to guide others through disciplining them, changing how they act by reference to a higher standard” (Sennett 15); it is “the power in
charge of unifying common action through rules binding for all" (Simon 48); it is a system in which “some kind of democratic legitimacy is always necessary” (Walzer 406); “Authority is legitimate power, power that is stable, because it is felt to be right and good to obey it” (King 145); finally, it is a power which “exists when one individual or group is perceived by another as having an assigned position—somewhat like a charter or social contract” (Bowers 13). If we accept that with authority comes some degree of power, then each of these definitions hint at the concept of legitimate or shared power discussed by Hindess and elaborated by Foucault, in that they reflect the reciprocal, non-quantitative definition. Authority is something granted, not wielded. When subjects (willingly) recognize authority, you could say it is an act of identification—they acknowledge consubstantial goals with the governing body.

It would appear that seeing power as a legitimate capacity, rather than simply a capacity, makes much more sense in discussing rhetorical situations, particularly when considering the power of identification to exact persuasion. Especially after having reviewed the rhetoric-epistemic debate, it is clear that meaning and action are created in systems of social symbolic construction—social-epistemic. I suppose we must concede with Richard Vatz that the rhetor—the one who “has the conch,” so to speak—has first crack at creating meaning out of thin air with symbols. Within certain Bitzerean constraints, the rhetor decides what to make salient at that point. But if there is no “universal locus of appeal,” no generally accepted form of authority or deference, then in a Burkean sense there can be no collaborative identification (RM 59). The process of identification, if collaborative, transcends the hierarchy and will lead to group advantage (61).

According to Andrew King, true rhetorical power comes from organized networks or groups. These groups have constituents who share “all potential ingredients for
mobilization like common habits and world views (48). The consubstantiality of the group creates real rhetorical power to collaborate in situations of crisis. In terms that echo Burke, King explains this rhetorical phenomenon:

> Probably the most important source of a group's power is its sense of identity. Dominant groups are bound together by common interests, habits, values, aspirations, interpretations of the past, and agreement on basic decisions. Group identity is made up of common prejudices and shared images of the world and of the group's role in it. In addition, they may share a common language or argot, and distinctive rituals and procedures. Power is fundamentally a psycho-social unity, a "we" feeling. The degree of group power depends upon the homogeneity of common images and the intensity of attachment to consensual beliefs. (49)

The "we" feeling mentioned here connects with Burke's concept of "corporate identity" mentioned in the last chapter. Again, identification is not an individual process, and the more the individual identifies with the "collective might" of the group, the more powerful that group will be rhetorically (Burke "Responsibilities of National Greatness" 46). Not only does the identification of the audience increase the rhetor's power to reconstitute group identity, it also increases the power of the audience/participants to "make themselves" with their own agency (Hammerback 21).

Therefore when considering campus dissent and the operations of power, you could say that rhetoric failed in the Sixties due to the failure of group cohesion and consubstantiality between administrators and students. At one time, students could easily identify with teachers and administrators as role models and authorities, but as the authorities continued *in loco parentis* and heavy-handed surveillance, the once positive side of the identification process self-destructed (King 154). Students turned from dialogue and
pursued more radical, nihilistic, counter-cultural, and violent forms of communication, if we can call those forms communication. And as students identified themselves more and more with the counter-culture in the late Sixties, they too lost rhetorical power to convince middle-road America, or anyone for that matter, that the conflict in Vietnam should be stopped (Gustainis and Hahn 214). What they had was a failure to identify. They didn’t want to identify, really, but the lack of homogeneity or psycho-social unity, in King’s words, diffused the rhetorical power of all participants and turned the rhetorical situation into violence and police action, rather than discursive cooperation.

So why the calm on the campus of BYU in the late Sixties? Simply, it was group identification. One would be hard-pressed to discover a campus more homogenous and prone to psycho-social unity than Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. More than ninety-five percent of the students and faculty belonged to the same religious organization. They practiced the same religious habits, enjoyed the same rituals, participated in a very similar culture of belief. In 1978 a scientific survey revealed that throughout the twentieth century, the students at BYU became consistently more orthodox, more conservative in values, and more homogenous in nature (Christensen and Cannon 54). Another study during the Vietnam war, after Tet, indicated that nearly eighty percent of the student body agreed that the US forces had to achieve victory in Vietnam as defender of world democracy (Larsen and Schwendiman 155). In a sense, once students signed their acceptance of the honor code and the school’s rules, they actively relinquished any individual identity that ran counter to the group’s identity. Wilkinson made this very clear when he spoke of the BYU “family” in his 1970 address; anyone unwilling to participate in the group identity would be ostracized from the society (which coincides with King’s discussion of the “pathological
state” of alienation, 6). For this address, Wilkinson received a lengthy standing ovation from the student body.

The historical data seem to indicate that as participants in social unity, BYU students accepted the destiny of the University as a divine organ in the purposes of God, which also means that they assented to the authority of Ernest Wilkinson, whom they saw as (indirectly) divinely called. Here we must diverge from the common understanding of authority in democratic institutions and acknowledge BYU’s unique rhetorical situation. It is true that in one sense, the ordained officers of the LDS church and their appointed assistants are sustained by a raise of hands by the congregation at large. However, church leaders are not answerable to their constituents; their employer is not of this world. There is not space in this study for a thorough treatment of the subject, but it is important to note that the kind of authority (and the power nexus formed from it) is qualitatively different. Acceptance of ecclesiastical authority is to Mormons an act of faith, not a necessary evil. Yet this does not change the fact that Mormon students at Brigham Young University willingly embraced a communal ethos, cheerfully entered a power relationship that did not favor them, and actively participated in creating a group identity by attending the university and refraining from revolt during the Vietnam Era.

In 1968 BYU student Tammy Tanaka wrote a communications thesis whose title is as descriptive as the thesis itself: “Why No Revolts at BYU: The Silent Language of the Mormon World-View and Patriotism at Brigham Young University.” Based on Edward T. Hall’s theory of “silent language,” Tanaka contrasted the world-view of the New Radicals with that of LDS-dominated student body at BYU. “Through the sensory screen of the Mormon World-View,” she wrote, “contemporary social problems and the methods for solving them appear different than they do from the sensory screen of the New Radicals”
Throughout the thesis, Tanaka works on a Burkean assumption that she does not make explicit—that the student body identified whole-heartedly with the administration. She does, however, show that the calm of the campus had just as much to do with the students as it did with the authoritarian administration:

It seems the prevailing attitudes and behavior of BYU students do not result specifically from the pressure of any one element of the culture [like a powerful administrative head]. Rather, it seems the cumulative effect of the interaction of all elements in the BYU environment, which seems to generate a pervasive atmosphere, energy or mood referred to by those familiar with it as the 'Spirit of the Y'” (41).

To connect Tanaka’s work with this discussion, and in conclusion, in order to understand the operations of power at BYU during the rhetorical situation of the Sixties, it will be most helpful to see power as Foucault saw it—as “a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity” rather than “a privilege that one might possess” and exercise at will (Discipline and Punish 26). Identification can be instigated, obviously, by a powerful rhetor who can remind, admonish, even threaten to induce the audience to accept and coalesce. Certainly Ernest Wilkinson had that influence, and BYU students did not have equal rhetorical power to discuss the war in any sense. Yet in most voluntary rhetorical situations, as at BYU during the Sixties, the most effective consubstantiation is cooperative and communal; or, as Antczak explains in Thought and Character, the most successful democratic rhetoric constitutes “a mutual reconstitution of thought and character” (11, my emphasis). Then, with that in mind, we understand why in Wilkinson’s speech to the student body in 1969, the year of the most campus violence and unrest and protest and dissent, he could ask to see whether the students supported law and order and the US government, and all stood in assent. Wilkinson would not have been successful rhetorically if he did not share the same orientation and
identity as the student body. The students saw in him not only a leader, but an identity that
they too, whether they fully recognized it or not, adopted.
CONCLUSION

The Moral Dimension of Identification

It is my hope that I have introduced a new way of understanding the apparent tranquility of the campus of Brigham Young University during the turbulence of the Sixties. During those “days of rage,” BYU did not have any significant demonstrations, petitions, or rebellions to protest the heavy-handed nature of college administrations or America’s involvement with Vietnam. Having reviewed some of the policies and discourse of the Wilkinson administration, we can see that the calmness of the campus community had so much to do with who attended BYU and who ran BYU, rather than what circumstances made up the Vietnam era situation. In rhetorical situations, when certain outside forces apply pressure to communities and force upon them certain pressing exigencies, rhetors and audiences can create strong solidarity through group ethos and identification—through the uniting of their souls. Ernest Wilkinson, president of BYU in the Sixties, through his seemingly heavy-handed administration, ensured a conservative and patriotic identity in his students that created an environment of tranquility and obedience. Conversely, the great majority of BYU students exercised their own power by embracing that conservative image and sharing, consubstantially, in a communal soul that identified against the Sixties counterculture of rebellion in dress and behavior and identified with the conservative and patriotic “silent majority” in America.

Though I am in no position to judge the identification practices of the students at BYU (or anywhere else, for that matter), there is a moral dimension to the rhetorical practice of identification that makes a fitting conclusion to this study. According to one Burkean synthesizer, Burke’s most basic contribution to the philosophy of rhetoric is his discussions of substance, of shared substances, of unity and consubstantiality of bodies (Hochmuth 137).
Yet within his discussions of consubstantiality and identity is an ethical and moral dimension sometimes overlooked in the literature. It is true that the heart of identification is positive; there is unity, community, shared interests, equality, and cooperation (Youngdahl and Warnock 337). Yet Burke expressly indicated that with identification came dissociation, exclusion, separation, alienation, even symbolic slaying of those with whom identification is impossible (Heath 375). When we identify ourselves with some, we naturally dissociate ourselves from others, whether we like it or not. As rhetorics of polarity seem to teach us, identification can be reductionistic—it can seal relationships that are not necessarily there, and it can forge enemies that do not necessarily exist.

During the Vietnam conflict, Burke warned readers of *The Nation* of the inherent dangers that come to citizens identified with a nation “of almost terrifyingly vast and expansive political and economic power.” For both good and ill, the corporate identity espoused in American citizenship was concrete and inescapable; but it need not be unchallenged. “We may profit,” Burke wrote, “by meditating on our personal modes of identification with the great empire of which we all are citizens,” especially when that empire makes decisions that seem to go against the grain of common sympathies (46). The essence of the Constitution of the United States itself does not require us to accept “without question” the policies of the nation, nor does it require us to uphold at all times the corporate “we,” as in “we the people” (49). Burke challenges us to make identification a recursive, introspective rhetorical process wherein we discover not only the efforts of others to create common substance with us, but we also reveal our own attempts at rhetorical consubstantiality and identification with other bodies. This challenge should continue to spur us on to more careful and conscientious rhetorical practices.
WORKS CITED


