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# Rhetorics of Opacity, Social Change, and Communal Cultivation: Case Studies of GLBTQ Christian Advocacy During the 1960s and Early 1970s

Joshua Holman Miller  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

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RHETORICS OF OPACITY, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND COMMUNAL CULTIVATION:  
CASE STUDIES OF GLBTQ CHRISTIAN ADVOCACY DURING THE 1960s AND EARLY

1970s

by

Joshua H. Miller

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August 2018

## ABSTRACT

### RHETORICS OF OPACITY, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND COMMUNAL CULTIVATION: CASE STUDIES OF GLBTQ CHRISTIAN ADVOCACY DURING THE 1960s AND EARLY 1970s

by

Joshua H. Miller

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Professor Kathryn M. Olson, Ph.D.

This dissertation probes questions about community and advocacy, analyzing four case studies involving GLBTQ Christian advocacy from the early 1960s to the early 1970s. Each case study involves the use of rhetoric to hide or downplay markers of the at-the-time stigmatized “homosexual” identity. The examined case studies are Bayard Rustin’s advocacy work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, William Johnson’s ordination paper, and the 1973 Christian Reformed Church’s study report. To engage these texts, the dissertation develops theories about and methods for examining rhetorics of opacity—silence, hidden appeals, discourse that obscures, rhetorics of minimalization, and distraction. I argue that rhetorics of opacity can constitute powerful, yet complex and precarious, appeals that enable political and shared action, cultivate and constitute community, and foster social change and inclusion. This conceptualization offers rhetorical scholarship a fuller appreciation of the ways in which opacity and self-silencing comprise critical rhetorical strategies in campaigns for social change. Especially in treacherous, oppressive, and deadly social contexts and environments, the utilization of opaque rhetorics might constitute a viable strategy for advocates seeking transformation and communal empowerment while minimizing the risk that harm will befall on them for trying to foster change.

*Keywords:* Opacity, GLBTQ Rhetoric, Advocacy, Social Change, Community, Passing

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introducing a Study on Opacity, Social Change, and Communal Cultivation

In 1978, Harvey Milk rose to speak at the San Francisco Castro District's annual Gay Freedom Day. At the time, John Briggs, a California State Senator had introduced an initiative "to remove from the public schools 'gay teachers' or anyone affirming homosexuality in the classroom."<sup>1</sup> Jason Edward Black and Charles E. Morris III described Briggs' proposal as a "crassly opportunistic and virulently homophobic campaign to rid the California schools of GLBTQ [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer] teachers."<sup>2</sup> Milk's solution to the threat facing the GLBTQ community was, in part, to "come out."<sup>3</sup> In front of those assembled for the festivities of Gay Freedom Day, he exclaimed:

Gay brothers and sisters, what are *you* going to do about it? You must come out. Come out to your parents, your relatives. I know that it is hard and that it will hurt them, but think of how they will hurt you in the voting booth! Come out to your friends, if indeed they are your friends. Come out to your neighbors, to your co-workers, to the people who work where you eat and shop.<sup>4</sup>

In California, unlike other parts of the country, Briggs' efforts to appeal to the Christian Right failed to garner enough support at the ballot box, and opponents defeated the proposition.<sup>5</sup> Later, referencing Milk's contention that "coming out is the most political thing you can do," Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal bishop, concurred with Milk's assessment of the transformative potential of "coming out." Robinson wrote,

It turned out [Milk] was right. And as more and more gay men and lesbians came out to their families and friends—not because they had to, but because they wanted to—

Americans realized that they knew someone gay or lesbian. And our world irrevocably changed.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, not all accepted Milk's call for "coming out." In 2014, 36 years after Milk's speech, Jennifer Knapp, a queer, Christian, country singer, penned a reflection about "coming out" and Milk's stance concerning the necessity for GLBTQ people to reveal their identities publicly. Her lengthy reflection unfolded as follows:

I think about Harvey's impassioned plea quite often. It whispers in my brain with both inspiration and reservation — inspiration because, as an out woman, I have experienced what only coming out will teach you, that life is significantly more reliable and fruitful without secrets and shame, and reservation because, as a Christian, I also know that coming out and purging all secrets can be a dangerous, painful prospect. I know that it is not as simple as pushing folks into a river of deadly rapids with a promise of rest on the distant shore. The reality is that not everyone survives the journey. Not everyone who takes the plunge is a strong swimmer. Worse yet, there are plenty who are more than willing to follow you into the deep just to push your head under, into suffocating silence. When asked what prescription I'd give to an LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender] Christian on the necessity, urgency or even obligation to come out, I lack Milk's confidence in insisting that all LGBT people identify themselves. Maybe it's the burden of my pessimist nature, but to those in earshot of anti-gay religious voices, I usually say, "It does get better, but make sure you prepare for the crossing." Somewhere along the way, particularly in religious environments, coming out is an act more along the lines of a confession than a natural step toward self-awareness. The result is that it makes me think long and hard before I insist that every LGBT person show their hand, knowing

for certain that the church still packs a punch. It's so very difficult for the average person to hold the ground of what they know to be true about themselves against an onslaught of biblical magnitude that can be both confusing and demeaning.<sup>7</sup>

Knapp's meditation complicated Milk's privileging of "coming out" as a necessary political act. She portrayed "coming out" as a complicated decision riddled with both potential positives and risks. Knapp's nuanced view included an understanding that contextual factors, such as an anti-GLBTQ religious environment, muddle questions about "coming out" and ensure that personal safety factor into the discussion. In Knapp's view, hiding parts of oneself and waiting for a more opportune moment might be necessary for some to weather the onslaught of anti-GLBTQ rhetoric and survive in oppressive contexts.

Knapp's and Milk's divergent positions reflect two of the central themes of this dissertation. First, topically, this dissertation focuses on how people use rhetoric to navigate anti-GLBTQ environments, particularly because of religious and Christian discourse, and create social change or cultivate community. Although I attune to specific instances of controversies involving the affirmation of same-sex relationships and GLBTQ people, the lessons gleaned from the analyses reveal transferable models for social change and communal cultivation. Second, theoretically, I work to explain how hidden, minimized, and opaque advocacy strategies can, like visible strategies, animate and enable fundamental social transformation. The examples of Milk's call for "coming out" and Knapp's meditation on how "coming out" can require embarking on a perilous journey across "deadly waters" both serve as useful starting points to engage with a continuum of options anchored on either end by visibility—"out" rhetorics produced by "out" rhetors who have reclaimed and consistently proclaim their sexual identity—and opacity—"closeted" rhetorics produced by rhetors who work to hide, downplay, minimize,

or change their identity. This dissertation illustrates the political, social, and strategic functions of advocacy and rhetoric on this continuum. In this introductory chapter, I explain the theoretical significance of the dissertation, detail the importance of continued scholarly inquiry into the “gay Christian” controversy, and provide a preview of each of the case studies that I analyze throughout this dissertation.

### **Rhetoric, Visibility, and Opacity**

Milk’s impassioned plea concerning the need for those with the deviant identity traits of “homosexuality” to reclaim and affirm those identities as a political act, to “come out,” aligns closely with how some scholars have articulated the importance of visibility for the purposes of social change and the development of communal identities. Lauren Barlant and Elizabeth Freeman, for example, wrote, “*Visibility* [emphasis in original] is critical if a safe public existence is to be forged for American gays, for whom the contemporary nation has no positive political value.”<sup>8</sup> Through an analysis of the role and function of GLBTQ-themed t-shirts in visible public advocacy, Joel Penney argued that visibility “may help to potentially expand this identity among like-minded people as well as to raise the interest and gain the sympathy of a broader swath of the public.”<sup>9</sup> In an analysis of the Soulforce Equality Riders, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) Christians who toured college campuses with anti-LGB policies, Leland G. Spencer and Joshua Trey Barnett contended that the presence and visibility of the riders “offered hope in the forms of possibilities for a reconciliation of the LGB-Christian binary.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, some rhetorical criticisms provide support for Milk’s contention that “coming out” functions positively and politically, offering hope for change, generating support for action from potential stakeholders, and cultivating the possibility for community.



However, supporting Knapp's reflection, critics have also noted that visibly revealing stigmatized identity markers carries risk and functions in complex and potentially contradictory ways. Dan Brouwer's work on visibility revealed its potential dangers. He contended that revealing hidden identity markers publicly can "invite oppressive surveillance, invite verbal or physical harassment, or lead that person to be defined primarily on the basis of that foregrounded identity marker."<sup>11</sup> Brouwer noted that visibility can positively cultivate community and disrupt harmful societal assumptions, but also concluded that visibility is "precarious" because of those potential shortcomings.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Spencer and Barnett's study on Soulforce detailed the ways in which visibility might harm "out" advocates, writing that, for the riders, being on anti-GLBTQ campuses "cause them harm in material and corporeal ways."<sup>13</sup> Even though visibility, according to Spencer and Barnett, can offer hope and challenge engrained assumptions, the act of being visible itself burdens advocates. Lester C. Olson described that for marginalized people the burden of "speech and visibility" is "the fear of social, political, and economic sanctions."<sup>14</sup> As such, rhetorical scholarship highlights both the risks and potential benefits associated with cultivating *personae* based on the visibility, or lack thereof, of stigmatized, marginalized, or oppressed identity markers.

The focus of this dissertation rests in two related threads concerning visible and hidden forms of rhetoric, advocacy, and protest. First, it complicates the visible-hidden binary in rhetorical scholarship, which currently minimizes scholars' ability to grasp fully the nuanced ways in which social transformation and communal betterment can occur. Second, it highlights how hidden rhetorics can foment and enable social transformation as opposed to merely survival or momentary instances of resistance. Scholars have examined appeals that minimize, hide, or downplay information about one's identity (including one's sexuality), political beliefs, or

values. Many names for this type of rhetorical endeavor exist, including “passing” rhetorics,<sup>15</sup> “closeted eloquence,”<sup>16</sup> the “null persona,”<sup>17</sup> “aesopian” rhetoric,<sup>18</sup> “infrapolitics,”<sup>19</sup> “hidden transcripts,”<sup>20</sup> and “writing between the lines.”<sup>21</sup> Nicholas De Villiers’ work drew on the term “opacity” to describe strategies that “attempt to baffle, stymie, or sabotage particular functions of truth, individuality, and authenticity” and “tactics of deferral, proxy, impersonation, and inauthenticity.”<sup>22</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term opacity as I analyze rhetoric and advocacy efforts that downplay, hide, and minimize the ability of an audience to perceive or know the identity, values, and beliefs of a person or group of people. The term opacity illustrates that visibility and hidden rest on opposite ends of a continuum and thus helps critics detail how rhetoric operates in a range of situations. Although De Villiers’ work used the term to emphasize discourses that resisted or countered the apparent transparency of the confessional “coming out” narrative, my use of the term encapsulates the many different types of rhetorical appeals that might downplay, minimize, hide, or deflect attention away from unsavory topics or stigmatized identities in less than completely transparent or visible ways.

Current scholarship highlights how opacity might enable survival in oppressive situations or fleeting instances of research, but additional work might more fully equip scholars with an understanding of the connections among opacity, advocacy, and social transformation. Currently, rhetorical critics remain without explanations, analyses, or evidence of how opaque advocacy, rhetoric, and tactics can foster long-term social transformation that fundamentally alters the social, political, and rhetorical landscapes in which oppressed people find themselves. Because potential burdens for visible advocates exist, especially for members of marginalized communities, scholars interested in how oppressed advocates utilize rhetoric to foster social change need to continue developing theories about and methods for examining the

transformative potential of rhetorics of opacity. Take Olson’s research as an example of how rhetorical criticisms of opaque discourses focus on survival. Olson’s research on visibility and silence shows how opacity might constitute a strategy for oppressed people to live through their oppressive conditions and avoid rebuke or violence. Olson indicated that fear of sanctions or violence “can become the source of invisible impositions upon oneself.”<sup>23</sup> Although rhetorical critics, like Olson, have identified ways opaque rhetorics might enable survival, they have not analyzed how advocates might utilize silence or other forms of opacity to challenge their social environment. Focusing on how opacity can enable social change also extends Dana Cloud’s work on what she terms the null *persona*. After developing an explanation of why oppression and threat of violence might result in invisible impositions, Cloud encouraged rhetorical critics to explore “the self-negation of the speaker and the creation in the text of an oblique silhouette indicating what is not utterable.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Cloud theorized that silence can have a range of strategic functions including enabling self-defense and resistance against “dominant signification practices.”<sup>25</sup> Current scholarship shows that, in particular environments and contexts, advocates might rely on silence to survive, avoid punitive sanctions, defend themselves, or resist the status quo. That is, advocates might decide against crossing the river to avoid being pushed under the surface. This dissertation posits that advocates might utilize opacity to transform, more fundamentally, the social situation in which they find themselves—a community in which crossing the river no longer remains a necessary or dangerous pursuit.

The work of Erving Goffman has conducted about what he calls “stigma management” can also serve as a starting point for understanding the range of rhetorics of opacity.<sup>26</sup> According to Goffman, when societal stigma marks an individual’s identity traits as deviant, discredited, or otherwise undesirable, that individual develops strategies and tactics for managing information

about their identity.<sup>27</sup> Goffman identifies three main types of stigma management: (1) converting, in which a person makes “a direct attempt to correct what he sees as the objective basis of his failing, as when a physically deformed person undergoes plastic surgery, a blind person eye treatment, an illiterate remedial education, a homosexual psychotherapy,”<sup>28</sup> (2) passing, in which a person conceals information about their identity, and (3) covering, in which a person downplays or minimizes their stigmatized identity, even though the markers of that identity might remain visible.<sup>29</sup> Each of these terms—converting, passing, and covering—represents a way in which an advocate might attempt to navigate a situation, especially if that advocate has a stigmatized or marginalized identity.

Although Goffman’s work provides a solid foundation for scholars interested in understanding how stigmatized individuals might use rhetoric to individually survive their marginalization or assimilate into society, this dissertation will argue that breaking from Goffman’s original conceptualization will help rhetoric scholars theorize how advocates might utilize opacity as a part of their larger social change campaigns or during social controversies. Because Goffman’s theory of “stigma management” focused on the individual assimilating into society and surviving oppressive conditions, rhetorical theories that have emerged from this original conceptualization also focus on survival and assimilation, rather than transformation. This dissertation pushes rhetorical scholarship to identify and demonstrate how opaque rhetoric can enable social change so that individuals need not forever assimilate to the status quo. With reference to Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric, this dissertation asks what available means of persuasion exist when an advocate must hide or chooses to hide part of their identity to foster change.<sup>30</sup> In other words, how can agents of change use rhetoric to effectively advocate while denying or hiding their identity or parts of their belief system? To complicate Goffman’s work

and to theorize how opacity functions in persuasive efforts, I offer a more nuanced view and theory of these opaque rhetorics and their potential for social change, not only survival and accommodation of oppressive norms. I argue that rhetorics of opacity, like rhetorics of visibility, can constitute powerful, yet complex and precarious, appeals that might enable future and long-term political and shared action, cultivate and constitute community, and foster social change and inclusion. This conceptualization offers rhetorical scholarship an expanded appreciation of the ways in which opacity and self-silencing comprise critical rhetorical strategies in campaigns for social change. Especially in treacherous, oppressive, and deadly social contexts and environments, using opaque rhetorics might constitute a viable strategy for advocates seeking transformation and communal empowerment while minimizing the risk that harm will befall them for trying to foster change. Individual rhetors might draw upon strategies of opacity—silence, converting, passing, and covering—in ways that can justify and foster *communal* development, empowerment, and betterment.

Articulating an argument about opacity’s communal, political, and transformative functions advances scholarly inquiry about how rhetoric can animate social change and inclusion and encourages scholars to view opacity as a communal endeavor in addition to an appeal by an individual. Scholarship concerning “visibility” has rightfully articulated the communal dimensions of advocacy that reveals and reclaims stigmatized identity.<sup>31</sup> Conversely, rhetorical theory on strategies of opacity mainly focus on the individual. Although individuals engage in rhetorical work to develop *personae* and *ethos* to counteract the potential influence of stigmatized identity markers, communities, especially advocacy coalitions, organizations, and social movements, also develop rhetorical appeals to ensure the continued credibility and legitimacy of the coalition, organization, or social movement. Communities, coalitions, social

movements, and organizations too might remain silent, convert, pass, and cover to re-articulate, re-secure, or re-authorize the bonds that hold community together. In addition to arguing that these tactics of “stigma management” can cultivate and practice community, I will argue that these tactics can help secure privileged *personae* and *ethos* and can form the bases for strategic advocacy efforts. In articulating this position, this project emphasizes how tactics for “stigma management” are not only personal, but political and communal.

As a part of this project’s emphasis on opaque strategies as constituting a potential component for social change campaigns, I also develop a rhetorical theory of “coming out.” To use colloquial phrasing, scholarship has mainly focused on either “out” and visible rhetoric or “closeted” and passing rhetoric. By detailing how rhetoric enables continual movement between “being out” and “the closet,” this dissertation develops new insights about the variations on rhetorics of “coming out,” and, in doing so, also equips rhetorical critics with tools to understand more broadly how advocates justify and articulate alterations to their *persona* and *ethos* across various situations. I argue that individuals, movements, coalitions, and organizations all might draw on rhetorics of “coming out” to transform social assumptions about marginalized people and to justify alterations about how they fight for social transformation and communal betterment. The metaphor of “coming out” focuses attention on sexuality, but the lessons learned from how advocacy efforts “come out” apply to any situation where rhetors must justify changing their approach to manage privilege and identity information.

To develop these insights about rhetorics of opacity, this dissertation analyzes four specific case studies from the 1960s and early 1970s. Each case study involves the use of opaque rhetoric to hide, downplay, minimize, or change the identity markers related to sexuality during times when anti-GLBTQ Christian rhetoric and sentiment might have stymied progress toward

social transformation and inclusion. This approach is unique. Critics have analyzed how Christians often debate questions related to what scripture states about sexuality and GLBTQ-inclusion policies and initiatives, but have not examined how rhetors with stigmatized sexualities navigate these debates in ways that can enable and produce the social change necessary for them to proclaim their identities publicly without stigma sutured to them.

Before I introduce and explain how the four case studies will help elucidate the communal, political, and persuasive functions of rhetorics of opacity, I probe how rhetorical critics have used Goffman's work and argue that scholars must also invest themselves in understanding the political and communal dimensions of opaque tactics and strategies. Then, I detail why scholars equipped with knowledge of argumentation and rhetoric should engage and analyze this aspect of the "gay Christian" debate. As I articulate the topical worth of this dissertation, I also secondarily describe how the project engages with an emerging area of communication scholarship about how Christians contest biblical interpretations that relate to sexuality and GLBTQ inclusion. After providing an overview of the significance of analyzing the "gay Christian" controversy, I argue that case studies from the 1960s and early 1970s can be particularly illuminating for scholars interested in the overall dispute. I then pivot to demonstrate the timeliness and importance of additional research on how rhetors utilize opacity, specifically noting that heteronormativity and anti-GLBTQ rhetoric persist. This persistence might, in turn, cultivate the painful environments that Knapp described as producing the conditions in which one might choose opacity as a political strategy as opposed to visibility. I conclude this chapter by introducing the case studies, explaining how they contribute to understanding rhetorics of opacity, and articulating their historical, political, and social significance.

## Rhetorics of Opacity, Social Change, and Communal Cultivation

Rhetorical critics draw on Goffman's categories to theorize about ways in which rhetoric obscures, hides, and downplays identity makers. For instance, Morris' theorization of passing connects Goffman's definition to *persona* and *ethos*. Morris wrote, "A wide range of male rhetorical behavior occurred that I interpret as 'passing,' the self-fashioning that constructs and preserves an ethos of gender and sexual 'normalcy.'"<sup>32</sup> In his initial articulation of passing as a rhetorical strategy, Morris suggested that rhetors might pass to "survive amid and sometimes to resist dominant, oppressive cultural practices."<sup>33</sup> Morris' observation that opacity's purpose remains to enable survival or fleeting resistance fails to demonstrate that the strategies of converting, passing, and covering animate societal transformation and social change. Thomas A. Salek argued that these strategies can solidify the status quo and its power relations. He explained this position:

Although these tactics may allow stigmatized individuals to temporarily deal with *kakoethos* [stigma] and assimilate into the norms of society, these tactics do not address the stereotypes and social dimensions of the stigma itself. Rather than breaking it, converting, passing, and covering leave the stigma—and the rhetorical environment constituting it—intact.<sup>34</sup>

Salek's argument shows how rhetorics that cover can reinforce stigma. In this view, a rhetor deploys a covering strategy to survive or weather a situation, not to transform the situation or environment into a more inclusive place.

Opaque rhetorics, including converting, passing, or covering, involve skillful deployment of style and *persona* to hide, downplay, and minimize the markers of a stigmatized identity.

Rhetorical scholarship drawing from Erving Goffman's work on stigma management utilized the



term “passing” as a part of a critical lens for evaluating discourse.<sup>35</sup> To extend the portability and applicability of Goffman’s theorization for rhetorical scholarship on social movements, community building, and social change, this section details the rhetorical potential of converting, passing, and covering. Doing so showcases how these tactics of opacity can operate in efforts to transform society and foment inclusive communities, not merely manage individual stigma. In what follows, I take Goffman’s terms and situate them as rhetorics of opacity that social movements and advocates might use as a part of their efforts.

Rhetorics of opacity, passing and covering, operate as rhetorical endeavors in which rhetors cultivate particular representations that camouflage forms of information from easy access and observation by members of a dominant social group or by a community’s official gatekeepers. In an argument about why passing constitutes a rhetorical practice, Morris contended:

To succeed in veiling one’s identity, i.e., convincing certain audiences of an “acceptable” persona, these rhetors-with-secrets employ tactics of impersonation, deflection, and silence in the public sphere. Collectively, these elements constitute a species of secrecy and a mode of rhetorical action that I call “passing.”<sup>36</sup>

Using this explanation of passing, rhetorical critics might understand efforts to camouflage or hide information as rhetorical performances, because working to pass requires the development and maintenance of specific *personae*. Rhetors’ invention and delivery of those representations highlight how tactics of passing or “closet eloquence,” as Morris later defined these techniques,<sup>37</sup> remain persuasive and thus are rhetorical undertakings.

Tension persists when rhetorical performances work both to evade detection from some and enable recognition from others, constructing textual markers that prevent “dupes” from

finding what the rhetor hides as well as clues that enable would-be confidants to find the camouflaged information. In his writing about rhetorical tactics used to camouflage sexual identity, Morris articulated that passing relies on “dupe participation invited by a subversive enthymeme: an appeal that manipulates the assumptions of heteronormativity to achieve the telos of sexual secrecy; dupes facilitate the masking performance that deceives them.”<sup>38</sup> Focusing on the “telos of sexual secrecy” underscores that one of the purposes of passing remains to individually manage and survive in the moment by hiding identity markers. In this particular view of passing, societal presumptions about what constitutes a normative identity provide opportunities to would-be passers, offering the grounds for the production of camouflaged rhetorics that bend problematic assumptions for the purposes of “prophylactic dupe ignorance.”<sup>39</sup> At the same time, performances that pass scrutiny of a rhetor’s identity contain cues that guide those in the know to what the rhetor hides. As such, rhetorical camouflaging, especially in contexts concerning concealing aspects of one’s identity, consists of complicated rhetorical work, which necessitates “securing membership in a sharply defined social community while denying yet retaining (willingly or not) membership in another such community.”<sup>40</sup> In the tension between denying and retaining membership, a passing performance thus necessitates balancing textual appeals to deny as well as textual cues to retain coherence and intelligibility within a particular community. Generally, scholars examine this rhetoric in relation with an individual’s efforts to survive oppression or as an individual’s short-lived and momentary efforts to resist or thwart oppressive forces. Scholars have not fully illuminated how opaque rhetoric can enable strategies for fundamental social transformation and communal inclusion.

Recent theorization of closeted eloquence generally focuses on how individuals conceal or downplay identity markers to pass as members of a dominant social group. For example,

Lauren Wagner encouraged scholars to examine the visual embodiments, in addition to the linguistic practice, involved in passing, and highlighted the embodied practice in the passing performances of individual migrants who establish the *personae* of non-migrants.<sup>41</sup> In a thick description of the ways in which she passed as a heterosexual individual in her professional life, Anna L. Spradlin articulated the emotional pain she experienced as she felt the need to hide her identity from others.<sup>42</sup> Although rhetors who pass may experience pain for enacting their performance, scholars also recognize that, through pain, passing rhetorics resist marginalization as passing can curtail the surveillance efforts of dominant group and protect a passer from violence that an identity group may experience—an argument which provides a touchpoint for theorizing passing in terms of ideology. Based on an evaluation of Ellen DeGeneres’s efforts to camouflage her sexuality before she came out, Helene A. Shugart claimed that “silence may, in fact, camouflage resistance.”<sup>43</sup> Morris offered an explanation of this position as well, writing, “Passing affords obscured agency, and immersion in the mainstream, precisely so that one might swim against the tide, undermining the homophobic order of things.”<sup>44</sup> Building upon these statements about how silence and passing can enable modes of resistance, this dissertation posits that opacity can camouflage subversive assumptions, beliefs, and values. The hidden identities and subversive material, rather than only pushing against the tide of heteronormativity, can provide an anchor to enable social change. Opacity can enable long-term tactics of transformation and social change as opposed to a strategy that survives by avoiding detection and momentarily resists the current social order.

In addition to theorization about how opacity, focused on passing, might hide resistance in the moment, rhetorical scholarship defines opacity as resistance in and of itself that undermines the surveillance capabilities of those in power. Although such thwarting efforts may

constitute important tactics in certain contexts, avoiding detection of those in power leaves the status quo power relations intact. Emphasizing uses of opacity to evade surveillance, Catherine R. Squires and Daniel C. Brouwer examined passing in terms of race and gender, where, for example, someone who is multiracial might pass or be labelled as being of a single race. They contend that passing operates as a form of resistance, because passing hides information necessary for “dominant groups and institutions” to remain knowledgeable of subordinates and ready for action.<sup>45</sup> In this view, passing stymies surveillance. In studying artistic styles and wear such as scarfs that evade the detection of surveillance technology, Torin Monahan argued that such technology might camouflage individuals, but likely does not challenge or resist the security apparatus that enables the nation’s gaze in the first place.<sup>46</sup> Monahan’s examination encouraged scholars to contemplate whether passing and camouflaged rhetors do enough to challenge oppressive institutions. Monahan’s point highlights that a bifurcation of resistance from social transformation is in order. Although efforts to momentarily resist surveillance through camouflage may remain an important tactic in an advocate’s survival repertoire, advocates might also deploy rhetorics of opacity as a part of longer-term strategies for fundamental social transformation.

Jeffrey A. Bennett’s scholarship on passing constitutes a start point in detailing how opacity can enable tactics for social change. In Bennett’s conceptualization, passing and visibility reinforce each other to produce social change; he suggested, “‘Passing’ and ‘protest’ are correlates of one another, existing not as two separate strategies, but as reciprocal forces that attempt to enact social change. Although passing may not always appear resistive, its importance as a mechanism of pride, power, and moral agency should not be ignored.”<sup>47</sup> To develop this argument about the connectedness of passing and protest in the service of political change,

Bennett examined how “men who sleep with men” navigate the ban on blood, showing how some openly protest the ban but others pass to donate blood despite the ban. Contending that “the men who openly dissent draw attention to those who pass and, in doing so, force questions about the number of queer donors and the amount of ‘tainted’ blood slipping into the system,”<sup>48</sup> Bennett’s position reinforced that advocates can both draw on opacity as a part of their social change campaign and use opacity as a tool to cover acts of resistance (e.g., the act of donating banned blood). In this instance, the ability to pass and donate blood, ostensibly tainting the system, shows that the logic of the ban is flawed, because the blood is still inspected and used to help others.<sup>49</sup> In Bennett’s conceptualization of passers and protesters resist the ban, visibly, opaquely, and carefully balancing the two proves critical.

Opacity itself can constitute political action just as visibility can. The complicated work of navigating when to utilize opacity, visibility, or an option on the continuum between the two retains political dimensions as efforts that can enable social change or facilitate other acts that can challenge the system. Alyssa A. Samek, referencing visibility and how visibility can constrain or harm the advocacy for GLBTQ rights, explained that conservative forces can turn “queer visibility into a fear appeal.”<sup>50</sup> Specifically, Samek wrote, “As queer people were fighting for visibility on the national political scene in the late 1970s, conservative activists were using them—or more accurately, the fear of them—to drum up voter turnout in state and local elections.”<sup>51</sup> Samek’s argument illuminates how visibility can enable oppositional forces to construct appeals that diminish the potential gains of the visible advocates. Because of this constraint on visibility, advocates working to foster change might opt to utilize opacity to minimize the potential for fear appeals, while still generating other strategies to foster change. In particular, the case studies analyzed in this dissertation highlight how rhetorics of opacity can

constitute a tactic that equips future advocates and generations with the tools needed to dismantle harmful ideologies. Although passing can enable survival and curtail surveillance, passing strategies can also hide subversive material in plain sight and in ways that might eventually upend the dominant assumptions, values, and beliefs that undergird oppressive ideologies and institutions. In this sense, scholarship might view some passing performances as more than a tactic of concealing stigmatized identity moment to moment to survive or to curtail surveillance but a long-term and proactive plan for dismantling authoritative and institutional beliefs to alter more permanently the material conditions of people living under those authorities and institutions.

Fully understanding the tactical and practical decisions of advocates experiencing oppressive conditions requires an illumination of how opacity and invisibility factor into their rhetorical choices. In an examination of how subordinate groups interact with those in power and control, James C. Scott explained, “The circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is, like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum. That it should be invisible, as we have seen, is in large part by design—a tactical choice born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power.”<sup>52</sup> In developing his argument about the significance of the invisible, hidden, and opaque work of marginalized people, Scott also framed this effort “*as a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it.*”<sup>53</sup> As such, Scott’s work to illuminate how invisibility and hidden action enabled social change challenges simplistic understandings of marginalized communities choosing either open protest or quiescence to the social order of the day. According to Scott, “the recovery of nonhegemonic voices and practices” necessitates a nuanced conceptualization of evasive, ambiguous, coded, and hidden tactics, strategies, and rhetorics.<sup>54</sup> In an analysis of the Gospel of Luke that utilized Scott’s methods for examining

hidden and opaque subversive strategies, Amanda C. Miller too developed an explanation for the significance of such an endeavor. She wrote,

The model of hidden resistance enables one to discern strategies for negotiating power imbalances that are evident in various times and places throughout history, and is thus enlightening not only for the study of Luke and other biblical books, but also for church history, missiology, modern-day groups that are forced to exist under domination and oppression, and all of us as we negotiate life in our own imperial contexts.<sup>55</sup>

Because marginalized groups must continually navigate their oppressive situations and how they interact with those in power, developing communicative models for how groups may choose to advocate for change contains significant portable lessons. Examining the hidden and tactical rhetorics of those in oppressed social locations, according to Isaac West, provides a wider understanding of resistance especially when “revolutionary politics may not be a viable option.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Neil Elliott contended that understanding the hidden and invisible tactics of oppressed groups usefully complicates classical rhetorical theory as those theories “were written to describe and to prescribe effective communication among the powerful.”<sup>57</sup> Opacity remains a significant tool for fostering and sustaining practical and tactical social change efforts. To fully anticipate and comprehend how minority and marginalized groups promote societal transformation, scholars of rhetoric must analyze and illustrated models of hidden resistance.

In addition to the argumentative and political dimensions to opacity, opaque rhetorics can also inspire inclusion and foster communal linkages; these linkages can also foster the basis for political and social change. To decipher the communal dimensions of opacity, this dissertation offers an expanded understanding about the rhetorical tactics of passing and covering, highlighting the potential communal dimensions of these rhetorical strategies. Traditionally

conceptualized, these terms both constitute strategies for an individual's "management of undisclosed discrediting information."<sup>58</sup> Following Goffman's use of the terms, scholars exploring the communicative functions of passing and covering examine both as individual tactics deployed to manage one's own stigmatized identity information.<sup>59</sup> Expanding on this individual dimension, this dissertation highlights how communities, organizations, and coalitions might deploy passing and covering rhetorics while individuals of the organization's membership simultaneously work to pass or cover.

Goffman's elucidation of the many ways in which people might manage stigma provides a touchstone for theorizing the communal and cooperative dimensions of opacity. Drawing upon his work can help inform scholarly understanding of opacity in this context, but his corpus cannot fully explain how communities and social movement can foster opacity as a political action strategy and way to enable social transformation. In describing the information management strategy of masquerading, he wrote:

A very widely employed strategy of the discreditable person is to handle his risks by dividing the world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies; he co-opts for his masquerade just those individuals who would ordinarily constitute the greatest danger.<sup>60</sup>

In a masquerade, a group of cooperative individuals work together to hide stigma from people who might harm those who have stigma. Their combined efforts show that stigma management can be a communal effort, because communities of marginalized individual might work together to help conceal stigmatized information. In Goffman's explanation, the masquerade serves the purpose of enabling a member of the community to survive. Coalitions can deploy strategies to pass or cover markers of stigmatized identities of certain individual who comprise the coalition.



In other words, “those who share a particular stigma can often rely upon mutual aid in passing.”<sup>61</sup> Communities, coalitions, and organizations can assist the opaque tactics of individuals who obscure, hide, and downplay identity information about themselves. Departing from Goffman’s explanation, however, rhetorical scholars can demonstrate how the performance of the masquerade rhetorically ties people together in community that could serve as the collective basis for shared action. As conspirators in the masquerade, some of whom may not share the stigmatized identity, share strategies and tactics that help each other pass and cover, they create linkages through implicit rules for how they should, together, navigate their treacherous social terrain. Opacity then can bind diverse communities together in an incipient action or collective efforts for social change.

Rhetorics of opacity might afford social movements, communities, and coalitions with the ability to craft *ethos* in important ways; the opacity enables effective social advocacy through these opaque strategies of *ethos* cultivation. Revealing these communal possibilities for passing or covering provides additional understanding about, for example, how coalitional work might involve streamlining and shared *ethos* cultivation. Coalitions can establish a passing or closeted *ethos* by hiding, concealing, or minimizing the identities of coalitional members in these alliances’ public portrayals of themselves, formulating public images based on normative or privileged identities. For individuals, according to Shugart, “Passing entails securing membership in a sharply defined social community while denying yet retaining (willingly or not) membership in another such community.”<sup>62</sup> For coalitions, communities, organization, and social movements, passing and covering both involve emphasizing and making visible the members of the coalition with privileged or normative identities to secure a particular public reputation, hiding and downplaying “deviant” counter-parts in the process. Such moves—acts of coalitional

passing and covering—foster types of authority for the alliance, because the act of passing, and covering by extension, formulates a closeted form of eloquence and *ethos*. For individuals, communities, and coalitions, successful closeted eloquence necessitates crafting and “convincing certain audiences of an ‘acceptable’ persona,” which might continually change based on the situation in which the passers find themselves. Both passing and covering constitute strategies by which hiding or minimizing aspects of the coalitional members’ identities to develop claims to authority might enhance the likelihood of achieving a strategic goal or of protecting members of the coalition in various contexts.

Although not a complete analog to GLBTQ rights advocacy in the 1960s and early 1970s, Robin D. G. Kelley’s work on the infrapolitics of the black working-class’s opposition to Jim Crow highlights how, at times, opacity might constitute a community’s only available option for resistance and potential social change. Kelley’s argument reveals how opacity can potentially serve both communal formulation and political action functions. Faced with the threat of physical violence and retaliation for engaging in visible actions for social change, “oppressed groups challenge those in power by constructing a ‘hidden transcript,’ a dissident political culture that manifests itself in daily conversations, folklore, jokes, songs, and other cultural practices.”<sup>63</sup> The development of these “hidden transcripts,” as forms of opaque communication, enabled the cultivation of community in ways that would avoid detection from those who enforced the oppressive and violent practices and policies of Jim Crow. Yet, these hidden transcripts furthermore produced strategies for survival and resistance. Kelley stated:

The submerged social and cultural worlds of the oppressed people frequently surface in everyday forms of resistance —theft, footdragging, the destruction of property — or, more rarely, in open attacks on individuals, institutions, or symbols of domination.

Together, the “hidden transcripts” that are created in aggrieved communities and expressed through culture and the daily acts of resistance and survival constitute [. . .] “infrapolitics.”<sup>64</sup>

Although Kelley did not initially connect these forms of infrapolitics to long-term campaigns for social and political transformation, he argued that the hidden transcripts of infrapolitics remain necessary to understand communal organization and advocacy. His conclusion articulates that “we need to recognize that infrapolitics and organized resistance are not two distinct realms of opposition to be studied separately and then compared; they are two sides of the same coin that make up the history of working-class self-activity.”<sup>65</sup> In Kelley’s analysis, hidden transcripts, or opaque rhetorics, form the foundation for community during times when oppressive and violence forces might break up, attack, malign, and harm members of a stigmatized-identity or marginalized community. The starting point of hidden communal formulation allows for both short-term strategies of survival and resistance, but then also empowers long-term community organizing as people transition in different opaque roles, or even visible ones. The arc of the “hidden transcripts” can reveal the hard and deliberative efforts that working-class African Americans used to induce societal transformation and maintain community. To enrich scholarship about “hidden transcripts” and opacity, this dissertation focuses on the “gay Christian” controversy and how rhetors navigated it in a manner that enabled social change.

### **The “Gay Christian” Controversy, Rhetoric, and Opacity**

The continuing debate about sexuality in Christian communities constitutes an emerging area of inquiry within rhetorical scholarship, and this dissertation enriches this body of literature. The “gay Christian” controversy retains an expansive range, and the contestation of biblical

interpretations continues in congregations, in denominational conferences, in theological research and scholarly publications, in documentary films, and at family dinner tables. In her analysis of this debate, Kristy Maddux contended that the stalled and stale controversy about what scripture states about “homosexuality” primarily focuses on a few passages that scholars call the queer “texts of terror.”<sup>66</sup> Maddux explained that the stalled nature of the debate likely lies in readers holding diverse assumptions about how to read scripture; Robin Reames concurred and suggested that these debates generally fail to reach consensus “because of the disputed status of historical data in the interpretation of the scriptures.”<sup>67</sup> The rhetorical choices made by advocates in this controversy can further solidify or disrupt assumptions about sexuality and how one should engage with the biblical text, and critics have started analyzing advocacy efforts that do both. For instance, Karma R. Chávez explained how pro-GLBTQ Christian rhetoric can solidify dominant assumptions about sexuality, writing:

Soulforce, one of the largest organizations working for the inclusion of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people in society and in Christian churches, is complicit with evangelical rhetoric. By accepting the choice vs. nonchoice binary as the only option for "homosexual" experience, Soulforce essentializes "homosexual" identity.<sup>68</sup>

Another study by Joshua H. Miller suggests that the tactic of “outing” biblical characters can dislodge the assumptions of biblical literalism. According to his analysis, proclamations that David and Jonathan, two biblical characters in the Old Testament, loved, in a romantic sense, each other tend to “place the burden of proof” on conservative interpreters of scripture “because the homoerotic ‘straightforward, literal reading’ of ‘your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women’ affirms same-sex relationships.”<sup>69</sup> When responding to the evocations of the love between biblical characters of the same-sex, conservative interpreters,

Miller argued, “craft arguments that justify methods of scriptural interpretation other than biblical literalism, undermining the presumption in favor of dominant readings of the ‘texts of terror’ by implying and even arguing that ‘common sense’ interpretations may not always be correct.”<sup>70</sup> As such, this emerging area of inquiry has articulated that the controversy tends to stall because of disagreement about how to read scripture, but has also embarked on a line of research to examine how deeply-held assumptions might be challenged or reinforced. This dissertation’s efforts to explain how rhetorics of opacity might foment social change and justify communal inclusion offer additional insight into how rhetors might refute and challenge anti-GLBTQ biblical interpretations.

The “gay Christian” controversy’s enduring nature, as well as the richness of arguments and advocacy in it, serve as one of the foundations for further inquiry into the rhetorical appeals involved in it—and how rhetors with secrets and stigma navigate these disputes. Many Christian denominations continue to discuss and debate questions of GLBTQ inclusion, including what the church stance on sexuality should be and whether to allow openly GLBTQ people to serve in church leadership. For example, in May of 2016, the United Methodist Church’s General Conference “hit the pause button on the denomination’s quadrennial debates related to homosexuality.”<sup>71</sup> Less than a month before the General Conference, 111 members of the denomination’s clergy and clergy candidates “came out” together in an open letter, which “put these clergy at risk of losing their credentials under church law.”<sup>72</sup> This particular denomination’s debate persisted into 2017, when controversy erupted about Lulu Garcia-Navarro’s sexuality. At that time, Garcia-Navarro became the first openly-GLBTQ bishop of the denomination.<sup>73</sup> Other frontlines of this debate continue to proliferate in many denominations, including in the Christian Reformed Church,<sup>74</sup> the Southern Baptist Convention,<sup>75</sup> the

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America,<sup>76</sup> and the Catholic Church.<sup>77</sup> Although these denominations have experienced recent conflicts, for decades, congregations, denominations, and families have clashed over and wrestled with the question of what scripture states about GLBTQ people, producing voluminous amounts of scholarly research on the question.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the persistence of “gay Christian” controversies within Christian communities, professed religious views about sexuality also impact public debates about GLBTQ rights and have material implications for GLBTQ people’s rights, inclusion, and mental health. A Pew Research report in 2013 found that of GLBTQ adults surveyed about “three-in-ten (29%) say they have been made to feel unwelcome in a place of worship” and “highly religious Americans remain more likely than others to believe that homosexuality should be discouraged rather than accepted by society.”<sup>79</sup> The viewpoint that scripture condemns same-sex relationships persists as a rationale for limiting GLBTQ rights in public debates and in policy implementation. In 2015, Kim Davis, a country clerk, denied a gay couple a marriage license, citing that “she was acting ‘under God’s authority.’”<sup>80</sup> In doing so, she violated a court order and withheld the newly-acquired right of marriage from the gay couple. She explained her decision, ““To issue a marriage license which conflicts with God’s definition of a marriage, with my name affixed to the certificate, would violate my conscience. It is not a light issue for me. It is a Heaven or Hell decision.””<sup>81</sup> Moreover, according to Alyssa A. Samek, “in 2016, conservatives [refreshed] an old set of fear appeals in a series of state laws designed to discriminate against queer and transgender people in the workplace and the bathroom and to boost voter participation in down-ballot races.”<sup>82</sup> In late 2016, reports surfaced about how the newly-elected Vice President, Mike Pence, “actively supported while a member of Congress” conversion therapy which aims to “change a person’s sexuality or gender identity to fit heterosexual or cisgender standard and

expectations—and it is usually religiously motivated.”<sup>83</sup> In April of 2017, Senate Democrats re-introduced a bill that would ban the practice of conversion therapy; when the bill had last been introduced, “a Republican majority let the bill die without a hearing.”<sup>84</sup> Public policy debates still occur, or fail to occur, about the virtues of conversation therapy as the practice continues.<sup>85</sup> Claims of “religious freedom” promote exceptions to legislation and ordinances prohibiting discrimination against GLBTQ people.<sup>86</sup> In 2017, the Southern Policy Law Center wrote the following about one of Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ “religious freedom” memos:

The clear intent of this guidance is to undermine the many gains LGBT Americans and others have achieved in securing dignity and equality for themselves and their families. It is motivated by the false notion that LGBT rights, reproductive rights and other rights have come at the expense of religious liberties, an idea that is an affront to the millions of Americans of faith who reject discrimination against all people, including LGBT people.<sup>87</sup>

Public policy debates about “religious freedom,” conversion therapy, and same-sex marriage illustrate that, although the “gay Christian” debate unfolds in pews, bible study groups, dining rooms, and denominational newspapers, the controversy frequently surfaces in arguments about GLBTQ rights and in public policy deliberations. Understanding how rhetors animate religious beliefs in opposition to, or pursuit of, anti-discrimination policies remains significant as these policies can reduce the risk of GLBTQ people committing acts of self-harm or suicide.<sup>88</sup> Discrimination against GLBTQ people furthermore “has been linked to many negative psychological and physical health outcomes.”<sup>89</sup> As rhetors draw on religious traditions to develop public policy positions about GLBTQ rights and inclusion, scholars of rhetoric and argumentation can provide added and nuanced insight into how this controversy unfolds, how

people use symbols to navigate it, and ultimately how advocates encourage shared action for or against increased GLBTQ inclusion in congregations, denominations, cities, states, or nations.

Certainly, a single dissertation project cannot hope to examine all the many contours and iterations of this protracted debate, but the voluminous nature and incredible reach of this debate demands sustained scholarly attention. To help manage the potentially expansive nature of the “gay Christian” controversy, this dissertation focuses on the 1960s and early 1970s as a significant period in the development of GLBTQ rights advocacy. Historian George Chauncey argued that the gay movement evolved during this time, offering specific examples of how rhetoric animated social and cultural transformation. He wrote, “In the 1960s and 1970s, the gay movement broke decisively with the assimilationist rhetoric of the 1950s by publicly affirming, celebrating, and even cultivating homosexual difference.”<sup>90</sup> The new direction of the movement toward a strategy of visibility makes this period an exemplar to understand and appreciate the complicated way in which rhetors move from strategies of opacity to rhetorics of visibility. This dissertation also produces insight about the complicated nature of this transition, articulating how movements towards visibility can utilize strategies of opacity to foster communal ties and enable social change. Moreover, Chauncey suggests that this period enabled the following “campaign for self-transformation and self-revelation, and gave it enduring force.”<sup>91</sup> Providing an explanation of how opacity and other rhetorical strategies in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the “enduring force” to the gay rights movement thus provides insight how GLBTQ people might navigate the “gay Christian” debate and still work to build more inclusive communities.

Furthermore, engaging this period in the development of the larger “gay Christian” controversy continues rhetorical scholarship’s endeavor to archive queer rhetoric in significant ways.<sup>92</sup> Chauncey explained the significance and political edge to such historical research. In



writing about a legacy of discrimination against GLBTQ people, he claimed that “calling this a forgotten history is really too benign. It’s more accurate to say this history of discrimination has been erased from the historical record, and that this erasure itself has been a central element of antigay politics.”<sup>93</sup> Rhetorical scholars, “in vexed pursuit of the elusive artifacts of our queer histories,”<sup>94</sup> not only can hedge against the depletion of memory about historical discrimination, but can illuminate how advocates used rhetoric to challenge this discrimination, articulate visions of more inclusive communities, and navigate marginalization. Illuminating cases in which advocates did this work can further provide enduring lessons of how rhetoric can continue the work of communal cultivation and transformation today. The 1960s and early 1970s provide case studies that augment such work, but, to explain how, I first briefly turn to the late 1970s. The backlash to GLBTQ advocacy in the late 1970s shows the success of GLBTQ advocacy in the 1960s and early 1970s in initiating political change and communal cultivation.

In 1977, Anita Bryant launched her “Save Our Children” campaign, using metaphors of war to challenge advances in GLBTQ inclusion and rights.<sup>95</sup> Ever since Bryant’s campaign, Christians have entered the public arena to rebuke GLBTQ people and behavior. Now, according to Cynthia Burack, “it is undeniable that traditionalist religious belief motivates most antigay bias and activism.”<sup>96</sup> Burack further contended:

One of the greatest rhetorical triumphs of the Christian right movement may be its success in constructing and defending the belief that queer people, by definition, are not Christian believers. This belief is a powerful wedge for separating LGBT people from their communities and families, if not from faith itself.<sup>97</sup>

The cultivation and maintenance of the definition of queer people as non-Christian ensures painful marginalization and exclusion in Christian communities. According to Reverend Nancy

Wilson, Christians have used scripture to verbally abuse GLBTQ people in a way that has cultivated *biblephobia* in GLBTQ communities. She contends, “gay and lesbian people open the Bible fearfully, as if it would physically hurt them to read it.”<sup>98</sup> This dissertation’s case studies offer a different trajectory, one articulated before Bryant launched her campaign, of the relationship between GLBTQ people and scripture. Starting with the 1960s allows me to demonstrate how GLBTQ Christians and their allies pursued affirmation, inclusion, and GLBTQ rights before the Christian right defined “queer” and “Christian” as mutually exclusive. Through an examination of the queer invitations in the “gay Christian” debate’s past, this project provides the equipment necessary to navigate and alter how the debate manifests itself generations later.

By theorizing the strategies of these GLBTQ figures and rhetorics of the past, scholars might develop conceptual tools necessary to explain current advocacy strategies and enable others to deploy those strategies to empower communities and foster change. My examination of strategies of opacity of the past comes at a time when GLBTQ leaders feel called back to the closet—a move that would necessitate opaque appeals that deflect, cover, minimize, and pass markers of once-again targeted and maligned identity. In 2017, Susan Ryan-Vollmar exclaimed, “Some of the most powerful LGBTQ people in the country are being driven back into the closet for fear of losing their jobs.”<sup>99</sup> In 2016, the Center for American Progress conducted a survey of GLBTQ individuals and found that “25.2 percent” of respondents “experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the past year.”<sup>100</sup> The report also concluded that “LGBT people make subtle but profound changes to their everyday lives to minimize the risk of experiencing discrimination, often hiding their authentic selves.”<sup>101</sup> A 2018 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that GLBTQ college students who view religion as important remain more likely to experience suicidal ideation and

attempt suicide.<sup>102</sup> *Out Magazine*, ironically, reported that many GLBTQ elders and seniors have recently decided to return to the closet to avoid discrimination from caregivers. In that article, Nico Lang stated, “While it might be shocking to think of LGBTQ seniors forced back into the closet, the reality is that queer people of their generation have been forced to make these kinds of hard choices all their lives just to survive.”<sup>103</sup> Finally, *Bloomberg* reported in 2018 that half of GLBTQ workers in the United States remain in the closet at work despite diversity efforts to expand inclusion at workplaces.<sup>104</sup> These reports highlight that the closet still looms large for GLBTQ people; people still deploy rhetorics of opacity to avoid discrimination and survive. Examining how GLBTQ people utilized opacity successfully in the past therefore accumulates lessons about how people develop opaque appeals now and into the future.

To develop portable lessons of how rhetorics of opacity can contribute to advocacy efforts, foster and maintain communal ties, and justify social transformation, this dissertation analyzes four case studies: (1) Bayard Rustin’s advocacy, (2) the Council on Religion and the Homosexual’s coalitional efforts, (3) William R. Johnson’s ordination paper, and (4) the Christian Reformed Church’s Study Report on “Homosexuality.” In the next section, I articulate how each case can contribute to the theorization of opaque appeals.

### **Cases of Opacity**

This dissertation investigates four moments when opaque rhetoric contributed to GLBTQ Christian efforts to pursue social change and foster communal bonds from the 1960s and early 1970s. The chapters together showcase how rhetors employ opacity as a part of strategies for communal betterment and social transformation. In addition, these case studies also highlight how people might evolve their strategies as their rhetorical situation and advocacy needs change. The trajectory of their opaque strategies shows how rhetorical management of stigmatized

identities, beliefs, and information constitutes a fluid and dynamic process, especially in advocacy efforts where the rhetor seek change. Showing that visibility and passing rhetorics occupy two ends of a continuum, the case study chapters start with the more hidden rhetorics and move to the more visible instances of opacity being used for social transformation and communal formation. In addition, before analyzing each of these case studies, in chapter two, I develop a methodological framework for examining instances of opacity.

In the third chapter, I analyze the Christian Reformed Church's 1973 study report on "homosexuality" and theorize that information management strategies can constitute long-term proactive plans for social change. Through an overarching strategy I term "seeding" liberal argumentative starting points, I argue that the report camouflaged subversive material, enabling future advocates to productively organize, connect, and cite the resources contained in the report to refute and overcome the apparent position statements of the document. "Information management strategies" therefore can include appeals that might seed the starting points for alternative communal beliefs and more affirming assumptions and enable social change, even as they appear sufficiently conservative to not be rejected from the outset by largely conservative communities. To develop this theoretical insight, I also demonstrate how the 1973 study report included visible markers affirming heteronormative beliefs and assumptions about scripture, solidifying the document's conservative credentials. As such, this case study reveals how careful management of subversive viewpoints and arguments can inform how advocates promote long-term social transformation.

Chapter four focuses on Bayard Rustin, a community organizer and aide to Martin Luther King Jr. In the 1950s, police officers arrested Rustin under sodomy laws that made it illegal to engage in lewd "homosexual" conduct.<sup>105</sup> Throughout Rustin's advocacy and community-

organizing career, Rustin's sexuality and his arrest record constituted a constraint on his efforts that needed to be negotiated. Historian John D'Emilio described how fear of revelations about his sexuality constricted Rustin's involvement in advocacy and organizing, writing that in the peace and civil rights movements "Rustin's influence was everywhere. Yet he remained always in the background, his figure shadowy and blurred, his importance masked. At any moment, his sexual history might erupt into the consciousness."<sup>106</sup> This chapter focuses on two instances when critics and detractors of King's civil rights promotion utilized evidence of Rustin's sexuality to disparage and discredit the larger civil rights movement. I argue that these accusations created a queer constraint for King, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other movement organizers: the potential that people might panic and withhold support for the movement upon learning of Rustin's deviant and stigmatized sexuality.<sup>107</sup> In examining how Rustin and his allies responded to these queer exigencies, I develop a theory of "value trajectories" which illustrates how rhetors and advocacy efforts can transition from "closeted" to "out" while still maintaining a coherent and identifiable core.

In chapter five, this dissertation journeys across the country to San Francisco to another example of how opaque rhetoric enabled communal cultivation and social change. I analyze the Council on Religion and the Homosexual's (CRH) efforts to respond to a police raid on one of its fundraisers and to create a more affirming and inclusive community for GLBTQ individuals.<sup>108</sup> The chapter develops a theory of "coalitional fronting," a strategy in which members of the coalition with privilege and an ability to develop an acceptable *persona* become the public face of a coalition and the members of the coalition who may have a stigmatized identity remain absent from the public deliberation.

The sixth chapter examines the rhetoric of William R. Johnson, the man who would be ordained as the first openly gay person in a mainline Christian denomination. In 1972, the United Church of Christ approved of Johnson's ordination. Johnson's ordination represents a noteworthy and critical turning point in the "gay Christian" debate, because, according to Mark G. Toulouse, his confirmation "spawned a number of gay caucuses in the Protestant denominations, leading to increased activism in churches on behalf of the ordination of homosexuals and the advocacy of civil rights for homosexuals in society."<sup>109</sup> Before his ordination, Johnson wrote a paper rationalizing and justifying his ordination. *In Unity* published the text in November 1971.<sup>110</sup> This text provides a window to explore how Johnson explained his "coming out" from a closeted theology student in 1970 to the first openly gay mainline clergy member two years later and justified the council authorizing his ordination.<sup>111</sup> Johnson's ordination paper showcases how newly-out rhetors may downplay their sexuality, or other maligned identity markers, by emphasizing their allegiance to and consistency with communal values and tradition. Studying Johnson's text therefore extends scholarship on opacity by highlight how "out" rhetors still deploy opaque rhetorics to defend how they have managed their stigmatized identities and warrant greater inclusion. Before proceeding to an analysis of these case studies, in the next chapter, I explain the methodological approach of this dissertation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jason Edward Black and Charles E. Morris III, *An Archive of Hope: Harvey Milk's Speeches and Writings*, eds. Jason Edward Black and Charles E. Morris III, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Black and Morris, *An Archive of Hope*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Following Black and Morris, in this dissertation, I opt to use the acronym GLBTQ, which stands for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer, to refer to individuals who have sexual and gender identities other than heterosexual and cisgender. To my knowledge, this acronym, while not complete, best encapsulates the identities of the individuals studied in this dissertation. However, I should also note that, at times, the texts I analyze likely do not refer to all the individuals who comprise the GLBTQ community as the community has historically marginalized those who are not white gay men. Many of the historical documents I analyze in this dissertation also only refer to a subset of the GLBTQ community or use an umbrella term that is less inclusive than GLBTQ (for example, referencing to the entire community as the gay community or the homophile community). For consistency and to mirror scholarship that uses the acronym GLBTQ, despite that acronym's limitations, because that acronym remains the best to encapsulate and include all the identities referenced throughout the case studies of this dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Milk, "Gay Freedom Day Speech," in *An Archive of Hope*, 210.

<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Rimmerman, *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002), 130.

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<sup>6</sup> Gene Robinson, *God Believes in Love: Straight Talk about Gay Marriage* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2012), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Knapp, “‘You Must Come Out’: How Harvey Milk’s Challenge Resonates With Gay Christians Today,” *The Huffington Post*, October 11, 2014, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jennifer-knapp/how-harvey-milks-challeng\\_b\\_5960258.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jennifer-knapp/how-harvey-milks-challeng_b_5960258.html)>.

<sup>8</sup> Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, “Queer Nationality,” in ed. Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 201.

<sup>9</sup> Joel Penney, “Eminently Visible: The Role of T-Shirts in Gay and Lesbian Public Advocacy and Community Building,” *Popular Communication* 11 (2013): 292.

<sup>10</sup> Leland G. Spencer and Joshua Trey Barnett, “Touring Homophobia: Understanding the Soulforce Equality Ride as a Toxic Tour,” *Southern Communication Journal* 78 (2013): 38.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Brouwer, “The Precarious Visibility Politics of Self-Stigmatization: The Case of HIV/AIDS Tattoos,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 18 (1998): 116.

<sup>12</sup> Brouwer, “The Precarious Visibility Politics,” 115.

<sup>13</sup> Spencer and Barnett, “Touring Homophobia,” 29.

<sup>14</sup> Lester C. Olson, “On the Margins of Rhetoric: Audre Lorde Transforming Silence into Language and Action,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 64-5.

<sup>15</sup> Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 228-44.

<sup>16</sup> Charles E. Morris III, “Richard Halliburton’s Bearded Tales,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 125.



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- <sup>17</sup> Dana L. Cloud, “The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of ’34,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2 (1999): 177-209.
- <sup>18</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Chautauqua: The Cunning Rhetor, The Complicitous Audience, The Conned Censor, and the Critic,” *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990): 73-8.
- <sup>19</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *The Journal of American History* 80 (1993): 75–112.
- <sup>20</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).
- <sup>21</sup> See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952).
- <sup>22</sup> Nicholas De Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 92, 116.
- <sup>23</sup> Olson, “On the Margins of Rhetoric,” 65.
- <sup>24</sup> Cloud, “The Null Persona,” 200.
- <sup>25</sup> Cloud, “The Null Persona,” 196.
- <sup>26</sup> Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, NY: Jason Aronson, 1974), 106.
- <sup>27</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 41-2, 51.
- <sup>28</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 9.
- <sup>29</sup> See Goffman, *Stigma*, 101-2.
- <sup>30</sup> See Aristotle, “*Art*” of *Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), I.ii.

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<sup>31</sup> See Berlant and Freeman, “Queer Nationality,” 201; Brouwer, “The Precarious Visibility Politics,” 105-6; Penney, “Eminently Visible,” 292; Spencer and Barnett, “Touring Homophobia,” 38.

<sup>32</sup> Morris “Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona,” 228.

<sup>33</sup> Morris, “Pink Herring,” 230.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas A. Salek, “Faith Turns Political on the 2012 Campaign Trail: Mitt Romney, Franklin Graham, and the Stigma of Nontraditional Religions in American Politics,” *Communication Studies* 65 (2014): 177.

<sup>35</sup> To review Erving Goffman’s work on stigma management, see Goffman, *Stigma*. For examples of rhetorical critics who have appropriated Goffman’s term “passing,” see Jeffrey A. Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood: Rhetorics of Citizenship, Contagion, and Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009); Charles E. Morris III, “Passing by Proxy: Collusive and Convulsive Silence in the Trial of Leopold and Loeb,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 264-90; Morris, “Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona,” 228-44; Morris, “Richard Halliburton’s Bearded Tales,” 123-47; Charles E. Morris III, “‘The Responsibilities of the Critic’: F. O. Matthiessen’s Homosexual Palimpsest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 261-82; Helene A. Shugart, “Performing Ambiguity: The Passing of Ellen DeGeneres,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23 (2003): 30-54; Anna L. Spradlin, “The Price of ‘Passing’: A Lesbian Perspective on Authenticity in Organizations,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 11 (1998): 598-605; Catherine R. Squires and Daniel C. Brouwer, “In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 283-310; Lauren Wagner, “Using Silence to ‘Pass’: Embodiment and Interactional Categorization in a Diasporic Context,” *Multilingua* 34 (2015): 659-86.

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- <sup>36</sup> Morris, "Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona," 230.
- <sup>37</sup> Morris, "Richard Halliburton's Bearded Tales," 125.
- <sup>38</sup> Morris, "Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona," 230.
- <sup>39</sup> Morris, "Richard Halliburton's Bearded Tales," 126.
- <sup>40</sup> Shugart, "Performing Ambiguity," 32.
- <sup>41</sup> Wagner, "Using Silence to 'Pass,'" 659-86.
- <sup>42</sup> Spradlin, "The Price of 'Passing,'" 598-605.
- <sup>43</sup> Shugart, "Performing Ambiguity," 51.
- <sup>44</sup> Morris, "The Responsibilities of the Critic," 263.
- <sup>45</sup> Squires and Brouwer, "In/Discernible Bodies," 287.
- <sup>46</sup> Torin Monahan, "The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 159-78.
- <sup>47</sup> Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*, 112.
- <sup>48</sup> Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*, 113.
- <sup>49</sup> Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*, 116.
- <sup>50</sup> Alyssa A. Samek, "Marginalizing the Queer Vote Post-Marriage: The Challenges of Visibility," *Women's Studies in Communication* 39 (2016): 361.
- <sup>51</sup> Samek, "Marginalizing the Queer Vote," 362.
- <sup>52</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 183.
- <sup>53</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 191. Italics in the original.
- <sup>54</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 19-20.
- <sup>55</sup> Amanda C. Miller, *Rumors of Resistance: Status Reversals and Hidden Transcripts in the Gospel of Luke* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014), 20.

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<sup>56</sup> Isaac West, “Debbie Mayne’s Trans/scripts: Performative Repertoires in Law and Everyday Life,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5 (2008): 257.

<sup>57</sup> Neil Elliott, “Strategies of Resistance and Hidden Transcripts in the Pauline Communities,” in ed. Richard A. Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 110.

<sup>58</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 42.

<sup>59</sup> For example, see Goffman, *Stigma*, 48 and 102. Also see, for examples, Monahan, “The Right to Hide?” 159–78; Spradlin, “The Price of ‘Passing,’” 598-605; Squires and Brouwer, “In/Discernible Bodies,” 283-310; Wagner, “Using Silence to ‘Pass,’” 659-86; Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 95.

<sup>61</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 97.

<sup>62</sup> Shugart, “Performing Ambiguity,” 32.

<sup>63</sup> Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem,’” 77.

<sup>64</sup> Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem,’” 77.

<sup>65</sup> Kelly, “‘We Are Not What We Seem,’” 111.

<sup>66</sup> See Kristy Maddux, “Christianity, Homosexuality and the ‘Plain Sense’ of Scripture: A Critical History of Interpretation,” *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 30 (2001): 94-120. Phyllis Trible originally developed the term “texts of terror” to refer to passages of the biblical text that reference gender violence. Robert Goss first reapplied Trible’s term to reference biblical passages that ostensibly condemn acting upon same-sex attraction. See Robert Goss, *Jesus Acted Up* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), and Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984).

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<sup>67</sup> Robin Reames, “Hermeneutical Rhetoric and the 2006 Souforce Equality Ride at Wheaton College,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 37 (2014): 131.

<sup>68</sup> Karma R. Chávez, “Beyond Complicity: Coherence, Queer Theory, and the Rhetoric of the ‘Gay Christian Movement,’” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 24 (2004): 255.

<sup>69</sup> Joshua H. Miller, “‘Until Death Do We (Queers) Part’: (Queer) Biblical Interpretation, (Invented) Truth, and Presumption in Controversies Concerning Biblical Characters’ Sexualities,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 4 (2017): 56.

<sup>70</sup> Miller, “‘Until Death,’” 56.

<sup>71</sup> Heather Hahn and Sam Hodges, “GC2016 Puts Hold on Sexuality Debate,” *United Methodist News*, May 18, 2016, <<http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/bishops-ask-for-hold-on-sexuality-debate>>.

<sup>72</sup> Heather Hahn, “500 Clergy Support Gay United Methodist Clergy Who Came Out,” *United Methodist News*, May 9, 2016, <<http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/111-clergy-clergy-candidates-come-out-as-gay>>.

<sup>73</sup> “Openly Gay Bishop at Center of Controversy in United Methodist Church,” *National Public Radio*, May 7, 2017, <<http://www.npr.org/2017/05/07/527250431/openly-gay-bishop-at-center-of-controversy-in-united-methodist-church>>.

<sup>74</sup> Clayton Libolt, “Synod Appoints Committee to Study Human Sexuality,” *Christian Reformed Church*, <<https://www.crcna.org/news-and-views/synod-appoints-committee-study-human-sexuality>>; Gayla R. Postma, “Pastoral Guidance for Churches Regarding Same-Sex Marriage,” *The Banner*, January 7, 2016, <<https://thebanner.org/news/2016/01/pastoral-guidance-for-churches-regarding-same-sex-marriage>>.

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<sup>75</sup> Antonia Blumberg, “Evangelical Leaders Release Anti-LGBTQ Statement On Human Sexuality,” *The Huffington Post*, August 29, 2017, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/evangelical-leaders-nashville-statement\\_us\\_59a5b705e4b00795c2a217fc](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/evangelical-leaders-nashville-statement_us_59a5b705e4b00795c2a217fc)>; Brandon Robertson, “Why This LGBT+ Christian Keeps Going to Southern Baptist Conferences,” *The Huffington Post*, August 25, 2017, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-this-lgbt-christian-keeps-going-to-southern-baptist\\_us\\_599f5c9ce4b0cb7715bfd45a](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-this-lgbt-christian-keeps-going-to-southern-baptist_us_599f5c9ce4b0cb7715bfd45a)>.

<sup>76</sup> Kevin Vogts, “ELCA Has Biggest Split in American Church History,” *The Aquila Report*, July 28, 2013, <<http://theaquilareport.com/elca-has-biggest-split-in-american-church-history/>>.

<sup>77</sup> Daniel Burke, “Can This Priest Persuade Church Leaders to Welcome Gay Christians?” *CNN*, July 6, 2017, <<http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/06/living/martin-gay-catholics/index.html>>; John Gehring, “Pulse Anniversary: Church Plays Wounding Role to LGBT People,” *National Catholic Reporter*, June 13, 2017, <<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pulse-anniversary-church-plays-wounding-role-lgbt-people>>; Jonathan Merritt, “This Vatican Adviser Is Moving Catholics toward LGBT Inclusion,” *Religion News Service*, June 6, 2017, <<http://religionnews.com/2017/06/06/this-top-vatican-official-is-quietly-moving-catholics-toward-lgbt-inclusion/>>.

<sup>78</sup> For examples, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1980); Michael L. Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?: Responding with LOVE & TRUTH to Questions about HOMOSEXUALITY* (Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine, 2014); Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2011); Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation*

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*Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Joe Dallas, *The Gay Gospel?: How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007); Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Keith Hartman, *Congregations in Conflict: The Battle over Homosexuality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978); Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997); Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connolly, *The Children are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-Sex Relationships* (Indianapolis, IN: LifeJourney Press, 2002); Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998); Gene Robinson, *In the Eye of the Storm* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2008); Jack Rogers, *Jesus, The Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2014); Mel White, *Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995); Nancy Wilson, *Outing the Bible: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Christian Scriptures* (Indianapolis, IN: LifeJourney Press, 2013).

<sup>79</sup> “A Survey of LGBT Americans,” *Pew Research Center*, June 13, 2013,

<<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/#fn-17196-1>>.

<sup>80</sup> Alan Blinder and Richard Pérez-Peña, “Kentucky Clerk Denies Same-Sex Marriage Licenses, Defying Court,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2015,

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/us/same-sex-marriage-kentucky-kim-davis.html>>.

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<sup>81</sup> Alan Blinder and Richard Fausset, “Kim Davis, a Local Fixture, and Now a National Symbol,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/us/kentucky-clerk-a-local-fixture-suddenly-becomes-a-national-symbol.html>>.

<sup>82</sup> Samek, “Marginalizing the Queer Vote,” 362.

<sup>83</sup> James Michael Nichols, “A Survivor of Gay Conversion Therapy Shares His Chilling Story,” *Huffington Post*, November 17, 2016, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/realities-of-conversion-therapy\\_us\\_582b6cf2e4b01d8a014aea66](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/realities-of-conversion-therapy_us_582b6cf2e4b01d8a014aea66)>.

<sup>84</sup> John Paul Brammer, “Senate Democrats Reintroduce Bill to Ban Conversion Therapy Nationwide,” *NBC News*, April 15, 2017, <<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/senate-democrats-reintroduce-bill-ban-conversion-therapy-nationwide-n750871>>.

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Hanks, “Miami-Dade Rejects Ban on Gay-Conversion Therapy,” *Miami Herald*, October 13, 2017, <<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article176807256.html>>.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick McGreevy, “Faith-Based Colleges Say Anti-discrimination Bill Would Infringe on Their Religious Freedom,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 2016, <<http://beta.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-religious-freedom-bill-20160622-snap-story.html>>.

<sup>87</sup> David Dinielli, “SPLC: Trump Administration’s Guidance on Religious Freedom Undercuts LGBT Rights,” *Southern Policy Law Center*, October 6, 2017, <<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/10/06/splc-trump-administrations-guidance-religious-freedom-undercuts-lgbt-rights>>.

<sup>88</sup> John R. Blosnich, Mary C. Marsiglio, Shasha Gao, Adam J. Gordon, Jillian C. Shipherd, Michael Kauth, George R. Brown, and Michael J. Fine, “Mental Health of Transgender Veterans



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in US States With and Without Discrimination and Hate Crime Legal Protection,” *American Journal of Public Health* 106 (2016): 534-40.

<sup>89</sup> Megan Sutter and Paul B. Perrin, “Discrimination, Mental Health, and Suicidal Ideation among LGBTQ People of Color,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 63 (2016): 98.

<sup>90</sup> George Chauncey, *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today’s Debate Over Gay Equality* (New York, NY: Basic Book, 2004), 29.

<sup>91</sup> Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 33.

<sup>92</sup> Charles E. Morris III explains the significance of the overall project of developing a queer rhetorical archive. See Charles E. Morris III, “Archival Queer,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 145-51.

<sup>93</sup> Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 12.

<sup>94</sup> Morris, “Archival Queer,” 148.

<sup>95</sup> See Ronald Fischli, “Anita Bryant’s Stand against ‘Militant Homosexuality’: Religious Fundamentalism and the Democratic Process,” *Central States Speech Journal* 30 (1979): 262-71.

<sup>96</sup> Cynthia Burack, *Sin, Sex, and Democracy: Antigay Rhetoric and the Christian Right* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 142.

<sup>97</sup> Burack, *Sin, Sex, and Democracy*, 142.

<sup>98</sup> Wilson, *Outing the Bible*, 77.

<sup>99</sup> Susan Ryan-Vollmar, “Under Trump, Washington’s LGBTQ Community Is Returning To The Closet,” *WGBH News*, May 30, 2017, <<http://news.wgbh.org/2017/05/30/news/under-trump-washingtons-lgbtq-community-returning-closet>>.

<sup>100</sup> Sejal Singh and Laura E. Durso, “Widespread Discrimination Continues to Shape LGBT People’s Lives in Both Subtle and Significant Ways,” *Center for American Progress*, May 2,

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<sup>101</sup> Singh and Durso, “Widespread Discrimination.”

<sup>102</sup> Megan C. Lytle, John R. Blosnich, Susan M. De Luca, and Chris Brownson, “Association of Religiosity with Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation and Attempt,” *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 54 (2018): 644-51.

<sup>103</sup> Nico Lang, “LGBTQ Elders Are Being Forced Back in the Closet, Now Trump Wants Them Erased,” *Out*, March 21, 2017, <<https://www.out.com/news-opinion/2017/3/21/lgbtq-elders-being-forced-back-closet-now-trump-wants-them-erased>>.

<sup>104</sup> Jeff Green, “Half of LGBT Workers Stay Closeted, Unmoved by Diversity Efforts,” *Bloomberg*, June 25, 2018, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-25/half-of-lgbt-workers-stay-closeted-unmoved-by-diversity-efforts>>.

<sup>105</sup> John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 192.

<sup>106</sup> D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 193.

<sup>107</sup> For a more detailed description of what constitutes a “homophobic panic,” see Charles E. Morris III, “My Old Kentucky Homo: Abraham Lincoln, Larry Kramer, and the Politics of Queer Memory,” in ed. Charles E. Morris III, *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 93-120.

<sup>108</sup> Even though many of the historical documents I analyze in this dissertation refer to GLBTQ people as solely “homosexuals,” scholarship is distancing itself from the term. Because of this, I opt to use the term GLBTQ. For an example of a criticism of the use of the term “homosexual,” see Chávez, “Beyond Complicity,” 255-75.

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<sup>109</sup> Mark G. Toulouse, “Muddling Through: The Church and Sexuality/Homosexuality,” in ed. David L. Balch, *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 21.

<sup>110</sup> See “The Historical Ordination of William R. Johnson,” *LGBT Religious Archives Network*, accessed on July 10, 2017, <<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Johnson/index.htm>>.

<sup>111</sup> Anne Moore explains this transition in an interview with Reverend William Johnson. See Anne Moore, “The One Who Endures,” *Prospect Magazine: Alumni Stories*, accessed October 20, 2017, <<http://www.elmhurst.edu/magazine/alumnistories/101525154.html>>.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **A Methodology for Investigating Rhetorics of Opacity and “Coming Out”**

In the four cases of Bayard Rustin’s advocacy work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, William Johnson’s ordination paper, and the 1973 Christian Reformed Church’s study report, critics can probe how opaque rhetorics contributed to advocacy efforts promoting social change and community. Given the ways opacity in these cases justified communal inclusion and societal transformation, these case studies also enable scholars to provide insight into how rhetoric animates alterations to how individuals, communities, coalitions, and movements manage potentially discrediting information and accusations. Using these cases, this dissertation develops a central argument about how rhetorics of opacity constitute precarious endeavors to promote shared action, articulate and justify communal linkages, and offer more inclusive social visions. To develop this position, in the previous chapter I promised that this project would develop a methodology for tracing the development of opaque rhetorics—a method enabling scholars to investigate rhetorics that enable, animate, or actualize the revelation of identity and thus “come out” as a part of an ongoing rhetorical process can foster social change and cultivate community. An examination of rhetorics that “come out” follows the developmental arc of an advocacy efforts from moments of opacity, through other opaque tactics, identity revelation, and toward long-term social change so that the identity would no longer be considered stigmatized.

This chapter develops this dissertation’s methodological framework, engaging with scholarship about rhetorical trajectories and longitudinal rhetorical scholarship to develop its approach. To develop this methodology, I first argue that “coming out” constitutes an ongoing, rhetorical process. Then, I review how previous critics have analyzed rhetorics and advocacy strategies that transform and develop across time and then turn to illuminate the way scholarship

currently examines rhetorics of "coming out." I emphasize that recent scholars have examined singular "coming out" narratives, including changes to the appeals of those narratives since the 1970s. However, scholars have not deployed a method for evaluating a communal *process* of "coming out" and its' rhetoric; I show how rhetoric animates this process and how scholars might critique it. When scholars investigate texts as a part of a process of identity revelation, then the critics also might glean insight into how the texts function in efforts to create social change or cultivate community.

### **"Coming Out" as an Ongoing, Rhetorical Process**

Recent social scientific and auto-ethnographic research reframes "coming out" as a lifelong process rather than a single event. According to Jennifer Mitchell, many media accounts of "coming out" contain simple narratives that showcase the closet as an obstacle that some overcome in a single act of disclosure. Writing about an example of a more simplistic "coming out" portrayal, Mitchell explained that the narrative "is somewhat misleading as it presumes that . . . coming out of the closet and never looking back . . . is simply explaining the reality of her identity."<sup>1</sup> Mitchell's analysis highlights that as "coming out" narratives have evolved they have started containing more complex representations of the process, rather than featuring a single act. Such narratives represent more closely how social scientific scholarship describes GLBTQ individuals' actual process of coming out. For example, Tony E. Adams contended that his auto-ethnography on "coming out" remains "a project that documents struggles of the closet, coming out, and same-sex attraction—struggles that, in my opinion, never end but rather continue over the course of a LGBQ person's life."<sup>2</sup> Jimmie Manning too claimed that "an LGB person comes out to many different people in many different contexts throughout life."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Stephen M. Didomenico defined "coming out" as a potentially "lifelong process."<sup>4</sup> Following the insight

from social scientific research that “coming out” constitutes a continual process, rhetorical scholarship should reflect upon and enhance its approaches to discourses concerning “coming out” and the closet.

For rhetorical scholarship, the importance of recognizing “coming out” as an ongoing process of revelation rather than a single act of disclosure is two-fold. First, methodologically, this signals that “coming out” or narratives of identity revelation should involve the examination of more than a single discrete text. Although a rhetor might disclose their identity or embrace their identity in a single discrete text, that person’s rhetorical career likely includes more complex, complicated, and fluid textual constructions related to *persona*, identity, narrative, secrecy, and disclosure. Second, theoretically, the recognition that “coming out” constitutes a communicative process rather than an act or event challenges the binary between being a “closeted” rhetor or “visible” rhetor. Such an orientation should encourage scholars to ask not is a rhetor visible or passing, but for whom, in what contexts, and how is the rhetor visible, passing, or in the liminal space in-between. Although not a self-proclaimed rhetorician, Adams’ explanation remains palatable for rhetoric scholarship as it involves a nuanced understanding of the relationship between GLBTQ rhetors and their many audiences. He wrote,

If coming out never ends, or if a person can’t ever complete the coming-out process, then the person will always be in the closet in relation to some audiences—and, consequently, always has the possibility of being held accountable for hiding, lying, omitting information, being selfish or reckless—and, consequently, always has the possibility of being held accountable for being unhealthy and unhappy, immature and immoral, dishonest and politically irresponsible, shameful and self-hating.<sup>5</sup>

Even “out” advocates must continually re-introduce, re-disclose, and re-justify their sexual identity challenges as they encounter new audiences, situations, and contexts. This understanding complicates rhetorical scholarship’s bifurcation of “out” and visible advocates from “closeted” and passing advocates. Simply, rhetors may simultaneously be “out” to certain audiences and “closeted” to others. Moreover, the degree to which a rhetor might reveal, show, or proclaim their identity might change among the situations in which they find themselves.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the continued and ongoing rhetorical processes of “coming out” highlight how even ostensibly “out” rhetors operate in liminal spaces and contexts. In these liminal spaces, rhetoric operates “betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life.”<sup>7</sup> That is, “out” rhetors remain in a liminal space between being “in” and “out of” the closet. In that continual liminal space, as Adams noted, rhetors face many exigences, challenges, and constraints concerning accountability, honesty, political responsibility, and political relevance.

Understanding the liminality inherent in the GLBTQ rhetors’ situation enables a deeper appreciation of the rhetorical work these rhetors do—the complicated work of balancing secrecy and disclosure, remaining both “out of” and “in” the closet, and managing how audiences might perceive how one navigates both. Describing the relationships between liminality and GLBTQ rhetors, Charles E. Morris III wrote, “Rhetorical artistry for those on the limen uniquely combines forms of secrecy and disclosure.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to Morris, rhetorical critics might trace tokens of rhetors’ efforts to navigate the demands of the liminal space in which their rhetoric operates. Furthermore, Benny LeMaster argued for embracing the potential of liminality to enable resistance, writing “liminality highlights moments of resistance to assimilation, essentialism, privacy, and heteronormativity, which in turn encourage transformation of the audience and the text.”<sup>9</sup> Yet, E. Tristan Booth contended, “Transsexuals and others who live

‘betwixt and between’ are left to negotiate perpetual liminality in a world of ill-fitting hegemonic constructs.”<sup>10</sup> Combined, these conceptualizations of liminality suggest that it can offer moments of resistance, but the continued and perpetual need for rhetors to navigate liminality showcases how difficult fundamental social transformation and change can be. To appreciate fully the rhetorical work necessary to sustain GLBTQ advocacy, rhetorical scholars must develop tools to understand how rhetors navigate and balance the difficult and challenging demands of the liminal spaces and contexts in which their rhetoric must operate.

### **Analyzing Transformation, Alteration, and Development in Rhetorical Endeavors**

Developing a theory and method of “coming out” can equip rhetorical critics to explore transitions from various opaque strategies to other tactics of opacity or visibility. Through this process, the critic can more fully explain how rhetorics of opacity operated in long-term social change efforts and processes of community cultivation. The project of analyzing the arguments for change and rhetorical appeals of people who “come out” emphasizes how rhetoric animates, enables, and even constrains the movement and arc of how people utilize opaque rhetorics in campaigns for social change. Such theorization offers insight into how the development of appeals varies and transforms alongside efforts to create change or form inclusive communities. Moreover, the work of theorizing “coming out” usefully highlights how opaque appeals and identity management work often require a nuanced, fluid, and risky rhetorical process rather than the deployment of a singular and static “coming out” text. With reference to the research approach involved in a rhetorical biography and social movement scholarship, this section carves out a space for a “coming out” methodology in rhetorical scholarship.



Rhetorical critics have deployed methods that trace the development, alteration, and progression of rhetorical appeals over time in at least two of the field's traditions: rhetorical biography and social movement scholarship. Rhetorical biographies investigate the careers of orators, showing how people's appeals evolve and change. For instance, in his rhetorical biography of Malcolm X, Robert E. Terrill stated how his study focuses on the evolution of a rhetorical career: "In the developmental arc of [Malcolm X's] oratory, I can see an echo of the history of development of rhetoric itself."<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on development in rhetorical biographies allows the critic to showcase how rhetors navigate fluid situations, emerging constraints, unplanned needs to speak, and unanticipated opportunities to share their messages.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, scholars interested in the rhetorics of social movements analyze how efforts for change generate new appeals and tactics to respond to the maneuvers of oppositional or established forces, negotiate new exigences, and capitalize on successes.<sup>13</sup>

The previous emphasis that rhetorical scholarship has placed on the evolution and progression of individual and movement appeals lends itself well to the articulation of theories and methods about the political and communal functions of rhetorics of "coming out." In collaborative and coalitional efforts, the individual management of information has implications for how the overall movement formulates its strategies and appeals to a broader public and vice versa. In this manner, this dissertation connects scholarship about social movements and the project of rhetorical biography, highlighting the "both/and" of the growth of individual rhetors and their appeals with coalitional, organizational, and movement rhetorics and their development. To examine the political, communal, and social functions that opaque rhetorics play, critics can trace how the rhetorical careers of individuals operate alongside the evolution of collective advocacy efforts, simultaneously examining appeals produced by individuals,

movements, and those who react to both. To develop this position, I articulate how the rhetorical biography and social movement scholarship can contribute to ongoing theorization about the progression of rhetoric across time, in diverse situations, and through different contexts. Then, I pivot to review literature about rhetorics of “coming out” to show how scholars might examine multiple pieces of discourse to analyze the connection among individual rhetorical management of biographical information, the construction of *persona* and *ethos* in texts, and the appeals, constraints, and exigences of campaigns for social change.

The tradition of rhetorical biography reveals and rationalizes methods for examining the development and movement of advocacy efforts and how rhetors might navigate “stigma.” For example, Meagan Parker Brooks’ close analysis of Fannie Lou Hammer’s rhetorical contributions to the Civil Rights Movement captures why rhetorical biography can constitute a significant scholarly endeavor. She argued that through this method a critic can trace changes to a rhetors’ appeals and “what about those symbols changes and what remains consistent in response to shifts in her personal life and changes in historical context.”<sup>14</sup> Examining the development of a rhetor’s appeals across time provides insight into how fluid and dynamic advocacy efforts can be and how necessary changing and evolving one’s strategies of opacity or visibility is for effective campaigns for social change. Karen A. Foss made clear how mapping the appeals of a rhetor over time can highlight how rhetoric might navigate the complicated and contradictory demands of a stigmatized personal biography and efforts for societal transformation in her longitudinal analysis of Milk’s rhetorical career. Foss explained, “Milk did not whitewash, deny, or distort his identity in any way, but he made his gay identity critical and at the same time just another part of who he was. He was different from some people because he was gay, but he was similar to many people in spite of being gay.”<sup>15</sup> Foss used this analysis of

Milk's rhetoric to develop an argument about the connection between identity and change: "Milk's discursive space, with its expanding and shifting sense of space and identity and its embrace of contradictions, is at the core of a queer rhetoric that has at its core the potential to envision and act into situations in new ways."<sup>16</sup> That is, Milk's visibility destabilized social norms to open space for new ways of being; importantly for my purposes, Foss connected how Milk cultivated his public *persona* and gay identity to social change through an examination of Milk's career as a would-be elected official and as a public servant after victory in an election.<sup>17</sup> As such, the tradition of rhetorical biography provides a rationale for a methodology that would trace the development of the relationship between a rhetor's personal biography and public advocacy efforts.

Rhetorical scholarship on social movements also utilizes methods for the close inspection of the development of rhetorical arcs—how rhetoric enables change which in turn necessitates the invention of new appeals to respond to the evolving situation. For example, James R. Andrews argued that rhetoric animates social movement, enabling the advancement toward objectives, overcoming or failing to address emergent challenges, backsliding, or recovering from missteps. Yet, to develop theories about the rhetoric of social movements, Andrews recommended exploring historical data and developing an explanation of the movement's rhetoric organically from the developments of and evolution in the movement's rhetoric in relation to its historical context.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in an essay that traces the development of gay rights rhetoric, James Darsey posited, "The rhetorician who studies social movements diachronically must find grounds for talking about rhetorical periods or eras, that is, eras in which discourses exhibit both significant distinctiveness from others occurring in adjacent periods and some central defining concerns within."<sup>19</sup> A critical aspect of justifying these rhetorical periods,

according to Darsey, is identifying “when situation and exigencies change dramatically.”<sup>20</sup> With reference to opaque rhetorics and rhetorics that “come out,” contextual developments (e.g., new exigencies, personal desires to reveal an identity, or changing social landscapes) may generate a desire or need to alter advocacy tactics; this process might include a desire or need to move from an opaque strategy to another opaque tactic, visibility, or somewhere in between. Thus, rhetorical critics have articulated that examining the history of a movement through its temporal development allows the critic to theorize how rhetoric operates in the evolution and alteration of the movement’s appeals based on the ever-changing nature of the situation.

Exploring how the evolution of appeals might also move from rhetorics of opacity, through revelation, and visibility remains a significant task for the full appreciation of the nuanced rhetoric involved in campaigns for change and inclusion. Kenji Yoshino highlighted the movement from forms of opacity, through other strategies of opacity, and towards visibility in his theorization of the three “phases of gay history.”<sup>21</sup> Yoshino explained:

Through the middle of the twentieth century, gays were routinely asked to convert to heterosexuality, whether through lobotomies, electroshock therapy, or psychoanalysis. As the gay rights movement gained strength, the demand to covert gradually ceded to the demand to pass. This shift can be seen in the military’s adoption in 1993 of the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, under which gays are permitted to serve so long as we agree to pass. Finally, at millennium’s turn, the demand to pass gives way to the demand to cover—gays are increasingly permitted to be gay and out so long as we do not “flaunt” our identities. The contemporary resistance to gay marriage can be understood as a covering demand: *Fine, be gay, but don’t shove it in our faces.*<sup>22</sup>

The vacillation among converting, passing, and covering shows how society alters its expectation of how people manage that information and how people alter their management of identity information, from strategies of opacity to either other opaque tactics or more visible ones. Similarly, rhetorical theorists have argued that theories about transition from hidden rhetorics to visible appeals constitutes an important endeavor. For example, Karma R. Chávez's examination of coalition-building moments in social movements emphasizes the movement between enclaved spaces and public advocacy. She wrote, "Activists use enclaves as the sites to invent rhetorical strategies to publicly challenge oppressive rhetoric or to create new imaginaries for the groups and issues they represent and desire to bring into coalition."<sup>23</sup> Framed in this manner, the hidden enclave enables the public advocacy that will follow, providing advocates the space to develop their appeals. To understand and appreciate the full range of a movement's rhetorical appeals, the critic therefore must investigate and theorize the connection between a movement's enclaved rhetoric and its public appeals.

Because certain advocacy campaigns, and individual rhetors' careers, move from opaque articulations to visible proclamations, "coming out" might provide a productive heuristic for the complicated work of negotiating identity information in social campaign and advocacy efforts and as the basis for analyzing the unstable arc of rhetoric involved in this effort. "Coming out" rhetorics, in this study, emphasize the transition and movement involved in social campaigns challenging the oppression and marginalization of stigmatized identities in ways that enable individual survival, the cultivation of political action, and the formation of a more inclusive society. Emphasizing transition from opacity to other strategies ensures that "coming out" and methodologies based on it have much broader implications for studying rhetorics that justify change. Although "coming out" places sexuality at the forefront, the method might apply to other

strategies that hide, downplay, minimize, or distract from other potentially discrediting accusations and identity information. Moreover, this dissertation's focus on sexuality does not diminish the portability of "coming out." For example, although one might not label this process "coming out," undocumented immigrants might use opaque strategies and must navigate who they should and should not disclose their status as undocumented. According to Yoshino, "Everyone covers. To cover is to tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream. In our increasingly diverse society, all of us are outside the mainstream in some way."<sup>24</sup> When people might downplay disfavored identity, they and advocacy groups they comprise might engage in rhetorics that shift from opaque appeals to other tactics, which would represent an effort to which a critic might apply the methodology of coming out or of identity revelation. A method for "coming out," which traces the opacity, revelation, and potential visibility of prolonged advocacy effort, therefore might apply to many rhetorics of marginalized people seeking transformation, social change, or more affirming communities.

To develop "coming out" as a methodological approach to investigating alterations, transformations, and developments in rhetorical endeavors, the next section provides an overview of literature concerning rhetoric and coming out. I connect this scholarship with theories about rhetorical trajectories to showcase how the analysis of multiple texts within multiple contexts across time allows critics to provide insight into how rhetoric animates transition and how rhetors can utilize "coming out" rhetoric to respond to fluid and ever-changing situations.

## “Coming Out” and Rhetorical Methodology

Case studies examining the coming out of Ellen DeGeneres and Rosie O’Donnell together showcase the need to develop theories about coming out that emphasize contextual factors and the trajectory of the “coming out” narrative. Bonnie J. Dow’s study focusing on DeGeneres’ “coming out” discourse on the *Ellen* show highlights that rhetors can de-politize their visibility in their discursive construction of their newly-out *persona*. Dow argued, DeGeneres’ “coming-out episodes operates repeatedly to emphasize personal issues over political ones.”<sup>25</sup> Dow’s analysis suggests that, although DeGeneres raised the visibility of gay and lesbian individuals, the narrative of her coming out “simply refuses to recognize the existence of organized, systemic, or politically oppressive homophobia, and the political status of gays and lesbians is never raised.”<sup>26</sup> Dow’s conclusion articulates that the way DeGeneres navigated her “coming out” enabled viewers “to ignore that there is much more at stake here than making TV safe for gays and lesbians.”<sup>27</sup> In this way, “coming out” can serve personal purposes disconnected from larger political struggles, or visibility is not always political.

Conversely, “coming out” narratives that remain connected to political aims do not necessarily challenge heteronormative societal assumptions. In her analysis of Rosie O’Donnell’s “coming out” rhetoric, Helene A. Shugart identified “the ideological context and premises that may precede, inform, and even constitute” the logic of queer visibility and “poster child politics.”<sup>28</sup> Shugart focused on O’Donnell’s *persona* before her “coming out” to contend that contextual factors might influence the public’s reception and understanding of the scandalous revelation. In particular, Shugart claimed, O’Donnell “was already constituted by powerful, familiar tropes of motherhood and childhood, tropes that, ironically, she revitalized and refined during the span of her talk show.”<sup>29</sup> These previously solidified tropes enabled

discourses about O'Donnell's "coming out" to position "gay parents as thoroughly but highly conditionally parental—somehow damaged and thus the appropriate guardians of similarly damaged and sufficiently pathetic children."<sup>30</sup> In this manner, the discourse surrounding O'Donnell's "coming out" reinforced heteronormative assumptions wherein the "nuclear family" is whole and the "gay family" broken. Therefore, although O'Donnell's "coming out" remained connected to the political goal of fostering parental rights for GLBTQ couples, the contextual tropes of motherhood and childhood informed the meaning of O'Donnell's "coming out" narrative in a way that reinforced heteronormative assumptions about family.

The differences in the narrative of "coming out" and the contextual factors surrounding the reveal should encourage scholars to answer Morris' call for "an audit and reinvigoration of the key term, *context*."<sup>31</sup> Questions concerning the need to explore context continue to appear in literature concerning rhetoric of visibility, opacity, and "coming out." A method for investigating the uses of "coming out" might enable scholars to provide answers. For instance, Dow raised the concern for underlying social structure and power relations in understanding visibility and the disclosure of stigmatized identity, writing, "The question, then, is not whether coming out is liberating or not, but how is it produced as liberating and what power dynamics does that production rely upon, produce, and also repress?"<sup>32</sup> This query should encourage critics to examine the "coming out" narrative alongside the power dynamics of production to identify how the revelatory discourse empowers or disempowers political and social change. Similarly, Erin J. Rand promoted "a closer consideration of under what conditions, on whose terms, for whose benefit, and at whose expense certain bodies can become visible."<sup>33</sup> To delve into these situational concerns, critics might turn to methods capable of tracing how, when, where, and why rhetors queer their *persona* in moments that disclose their stigmatized identity.



Trajectory might prove that “coming out” implies both movement (“coming”) and direction (“out”)—a trajectory. George N. Dionisopoulos, Victoria J. Gallagher, Steven R. Goldzwig, and David Zarefsky posited that trajectory constitutes “the progression or curve of development that a speaker establishes as he or she attempts to turn a vision into reality.”<sup>34</sup> These critics apply the concept of trajectory to “the level of social/political movement.”<sup>35</sup> Articulating these progressions can highlight the incremental, long-term strategies for change utilized by advocates and activists. Importantly, understanding that the appeals of both individuals and social movements contain trajectories can help elucidate how “coming out” and rhetorics of opacity relate to political action, communal development and advocacy, and social movements. Individually, the trajectory of “coming out,” stated overly simplistically, contains appeals to maintain a “closeted” *persona*, the disclosure of the stigmatized identity in a kairotic, or opportune, moment, and the management of one’s “out” *persona*, including rhetorics that justify why and when someone decided to “come out.” The process, of course, involves complications and disruptions, especially in cases of forced outings. In social and political campaigns, the advancement, or lack thereof, of their movement’s goals can help shape the timeliness of “coming out.” Before the movement has fostered more inclusive versions of society, the revelation that the movement’s membership includes stigmatized identities might diminish the credibility of the movement and constitute an additional constraint that the movement must navigate. However, as part of the campaign’s argument that people experience discrimination, the movement’s membership might reveal their identities and how they have been marginalized in visible moments that help evidence the claims made by the movement. The timing of the disclosure of stigmatized identity has implications for the movement, communities, and political action. For example, such revelations might endanger a movement’s objectives; in these cases,

enemies of a movement might use members' previously hidden identities against the movement by revealing their identities in inopportune times to discredit the rhetors and their movement.

The critic's work of tracing trajectories can entail the examination of multiple texts at various times and places. Examining distinct moments in a rhetor's advocacy or of a social campaign's efforts allows the critic to illuminate the shape of the rhetoric's progression and arc. As Leland M. Griffin stated, "The path of that trajectory may be traced summarily through a glance at selected occasions and addresses."<sup>36</sup> Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky concurred in this methodological assessment, arguing that "the context of a particular speech is heavily influenced by the progression of a speaker's rhetoric. Critically tracing the strands that compose such a progression provides an understanding of the constraints as well as the possibilities for rhetorical invention which, in turn, shape and reflect a speaker's choices and motives."<sup>37</sup> A longitudinal approach in examining arcs of identity management allows the critic to show how one strategy of identity management creates constraints, but also opportunities, for the alteration of how rhetoric frames identities in certain situations. For instance, how rhetors enact passing strategies can constrain their ability to re-frame identity information later. Thus, examining how the rhetors pass before "coming out" or to other audience to whom they are not yet out can lead to deeper insight into the rhetoric of their revelation and how they continue to discuss their identity after disclosure. To conduct this analysis, a critic can inspect texts produced throughout the process of "coming out," including during their work to hide identity markers, when and how they proclaim previously veiled information, and how they talk about that identity after the scandalous disclosure.

Kyle R. King deployed a method that highlights progression to study the evolution of male athlete "coming out" narratives, tracing the genre from the 1970s "macho gay" through the

1980s and 1990s to recent examples such as Michael Sam’s iconic kiss during the NFL draft.<sup>38</sup> King’s criticism focuses on how historical developments alter the narratives of gay athletes’ coming out—the moment of revelation and the fallout. Developing his methodology further, this dissertation focuses on the process of maintaining opacity, moving to other modes of opacity, and the eventual foregrounding of a text that proclaims stigmatized identity. Analyzing the progression of the rhetorical appeals in the process of “coming out” and the genre of “coming out” narratives highlights the importance of understanding and theorizing the connection between text and context. King noted that “shifting historical circumstances” can “open up some argumentative pathways while introducing other rhetorical constraints.”<sup>39</sup> Because alterations in context can create new opportunities to advance the cause of change or inclusion, advocates might opt for opaque strategies, waiting for more opportune timing and “argumentative pathways.” Elucidating contextual constraints can help critics illuminate why and how advocacy efforts move among forms of opacity and visibility. The diachronic method supports this scholarly endeavor by tracing contextual changes and the arcs of advocates’ appeals.

Scholarly endeavors to unpack rhetorical strategies for identity management turn, in part, on the critic’s attention to identity and therefore context, and any methodology to examine the “coming out” process must grapple with the contextualized issue of identity. King described tensions between identities as a critical exigence for gay athlete “coming out” narratives. He contended, “The recurrent situation that coming out narratives of gay male athletes address is the tension between one’s identity as athlete and one’s identity as gay male, an issue of ‘characterological coherence’ that runs through each narrative.”<sup>40</sup> Read in this manner, coming out narratives resolve the tension of one individual having two, ostensibly contradictory identities. Similarly, Morris signaled a bifurcation of “identity as context” from “*persona* as text”

in his examination of “the instrumentality of persona, employed in the service of camouflage, when a private life must be introduced into public discourse.”<sup>41</sup> In this account, the private life of the rhetor constitutes a constraint on their public discourse as it must be hidden through the careful deployment of a *persona*. Understanding and analyzing the tenuous and complicated relationship between contextual identity and textual *persona* remains necessary work for scholars exploring the rhetorics of “coming out.”

To navigate this relationship between text and context, rhetorical critics might draw from scholarship on privilege and probe its textual dimensions. Sonja K. Foss and Kimberly C. Elliott’s overview of perspectives on privilege emphasize two critical approaches to the concept: the structural approach and the performative approach. In the structural approach, scholars focus “on the structural and material conditions, mechanisms, and practices that categorize people, advantage or restrict them according to those categories, and create privileged and nonprivileged communities as a result.”<sup>42</sup> The structural approach centers privilege on contextual factors—the constraints and limitations placed on communities and thus also on the potential advocates of those communities. The performative approach defines privilege as “something that is performed by individuals.”<sup>43</sup> Foss and Elliott explained this position:

As individuals interact, they enact attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about themselves in relation to others through their words, actions, demeanor, and appearance. When they employ these various communicative mechanisms to adopt a role of superiority or a dominant style of interaction, they are performing privilege.<sup>44</sup>

The performative definition of privilege highlights the textual dimensions of privilege. “Adopt a role” showcases the deployment of *persona* as privilege as does “demeanor.” The reference to “words” and “a dominant style” being at the forefront rhetorical choices is a *marker* of privilege.

That is, privilege becomes a textual construction—a constitutive rhetoric.<sup>45</sup> Yet, Foss and Elliott claimed that context remains critical to how people interpret and understand performatives of privilege, writing “performances of privilege are always affected by and judged within the contexts and cultures in which they occur.”<sup>46</sup> Because context shapes the evaluation of performances, analyzing context would be required to evaluate privilege under a performative framework.

Both senses of privilege help illuminate the connection between context and text in the trajectory of “coming out” rhetorical arcs. Although Megan Irene Fizmaurice’s theorization of privilege develops from an analysis of commemorative statues, her argument highlights privilege and a connection between context and text. According to her essay, “the surrounding environment where [statues] are places” and location contributes to the cultivation of prestige of those statues.<sup>47</sup> That is, specific contexts enable certain forms of *ethos* in the text. To translate this theory away from material texts and toward discourse and prolonged advocacy efforts, scholars might more thoroughly and forcefully examine how social conditions, societal structures, physical characteristics, and “the preferences of the dominant group in a society” enable or foreclose textual choices that might cultivate *ethos*.<sup>48</sup> As Morris correlated the contextual biographical information with textual *persona*, critics might also correlate structural opportunities for advocacy with the textual production of *ethos*.

Michael Leff and Ebony A. Utley’s exploration of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” proves revealing in how privilege, or lack thereof, might manifest in textual choices. A part of Leff and Utley’s analysis articulates how King developed a prophetic voice in this letter. To develop this position, the authors wrote, “King also faced the more difficult task of embedding himself within a culture that segregated people of his race. The prophetic voice does

not come from the outside; it must arise from within the people who it criticizes.”<sup>49</sup> Yet, the question of who counts as on the “inside” and on the “outside” might encourage scholars to theorize textual privilege. Although Leff and Utley did not use the term “privilege,” their analysis highlights that King lacked an inventional resource that others, specifically white pastors, had. They stated:

The prophet is a member of the tribe, and so, to be a prophet among the Hebrews, one must be a Hebrew. And what is required to be a prophet among white Americans? That is a role King neither inherits by birth nor gains through any other easy access. He must argue himself into it, and the "Letter" is wonderfully designed to achieve just this purpose.<sup>50</sup>

In this sense, King’s race, like Rustin’s and Johnson’s sexuality, constituted a situational constraint on his rhetoric. Instead of being able to start his appeal as an authoritative insider to white America, King had to cultivate appeals to position himself in that role. That rhetorical cultivation likely would not have been required of his white pastoral counterparts. As such, contextual factors such as identity can provide opportunities for some to develop *ethos* while, at the same time, providing barriers for *ethos* development to others. This connection between context and *ethos* provides a footing for rhetorical theories of privilege.

Thus, although training in rhetoric might not equip scholars in the field to theorize how social structures and systems maintain privilege, rhetoricians can analyze how privilege manifests itself in texts in the form of *ethos* or artistic proofs based on access to certain inartistic evidence that provides additional opportunities for engagement. Privilege, in a rhetorical sense, could be examined as access to inventional resources to establish and maintain socially-accepted, even revered and admired, *persona* and thus *ethos*. Access connects the textual production of

ethos with context in a way that highlights how constraints might apply to certain would-be rhetors and not others. Thus, these constraints might impede the *ethos* cultivation of some but not the rest. Although advocates must develop *ethos* in each encounter with their audience,<sup>51</sup> contextual factors complicate the relationship among rhetor, audience, and *ethos* cultivation. For example, Thomas A. Salek explained, “Normal audience members rhetorically mark individuals in possession of a discrediting trait by essentializing their identity through the stigma itself.”<sup>52</sup> An audience’s assignment of stigma to an advocate complicates and constrains the ability of the rhetor to generate a favorable *ethos* in interactions. Examining the privilege associated with the ability to develop specific appeals to generate *ethos* allows the critic to more carefully and closely examine the relationship between context and text.

More specifically, the concept of rhetorical privilege enables critics to analyze the interplay between context and text in the trajectory in processes of “coming out.” As strategies for social change and communal inclusion gain or lose momentum, contextual factors such as responding to new argumentative options, inartistic inventional resources, and threats to personal safety will also fluctuate. The fluidity of context in these instances alter the ability for advocates to develop *personae* and forms of *ethos*—their rhetorical privilege. As contextual factors shift, tracing the arc of the “coming out” rhetoric alongside of the concept of privilege might provide further insight into the rhetorical choices made by advocates—especially in terms of how these rhetors utilized opacity in their efforts and shifted among modes of opacity and ventured toward visibility. Moreover, scholars interested in coalitional rhetorics might benefit from this view of rhetorical privilege, because it might help explain why coalitions determine and strategically utilize certain parts of their membership to be the public face and spokespeople for the group. That selection process might involve the determination of which members of the coalition retain

access to inventional resources for *ethos* cultivation and which members do not. As coalitions develop and manage identity information about their membership, members with the access to resources to cultivate privileged *ethos* might comprise the visible front of the group, maintaining the safety of the less privileged membership and the credibility of the coalition.

In the following chapters, I utilize the preceding methodology of “coming out” to illustrate how opacity can enable social change and communal cultivation. Some of the chapters highlight the potential contributions of a longitudinal approach to examining rhetorics of “coming out” (e.g., chapter four’s focus on Rustin) and other chapters focus on a single text to show how that text warrants and animates the process of “coming out” and long-term societal transformation (e.g., chapter three’s examination of the CRC study report). Together, these case study chapters highlight this dissertation’s theoretical contributions concerning opacity and the significance of its methodological intervention.



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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Jennifer Mitchell, “The Best Lesbian Show Ever!: The Contemporary Evolution of Teen Coming-Out Narratives,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19 (2015): 456.
- <sup>2</sup> Tony E. Adams, *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011), 8.
- <sup>3</sup> Jimmie Manning, “Positive and Negative Communicative Behaviors in Coming-Out Conversations,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 62 (2015): 69.
- <sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Didomenico, “‘Putting a Face on a Community’: Genre, Identity, and Institutional Regulation in the Telling (and Retelling) of Oral Coming-Out Narratives,” *Language in Society* 44 (2015): 622.
- <sup>5</sup> Adams, *Narrating the Closet*, 108.
- <sup>6</sup> See, for examples, Mary L. Gray, “Negotiating Identities/Queering Desires: Coming Out Online and the Remediation of the Coming-Out Story,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14 (2009): 1162-89; Natalie T. J. Tindall and Richard Waters, “Coming Out to Tell Our Stories: Using Queer Theory to Understand the Career Experiences of Gay Men in Public Relations,” *Journal of Public Relations Research* 24 (2012): 451-75.
- <sup>7</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 51.
- <sup>8</sup> Charles E. Morris III, “Contextual Twilight/Critical Liminality: J. M. Barrie’s *Courage at St. Andrews*, 1922,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 208
- <sup>9</sup> Benny LeMaster, “Queer Imag(in)ing: Liminality as Resistance in Lindqvist’s *Let the Right One In*,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8 (2011): 108.

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<sup>10</sup> E. Tristan Booth, "Queering *Queer Eye*: The Stability of Gay Identity Confronts the Liminality of Trans Embodiment," *Western Journal of Communication* 75 (2011): 202.

<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Terrill, *Malcolm X: Inventing Radical Judgment* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), vii.

<sup>12</sup> For additional examples of rhetorical biographies, see the following: Stephen H. Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity and the Radical Imagination* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Gregory P. Lampe, *Frederick Douglass: Freedom's Voice, 1818-1845* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998); Gregory A. Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam: A Study in Rhetorical Adaptation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Social movement critics have developed, employed, and debated methodologies that track and evaluate the evolution of movement appeals. For examples of the scholarship involved in this scholarly conversation, see John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, Richard J. Jensen, and David P. Schulz, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010); Robert S. Cathcart, "Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 43 (1978): 233-47; James Darsey, "From 'Gay is Good' to the Scourge of AIDS: The Evolution of Gay Liberation Rhetoric, 1977-1990," *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 43-66; Celest Condit Railsback, "The Contemporary American Abortion Controversy: Stages in the Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 410-24; Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 1-11; Charles J. Stewart, "The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*

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83 (1997): 429-46; David Zarefsky, "President Johnson's War on Poverty: The Rhetoric of Three 'Establishment' Movements," *Communication Monographs* 44 (1977): 352-73.

<sup>14</sup> Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Karen A. Foss, "Harvey Milk and the Queer Rhetorical Situation: A Rhetoric of Contradiction," in ed. Charles E. Morris III, *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 86.

<sup>16</sup> Foss, "Harvey Milk," 86.

<sup>17</sup> See Foss, "Harvey Milk," 89.

<sup>18</sup> James R. Andrews, "History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 274-81.

<sup>19</sup> Darsey, "From 'Gay is Good,'" 45.

<sup>20</sup> Darsey, "From 'Gay is Good,'" 46.

<sup>21</sup> Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2006), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Yoshino, *Covering*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Karma R. Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59 (2011): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Yoshino, *Covering*, ix.

<sup>25</sup> Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18 (2001): 132.

<sup>26</sup> Dow, "Ellen," 133.

<sup>27</sup> Dow, "Ellen," 137.

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- <sup>28</sup> Helene A. Shugart, "On Misfits and Margins: Narrative, Resistance, and the Poster Child Politics of Rosie O'Donnell," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2 (2005): 70.
- <sup>29</sup> Shugart, "On Misfits and Margins," 71.
- <sup>30</sup> Shugart, "On Misfits and Margins," 72.
- <sup>31</sup> Charles E. Morris III, "Context's Critic, Invisible Traditions, and Queering Rhetorical History," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101 (2015): 230.
- <sup>32</sup> Dow, "Ellen," 136.
- <sup>33</sup> Erin J. Rand, "An Appetite for Activism: The Lesbian Avengers and the Queer Politics of Visibility," *Women's Studies in Communication* 36 (2013): 137.
- <sup>34</sup> George N. Dionisopoulos, Victoria J. Gallagher, Steven R. Goldzwig, and David Zarefsky, "Martin Luther King, The American Dream and Vietnam: A Collision of Rhetorical Trajectories," *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 94.
- <sup>35</sup> Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky, "Martin Luther King," 95.
- <sup>36</sup> Leland M. Griffin, "When Dreams Collide: Rhetorical Trajectories in the Assassination of President Kennedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 114.
- <sup>37</sup> Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky, "Martin Luther King," 95.
- <sup>38</sup> Kyle R. King, "Three Waves of Gay Male Athlete Coming Out Narratives," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103 (2017): 372-94.
- <sup>39</sup> King, "Three Waves," 373.
- <sup>40</sup> King, "Three Waves," 375.
- <sup>41</sup> Morris, "Contextual Twilight/Critical Liminality," 208.
- <sup>42</sup> Sonja K. Foss and Kimberly C. Elliott, "Acting to Alter Privilege by Maintaining the Structural-Performative Paradox," *Women & Language* 38 (2016): 12.

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<sup>43</sup> Foss and Elliott, “Acting to Alter Privilege,” 16.

<sup>44</sup> Foss and Elliott, “Acting to Alter Privilege,” 16.

<sup>45</sup> See Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133-50.

<sup>46</sup> Foss and Elliott, “Acting to Alter Privilege,” 16.

<sup>47</sup> Megan Irene Fitzmaurice, “Commemorative Privilege in National Statuary Hall: Spatial Constructions of Racial Citizenship,” *Southern Communication Journal* 81 (2016): 255.

<sup>48</sup> Foss and Elliott referenced “physical characteristics” and “the preferences of the dominate group in society” as markers of privilege in the structural perspective on privilege. See Foss and Elliott, “Acting to Alter Privilege,” 12-13.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Leff and Ebony A. Utley, “Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric in Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail,’” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 47.

<sup>50</sup> Leff and Utley, “Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric,” 47.

<sup>51</sup> See Kathryn M. Olson, “Rhetorical Leadership and Transferable Lessons for Successful Social Advocacy in Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 44 (2007): 102.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas A. Salek, “Faith Turns Political on the 2012 Campaign Trail: Mitt Romney, Franklin Graham, and the Stigma of Nontraditional Religions in American Politics,” *Communication Studies* 65 (2014): 176.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Long-Term Opaque Strategies for Social Transformation: Seeding in the Case of the Christian Reformed Church’s Study Report on “Homosexuality”

In 1973, the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRC) approved a study report on “homosexuality” as the denomination’s official policy. The report seemingly established that being in a same-sex relationship and engaging in sexual acts with someone of the same sex constituted a sin. According to the report, “homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture.”<sup>1</sup> Since the inception of this policy, some within the denomination have interpreted the report as claiming, “any homosexual practice—even within life-long committed relationships—is incompatible with Scripture and in all cases [is] to be considered sin.”<sup>2</sup> Members of the denomination have used the document to advocate for severing ties with congregations affirming of GLBTQ individuals and to tell members of the denomination that their sexuality constitutes a disorder.<sup>3</sup> For instance, in 2009, one of the denomination’s colleges, Calvin College, cited the 1973 study report to support a policy prohibiting its faculty from openly supporting GLBTQ rights on campus.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the denomination, based on the 1973 policy, has “promoted and implemented conversion therapy due to the belief that it is immoral and a ‘sin’ to be homosexual.”<sup>5</sup> On the surface, the document and its use in the denomination appear conservative and condemning of same-sex relationships.

Yet, since 1973, controversy, conspiracy claims, and confusion have persisted in the denomination as it relates to the report and the issue of same-sex relationships generally. Twice in the 1970s, members of the denomination accused the report of being too ambiguous, arguing that the document needed some rewriting to clarify several of its positions and statements.<sup>6</sup> For example, a year after the acceptance of the report as an official church policy, some advocated

for clarification to “leave no room for the homosexual, afflicted with ‘homosexuality,’ to misinterpret the report as a possible licensure for his thoughts and actions.”<sup>7</sup> Later, in 1994, others argued that the report contained a “flaw,” which “has led some in our churches to advocate the acceptance of homosexual behavior.”<sup>8</sup> In 1995, members of the denomination claimed that the report was too soft on the matter and actually “is contrary to Scripture in that it obscures the sinfulness of homosexuality.”<sup>9</sup> The next year, some expressed concern that “some in the church today seriously propose the possibility that, when the Bible condemns homosexual activity, this condemnation does not include the homosexual activity of a couple that seek to live in a loving monogamous relationship.”<sup>10</sup> Some asserted that one of the individuals who helped write the document, Marten Woudstra, was a gay man.<sup>11</sup>

As some in the denomination argued the report remained too ambiguous and enabled advocates to argue for GLBTQ rights, others continued to contend that the denomination should become more accepting of GLBTQ congregants that the report, on its face, seemed to allow. For example, congregations and professors have articulated, and have a history of promoting, alternative interpretations of scripture to the ones ostensibly articulated in Synod’s 1973 report.<sup>12</sup> As a part of efforts to promote interpretations of scripture more affirming than the ones seemingly outlined in the 1973 report, in 2016, members of the denomination developed an extensive study of the 1973 report and, in part, concluded that the document left important issues “unaddressed and addressed others without resolving them.”<sup>13</sup> Interpreting the 1973 report as incomplete, the denomination continues to debate its merits.

To add even more complexity to the continued negotiations around the report and the issue of “homosexuality” more broadly, a close inspection of the text actually reveals the starting points for and the resources to develop GLBTQ-affirming communal values and beliefs. For

example, the report contains a list of several recommended books for reading—the majority of which explicitly refute the apparent positions promoted by the study report. For instance, the 1973 report references a chapter written by an openly gay clergy member—Troy Perry. In his chapter, Perry proclaims that one can act upon same-sex desires and be Christian.<sup>14</sup> In a fascinating turn, the CRC’s report, which ostensibly condemned same-sex relationships, recommended that members of the denomination read texts developed by many GLBTQ-affirming religious leaders who proclaimed several GLBTQ-affirming positions.

In this paper, I offer one explanation for the apparent tension in the text and how people have read the text after it became accepted as the denomination’s policy. I posit that the report included visible markers affirming heteronormative beliefs and assumptions about scripture, solidifying the document as apparently conservative. Yet, through an overarching strategy that I call “seeding” liberal argumentative starting points, I further argue that the report camouflaged, yet offered much, subversive material, enabling future advocates to study and cite the resources contained in the report to refute and overcome the apparent position statements of the document. Ostensibly crafting an authoritative voice to settle questions on the “problem of homosexuality” within the denomination, I contend that the report potentially enabled the propagation of controversy and informed the debate by equipping those who would oppose its conclusions with the argumentative resources necessary to do so.

In developing this argument, the following analysis provides insight into rhetorical tactics and strategies that may foster social change in protracted and elaborate controversies and argumentative processes that contain deep disagreements and presumptions about what constitutes appropriate evidence. Although the focus of the chapter remains on the GLBTQ debate within Christian communities, understanding how long-term rhetorical strategies operate



to undermine entrenched ideologies remains useful for advocates interested in any form of social change. Especially in controversies over entrenched positions and assumptions, strategies should first dislodge presumption and then offer and enable the necessary starting points for efforts to change the social climate in which disputes ensue. In these cases, tactics of opacity might enable advocates to alter presumptions. Such opaque performances move beyond survival and short-term or impromptu modes of resistance towards enduring rhetorics that might gradually alter the underlying assumptions to foster an environment where one day hiding identity or beliefs would no longer be required.

To actualize this payoff, I first develop a theory of “seeding” to show how texts might enable subversive argumentative and rhetorical strategies, cached in plain sight until the opportune time to reveal the subversive materials. After this, I detail how Synod placed significant constraints on the study committee, which made hiding liberal argumentative starting points a necessary strategy if any members of the committee were so inclined. I describe the ways in which CRC’s study document mimicked Synod’s language, cultivating the report’s authority within the denomination and enabling the document to deflect attention from potentially subversive material. My analysis then turns to illuminate how the report arguably hid deviant assumptions and values, which trained future advocates to find what started off as hidden.

### **Seeding: A Long-Term Strategy of Opacity**

When marginalized people work to transform society, at times, they may need to utilize long-term advocacy strategies that downplay, minimize, or hide their position, arguments, values, and beliefs until the most opportune moment to reveal them. Especially when faced with the threat of violence and continued persecution, transparently revealing the advocacy tactics and

strategy, as well as the values and beliefs, of the oppressed community might result in rebuke, backlash, and censure from those in power and control.<sup>15</sup> To navigate the potential for retribution, members of oppressed communities and advocates may opt for opaque strategies that minimize the potential for those in control to recognize their strategy and beliefs and thus also reduce the risk that those in power will undermine, hinder, or squash the strategy. The theory of seeding helps explain one way in which oppressed communities might navigate these types of situations to foster social change and more inclusive communities. Seeding includes locating the most conducive place to hide subversive beliefs, where those beliefs wait, grow, and eventually become revealed in a moment more opportune for their acceptance. In this section, I first unpack the careful rhetoric of concealing and revealing utilized in argumentative strategies that plant subversive seeds, detailing how seeding can prepare and equip communities for social transformation. Secondly, I review methodological considerations involved with the theory of seeding.

### *Seeding as Opaque Rhetoric*

James C. Scott's dual concepts of public transcripts and hidden transcripts provide a basis for understanding how seeding can function as a subversive opaque tactic for social change. Scott identified that public transcripts constitute the public and accessible "open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate."<sup>16</sup> Public transcripts, according to Scott's work, rarely "tell the whole story about power relations."<sup>17</sup> In contrast to public transcripts, oppressed and marginalized communities develop hidden transcripts. A hidden transcript is a "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders" where marginalized people communicate away from the gaze of the powerful and to avoid sanction for their beliefs.<sup>18</sup> In developing this position, Scott also describes a "politics that lies strategically between the first

two. This is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors.”<sup>19</sup> Seeding constitutes one of these types of politics as it negotiates the poles of the public and hidden transcripts as an advocate publicly deploys appeals that hide or distract from subversive beliefs but also cue potential allies to that subversion.

The theory of seeding enriches Scott’s work on hidden and public transcripts and, in doing so, contributes to rhetorical scholarship’s understanding of long-term efforts to transform society. With the “passing” literature in rhetorical scholarship as an example, most who draw upon Scott’s work emphasize hidden transcripts as providing protection and ensuring survival.<sup>20</sup> The theory of seeding shows how opaque rhetoric and hidden transcripts can do more than ensure survival and equip communities for social change. According to Scott, the reason for the use of euphemisms in the public exchange between those in power and the marginalized is “to avoid the sanctions that direct statement will bring.”<sup>21</sup> Amanda C. Miller explained the significance of successfully hiding subversive information and avoiding the appearance of openly challenging a social order. She explained that the “façade of compliance” with the elite class of a society became “an important survival skill.”<sup>22</sup> To avoid sanction, retribution, and backlash, an advocate seeding subversive information develops appeals that work “between the lines,” minimizing, hiding, downplaying, or distracting from the subversive material being planted. Yet, the theory of seeding pushes this point further by embracing the transformative potential of what remains hidden. Seeding enables more than survival or momentary resistance as it equips and prepares communities for eventual and long-term social change and transformation.

When planted, seeds, as subversive beliefs and values, reflect and contribute to the hidden transcripts of an oppressed community and its accomplices and contain the intellectual and rhetorical potential to challenge the dominant beliefs and values of the community. Miller's examination of the Gospel of Luke revolved around the belief that hidden transcripts populate the Gospel of Luke in ways that offered "significant resistance to some of the dominant values and practices of the Roman Empire."<sup>23</sup> In unpacking these hidden transcripts, Miller offered several conceptualizations of what hidden transcripts do and contain. First, Miller argued that a hidden transcript "forms a coherent, community-endorsed counterideology that enables the dominated to fight against the daily rituals of public humiliation and powerlessness with which they are faced."<sup>24</sup> Second, Miller articulated that hidden transcripts contain a "different worldview" that runs contrary to the worldview of domination affirmed by those in control.<sup>25</sup> Miller's explanation of what hidden transcripts contain illustrates what the material of the subversive seeds can comprise: the necessary arguments, values, and beliefs to challenge the marginalizing ideology of the dominant system of belief in a particular community.

In ideal and successful instances of the opaque advocacy strategy of seeding, the following conditions materialize: (1) appropriate cover, (2) growth, and (3) kairotic revelation. When seeding, advocates should use discourse to conceal or make plausibly deniable the subversive values, beliefs, and assumptions that together challenge the dominant communal norms, values, and beliefs. In hiding the potentially subversive material, the tactic of seeding reduces the risk of sanction or backlash against the advocate attempting to foster social change. Creating texts that contain hidden transcripts enable people, even in the most oppressive conditions, to develop and deploy strategies for challenging the status quo. Detailing how historical figures deployed double meaning to spread their belief without members of the

dominant authority detecting the subversive content of the writing, Leo Strauss wrote, “Persecution cannot prevent even public expression of the heterodox truth, for a man of independent thought can utter his views in public and remain unharmed, provided he moves with circumspection. He can even utter them in print without incurring any danger, provided he is capable of writing between the lines.”<sup>26</sup> Authors’ rhetorical prowess can enable them to spread ideas in public with a minimized potential for retribution. Scott termed the careful disguising of messages “euphemization” and wrote that “what is left in the public transcript is *an allusion to profanity without a full accomplishment of it.*”<sup>27</sup> In this sense, seeding subversive values, positions, and argumentative starting points covers the message enough to ensure that those in power cannot decipher the subversion, yet also that oppressed communities and their allies might find the empowering “profanity” being seeded.

Tension exists between properly camouflaging the subversive information and enabling others to trace the potential subversion. The rhetor cannot disguise the subversive beliefs so well that potential allies and confidants cannot locate the information. Yet, the rhetor cannot aid the process of finding the information so well that those in power can also trace the subversion. To navigate this tension, Scott stated, “The creation of disguises depends on an agile, firm grasp of the codes of meaning being manipulated.”<sup>28</sup> Careful coding enables “meanings that are accessible to one intended audience and opaque to another audience the actors wish to exclude.”<sup>29</sup> When rhetors hide subversive material from one audience but allude to the subversion with another audience, the rhetors’ “double meaning strikes a delicate balance.”<sup>30</sup> Maintaining this balance ensures that the subversive material eventually can develop and gain adherence by allies while still minimizing the likelihood of the strategy’s suppression.

Moreover, to gain authority within religious communities and thus enable the infiltration of subversive material through camouflaged tactics, texts may need to pass an ideological test in which the author of the text demonstrates the text's alignment with the community's sacred texts. John Lynch argued that religious documents and texts, especially ones produced by middle-level organizational rhetors, "must construct the speaker's right to speak within and for the organization."<sup>31</sup> These texts should "appease institutional authorities in order to acquire their imprimatur, or silent assent."<sup>32</sup> To potentially run counter to a religious community's dominant ideology, a text might conceal the seeds of its subversive vision for the community in order to pass an initial ideological screening for the purposes of infiltrating that community's official policies and dominant assumptions.<sup>33</sup> For the seeds to survive in these conditions, advocates must earn the approval of those in control while hiding or minimizing the threat of the subversive material.

In addition to providing appropriate cover, long-term strategies of seeding should enable growth and kairotic revelation. When strategically seeding subversive material, a rhetor must successfully hide the seed and provide enough support for the seed that allies may find and help it develop. In developing his articulation of hidden transcripts, Scott detailed both "its disguises" and "its development."<sup>34</sup> The growth of the subversive information prepares advocates in oppressive situations for the eventual revelation of the alternative interpretations, assumptions, and values contained in the seeds.<sup>35</sup> Growing subversive seeds helps enable an opportune moment for advocates to reveal the subversive material. Scott argued that a hidden transcript develops a "prehistory" before their first public revelation which "explains its capacity to produce political breakthroughs."<sup>36</sup> When the hidden transcript emerges into public view, the revelatory moment can generate controversy, which disturbs the apparent calm of the public

transcript.<sup>37</sup> If timed appropriately, the revelation generates societal transformation. Horsely suggested the emergence of hidden transcripts can create sudden “bursts”<sup>38</sup> of collective action as “breakthrough” events that lead “to the sudden expansion of the movement.”<sup>39</sup> Although the moment of revelation might not succeed in creating social change, revealing the hidden transcript in the public for the first time creates a powerful moment in which members of oppressed communities might recognize the legitimacy of their subversive values, belief, and assumptions and identify with each other.<sup>40</sup> If properly nurtured, the subversive seeds invite alternative communal orders and value systems when revealed.

Not all seeding strategies succeed. Much can go wrong in this process.<sup>41</sup> An advocate may fail to hide the subversive information sufficiently, the subversive value system might never find sustenance from allies, the subversion may not gain enough traction or support before it is revealed, and even strong subversive challenges to the social order based on a process of seeding and then revealing subversive material may not succeed. When this failure occurs, critics can still glean insight into the powerful ways in which social orders sustain themselves and what future subversive advocacy should avoid doing. Failure signals the strength of oppressive social conditions and normativities, such as heteronormativity.<sup>42</sup> As such, examining how rhetors seed subversive viewpoints remains a useful endeavor, even when the critic lacks evidence to contend that the seeding worked to transform society.

### *Methodological Considerations*

Inspecting hidden subversive material and theorizing seeding as a strategy for social change raises methodological challenges. Evasive rhetorics “can, at times, silence or distort critical judgement.”<sup>43</sup> Hinting at the potential for critical bias, Charles E. Morris III wrote that he would “secretly hope to find a gay hero” as he analyzed illusive and “passing” rhetorics.<sup>44</sup>

Summarizing these critical problems, Morris insightfully stated, “Torn between a desire to discover homosexual expression and the mandates of critical ‘objectivity,’ the fragile proof assembled in support of one’s reading can often seem speculative even to the critic herself.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, Strauss contended that it remains difficult for critics to show and provide evidence of opacity especially when a rhetor “does not tire of asserting explicitly on every page of his book that *a* is *b*, but indicates between the lines that *a* is not *b*.”<sup>46</sup> In instances of opaque rhetoric or hidden transcripts, critics face a difficult task of demonstrating the ways in which a text worked subversively, given the theories of opaque rhetorics and hidden transcripts themselves argue that people worked to hide the existence of what they hid.

Despite the methodological difficulties, scholars have remained adamant about attempting to analyze hidden and opaque strategies, arguing that failing to do so creates a simplistic understanding of the relationship among advocacy, rhetoric, politics, and change. For instance, Scott argued, “Interpreting these texts which, after all, are designed to be evasive is not a straightforward matter. Ignoring them, however, reduces us to an understanding of historical subordination that rests either on those rare moments of open rebellion or on the hidden transcript itself, which is not just evasive but often altogether inaccessible.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, to avoid a simplistic view of politics, rhetoric, and advocacy, scholars must analyze hidden transcripts and opaque rhetoric, despite, yet aware of, the methodological challenges of doing so.

Fortunately, to help uncover opaque rhetorics, scholars have developed justifications for the precarious inquiry involved in studying the discourses that would be required to examine the seeding of subversive beliefs and values. Kathleen Hall Jamieson argues that texts “leave clues in the form of otherwise inexplicable details, small lapses in generic propriety, minute blunders—all designed to whisper and to gently prompt the sensitive, susceptible audience to



divine subtextual meaning.”<sup>48</sup> William Earnest went further, arguing “Some hidden rhetorics may remain hidden even from those who created them.”<sup>49</sup> To help critics articulate arguments about hidden rhetorics, Barry Brummett offered a metric of determining if a critic has uncovered a disguised rhetoric: consistency.<sup>50</sup> Observing repeated hints, gestures, or cues toward a deeper meaning the text, Brummett suggests, enables critic to argue they have deciphered a deeper or hidden aspect of the text. Brummett wrote, “Consistency tells us whether we have a real work of disguise under way or just an isolated turn of phrase.”<sup>51</sup> According to Miller, the critic might locate repeated textual hints of hidden material and seeding through an inspection of the “ambiguity, double meanings, and insider language” of a text.<sup>52</sup> Although critics never know for sure the intent of a text, their careful inspection can reveal repeated textual cues that hint at, and enable the critic to discern, the subversive potential of the text.

Rhetorical critics might participate in the opaque strategy of seeding, revealing the hidden seeds of subversion in a text for the first time. In closely and carefully inspecting a text, the critic might uncover hidden aspects of the texts and show how people can read texts subversively. According to Earnest, because certain social issues “can be sensitive, complex subjects, often the best way—sometimes the only way—for them to enter the public’s imagination is to do so in disguise, where they wait patiently for discerning, imaginative critics to properly introduce them.”<sup>53</sup> Such a position reinforces Raymie E. McKerrow’s stance that, because of the polysemy of texts, critics can develop “a subordinate or secondary reading which contains the seeds of subversion or rejection of authority.”<sup>54</sup> In their analyses of texts, critics can uncover and nurture subversive seeds. In doing so, critics participate in the opaque strategy of seeding as they publicly declare what remained hidden until their inspection.

To illustrate the opaque strategy of seeding, the following analysis shows how a document covers the seeds and enables an opportune moment for revelation of subversive beliefs. To secure approval of their report, the study committee needed a skillful rhetoric to get subversive material past the denomination's institutional authorities and their dominant assumptions about scripture. Viewing the CRC's report as more than a diffused or isolated appeal, momentary performance of resistance, or act of survival, I argue that the CRC's study report's opacity constituted a means to plant a different, yet coherent, initially-hidden vision for the denomination and a subversive interpretation of the denomination's authoritative text, the Bible, with the possibility for reorienting the denomination's assumptions concerning sexuality. Before proceeding to an analysis of the study report, I first detail why the CRC's study report needed to pass ideological inspection to gain the assent of Synod.

### **A Constrained Committee and Report**

In 1969, Canada passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which, in part, decriminalized "homosexuality."<sup>55</sup> With apparent concern about the license suggested by this legal change, the next year, the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada sent a request to the denomination's governing body, Synod, which oversaw the Christian Reformed Churches in both the United States and Canada. The request suggested that the denomination should study the issue of "homosexuality" and develop a "genuinely Christian and rehabilitative attitude" towards its "homosexual" members, including "setting up counseling and rehabilitative services."<sup>56</sup> Synod accepted the request and announced a two-year study committee to examine the growing "problem of homosexuality." The denomination, when justifying the creation of the committee, established the group in a way that limited the conclusions to which the committee

could arrive. This fact meant that, at the time, these committee members could not have been as transparent in their argumentation as people have been since the report's confirmation.

To develop an acceptable appearance based on Synod's grounds for studying the "problem of homosexuality," the 1973 report needed to maintain an ostensible stance that "homosexuality" constituted sinful behavior. The Canadian council's request utilized a presumption concerning the sinful nature of "homosexuality"—a presumption Synod affirmed when it accepted the Canadian council's official recommendation to the denomination's governing body to study the issue. According to the Canadian council's proposal, legislative actions in Canada "change the conditions under which the sinful act of homosexuality is deemed to be punishable by law."<sup>57</sup> Although the Canadian council did not argue that the CRC should challenge the legal change, it did suggest that the CRC should study the moral implications of "homosexuality's" increased acceptance.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, when articulating the grounds on which the study committee should operate, Synod described a "growing" problem of "homosexuality," adding urgency to the study committee's investigation. When defining "homosexuality" as a "growing problem," however, Synod failed to describe the ways in which it perceived that "homosexuality" continued to grow, which cultivated the image of "homosexuality" as an unknown threat.

These statements framed the issue of "homosexuality" in the negative, stating, in the case of the Canadian council's recommendation, that "homosexuality" is sinful and, in the case of Synod's statement, "homosexuality" is a problem. When the study committee delivered its report to Synod for approval, it included a statement that read as follows: "We assume that it is the new openness and awareness of homosexuality and the changing social attitudes toward it that synod had in mind when it declared that homosexuality is a growing problem."<sup>59</sup> Synod's claims,

understood in this manner, positioned the study committee into needing to maintain the appearance of concluding that “homosexuality” constitutes problematic behavior to retain its fidelity to Synod’s grounds for initiating study. As such, even as the denomination asked members of the study committee to examine the issue of “homosexuality,” the denomination simultaneously cued the committee to support assumptions about the sinful nature of “homosexuality.” Synod’s choice to define “homosexuality” as a problem constrained the study committee; the six authors of the study would need to meet the expectation that the report address “homosexuality” as a “problem” to earn Synod’s ultimate approval. This constraint undermined the ability for the study committee to advance transparently liberal arguments and beliefs about what scripture states about “homosexuality.”

The Canadian council’s recommendation that the denomination promote rehabilitative solutions to the problem of “homosexuality” further underscored how constrained the study committee’s rhetorical options were. For instance, the Canadian council recommended that the denomination develop “proposals for setting up counselling and rehabilitative services for homosexuals, possibly in cooperation with other Christian groups.”<sup>60</sup> By promoting rehabilitative services for “homosexual” CRC members, the Canadian council’s overture displayed an assumption that “homosexuality” constituted a problem, defect, or disease that must and could be cured. The denomination did not base the grounding and justifications for the study committee only on an assumption that “homosexuality” constituted a problem, but also on a belief that the study committee could and should proclaim conversation therapy’s purported effectiveness. Given Lynch’s observation that religious rhetors must maintain the appearance of using the institutional rhetoric of their denomination to retain authority and credibility, assumptions about homosexuality being sinful and curable constrained the options available to

the study committee’s members. These individuals needed to produce a document that would, at the very least, maintain an appearance of condemning homosexuality as sinful and of grappling seriously with the proposed rehabilitative services.<sup>61</sup> To elucidate how the study committee maneuvered while constrained, I now proceed to analyze the strategies the report included to provide cover for its subversive material.

### **Seeding Subversion: Opacity in the Study Document**

#### *“Nothing to See Here”*

The document’s clear articulation that acting on same-sex attraction is sinful, description of conversion therapy as potentially being a successful solution to the “problem of homosexuality,” and use of the 1970 Synod’s own language constructed an impression that the document upheld CRC’s dominant beliefs and Synod’s prior statements. Cultivating this image provided cover for the document’s subversive strategy; it made ostensible markers of the denomination’s traditional ideology highly present and visible, which utilized the heteronormative grounds for the study to demonstrate that the document affirmed the denomination’s preexisting assumptions and beliefs and offered reassurance to conservative members that they need not inspect the document carefully.

The opening section of the committee’s report placed the document into conversation with Synod’s rationale for forming a study committee, detailing the extent of the “problem of homosexuality” in society in the process. In doing so, the report mimicked the language that Synod had used, which generated authority for the document and fostered an impression that the report followed the grounds provided by Synod. After quoting the Synod’s grounds for study, the report summarized the rationale for its existence: “The Canadian Council’s involvement in the

question of homosexuality and synod’s concern about the problems of homosexuality must be seen in a larger context. In recent years there has been an increasing tolerance towards homosexuality and lesbianism.”<sup>62</sup> Although the study report in its opening pages references both the “problem of homosexuality” and the “problems of homosexuality,”<sup>63</sup> the report repeated the phrase “problems of homosexuality”—the phrase used by Synod to justify commissioning the study—in a manner that aligns the rhetoric of the document with the dominant rhetoric of the church’s governing body. Moreover, the report argued that engaging in same-sex activities “must be condemned.”<sup>64</sup> This passage provided cover for the document’s subversive material, because it agreed, rather transparently, with the denomination’s initial statements about “homosexuality” constituting the problem. Creating this alignment positioned the document as affirming the stance implied in Synod’s grounds for formulating the study group and so encouraged conservatives to accept the report.

The report also amplified and magnified the “problems of homosexuality” in society by describing increased “radical gay activism,” which ironically and subversively directed the denomination’s gaze outward and toward additional “problems of homosexuality” not mentioned in Synod’s grounds for studying the issue. Such a deflection played the part of both constructing dupes who need not investigate further and describing “homosexuals” as members of the larger and affirming community. As Morris noted, deflecting attention towards sexual abnormality can generate an *ethos* of normalcy for the deflector, and that *ethos* of normalcy can aid a rhetorical strategy that hides or downplays information.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the CRC’s study document emphasized the “problems of homosexuality” beyond Synod’s charge for the committee, directed the denomination’s attention towards outsiders, and thus enhanced the perceived acceptability of

the document, which minimized the need for the dominant social order members to scrutinize it.

The report stated,

Homosexuals have become more vocal than hitherto in acknowledging their condition and defending it and their life-style. Radical gay activist groups have been organized in nearly every city. Through their publications they are urging homosexuals to take pride in themselves and to deny that their condition is an illness and abnormality.<sup>66</sup>

This passage began a list of apparent grievances about current happenings related to “homosexuals” in society. The list documented “problems” concerned the expansion of social acceptance for “homosexuals,” cultivating implied readers who focus on problematic sexual abnormality developing around them. In that sense, the document exploited heteronormativity to direct attention outward, which secured the document as one aiding the denomination in understanding the “problems” of outsiders. In turn, this cultivated authority for the document provided appropriate covering for the document’s subversion.

As the document used heteronormative assumptions to craft implied readers who would direct attention outward, the report simultaneously positioned “homosexual” readers as potential members of a growing, active, and self-accepting community. Even though the document maintained an appearance of disapproving of “homosexual” pride and acceptance in order to cultivate conservative acceptance outside the church, the report simultaneously connected “homosexual” congregants and their allies with communities that affirm and support them. In telegraphing the existence of queer communities and queer social acceptance, the document communicated a potential worldview of increased respect, affirmation, and rights for “homosexual” persons. Continued from the initial list of “problems of homosexuality,” the report indicated the following:

They [homosexuals] are working to repeal laws that discriminate against them and to win social acceptance of themselves as they are. They hold that it is up to the individual to choose his sex orientation, and they decry society's attempt to "change" him by punishment or treatment. In Los Angeles a church openly organized for homosexuals has attracted considerable publicity.<sup>67</sup>

Although this passage continued to redirect potential dupes towards the increased acceptance of "homosexuality" outside the denomination, this passage also announced the existence of affirming communities, which cultivated an image of "homosexual" acceptance of which many members might be otherwise unaware. The study report positioned "homosexual" denominational members as potential members of a growing community that will defend them. This positioning provided "homosexual" Christian readers with knowledge that they did not remain alone and without hope that social change could occur. Including a reference to the Los Angeles church, moreover, connected members of the denomination with specific potential allies who might offer assistance in challenging conservative religious beliefs and assumptions about "homosexuality." Finally, framing the "homosexual" community as active in challenging society's treatment of "homosexuals" potentially encouraged readers to model that lively resistance and join efforts to foster social change. Therefore, as the report directed dupes to gaze upon a growing "problem," particularly "outside" the church, the report simultaneously encouraged potential confidants to seek and foster "homosexual"-affirming communities and activism. Just as the document alluded to potential allies for "homosexual" congregants, the report also encouraged additional research on the issue of "homosexuality," which the following section will analyze.

*Empowering Congregants' Study: The Report Denies its Authority*



In hinting that congregants could conduct additional research on the subject of “homosexuality,” the study report undercut its own authority as unchallengeable and articulated a view that plain understandings of scripture and “homosexuality” might not exist, providing would-be oppositional voices the necessary grounds to challenge the document’s findings in the future. By emphasizing the persistence of debate and disagreement *among experts*, the document emphasized that an easy and clear answer to the denomination’s questions about sexuality remained elusive, encouraging more study and research to weigh all of the arguments, beliefs, and scriptural passages at play in the controversy. Moreover, the report empowered members of the church to continue debate by providing members with the encouragement, viewpoints, and reading strategies necessary to sustain study and contestation concerning “homosexuality” and the proper response to its presence in society. These tactics ultimately undermined the logic of arguments that otherwise might end the discussion.

The document portrayed the issues of sexuality as intricate and multifaceted, which stymied a common logic that scripture established clear and plain prohibitions against same-sex relationships and also complicated the report’s own authority as an objective or final voice on the issue. Early in the report, its authors wrote, “It will be apparent to synod that the subject of our study is so broad and involved and the literature on it so voluminous, that we could not enter exhaustively into every aspect of the problem.”<sup>68</sup> Highlighting that even the blue-ribbon study committee could not examine fully the “problem of homosexuality” voluntarily circumscribed the authority of the committee, its report, and the policy that the denomination would establish based on the report. By framing the topic of “homosexuality” as an expansive issue, the document denied that the committee and thus the denomination could easily and quickly comprehend what scripture, historical accounts, psychology, and science state about sexuality—

all sources of evidence which the document referenced to develop its conclusions about sexuality.<sup>69</sup> By adding that the writers of the report could not conduct an exhaustive study, the report denied its own authority as a complete illustration of all of the arguments and beliefs that the denomination should consider before firmly defending its stance on sexuality.

The report's stance that a certain and clear definition of "homosexuality" could not be ascertained provided the ambiguity necessary for later potential liberal challenges to the denomination's accepted position. After establishing that studies about "homosexuality" have not been able to determine its cause, for example, the report later concluded, although still affirming the necessity to try conversion therapy, "There are those whose inversion is not changed by the application of present knowledge and therapy."<sup>70</sup> The study committee wrote, "A precise definition of homosexuality is impossible, and to say who is homosexual and who is not is a matter on which there is no unanimity."<sup>71</sup> To reach this conclusion, in part, the report also stated, "Experts are not agreed on what the causes of homosexuality are and today probably most of them, if not all, admit that we cannot give a definitive account of why the condition develops. In fact, its origin is so unclear as to be finally a mystery."<sup>72</sup> Both of these statements framed "homosexuality" as an impossible-to-understand phenomenon. Because the report described itself as unable to define "homosexuality," it limited its ability to claim an authoritative stance on what scripture condemns. One cannot know scripture disapproves of "homosexuality," especially modern same-sex relationships, if one cannot conceptualize the meaning of "homosexuality." Moreover, the committee's inability to define "homosexuality" undermined its own ostensible conclusions, which relied on the existence of a specific and clear understanding of "homosexuality." The report's purported lack of knowledge about the causes of "homosexuality" curtailed its own position that reparative therapy might work, because one cannot know that

reparative therapy will succeed in addressing the causes of “homosexuality” if one cannot know its causes. Instead, the report created ambiguity about how the denomination should define “homosexuality,” which provided an opening for liberal congregants to develop refutation strategies based on dissociation—a tactic which splits a root term into two or more distinct terms, leaving one term with a positive valence and the other with a negative one.<sup>73</sup> For example, liberal interpretations might argue that biblical passages about “homosexuality” refer to illegitimate same-sex relationships such as pedophilia, not legitimate same-sex relationships such as consensual, long-term, and loving same-sex relationships.

This passage thus provided an underpinning for new or alternative understandings about how the church or its individual members should respond to the question of “homosexuality,” because the current report, in its own assessment of itself, lacked a full grasp of the issue. Stating this passed some authority to members of the denomination willing and able to continue to fill the holes in the denomination’s view on “homosexuality.” Highlighting a gap in its understanding of sexuality, the report invited congregants to fill that gap through research and reflection on God’s Word, empowering ordinary folks to formulate their own thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about how the denomination should approach the issue of “homosexuality.” Ultimately, revealing the voluminous nature of writing on “homosexuality” and the inability of the committee to study it completely warranted continued research and discussion with the purpose of comprehending the complex issues more completely.

### **Seeding Liberal Argumentative Starting Points: Footnoting and Modelling Intertextuality**

In addition to undermining its authority, the report planted the seeds of oppositional arguments in the report itself, providing readers with the starting positions to foster continued

debate about the denomination's stance. The report did this first by footnoting academic resources that clearly articulated arguments that refute the study's apparent conclusions. Second, the report modeled intertextual reading strategies and proclaimed the importance of contextual evidence, denying the validity of readings of scripture based on scripture's ostensibly literal and obvious meaning. Especially considering how the authors undermined the authority of their own report as definitive or timeless, citing liberal positions cultivated a model from which congregants could develop their own stances and subversive positions on "homosexuality."

### *Footnoting Subversive Material*

As the report signaled that research into the subject matter of "homosexuality" remained incomplete, it also directed its readers to specific sources that they could use to continue analyzing the evidence surrounding the issue. Encouraging and aiding the research efforts of the denomination's congregants authorized continued argument and advocacy by and on behalf of "homosexuals" within the denomination. The document equipped ordinary individuals to research "homosexuality" by including and highlighting the availability of two lists of books that they could read to more fully appreciate the complexity of the issue.<sup>74</sup> The authors drew attention to these lists, writing within the text of the report that "we are including a list of books at the end of this report that we believe are valuable for those who wish to study the subject in greater detail."<sup>75</sup> Providing readers with this list of books enabled members of the denomination to start their own scholarly endeavor into the question of "homosexuality," lowering the barrier to starting a process of ascertaining more about the issue and legitimizing such discovery explicitly. If members of the denomination did not previously know what resources to use to explore the questions facing the denomination, they would now be equipped with books to aid their efforts. Lowering this barrier to participation empowered interested ordinary folks to involve themselves

in the question facing the denomination, providing authority and resources to members of the denomination to voice their opinions and concerns about “homosexuality.” Doing so provided ordinary members of the denomination with the authority to challenge the report’s findings and to continue discussion about their own research findings. The report, by providing specific lists of sources to read, implicitly supported congregants challenging the denomination’s ostensible stance.

By including citations of books that refuted the ostensible conclusions of the study document, the authors aided readers’ abilities to discover subversive values, beliefs, and ways to frame the issue of sexuality and thus propagated the seeds to refute the report’s argument. Specifically, two of the referenced books contain explicit rebukes of the church and how heterosexual individuals read and use scripture, which could reframe the denomination’s debate about “homosexuality” to a question of whether the church remained in sin for condemning same-sex relations as opposed to whether being “homosexual” constituted a sin. For example, in the cited book *The Ethics of Sex*, Helmut Thielicke argued that many interpret scripture through a heteronormative lens, finding condemnation in scripture because of their pre-existing values and beliefs. Thielicke concluded that people arrive “at an a priori defamation of these who are afflicted with this anomaly.”<sup>76</sup> Powerfully, Thielicke contended that people project their own assumptions, especially heteronormative perspectives, onto scripture. Thielicke’s argument denies that the study report upholds an objective view of scripture and frames the arguments of the study report in the negative, positioning them as a “defamation” of GLBTQ people. In addition, the study report recommends a book that contains a chapter written by a same-sex couple, which develops a lesbian approach to biblical interpretation and prophetically rebukes the church for its treatment of GLBTQ people. The chapter exclaims that excluding GLBTQ

people from community creates consequences, such as suicidal inclinations, and thus constitutes a sin.<sup>77</sup> When read in context with the CRC's study report, these two sources recommended by the report itself could re-orient the controversy in the denomination around the question of whether condemning same-sex relationships constitutes sinful behavior. Thielicke's book could encourage a re-evaluation of scripture based on an understanding that people have reading biases, including heteronormative biases, into scripture. The argument that excluding GLBTQ people inflicts tremendous harm could be cited by people within the denomination to challenge the apparent claims in the study report and argue that the denomination, to avoid sin, needed to become more inclusive of GLBTQ people.

The sources recommended by the report also include poignant affirmations of same-sex relationships, which significantly contrast with the heteronormative outward appearance of the study report. Including resources that defend and support same-sex relationships enabled the continuation of debate around the issue of "homosexuality," providing credence to those who may have wanted to see the original policy of the denomination changed. In one of the report's recommended readings, Norman Pittenger claimed, for instance, that "homosexual acts are not sinful when they are expressions of love, moving those who engage in them toward faithfulness, tenderness, respect, hopefulness, mutuality."<sup>78</sup> Moreover, another recommended author, Joseph Fletcher, contended, "Love validates sex. Sex is not self-validating or inherently right and good—not in any of its variant forms. A truly loving homosexual relationship is morally justifiable as an unloving heterosexual relationship is not—not even when licensed by marriage."<sup>79</sup> Both of these statements explicitly disagree with the conclusions of the CRC study report. Whereas the study report contends that engaging in same-sex sexual activity constitutes a sin, these two statements defend same-sex relationships and behavior if done out of love.

Including these two sources as recommended readings therefore could equip members of the denomination with the resources to challenge the apparent claims in the denomination's policy.

Moreover, the process by which the report directed its readers to academic books that challenged many of the report's own findings lent credibility to those academic books and thus credibility to evidence that refutes the apparent conclusions of the report. For instance, Derrick Sherwin Bailey's 1955 book refuted assumptions about the Sodom and Gomorrah story's condemnation of "homosexuality," writing that "we may conclude that the Sodom story has no direct bearing whatsoever upon the problem of homosexuality or the commission of homosexual acts"<sup>80</sup> and that Old Testament passages "give us no guidance in dealing with the manifold and complex problems of sexual inversion."<sup>81</sup> The CRC's study report also cited a biblical study conducted by Reverend Doctor Robert Treese as a part of his role in the Council on Religion and the Homosexual. Treese's contention concurred that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah could not be used to condemn same-sex relationships, writing "nowhere does [the Bible] identify that sin explicitly with the practice of homosexuality" and "we cannot, in truth, say that Sodom proves that God is categorically against homosexuality."<sup>82</sup> The 1973 report included several other sources that drew this same conclusion.<sup>83</sup> Combined, the repeated ways in which the CRC's report referenced sources that denied one could use the story of Sodom and Gomorrah thusly provided a potential well-supported foundation to challenge the ostensible claims of the report itself.

In addition to challenging the belief that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah condemned same-sex relationships, the referenced sources in the study report provided the logical reasoning to undermine most heteronormative readings of scripture. The wide spread applicability of these resources provide potential future advocates with the argumentative resources necessary to refute

the vast majority of potential conservative claims about scripture. For instance, Bailey’s analysis extended beyond the passage on Sodom and Gomorrah, offering that the Leviticus prohibitions are too “ambiguous” and “give us no guidance in dealing with the manifold and complex problems of sexual inversion.”<sup>84</sup> In reference to the writings of Saint Paul, Bailey stated that, about modern notions of same-sex relationships, “it can hardly be said that the New Testament speaks, since the condition of inversion [‘homosexuality’], with all its special problems, was quite unknown at that time” and that Paul’s letter most likely referred to temple prostitution.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Treese explained his position that the passages referencing “homosexuality” likely “referred to a male homosexual temple prostitute.”<sup>86</sup> In reference to the Old Testament, Thielicke’s book claims, “It is uncertain whether the passages concerning ‘sodomy,’ which have been traditionally authoritative, actually refer to homosexual acts at all.”<sup>87</sup> In his analysis of New Testament passage, Thielike likewise suggested that Paul’s writing condemned certain forms of coercive and non-consensual same-sex acts, not all same-sex acts.<sup>88</sup> In this dissociative move, the report provided potential GLBTQ advocates with a powerful argument: that scripture condemned non-consensual relationships, not the loving same-sex relationships they promoted.

Moreover, the document modeled this dissociative argument, providing liberals with potential arguments to challenge the assumption that scripture condemned all forms of same-sex relationships. When evaluating the Sodom and Gomorrah story, CRC’s study committee articulated a liberal interpretation of the passage based on dissociation, which could provide future advocates with a model to reinterpret the passage. Even though the report stated that the sin of these two cities included the sin of acting upon same-sex attraction, the document also noted, “The evil that the men of Sodom were planning with Lot’s guests was sexual assault and violence, which is always [sic] wrong, also in heterosexual contexts. From this account therefore



it does not follow that homosexuality under other circumstances is wrong.”<sup>89</sup> The committee’s interpretation highlighted the violent aspect of the sin of the people of Sodom. Doing so alerted the reader again to the existence of multiple types of same-sex encounters, describing Sodom as being about non-consensual sexual violence. Based on the document’s dissociation of same-sex relationships into consensual and non-consensual ones, the report provided the grounding necessary for the conclusion that the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah only condemned non-consensual same-sex relationships, not consensual ones. The report’s conclusion that this story condemned acting upon same-sex desires never refutes this position. Moreover, the referenced list of resources contained in the study report included sources that develop this dissociative move, which provides an explicit model for how a member of the denomination could do the same.<sup>90</sup> Thus, by creating a division between non-consensual and consensual relationships and failing to resolve this dissociation in its final conclusion, the report equipped those that would oppose the document’s conclusions with an argumentative strategy to do so.

By promoting and footnoting these sources, the authors of the denomination’s report provided those who would disagree with the report’s apparent conclusions with a influential resource. Citing these recommended readings in a document that would become the policy of the denomination secured credence and authority for this scholarship, which in turn constructed a place for these subversive positions and arguments inside the CRC’s official policy. To challenge the denomination’s stance and policy on “homosexuality,” members of the denomination could now cite the policy itself and the authority contained within that policy, uprooting the dominant assumptions and beliefs of the denomination from within its shared policies and customs. In this manner, the footnoting of subversive material enabled long-term strategies to alter the assumptions of the denomination in terms of what constituted a valid stance about

“homosexuality.” Future rhetors could alter the trajectory of the denomination’s stance on sexuality utilizing its own official policies, which now would contain the resources necessary to challenge that the denomination’s assumptions and beliefs about “homosexuality.”

*Denying Literalism’s Presumption: Modeling Intertextuality and Promoting Contextual Evidence*

Reinforcing its strategy of footnoting, the report also included a strategy of alluding to liberal argumentative starting points, which could equip congregants to oppose the denomination’s stance on “homosexuality.” As the document fostered organic research efforts in the denomination and footnoted subversive sources, it simultaneously denounced plain readings of scripture, modelled the appropriateness of intertextual ways of reading scripture, and promoted the use of contextual evidence in controversies about biblical interpretation. Together, these efforts encouraged a movement of evidentiary presumptions away from usual conservative interpretations of scripture based on plain reading towards an assumption that the way liberals tended to interpret scripture constituted the more appropriate approach.

For instance, defining the issue of “homosexuality” as complex undermined the ability of members of the denomination to utilize plain readings of scripture to condemn same-sex relationships, equipping those who might dissent from the conclusions of the report with a powerful resource to do so. The document specifically stated that these literalist and plain understandings of scripture constituted inappropriate and violent approaches to biblical interpretation, writing “to wrench a text out of its context and apart from the rest of the Scriptures is to do violence to the Word of God.”<sup>91</sup> Referring to passages in Psalms and Ecclesiastes, the authors explained, “It is immediately clear to us that these passages must be read in their context and in the light of the whole of the Bible before we conclude what appears to be their plain teaching.”<sup>92</sup> This part of the report denies plain reading and literalist reading of

scripture, emphasizing context in discerning the meaning of passages and interpreting with the entirety of scripture in mind. This move offered liberal congregants a starting point to challenge dominant modes of biblical interpretation on the issue of “homosexuality” that typically rely on biblical literalism and plain readings of scripture. Because the report authorized interpretative strategies that examine biblical context and modern science to help understand scripture, it lent credence to scriptural arguments affirming same-sex relationships that typically rely on context, historical evidence, and the connections among biblical passages.<sup>93</sup> Doing so encouraged hermeneutical strategies that might produce GLBTQ-affirming readings of scripture.

As the report promoted intertextual reading methods, it destabilized presumptions in favor of straightforward readings of scripture. The way the report footnoted and cited other biblical passages to help understand the Genesis creation narratives enacted an intertextual method of biblical interpretation—a method of interpretation that utilizes certain biblical passages as a reference point or lens to complicate the ostensible plain reading of another biblical passage. Doing so both fostered acceptance of intertextuality and undermined the logic of appeals to the plain understanding of scripture, which could constitute a move to affirm and secure a rationale for liberal challenges to the conclusions of the report in the long run. For example, when articulating a position about how the creation narratives in Genesis provide evidence that “homosexuality” constitutes sinful behavior,<sup>94</sup> the study report included citations of other biblical passages that reference this narrative. The authors of the report wrote, “Turning to the New Testament we find the creation order of Genesis reaffirmed several times: by Jesus in Matthew 19:5, 6, and in Mark 10:6-8; by Paul in Ephesians 5:31 and I Corinthians 6:16.”<sup>95</sup> By citing these passages, the document affirmed an intertextual approach to understanding scripture wherein a reader must consider the rest of scripture to understand the specific passages under

question. Such an approach enabled readers to alter their understanding of what a single passage appears to state by comparing the text in question with other passages and generating new conclusions through that comparative process; this method of reading then denied that one might fully understand a single passage by merely reading that one passage in isolation from the rest of scripture. Denying the plain and isolated hermeneutical strategies undermined presumption in favor of conservative interpretation.<sup>96</sup> By negating the validity of literalism, however, the report altered the presumption away from straightforward interpretation and toward more nuanced forms of interpretation that include, but are not limited to, intertextual reading strategies.

As such, the report's promotion of intertextuality provided an authoritative grounding for liberal challenges to conservative interpretations of scripture regarding sexuality, a move which future advocates could draw upon to renegotiate the basis for the denomination's continued deliberation on the subject. For instance, the report included a reference that might help liberals challenge the argument that the Genesis creation stories highlight the importance of relationships for the purposes of procreation. In the case of the second creation story of Genesis, the document's specific reference to Matthew 19 could have complicated plain understandings of the statement: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."<sup>97</sup> In Matthew 19, Jesus Christ rebuked the sentiment that it would be natural for all people to follow the life path stated in this creation story: "For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuch by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."<sup>98</sup> Jesus' proclamation that God created eunuchs challenged any interpretation of the Genesis creation stories that promotes that all people should naturally enter a relationship that promotes procreation, cultivating a potentially new comprehension of scripture based on reading passages

in relation to each other. Citing additional passages to understand the second Genesis creation story crafted a model for how denomination congregants should read and interpret scripture, promoting a method of intertextuality. Promoting intertextuality as an appropriate hermeneutic method aided liberal advocates because many oppositional readings of Genesis and the Sodom and Gomorrah story involve referencing other parts of scripture to acquire a, according to liberal advocates, clearer understanding of those two passages.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the study report cultivated authority inside the confines of the denomination’s official policy regarding “homosexuality” for intertextually derived liberal argumentation, providing the basis for continued debate.

### **Conclusion**

When Synod established a committee to study the “problems of homosexuality,” it constrained the options available to the members of the study committee. In articulating “homosexuality” as a problem and reparative therapy as a potential solution, Synod foreclosed the study committee’s ability to articulate liberal arguments affirming “homosexuality” while simultaneously aligning their study with Synod’s rationale for formulating the committee. To gain the assent of Synod, the study committee needed to pass an ideological test by mimicking Synod’s discourse and so concealing any strains of liberal argumentation included in the report. However, by downplaying the report’s authority on the issue, the document potentially empowered ordinary members of the denomination to study and develop their own conclusions about what scripture states about “homosexuality.” Claiming that the denomination should continue to study the expansive literature on the issue, footnoting resources to support liberal interpretations of scripture and articulating oppositional arguments allowed the study committee to equip the congregants with resources to continue debate and discussion on the subject of

“homosexuality.” The report’s promotion of intertextuality and historical data further readjusted the denomination’s dominant assumptions about what constituted appropriate ways to interpret scripture. Although the document ostensibly allowed that scripture condemns “homosexuality,” the document contains the seeds of alternative and subversive assumptions and viewpoints about scripture and how the denomination could react to the question of “homosexuality,” which could enable future advocates to challenge the heteronormative assumptions of the denomination. One cannot know the intent of the authors of the study report, but their repeated footnoting and promoting of non-literal reading strategies meets Brummett’s evidentiary standard for a hidden rhetoric.<sup>100</sup> This fact ensures the 1973 constitutes a clear model for how a text might seed subversive beliefs in ways that enable social change.

The CRC’s study committee’s nuanced and opaque rhetoric extends understanding about how religious and organizational rhetoric can operate. Because the study committee’s report needed approval by Synod before it could become the denomination’s policy, the committee had to navigate a tension between earning assent from superiors in the denomination and providing congregants with the materials needed to develop liberal arguments.<sup>101</sup> To balance the need to appeal to all of these audiences, mid-level rhetors may need to pass ideological tests of their institution or organization, but also allude to the seeds of an alternative beliefs to speak to other constituents. The strategy of seeding then may prove useful for these mid-level rhetors as they navigate the many constraints created by their need to satisfy several audiences.

This chapter also elucidates tactics of opaque rhetorics previously unacknowledged in rhetoric scholarship. By footnoting information about “homosexuality,” CRC’s study document encouraged dupes to continue reading, for they would not have to look up citations to support positions to which they already assented. Yet, for those inclined to continue researching the issue

of “homosexuality,” the way CRC’s document footnoted subversive scholarship hid the seeds of alternative interpretations, beliefs, and values in plain sight. These congregants would only need to pick up their Bible or travel to a local library to find that these references pointed the document’s readers to liberal argumentation. In addition to the strategy of footnoting, the document’s articulation of liberal argumentative starting points, by modelling dissociation, equipped readers with position statements that they could use to challenge the report’s own stance on sexuality. In doing so, the document, while ostensibly disagreeing with these arguments, potentially trained the opposition, which could ground its arguments in such research and follow the model provided by the report about how to develop refutational strategies.

Seeding constitutes a precarious strategy because it might camouflage non-normative ideologies and identities so well as to make those ideologies and identities unrecognizable, unintelligible, and unconvincing once advocates eventually draw on the subversive material needed to challenge the denomination’s official policy stance. Despite this risk, advocates may need to embark on long-term, even uncertain, argumentative and rhetorical journeys to craft alternative starting points and presumptions for the deliberations about which they engage. In the case of controversies concerning “homosexuality” in Christian denominations, plain readings of scripture provide conservatives with an argumentative presumption, which augments the difficulty of liberals’ task to convince others of their position unless the presumption in favor of plain readings first became dislodged. CRC’s 1973 study report *consistently* and inconspicuously altered the traditional grounds on which congregants within that denomination would debate. In situations without attainable short-term success, seeding remains an option for advocates who may choose to hide subversive material in hopes that one day future advocates might find and

use that subversive material to craft positions and arguments in a way that might undo dominant ideologies.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, published on June 12-22, 1973, accessed on January 3, 2017,

<<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1973agendaacts.pdf>>, 632. This statement also circulated and continues to circulate as the official position of the denomination. See, for examples, Rafaella Gunz, “Conservative Christian Colleges in America Grapple with LGBTI Issues,” *Gay Star News*, April 1, 2018, <<https://www.gaystarnews.com/article/conservative-christian-colleges-america-grapple-lgbti-issues/#gs.tYg296I>>; Kathryn Mae Post, “LGBT+ Issues Create Tension in CRC,” *Chimes*, April 21, 2017, <<https://calvinchimes.org/2017/04/21/lgbt-issues-create-tension-in-crc/>>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, William De Vries, David Beelen, Nathan Bierma, John Chapin, Jeff Fisher, Loren Haarsma, Karen Helder, Arthur Jongsma, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl, “Classis Grand Rapids East Study Report on Biblical and Theological Support Currently Offered by Christian Proponents of Same-Sex Marriage,” January 2016, accessed on May 25, 2018, <<http://www.classisgreast.org/downloads/ssmstudyreport2016.pdf>>, 5.

<sup>3</sup> See “1992 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 9-19, 1992, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1992agendaacts.pdf>>, 566. Also see, “1993 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 8-18, 1993, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1993agendaacts.pdf>>, 279-80.

<sup>4</sup> Darin Estep, “Calvin College Professors Call for Discussion about Memo Warning against Homosexual Advocacy,” *MLive*, August 28, 2009, <[http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/08/calvin\\_college\\_professors\\_call.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/08/calvin_college_professors_call.html)>.

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<sup>5</sup> Sanam Assil, “Can You Work It? Or Flip It and Reverse It?: Protecting LGBT Youth from Sexual Orientation Change Efforts,” *Cardozo Journal of Law & Gender* 21 (2015): 562.

<sup>6</sup> See “1974 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, published on June 11-21, 1974, accessed on May 25, 2018, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1974agendaacts.pdf>>, 633. Also see, “1977 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 14 to 24, 1977, accessed on May 26, 2018, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1977agendaacts.pdf>>, 680-1.

<sup>7</sup> “1974 Acts of Synod,” 633.

<sup>8</sup> “1994 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 14-24, 1994, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1994agendaacts.pdf>>, 271.

<sup>9</sup> “1995 Acts of Synod,” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 13-23, 1995, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1995agendaacts.pdf>>, 598.

<sup>10</sup> “1996 Acts of Synod,” 288.

<sup>11</sup> See Michael Penfold, “Article Asserts that Dr. Marten Woudstra, Chairman of the NIV Old Testament Committee, was a Sodomite/Homosexual,” November 1997, <<https://www.jesus-is-lord.com/woudstra.htm>>; Also see, Jeremy Shorter, *The Hidden Treasure that Lies in Plain Sight 3: Exploring the True Name of God and Christ, Holydays, the Image of Christ, Pagan Holidays, Days and Months, and Identifying of the 12 Tribes* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2016); “The Bond that Breaks the Boundaries,” *Evangelicals Concerned Inc.*, November 2, 2001, <<http://ecinc.org/the-bond-that-breaks-the-boundaries/>>.

<sup>12</sup> See Christian Bell, “Calvin College Statement about Homosexuality Draws Fire,” *The Banner*, January 18, 2011, <<http://www.thebanner.org/news/2011/01/calvin-college-statement-about-homosexuality-draws-fire>>; Noah J. K. Kruis, “Michigan Group Responds to Synod’s Decision

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on Homosexuality,” *The Banner*, January 16, 2012,

<<http://www.thebanner.org/news/2012/01/michigan-group-responds-to-synod-s-decision-on-homosexuality>>; Gayla R. Postma, “Wolterstorff: Biblical Justice and Same-Sex Marriage,” *The Banner*, October 24, 2016, <<http://thebanner.org/news/2016/10/wolterstorff-biblical-justice-and-same-sex-marriage>>.

<sup>13</sup> De Vries, Beelen, Bierma, Chapin, Fisher, Haarsma, Helder, Jongsma, and Naranjo-Huebl, “Classis Grand Rapids East,” 57.

<sup>14</sup> Troy Perry, “God Loves Me Too,” in *Is Gay Good?: Ethics, Theology, and Homosexuality*, ed. W. Dwight Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 121.

<sup>15</sup> Neil Elliott, “Strategies of Resistance and Hidden Transcripts in the Pauline Communities,” in ed. Richard A. Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 121; Amanda C. Miller, *Rumors of Resistance: Status Reversals and Hidden Transcripts in the Gospel of Luke* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014), 2; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 140-52; Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 24.

<sup>16</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 18-9.

<sup>20</sup> For examples of rhetorical scholarship that showcase passing as promoting assimilation, survival, or momentary resistance, see Torin Monahan, “The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance

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Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 159–78; Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 230; Charles E. Morris III, “‘The Responsibilities of the Critic’: F. O. Matthiessen’s Homosexual Palimpsest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 263; Helene A. Shugart, “Performing Ambiguity: The Passing of Ellen DeGeneres,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23 (2003): 51; Anna L. Spradlin, “The Price of ‘Passing’: A Lesbian Perspective on Authenticity in Organizations,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 11 (1998): 598-605; Catherine R. Squires and Daniel C. Brouwer, “In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 287; Lauren Wagner, “Using Silence to ‘Pass’: Embodiment and Interactional Categorization in a Diasporic Context,” *Multilingua* 34 (2015): 659-86.

<sup>21</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 152.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Strauss, *Persecution*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 153. Italics in the original.

<sup>28</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 139.

<sup>29</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 54.

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<sup>31</sup> John Lynch, "Institution and Imprimatur: Institutional Rhetoric and the Failure of the Catholic Church's Pastoral Letter on Homosexuality," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 385.

<sup>32</sup> Lynch, "Institution and Imprimatur," 385.

<sup>33</sup> Also see William R. Herzog II, "Onstage and Offstage with Jesus of Nazareth: Public Transcripts, Hidden Transcripts, and Gospel Texts," in Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance*, 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> See Richard A. Horsely, "Jesus, Paul, and the 'Arts of Resistance': Leaves from the Notebook of James C. Scott," in Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance*, 7; Patrick E. Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories of the Lukan Galilean Ministry Speeches: Hermeneutical Appropriation by Authorial Readers of Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 127.

<sup>36</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 227.

<sup>37</sup> See Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Richard A. Horsely, "The Politics of Disguise and Public Declaration of the Hidden Transcript: Broadening Our Approach to the Historical Jesus with Scott's 'Arts of Resistance' Theory," in Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Horsely, "The Politics of Disguise," 73.

<sup>40</sup> See Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 223.

<sup>41</sup> See Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories*, 122.

<sup>42</sup> See Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Morris, "The Responsibilities of the Critic," 277.

<sup>44</sup> Morris, "The Responsibilities of the Critic," 277.

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<sup>45</sup> Morris, “The Responsibilities of the Critic,” 278.

<sup>46</sup> Strauss, *Persecution*, 27. Italics in original.

<sup>47</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Chautauqua: The Cunning Rhetor, The Complicitous Audience, The Conned Censor, and the Critic,” *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990): 74. Also see Jamieson, “Chautauqua,” 76.

<sup>49</sup> William Earnest, “Making Gay Sense of the X-Men,” in ed. Barry Brummett, *Uncovering Hidden Rhetorics: Social Issues in Disguise* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 216.

<sup>50</sup> See Barry Brummett, “Social Issues in Disguise: An Introduction to Sneaky Rhetoric,” in Brummett, *Uncovering Hidden Rhetorics*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Brummett, “Social Issues in Disguise,” 7.

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 53; also see, Elliott, “Strategies of Resistance,” 112.

<sup>53</sup> Earnest, “Making Gay Sense of the X-Men,” 232.

<sup>54</sup> Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 108.

<sup>55</sup> Jay C. Prober, “The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1968-69 (Canada),” *British Journal of Criminology* 10 (1970): 180.

<sup>56</sup> “Acts of Synod 1970,” *Christian Reformed Church in North American*, published on June 9-19, 1970, accessed on January 3, 2017, <<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1970agendaacts.pdf>>, 540.

<sup>57</sup> “Acts of Synod 1970,” 540.

<sup>58</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 610.

<sup>59</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 611.

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<sup>60</sup> “Acts of Synod 1970,” 540.

<sup>61</sup> See Lynch, “Institution and Imprimatur,” 400.

<sup>62</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 610.

<sup>63</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 609-11.

<sup>64</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 632.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, “Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona,” 238.

<sup>66</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 610-11.

<sup>67</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 611.

<sup>68</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 611.

<sup>69</sup> See “Acts of Synod 1973.”

<sup>70</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 627.

<sup>71</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 612.

<sup>72</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 613.

<sup>73</sup> See Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 190-2, 411-3.

<sup>74</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 615, 631.

<sup>75</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 611.

<sup>76</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 270.

<sup>77</sup> Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, “A Lesbian Approach to Theology,” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 213-4.

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<sup>78</sup> Norman Pittenger, “The Homosexual Expression of Love,” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 233.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph Fletcher, “Preface,” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 10.

<sup>80</sup> Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, (London: Archon Books, 1955), 28.

<sup>81</sup> Bailey, *Homosexuality*, 156.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Treese, “*Homosexuality: A Contemporary View of the Biblical Perspective* by The Rev. Dr. Robert Treese (39 pages),” *LGBT Religious Archives Network*, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, in *Becomes Resource Publishing Agency*, accessed February 1, 2018, <<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=5&CID=26>>, 9 and 11.

<sup>83</sup> See John Von Rohr, “Toward a Theology of Homosexuality,” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 76; Lewis Williams, “Walls of Ice—Theology and Social Policy,” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. Oberholtzer (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 170-1.

<sup>84</sup> Bailey, *Homosexuality*, 156.

<sup>85</sup> Bailey, *Homosexuality*, 157.

<sup>86</sup> Treese, “*Homosexuality*,” 7.

<sup>87</sup> Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*, 277.

<sup>88</sup> See Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*, 278-80.

<sup>89</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 617.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Fletcher, “Preface,” 10.

<sup>91</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 621.



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<sup>92</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 622.

<sup>93</sup> Generally, conservative Christians typically rely on biblical literalism to advance their arguments and liberal Christians utilize historical data and context to interpret scripture. Fundamentalist opposition to “homosexual” rights in the 1970s relied on plain readings of scripture. See Maddux, “Christianity, Homosexuality,” 94–120; Reames, “Hermeneutical Rhetoric,” 126–44; Ronald Fischli, “Anita Bryant’s Stand Against ‘Militant Homosexuality’: Religious Fundamentalism and the Democratic Process,” *Central States Speech Journal* 30 (1979): 262–71.

<sup>94</sup> The particular passages most often in question are Genesis 2:24, which, in the New International Version, reads, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” as well as the passage Genesis 1:27-28, which states, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’”

<sup>95</sup> “Acts of Synod 1973,” 624.

<sup>96</sup> See Maddux, “Christianity, Homosexuality,” 104.

<sup>97</sup> Genesis 2:24, New International Version.

<sup>98</sup> Matthew 19:11-12, New International Version.

<sup>99</sup> See Jeirdre J. Good, Willis J. Jenkins, Cynthia B. Kittredge, and Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., “A Theology of Marriage Including Same-Sex Couples: A View from the Liberals,” *Anglican Theological Review* 93 (2011): 68. The authors articulated that a common liberal response to conservative interpretations of Genesis is to cite Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ

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Jesus.” Liberal readers cite this passage as both indicating that the mandate for procreation in Genesis is null and void as well as evidence that gender no longer matters for the purposes of forming relationships.

<sup>100</sup> Brummett, “Social Issues in Disguise,” 7.

<sup>101</sup> See Lynch, “Institution and Imprimatur,” 383-4.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Opacity and Bayard Rustin's Value Trajectory: Sacrifice, Commitment, and Unity

“My being gay was not a problem for Dr. King but a problem for the movement.”—Bayard Rustin<sup>1</sup>

“Despite his achievements, Bayard's life remains largely unrecognized and unrecognizable. He continues to be a distorted footnote in the civil rights narratives he helped to author.”—Devon W. Carbado and Donald Wiese<sup>2</sup>

Studies of the 1960s civil rights movement, its leaders, and their rhetoric continue to populate the Communication Studies journals. In detailing how rhetoric animates social change during the 1960s, this work traditionally focuses on how notable leaders utilized their rhetorical prowess. Analyses of Martin Luther King,<sup>3</sup> Stokely Carmichael,<sup>4</sup> and Malcolm X<sup>5</sup> generate insight and appreciation of the advocacy of the movement's prominent figures. Although the contributions of this wide-ranging scholarship should not be understated, rhetoric scholarship still has work to complete to illuminate the full range of rhetorics upon which the civil rights movement relied. For example, Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback argued that scholarship concerning the movement has focused on more visible community mobilization rhetorics of known figures as opposed to the less visible community organizing efforts. To help illustrate the significance of rhetors who worked to organize community, Jensen and Hammerback analyzed Robert Parris Moses' rhetoric as an alternative to rhetoric of the community mobilization tradition of rhetors such as King.<sup>6</sup> Another criticism of current scholarship emerged with Paul Hendrickson's argument that rhetoric scholarship has failed to account for the significance and contributions of black women. Hendrickson argued that scholars needed to “praise unfamous women” and “honor names in the shadows.”<sup>7</sup> Since Hendrickson's call, critics have started developing analyses of the rhetoric of Ella Baker<sup>8</sup> and Fannie Lou

Hamer.<sup>9</sup> Following these scholarly moves to develop fuller understanding and appreciation of the range of civil rights movement rhetoric, this chapter examines the rhetoric of and the rhetoric surrounding another significant, yet understudied, figure of the movement: Bayard Rustin, the openly gay assistant of King.

Examining Rustin's rhetoric enables another significant turn and emphasis in the continued development of scholarship probing the lesser known figures and yet-to-be-fully analyzed rhetoric of the 1960s civil rights movement. Through an examination of Rustin's rhetoric and rhetoric about him, we can glean a deeper appreciation and understanding of how the movement navigated constraints related to sexual orientation because Rustin represented both one of the movement's prominent figures and an openly GLBTQ figure. Although a few published works of rhetorical criticism do examine how rhetors utilized the memory of the civil rights movement in debates about GLBTQ rights much later,<sup>10</sup> scholars have not inspected how sexuality intersected with civil rights movement efforts at the time. Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise offer a sharp criticism of disciplines that do not account for Rustin's contributions to the movement. They write, "The lack of attention to Rustin's life and civil rights contributions not only limits and distorts our understanding of the civil rights movement, but it legitimizes the (heterosexual) terms upon which Rustin was forced to perform civil rights."<sup>11</sup> To help avoid a distorted view of the civil rights movement, this chapter unpacks a dimension of civil rights rhetoric specifically related to sexuality. In addition, scholars have not traced the rhetorics of specific individuals from the origins of the civil rights movement to and through gay liberation advocacy. Examining the trajectory of Rustin's rhetoric constitutes a new approach to analyses of the interaction between the civil right movements and later GLBTQ advocacy, highlighting how specific rhetorical appeals animated a connection between the two. Moreover, the case

study illustrates poignantly how Christians, especially those wishing to frame their efforts as moral, may need to navigate the “gay Christian” debate in advocacy efforts seemingly unrelated to GLBTQ inclusion and how they may need to be ready and able to defend GLBTQ allies from rebukes of fellow Christians.

As such, the following chapter answers several calls in rhetorical scholarship. First, it addresses Hendrickson’s promotion of honoring “names in the shadows” of the civil rights movement because, according to Carbado and Weise, “perhaps no other figure contributed so much to the cause of African-American equality and remains so invisible in history.”<sup>12</sup> Second, this chapter continues the work called for by Charles E. Morris III in that it promotes, circulates, and theorizes the rhetoric of GLBTQ figures of the past.<sup>13</sup> Third, the payoffs of the following analysis also move beyond the “additive model” of queer public address scholarship, which would merely “focus on ‘adding’ gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered voices to the preexisting public address canon.”<sup>14</sup> As Julie M. Thompson wrote, the additive model “fails to contest the elitist approaches to the rhetorical process and thus necessarily will misapply existing standards to vernacular and experimental forms of rhetorical activities.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, Thompson encouraged queer public address scholarship, which, in part, can help illustrate the intersections of how racism and heteronormativity operate to silence change agents and maintain existing social orders.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, analyzing Rustin’s rhetoric and rhetoric about him can enable the theorization for which Thompson advocates. This analysis demonstrates how heteronormativity can be, and was, levied against efforts to transform society and, historically, campaigns for desegregation and voting rights.

Rustin’s rhetoric remains a prime example of how opaque rhetoric can inform advocacy and efforts to promote social change. The potential revelation of Rustin’s identity as a gay

individual constituted a constraint that he and the movement needed to manage; that management was strategic. According to Carbado and Weise,

Rustin's obfuscation of his role in shaping the black civil rights agenda was an important part of an identity-management strategy. The purpose of this strategy was to control the potential negative impact Rustin's sexual orientation could have on the civil rights movement. Informing the strategy was Rustin's awareness that the more visible and prominent his leadership roles in the black community, the more vulnerable the black civil rights establishment was to the charge that black reform efforts were being conceived of and orchestrated by a "sexual deviant."<sup>17</sup>

As such, Rustin and his allies in the movement had incentive to hide, minimize, and downplay Rustin's sexuality and, specifically, his arrest records on sodomy charges. To avoid the ways that the revelation of Rustin's identity might have diminished the authority of the civil rights movement, Rustin and his associates utilized opaque rhetorics to help enable the continued cultivation of social change on matters related to voting rights and desegregation while minimizing the potential that "deviant" markers of identity could curtail those efforts.

To elucidate how opaque rhetors enable social change and communal betterment, this chapter traces Rustin's rhetoric through two critical moments in the 1960 civil rights struggle, in which the threatened revelation of his gay identity could have hampered the moral authority of the movement to his visible GLBTQ rights rhetoric of the 1980s. I argue that the affirmation of a cluster of values centered on individual devotion and commitment to the collective and to society, willingness to sacrifice for the betterment of others, and unity constituted a value trajectory in the rhetoric and advocacy work of Rustin. This trajectory allowed Rustin and his allies to navigate queer constraints wherein the revelation of Rustin's sexual orientation either

could have occurred or did occur in a manner that still maintained Rustin's and the movement's moral authority. Moreover, I contend that this value trajectory animated the movement from Rustin's opaque 1960s civil rights rhetoric to his later visible 1980s GLBTQ rights rhetoric. In both, the continued affirmation of this cluster of values warranted the cultivation of inclusive communities and rationalized joining and supporting social change campaigns.

To advance this argument, I first develop a theory of value trajectories, which will then serve as the framework for my analysis of Rustin's rhetoric. After this task, I detail the first queer constraint of Rustin's 1960s civil rights efforts: when someone threatened to spread a rumor that Rustin and King had same-sex sexual encounters. Then, attuning to Rustin's response to this threat, I showcase how Rustin validated commitment to collective, sacrifice for others, and unity to defend his moral character. The next queer constraint that I discuss occurred when a southern Senator, Strom Thurmond, revealed Rustin's sexual identity on the Senate floor. After unpacking this situation, I focus on how members of the movement defended Rustin, highlighting how they drew upon the same values of commitment, sacrifice, and unity to react to Thurmond's accusation. The section that follows this exploration traces Rustin's rhetoric to the 1980s, revealing how this value cluster persisted decades later. Finally, I conclude by explaining the significance of this analysis for rhetorical scholarship.

### **Opacity, Visibility, and Value Trajectories**

To illustrate one way in which opaque rhetorics can foster social transformation and help cultivate community, this chapter advances a theory of value trajectories. Developing a concept of value trajectories can equip critics with the ability to trace the progression of discourse found in long-term campaigns for social change, such as the 1960s civil rights struggle and gay

liberation efforts. The significance of such an explanation is two-fold. First, the value trajectories can unify and guide social movements and campaigns for social change around the promotion and reaffirmation of shared values, even as the situations and issues they encounter vary. Second, analyzing value trajectories can illustrate how justifications and motives from advocacy on one specific issue can translate to motivation for advocacy on another issue. The value trajectory can animate connection among seemingly disparate and diverse social issues, empowering individuals and communities to work together for social change on those previously ostensibly dissimilar matters. In identifying a value trajectory, a critic can detail what rhetorical choices to expect from advocates as the affirmation of values in one context coaches the continued affirmation of those values in new instances. More specifically, a theory of value trajectories can also help explain how opaque rhetorics can function as the impetus for social transformation on social issues that remain hidden at first but will eventually become more visible, because values affirmed in opaque rhetorics can justify and rationalize later visible advocacy.

Crafting a theory of value trajectories usefully extends the theory of rhetorical trajectory and scholarship concerning it. As a useful tool to help critics illustrate how rhetoric evolves and progresses over time, a rhetorical trajectory refers to “a rhetorical arc of development upon which a speaker embarks.”<sup>18</sup> When initially proposing this concept, Leland M. Griffin drew on Kenneth Burke’s theorization about form and qualitative progression as a tool to help scholars understand how particular rhetorical motivations equip people for action and push those people along particular paths based on initial and incipient motivations.<sup>19</sup> For Burke, form involves “an arousing and fulfillment of desires”<sup>20</sup> or “the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite.”<sup>21</sup> That is, a formal appeal of a discourse involves the creation of anticipation and expectation in the mind of the audience, which the discourse



should then satisfy and meet. Qualitative progression constitutes a type of formal appeal wherein “the presence of one quality prepares us for the introduction of another.”<sup>22</sup> In terms of a trajectory, the inclusion of certain appeals readies audience members or creates the expectation among audience members that another type of appeal will follow. Thus, an initial discourse can point the audience and the speaker in a certain direction and craft the motivation or impetus to follow the direction, creating a trajectory of and preparation to accept what sensibly comes next. Affirming values can point communities and society in a direction toward social change as a natural outgrowth of the initially encouraged value system. A rhetor’s promotion of values that audiences recognize and perhaps cherish can enable progression in audience’s understanding of their situation and what actions remain needed.<sup>23</sup> Promoting values and generating a rationale for the significance of those values can enhance the ability of rhetors to draw on that value in new ways and during different contexts in the future to advance a value trajectory. Fidelity to values can allow rhetors, advocacy groups, and communities to navigate new situations and contexts and animate change as their experience of those values generates authority for the promotion of those values later on. That is, values can animate and secure trajectories as people move from one context into others.

As a form of rhetorical trajectory, value trajectories can animate the development of inclusive communities and illuminate the path for social change. Embracing values and value systems can serve as one potential component in how a rhetor animates progress from one social order to another. For example, promoting the value of equal justice for all might help a rhetor cultivate a vision of a more inclusive society that could emerge from a current social order based on exclusion. Uplifting the value might serve as a guide and a benchmark from which advocates and their communities can assess their journey toward the vision of the new social order based

on adherence to the value. As value trajectories can foster social change, the intimate connection between values and communities also enables these trajectories to cultivate community. Through rhetoric, especially in epideictic rhetorics that praise or blame, rhetors can “establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience.”<sup>24</sup> As such, around the affirmation of certain values, communities can coalesce and develop as they work to live out those values.

Developing the theoretical framework of value trajectories remains important to understand how opaque rhetorics, especially rhetorics produced by closeted rhetors, can create formal appeals to enable and animate social transformation and the cultivation of community. Previous work on trajectories has showcased how rhetors can maintain the formal appeal of following a trajectory by cultivating consistent *persona*. When describing how a rhetor might hold a trajectory together, George N. Dionisopoulos, Victoria J. Gallagher, Steven R. Goldzwig, and David Zarefsky explained that trajectory “can be articulated in a number of ways, for example: being a consistent dramatic character before the public audience or maintaining a certain tradition of the self so that one's life ‘makes sense’ to oneself and others.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, for opaque rhetorics and closeted rhetors, maintaining the trajectory through a consistent character remains difficult. Especially when a rhetor decides to come out or become a more visible advocacy, the rhetor necessarily undermines the previous consistency and certainty of a trajectory held together by *persona*. Yet, even as the radical shift in proclaimed identity might threaten the trajectory of the rhetoric, the consistent promotion of values can stabilize that trajectory. Thus, the concept of value trajectories, a trajectory animated and maintained by the consistent promotion of certain values, can serve as a tool to extend the theory of trajectory into a situation where the *persona* of a rhetor fluctuates. As such, opaque rhetorics might affirm or

draw on values that consistently create the foundation or justification for more visible efforts later. The consistency afforded by the development of a value trajectory lends more durability to an advocacy effort as individual members of a collective can share it and it can endure beyond the lifetime of any one person in the group. More significantly, as the opaque rhetoric utilizes certain values, the rhetoric can animate social change as the continual affirmation of those values cultivates a path for transformation or the cultivation of community. To detail the situation in which the value trajectory developed by Rustin and those who defended him operated, the following section first examines how the threat of the revelation of Rustin's sexual identity constituted a constraint on Rustin's and others' advocacy and then closely examines Rustin's resignation to demonstrate how his affirmation of values enabled him to navigate the situation.

### **Rustin's 1960 Resignation Rhetoric**

#### *The 1960 Threatening Queer Constraint*

In 1953, Rustin's sexuality surfaced as a barrier to his participation in advocacy after his arrest under sodomy laws in California. According to Michael G. Long, Rustin approached a car early one morning to offer oral sex to two white men. Long describes the scene: "They accepted, and Rustin engaged in sex with the passenger in the front seat before climbing into the back seat with the driver. As Rustin was seated in the back seat, two police officers approached the car and arrested all three for lewd vagrancy."<sup>26</sup> News of Rustin's arrest spread among pacifist organizers and advocates, and Rustin had to end "his dozen years of service to a Christian organization dedicated to peace and social justice."<sup>27</sup> Although Rustin would later be invited by King to aid the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott,<sup>28</sup> since his arrest in 1953, Rustin and advocates who worked with him needed to manage his sexuality and the potential for his arrest records to become

public. Long explained, “The problem posed by the arrest was a practical one; it created the ever-looming possibility that his enemies would republicize the arrest as a way of undermining the credibility of any movement he helped to lead—including the Montgomery bus boycott.”<sup>29</sup> Carbado and Weise concurred, arguing, “Highlighting Rustin’s civil rights career exposes a subtle instantiation of ‘the politics of the closet’: Rustin’s sexual orientation, always available to discredit him, limited the terms upon which he expressed his civil rights identity.”<sup>30</sup> As proof of Rustin’s “deviant” sexual identity, his arrest record and its potential revelation remained a constraint on Rustin’s rhetoric as an advocate for civil rights during the late 1950s and 1960s. To negotiate this constraint, Rustin and his allies crafted rhetorics and strategies that hid, downplayed, and minimized his sexuality.

Specifically, when Rustin worked with King as a part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), his sexuality constituted a constraint on King’s rhetoric, the SCLC’s strategies, and the civil rights movement efforts. Long argues that King remained silent on issues of sexuality as a tactic to help enable him to earn assent from Christian audiences. He writes, “Homosexuality was an issue that no doubt would have proved divisive in [King’s] efforts to gain support from Christians who were fundamentally opposed to homosexuality, especially those in black and white evangelical churches.”<sup>31</sup> To build support for objectives of civil rights advocacy, the issue of Rustin’s sexuality appeared to need to remain hidden from potential supporter in Christian communities. Moreover, the question of sexuality, Eric King Watts suggests, can factor into how communities attempt to portray themselves to outside audiences. In his analysis of the Harlem Renaissance, for example, Watts argues that “the ‘culture of homosexuality’ that was cultivated among a coterie of young black intellectuals [. . .] was unsettling to those who hoped that the Harlem Renaissance would produce a ‘mainstream’

black American nationality, an ethos deemed worthy of social equality.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, to ensure that an organization or a community could portray itself in a “positive” light, the organization or community may opt to downplay or hide markers of non-heterosexual sexualities. Thus, to avoid the divisiveness of sexuality and to help build the proper authority for the movement, Rustin minimized his sexuality. Importantly, the revelation of Rustin’s sexuality could distract from King’s focus on advocating for civil rights and undermine King’s moral authority with his Christian audiences.

In 1960, Rustin and King faced one of these potentially dangerous revelatory situations—a queer constraint. At this moment, the threatened public disclosure of King’s identity created the need for Rustin and King to develop a strategy and a rhetoric to shield King from allegations of “sexual deviancy” and thus lack of proper moral authority for effective civil rights advocacy. The situation started when King, Rustin, and A. Phillip Randolph “announced a march on the Democratic and Republican conventions” where John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon would be nominated by their respective parties for president.<sup>33</sup> The news angered Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, the Democratic representative to the House of Representatives from Harlem. According to historian Daniel Levine, Powell “was furious” that no one consulted him about the protest at the Democratic convention, and “The *New York Courier* suggested that Powell was under pressure from southern Democrats, whose support he would need to become chairman of the House Labor and Education Committee, to squash the march.”<sup>34</sup> Regardless of the reason, Powell responded to the news of the march in a manner that created a queer revelatory constraint for Rustin and King. Powell threatened that, unless the march on and picketing of the Democratic convention was called off, he “would tell the media that King and Rustin were gay

lovers.”<sup>35</sup> Upon learning of Powell’s intentions, two of King’s advisors, Stanley Levison and Clarence Jones,

felt that the public’s largely negative attitude toward homosexuality at that time presented “a no-win gain in the media,” and that letting the public know of the allegation would leave King in a “difficult position of having to prove himself innocent after having been presumed guilty.” The two of them also encouraged King to consider cutting his ties to Rustin.<sup>36</sup>

Further, a SCLC committee thought it would be best if Rustin resigned as King’s assistant.

According to Long, “With a sense of personal rejection, Rustin offered his resignation and, much to his dismay, King accepted it without even a request for reconsideration.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, to avoid the revelation of his sexuality in a manner that threatened King, Rustin left the SCLC and his official position as King’s personal assistant.

Even though Rustin resigned from SCLC, the situation still called for careful rhetoric that appropriately balanced two needs. First, the rhetoric had to explain the reason for the change of leadership at the organization while still supporting its overall mission. Second, this rhetoric also needed to include opacity in the sense that the reason for Rustin’s resignation, Powell’s threat, could not become the public account of the alteration. Yet, the exit of a prominent member of SCLC’s leadership did require a public justification and explanation. To satisfy this need, Rustin penned a resignation letter that he publicly published in the *Pittsburg Courier* on July 9, 1960.<sup>38</sup> In offering the account of his resignation, Rustin needed to avoid mentioning sexuality because the revelation of his identity could still trigger a panic about his identity, which could both distract from the civil rights struggle and tarnish the reputation of King and the SCLC. The following analysis details how Rustin’s resignation letter negotiated his need to justify his

resignation, to respond to Powell's public criticism of him, while simultaneously supporting the SCLC and avoiding the revelation of his identity.

*Rustin's Resignation: Promoting Values and Affirming the Movement*

To respond to the complex situation in which Rustin found himself, he utilized tactics of opacity, enabling him to hide his sexuality and downplay the risks of the revelation of his sexual identity. Specifically, as this section illustrates, Rustin framed Powell's accusation in a manner that drew attention to Powell and his need to act, diverting attention away from Rustin's resignation. Moreover, Rustin's resignation, in its defense of his contributions to the movement, cultivated a value trajectory based on duty to the collective, personal sacrifice for communal betterment, and unity. The value trajectory encouraged support for King, SCLC, and the movement, even as Rustin withdrew from an official position in the organization. Emphasizing unity as a significant value furthermore discouraged members of the organization from creating internal division, for instance by revealing discrediting information about an individual devoted to the cause.

The way Rustin's resignation letter defined Powell's critique of Rustin's involvement with King enabled Rustin's response to hide the fact of Powell's threat, yet called attention to Powell's action, which could help ensure that potential supporters of King would remain unaware of Rustin's sexual orientation. Rustin's deflection started with defining the accusations against him in terms related to the effectiveness and divisiveness of his involvement in SCLC, which offered an explanation not based in terms of sexuality for why he might decide to step down from his position. He wrote:

Congressman Powell has indicated that my association with Dr. King is divisive of the Negro leadership. I cannot permit a situation to endure in which my relationship to Dr.

King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is used to confuse and becloud the basic issues confronting the Negro people today.<sup>39</sup>

In this passage, Rustin simultaneously directed his readers to focus on both Powell's actions and the everyday challenges faced by African-American individuals. Deflecting attention by reminding readers of the importance of the movement and promoting civil rights to aid marginalized communities established a priority for readers to continue pursuing the movement's goals—a pursuit that did not include closely inspecting Rustin's reasons for resigning. Furthermore, defining the charge against him as about being “divisive” satisfied Rustin's need to produce an explanation for his resignation that did not disclose the threat about revealing his sexuality. Providing this explanation while promoting the need for clarity on the “basic issues” offered his readers a path to move past his resignation. Discouraging readers from lingering on his resignation importantly also operated to move the discussion beyond his resignation and the potential revelation that Rustin needed to resign because of Powell's threat toward future challenges.

As Rustin foregrounded his resignation in ways that sidestepped his sexuality, he also utilized a temporal shift, pushing readers to focus on the future as opposed to the present, to place the focus and burden of action onto Powell. This shift invited his readers to attune to Powell's next moves as opposed to pondering Rustin's resignation. Rustin contended, “Congressman Powell has suggested that I am an obstacle to his giving full, enthusiastic support to Dr. King. I want now to remove that obstacle. I have resigned as Dr. King's special assistant and severed relations with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.”<sup>40</sup> According to Rustin's explanation, Powell's lack of support for King constituted a sufficient reason for Rustin to leave his position; this explanation addressed Rustin's exigence of justifying his exit. Through



this justification, Rustin enthymematically encouraged both Powell to provide his “full, enthusiastic support” and his readers to expect to witness Powell doing so. Framing his resignation as the removal of an obstacle promoted the expectation that Powell would follow by acting to support King.

Rustin’s resignation letter makes explicit the desire that Powell would back King. Rustin wrote, “I sincerely hope that in the light of my resignation Mr. Powell will now see his way clear to lend his special talents to the building of such a movement and to the support of Dr. King and other leaders in the South who are on the firing line.”<sup>41</sup> Encouraging Powell to act and readers to hold him accountable to do so served at least three functions. First, it shifted attention away from Rustin, which helped keep information about his sexuality hidden from potential supporters. Rustin invited readers to focus on Powell, which would lessen their attention to deducing Rustin’s queer reason for resigning. Second, it circulated the assumption that people will naturally support King and the objectives of the SCLC if people remove barriers to their participation. Even as Rustin removed himself from the organization, he promoted the continuation of its efforts. Such a framing reinforced the expectation that readers should now anticipate supportive action from Powell and that they should act to support King or remove barriers to participation in efforts to obtain civil rights. Third, it complicated Powell’s ability to act upon his threat of suggesting King and Rustin were romantic partners, discouraging him from doing so. By defining Powell’s accusation in a way that did not concern sexuality, Rustin’s rhetoric raised Powell’s burden of explanation should he choose to act in any way other than supporting King. As such, Rustin’s resignation both encouraged Powell to support King and not to act on his threat, which shifted the risk that Powell might work to undermine King’s moral

*persona* to an expectation that Powell would lead his support to King and thus King's moral authority.

As Rustin's resignation deflected attention away from the queer reason for his exit from SCLC, it also promoted the need for unity among black leaders. Encouraging unity urged readers to prepare for future action from the whole rather than disputes happening in the present. For instance, Rustin wrote, "Internal wrangling must cease. Let us get on with the job! It is by this conception, and this conception alone, that I have been motivated to resign."<sup>42</sup> Defining his resignation as about ending present disputes asked his readers likewise to determine what they could do to push the movement forward toward solving problems as opposed to lingering on internal disputes. This framing encouraged readers to consider what needed to occur to advance the interests of the movement and the community and how they could participate in assisting those efforts rather than linger on questions of present disputes. Foregrounding the needs of readers to ponder the future provided yet another layer of deflection away from the present disputes about Rustin's relationship with King.

Calling for unity encouraged action while also identifying that the whole of the community remained greater than the individuals who comprised the community. Characterizing the community as strong and unstoppable, if it remained unified, positioned readers as having the responsibility to maintain unity regardless of whatever individual actions they would need to undertake to do so. As promoting unity helped Rustin justify his resignation from SCLC to avoid internal division, it also positioned both Powell and his readers as needing to work toward unity; continuing to disparage or threaten Rustin or King would not rise to the occasion or promote unity. Rustin contended,

Mr. Powell has stated that the only thing that can stop the forward march of the Negro is a “lack of unity, or division, within its ranks.” Who can take issue with this point? Surely, unity of the Negro leadership is of the larger importance than any single individual or single relationship of individuals. No one who sincerely works for the freedom of our people could possibly permit himself to stand in the way of this prime consideration.<sup>43</sup>

In this passage, Rustin framed Powell as already agreeing with the value of unity, which positioned Powell as needing to continue to promote unity after Rustin’s resignation. Such a framing placed Powell in a situation in which he should move forward and promote unity, not engage in any further action that might risk division. Valuing unity aided Rustin in navigating the potential that his sexuality would be used for individual disruption, such as continued threats by Powell, because it focused attention on the leadership’s need to continue working together to create change and implicated Powell, by his own words, in that need.

Moreover, empowering the leadership by articulating its collective strength further encouraged working together to promote action in the future. For action to occur, stakeholders generally must view their participation as both worthwhile and necessary or believe that they have a duty to act.<sup>44</sup> Rustin articulated that leadership remaining united and energized was indispensable to challenging segregation. He contended,

We have made progress. But the final victory cannot be won until we have mobilized the great numbers of our people to take direct action against all political, economic and social agencies that sanction Jim Crow. When all of our leaders give themselves energetically and unreservedly to this principle, our struggle will be truly invincible.<sup>45</sup>

Rustin’s declaration that having leaders working energetically together could result in an invincible movement invited his readers to view themselves as potentially a crucial part of an

effective and strong community capable of creating change. Such a statement, combined with the viewpoint that many people would need to act, highlighted how the community could achieve additional gains through a utilization of its potential energy and large pool of supporters. In conjunction with his promotion of the value of unity, Rustin's statement conditioned the effectiveness and strength of communal action on unity, which solidified the significance of cooperative leadership, as opposed to individualistic motives for leaders. More importantly, the promotion of unity and articulating strength through unity promoted continued efforts to obtain advances in civil rights regardless of the individuals currently slated as official leaders of movement organizations. In this manner, the way Rustin crafted this value trajectory transcended the specific time and rhetor, offering a durable path forward where a trajectory based on personal consistency could not. That is, Rustin privileged continued action and support for SCLC even as he justified his departure. He did this by promoting the value of unity.

In addition to promoting unity, Rustin defended his character by articulating the individual sacrifices that he had made for communal betterment, which worked to instill the importance of placing the collective good above personal gain or loss. Highlighting the principle of putting community ahead of self, as evidenced by individual sacrifice, encouraged his readers to continue contributing to desegregation efforts, providing those readers with ways in which they could participate. Rustin stated, "Twenty-two arrests in the North and South, including time on a North Carolina chain-gang in the course of fighting Jim Crow, are the recorded measure of my dedication, not to political power, but to the ideals of our struggle."<sup>46</sup> Although Rustin drew on his sacrifice to boost and defend himself, his discussion of his arrests provided a model for how others might contribute to the movement. Emphasizing individual devotion and sacrifice for the cause crafted authority for Rustin as he established the significance of his contributions to

SCLC. Moreover, showcasing his individual sacrifices, in terms of his arrest record, provided a model to his readers concerning how they might engage and participate in the struggle to end segregation and to advance the cause of civil rights.<sup>47</sup>

Rustin furthermore implied that maintaining a particular position in a movement organization failed to capture one's individual commitment to the collective, contending, "Those who have worked with me during my 20 years in the movement, [sic] know that I have never sought high position or special privilege, but have always made myself available on the call of the leadership."<sup>48</sup> In calling attention to his 20 years of service to the movement, Rustin furthered his appeal to his authority based on his commitment and dedication. His promotion of being available to the needs of the leadership of the movement also framed him as a willing servant, someone who would do whatever the movement needed him to do to promote its objectives. Combined, these two appeals illuminated how he could remove himself from his position as King's advisor and still support the aims of King and the SCLC. He did not need a high-level position to remain open, available, and supportive of desegregation and civil rights advocacy. Importantly, this modelled to others who did not have an official title or role in SCLC that they too could support and aid the movement and SCLC through their own forms of devotion and sacrifice. The promotion of the value of communal betterment ahead of individual benefit reinforced the belief that individuals should continue or begin their own efforts to help secure civil rights for their community.

### **Defending Rustin in 1963**

*The March on Washington's Queer Constraint*

After Rustin's resignation and although he was no longer formally a part of the leadership of the SCLC, he continued to provide informal personal and strategic advice to King from 1960 to 1962. Rustin's main connection to the civil rights struggle during this time centered around his advisory role to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Rustin would speak about the movement at colleges and universities.<sup>49</sup> Because of Rustin's influence with SNCC, King's relationship with Rustin proved fortuitous, enabling King to connect with leaders of the student movement. All the while, Rustin remained in contact with Randolph, an experienced organizer and activist. In 1962, a conversation between Randolph and Rustin sparked the idea of a massive march in the nation's capital—a march to address the economic injustices faced by American Americans.<sup>50</sup> This idea would develop into the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and King would deliver his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on this occasion.

In the formulation and planning stage of this event, Rustin's sexuality again surfaced as a constraint that the organizers of the march and the leaders of movement organizations would need to navigate. John Lewis, SNCC leader and future congressman, would later recall the concern about Rustin's sexuality in a 2010 interview. He stated that discussion persisted among movement leaders about whether "Rustin should be the director of the march."<sup>51</sup> The reason for concern, according to Lewis, was that "members of the Senate, especially Southerners, would try to smear the march" using Rustin's sexuality.<sup>52</sup> One of the march's planners, Roy Wilkins, opposed Rustin serving as director of the march. According to William P. Jones, "Wilkins attempted to block Randolph from naming Bayard Rustin the official director of the march on the grounds that his communist past and homosexuality would discredit the mobilization."<sup>53</sup> Randolph supported Rustin's participation in planning the event, so he "outmaneuvered Wilkins

by agreeing to serve as director and then appointing Rustin to act as deputy director.”<sup>54</sup>

Internally, Rustin’s sexuality caused concern among organizers as they remained concerned that his arrest record and sexuality would emerge and discredit the march and its objectives.

These concerns came to fruition when Senator Thurmond attacked Rustin, using his arrest record to discredit the march and the movement. On August 13, only two weeks ahead of the August 28 March on Washington, Thurmond rose to speak on the Senate floor. Historian Daniel Levine articulated that, using documents and reports provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and its director J. Edgar Hoover, Thurmond demeaned Rustin’s character, calling him a “draft dodger, a former communist, and a person without personal morality, by which he meant homosexual.”<sup>55</sup> According to Long, Thurmond “outed Rustin as a gay man, and a convicted one at that, to the entire nation, or at least those who read national newspapers, in an effort to discredit the march and its goals for racial justice.”<sup>56</sup> The public pronouncement of Rustin’s sexuality constituted a queer constraint in that the organizers of the march would need to respond to the accusation of immorality as evidenced by the sexuality of its leader and Thurmond’s implication that the movement failed to maintain moral integrity. Two weeks before the march, Rustin’s sexuality erupted as a constraint on the movement and its rhetoric.

Unlike Rustin’s queer constraint of 1960, the constraint in 1963 explicitly and publicly emphasized Rustin’s sexuality. In both cases, Rustin’s sexuality constituted a constraint. However, in 1960, the rhetorical appeals worked to distract public attention away from Rustin’s sexuality, aiming to avoid disclosure in the first place. In 1963, Thurmond’s public revelation curtailed the ability of King, Rustin, and the rest of the organizers to implement the same strategy. Historian John D’Emilio compared the two situations, writing:

In 1960, the conflict with Adam Clayton Powell rippled through the nation's press, but the substance remained unnamed. Thurmond made the labeling process clear and ubiquitous. He named Rustin a sexual pervert in the *Congressional Record*, and newspapers across the country gave the story play. Not of his own choosing, Rustin had become perhaps the most visible homosexual in America at a time when few gay men or lesbians aspired to any public attention.<sup>57</sup>

The clarity of Thurmond's accusation and the implication of the accusation undermined the ability of Rustin and his allies to maintain course and hold the march without a response. Thurmond's use of Rustin's arrest records limited the ability of Rustin and his fellow organizers to deny or deflect from the claims of his sexuality identity. For example, after Thurmond outed Rustin on the Senate floor, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article referencing Thurmond's speech and stating that "Rustin was convicted in Pasadena, Cal., in 1953 on a morals charge after being arrested with two other men."<sup>58</sup> Under the large and bold title "Calls Rustin Convicted Pervert," the article also included quotations from Thurmond's speech such as "the conviction was sex perversion and a subsequent arrest of vagrancy and lewdness. Mr. Rustin pleaded guilty to the sex perversion charge."<sup>59</sup> The circulation of Thurmond's charge stymied the ability of the organizers to simply ignore the Senate floor speech. Moreover, the explicit nature of Thurmond's claims about Rustin's orientation and their distribution made it much more difficult for the march's leadership to respond by working to undermine the public circulation of information related to Rustin's identity. This queer constraint required a careful and nuanced rhetoric that would help maintain the movement's moral authority and justify the continuation of the march despite Thurmond's attack.



Significantly, the way in which the leadership responded to Thurmond arguably serves as a model for how a community can defend a member under attack and how a movement can navigate oppositional forces seeking to discredit its efforts with distractions. Writing about the members of the march's leadership and their response to Thurmond's condemnation of Rustin, D'Emilio argued:

Rarely in American public life had anyone been so overtly labeled a homosexual and survived the attack. Because the accusation was so public, because it was leveled by a white supremacist, and because it came just two weeks before an event on which the movement was banking so much, civil rights leaders had to rally to Rustin's defense.<sup>60</sup>

Not only did Rustin survive the incident, but the march would become one of the hallmark moments of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. Moreover, according to Levine, after leaders rallied to Rustin's defense and after the march, Rustin became "such a public figure that King did not have to hide the association."<sup>61</sup> The march's success, Rustin becoming a public figure, and his survival after the attack all evidenced the success in how leaders defended Rustin. To illuminate this fruitful model concerning how a community can defend one of its members and how a movement can defend itself against unfriendly critique, the following section will analyze the rhetoric that the movement used to mount a defense of Rustin, to highlight his moral character, and to defend the march from disparagement.

#### *Responding to Thurmond: Defenders Use Rustin's Values*

After Thurmond's revealing speech on the Senate floor, movement leaders publicly defended Rustin in a manner that worked to minimize the potentially negative influence of his sexuality and fostered additional moral authority for the march. The movement leaders, such as Randolph, promoted similar values that Rustin utilized in his 1960 resignation, values that Rustin

upheld that also warranted his positive integrity and character. In addition to defending Rustin based on his devotion and willingness to sacrifice for communal betterment, Randolph encouraged potential supporters to evaluate moral authority based on present commitment as opposed to past actions, which emphasized Rustin's ongoing contributions to the movement and community and deemphasized his past arrest. Focusing on the present also enabled movement leaders to highlight Thurmond's actions, further diverting attention from Rustin.

After Thurmond outed him, Rustin's initial statement provided a rubric by which members of the public could evaluate his character. As Rustin called for reflection about his character, he did so by encouraging people to form their opinions based on his entire life and by listening to other leaders of the movement. Mentioning other leaders of the movement worked to reestablish the moral authority of the movement based on what potential supporters thought of the other leaders' characters, a risky strategy as those potential support might have perceived the other leaders' characters in negative light based on their support of Rustin. In referencing the moral authority of other march organizers and broadening the scope of the metrics by which his audience might judge him, Rustin enabled his defense to center on his overall character, not his arrest for same-sex sexual conduct. A *New York Times* article reported Rustin as having said:

An individual involved in a character charge cannot deal with it himself [ . . . ] This must be done by my peers who as you know are the Christian ministers of the Negro communities and the civil rights leaders. They have the responsibility for the moral and Christian leadership of the Negro people. Character is a matter of judgment within the context of a whole life. It is for my peers to judge me and my life.<sup>62</sup>

In this statement, Rustin relinquished the authority to judge his character to his peers and, importantly, his fellow activists and organizers. As Rustin stated, his fellow civil rights leaders

represented Christian ministers, who represented formal moral authority for many. Highlighting the work of other members of the march's leadership diminished Rustin's role in the march and cultivated authority for the march based on others' characters not just his own. A second significant aspect of this statement involves how Rustin widened the scope of how one should evaluate his character. Rustin encouraged his audience to examine his entire life, which worked to minimize the centrality of the sodomy arrest in the judgement of his character. Reminding his audience that they could judge him on his entire life and entire record should serve as the basis for determining that Rustin retained moral character and authority despite the charges that Thurmond levied against him.

Widening the scope of how people might judge Rustin's character enabled a more robust defense of Rustin because it enabled other leaders to draw on the many examples of Rustin's dedication and devotion to civil rights as evidence of his character. Strikingly, Randolph drew on the values of unity, devotion, and individual sacrifice for the communal good in his defense of Rustin, echoing the values that Rustin used to explain his resignation in 1960. In this case, Rustin's devotion and sacrifices for his community served as warrants for Rustin's continued moral credibility and authority. Randolph's statement in defense of Rustin explicitly developed this argument:

I am sure I speak for the combined Negro leadership in voicing my complete confidence in Bayard Rustin's character, integrity, and extraordinary ability. Twenty-two arrests in the fight for civil rights attest, in my mind, to Mr. Rustin's dedication to high human ideals.<sup>63</sup>

Randolph emphasized that the "combined" members of the leadership to display the march's organizers as unified in their defense of Rustin. Reminiscent of both Powell's and Rustin's

claims that a unified front would constitute an unstoppable force, the framing of the response to Thurmond's charges created the impression that the leaders would not fracture under this threat, highlighting the strength and determination of the leaders to carry out the march.

Moreover, Randolph situated this unity as grounded in support of the values of dedication and devotion, which served as evidence of Rustin's moral credence and proved that the movement would protect its members from outside criticism and attack. In a statement that also resounded in Rustin's 1960 resignation, Randolph explicitly stated the number of arrests that Rustin experienced as a part of his civil rights activism. Articulations of Rustin's sacrifice for civil rights also circulated through the *New York Times* article. Author M. S. Handler wrote, "Mr. Rustin served 28 days in a Hillsboro, N. C., chain gang for a civil rights action in 1947."<sup>64</sup> An anonymous aide reportedly stated that "Rustin had redeemed himself many times with his record of achievement."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Handler reported that King defended Rustin based on Rustin's "abilities and achievements."<sup>66</sup> The *New York Herald Tribune* also reported, "Arrested more than 25 times in the South for his role in the civil rights fight, Mr. Rustin said he once spent 30 days on a North Carolina chain gang."<sup>67</sup> These statements featured Rustin's sacrifices, dedication, and contributions to communal betterment as warrants for Rustin's overall moral authority and character. The reasoning followed a belief that someone who would sacrifice so much for others must retain some moral integrity; sacrifice displayed integrity. Focusing on Rustin's service and sacrifice to community therefore served as the rationale by which members of the community could continue to support him after Thurmond attempted to assassinate his character. Importantly, the circulation of Rustin's sacrificial model showed others that they too could sacrifice for the movement and be supported, even if imperfect. The vigorous defense of Rustin shows potential supporters that if they risked reputation to serve the community that the

community would back them should they face criticism. Demonstrating that dedication and commitment, even sacrifice, would be protected by the movement's leadership lowered barriers to participation for those who would risk reputation and more to join the efforts.

Randolph's defense of Rustin also included a temporal shift, which encouraged audience members to focus on present actions and contributions as opposed to past deeds. Shifting toward present action magnified Rustin's dedication and commitment to community and reassured potential supporters that they could participate in civil rights actions even if they did not have a faultless past. Alluding to Rustin's sodomy arrest but not explicitly naming the event, Randolph stated, "There are those who contend that this incident, which took place many years ago, voids or overwhelms Mr. Rustin's ongoing contribution to the struggle for human rights. I hold otherwise."<sup>68</sup> Moreover, one of the aides for the march noted "that the conviction was 10 years old."<sup>69</sup> These statements reoriented potential contributors and those who would assess the authority of Rustin to examine his current efforts to aid his community. Foregrounding the present encouraged audience members to value Rustin's current contributions to the movement and believe that those contributions should matter more than an arrest record from a decade prior. Even if these statements did not expunge Rustin's arrest, they created a framework in which audience members could conclude that Rustin retained good moral character because of his present actions. That is, these comments suggested that people can evolve and change, which also modelled to potential supporters with imperfect pasts that they could still, like Rustin, contribute significantly to the movement and should still view themselves as having moral credence.

Including the temporal shift furthermore enabled Rustin's defenders to frame Thurmond's present actions as immoral and unethical, which encouraged audience members to

oppose the Senator and his agenda in favor of the current, moral agenda of Rustin and his allies. For example, Randolph's rhetoric redirected the focus of the situation toward Thurmond's present and, according to Randolph, suspicious actions. He explained:

I am dismayed that there are in this country men who, wrapping themselves in the mantle of Christian morality, would mutilate the most elementary conceptions of human decency, privacy, and humility in order to persecute other men. We are not fooled, however, into believing that these men are interested in Mr. Rustin. They seek only to discredit the movement.<sup>70</sup>

Randolph's statement flipped the accusation of moral indecency back on Thurmond, arguing that his attack "mutilated" what should constitute Christian and moral action. Framing Thurmond's critique as an unethical act encouraged potential supporters to ignore and discount Thurmond's charges, implying that people should not accept the charges of someone who lacked the moral integrity to judge others' moral authority. Providing cover for Rustin, Randolph's forceful reorientation of the situation prompted audience members to oppose Thurmond and his agenda of discrediting the movement, not dwell on the substance of Thurmond's accusations.

Furthermore, one of the aides portrayed Thurmond's character assassination of Rustin as an ongoing effort to disparage the integrity of all the march's leaders. The aide stated, "They can't get Randolph, they can't get King, they can't get Wilkins—so they go after Rustin."<sup>71</sup> The aide's contention framed Thurmond and his allies as embarking on a haphazard campaign to discredit the movement by finding any small piece of information to do so. As such, the aide painted Thurmond's critique within a context of a politically motivated and biased attempt, which encouraged audience members to ponder Thurmond's motivation for the criticism as opposed to inspecting the elements of the criticism against Rustin. Echoing how Rustin's 1960

resignation deflected attention to the actions of others, this statement focused consideration on Thurmond, not Rustin. Furthermore, this statement implied that the leadership of the march remained exemplary moral leaders, because Thurmond could not find discrediting material about their moral character. Without denying the accusation against Rustin, this statement solidified the credibility of the march's leadership. Focusing the audience's attention on the present as opposed to past actions enabled march organizers to deflect attention away from Rustin's past action and towards Thurmond's current immoral behavior, helping buttress the moral authority of the leadership and thus the march.

Rustin's 1960 resignation rhetoric and the rhetoric used in his 1963 defense retained several similar substantive and formal characteristics. First, both texts employed the opaque rhetoric of deflection. As Rustin encouraged readers to attune to and reflect upon Powell's actions, those who came to Rustin's defense promoted potential supporters to focus on Thurmond's strategy of maligning the movement. Both maneuvers worked to minimize and provide cover for Rustin's sexuality in a way that aimed to maintain credibility for Rustin, his work, and the movement. Second, echoing the values affirmed in Rustin's resignation, the ardent defense of Rustin centered on the value of unity, dedication, and sacrifice, which also included the promotion of collective betterment ahead of the individual. These values held the trajectory of Rustin's activism and the aims of the movement together, even after Thurmond "outed" Rustin and threatened to derail the moral character developed by the movement. As the next section will trace, as Rustin advocacy moved from his civil rights work in the 1960s to his GLBTQ rights advocacy in the 1980s, the trajectory of this activism remained held together through a constituent promotion of the values appealed to in his resignation and defense.

## From Opacity to Visibility: Tracing Rustin’s Value Trajectory through Coming Out

After the March on Washington, Rustin continued his advocacy career and, over the decades that followed, he spoke about many issues including poverty, racial equality, gay rights, and global human rights issues. Later in his career, Rustin would highlight the similarities among the plight of many different groups and how those similarities fostered similar “revolutionary beginnings” to movements and campaigns for social change.<sup>72</sup> Based on his vast experience with racial justice, social justice, and human rights organizing, it might initially be difficult to observe how core beliefs flowed through Rustin’s efforts. Yet, Carbado and Weise argued that his extensive advocacy centered on certain central values. For instance, they wrote, “Renewed attention to Bayard’s life and ideals might help bring greater attention to the common thread in all of these struggles—the value of *human* rights.”<sup>73</sup> In this section, I detail how affirmation of values animated the trajectory of Rustin’s rhetoric, which helped solidify the consistency of this trajectory when *persona* could not. In the 1980s, Rustin’s *persona* once again radically shifted as he “became publicly vocal about his homosexuality.”<sup>74</sup> In their description of this period of Rustin’s advocacy, Carbado and Weise explained that “his ‘coming out’ in the national press of the 1980s marked an important transition.”<sup>75</sup> To illuminate the value trajectory that guided Rustin’s advocacy as he navigated different situation, audiences, and times, I highlight several of the appeals Rustin made during the 1980s and about GLBTQ rights that, value-wise, echo Rustin’s resignation rhetoric and the rhetoric used to defend Rustin after Thurmond attacked his character. Specifically, Rustin’s rhetoric: (1) promoted the values of devotion and sacrifice for others, (2) instilled the necessity of commitment to communal betterment and societal transformation, and (3) encouraged unity among GLBTQ people and among various marginalized communities.



Rustin's GLBTQ rights rhetoric emphasized the need for gay people to persist through difficulty to foment change in a way that resonated the call for dedication, devotion, and sacrifice of his 1960s rhetoric. Rustin's GLBTQ rights rhetoric specifically referenced his arrest record for fighting for civil rights to cultivate authority, as his resignation letter did in 1960 and his defenders did in 1963. In a 1987 statement opposing the weakening of non-discrimination legislation in New York City, Rustin contended:

As one who has been active in the struggle to extend democracy to all Americans for over fifty years I am opposed to any attempt to amend the recently enacted law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. I have been arrested twenty-four times in the struggle for civil and human rights. My first arrest was in 1928 merely for distributing leaflets on the behalf of Al Smith's candidacy for President in a climate of anti-Catholic hysteria.<sup>76</sup>

Rustin's statement showcased his arrests, sacrifices, and fight as not only action that would benefit him personally but as efforts to push toward human rights for all, another marker of positive character. In addition to revealing Rustin's extensive devotion and willingness to sacrifice, this passage framed his devotion and sacrifices to a broad agenda; this agenda centered on the universal advancement of civil and human rights. The way Rustin framed his dedication to a broad agenda provided a model for how audience members might respond to any social ill or lack of civil rights. This model, built on the need for individuals to sacrifice and devote themselves to continual progress toward ensuring civil and human rights for all, functioned to cultivate commitment to the process of advocating for all, justifying engagement in the public arena regardless of which community that fight might assist. In a declaration that compared the gay rights struggle to other human rights struggles, Rustin contended:

There are four burdens, which gays, along with every other despised group, whether it is blacks following slavery and reconstruction, or Jews fearful of Germany, must address.

The first is to recognize that one must overcome fear. The second is overcoming self-hate. The third is overcoming self-denial. The fourth burden is more political.<sup>77</sup>

This passage's reference to connections between burden and progress implied the unavoidability and value of sacrifice in fostering social change. The repetition of the four burdens also created an impression that one would need to struggle through these "burdens," highlighting the need to devotion and dedication to overcome all the burdens faced by marginalized and oppressed groups. The way Rustin compared "every" despised community established the need for willingness to sacrifice and devote oneself to transformation in the context of GLBTQ rights but also solidified the values of devotion and sacrifice universally as necessary to fostering change.

As such, an appeal to the universality of the values of devotion, dedication, and sacrifice animated the connection across Rustin's advocacy work, even when his *persona* radically shifted to that of an out, gay man. More specifically, Rustin explained that social change constituted a "job" both during the civil rights movement and during the movement for GLBTQ rights. He claimed, "That's our job today: to control the extent to which people can publicly manifest antigay sentiment."<sup>78</sup> The repetition of advocacy as a job showcased for his audience that they needed to prepare themselves to expend energy and commit labor to the movement. Such a framing recirculated the value of sacrifice for the collective betterment as a duty for gay Americans. The call to sacrifice operated to empower members of his audience members as they retained control over their ability to commit themselves, their time, and their energy to fostering change.

By warning about the hardships that potential members of the GLBTQ community would face in executing their duty to push for inclusion, Rustin prepared his audience to give of self and to face challenges in their campaigns to expand rights to GLBTQ individuals. For example, Rustin warned that fighting for GLBTQ rights “will not be easy, in part because homosexuality remains an identity that is subject to a ‘we/they’ distinction.”<sup>79</sup> Rustin also contended, “We have to fight for legislation wherever we are, to state our case clearly, as blacks had to do in the South when it was profoundly uncomfortable.”<sup>80</sup> In both of these statements, Rustin highlighted the struggles that members of the GLBTQ community would face for their advocacy work, which equipped them with the knowledge of how they would have to risk and sacrifice as part of their campaign to ensure GLBTQ equality; they would have to risk comfort and reputation during their efforts. Yet, referencing the civil rights struggle in the South highlighted that, as a community, GLBTQ individuals could successfully coalesce around their objectives of advancing GLBTQ rights to effectively promote change while enduring the risk associated with advocacy. Rustin explicitly referenced antilynching campaigns to demonstrate this point. He stated, “The NAACP worked for sixty years to get an antilynch law in this country.”<sup>81</sup> This example showcased how much dedication and devotion may be necessary to ensure social change. The continual sixty years of efforts to end lynching highlighted that the GLBTQ community would need to persist and continue working to foment social transformation through long periods of time. Thus, the historical references evidenced that placing oneself at risk of losing reputation or giving to the collective could prove to be worth the effort if one remained dedicated to facing the challenges that emerge when pushing for change. Such appeals prepared GLBTQ individuals for the challenges they would face, which would also equip them to overcome those trials with sacrifice and dedication.

Furthermore, Rustin’s later rhetoric reaffirmed the significance of efforts to ensure communal and societal betterment, placing the collective good ahead of individual comfort. Specifically, Rustin indicated that the GLBTQ community had a duty to fight for its rights, not only for itself but for society. For example, Rustin framed the gay rights movements as synecdochic of the overall health of democracy; according to this perspective, GLBTQ individuals had to advocate for their rights to advance the interests of democracy. Rustin made this argument on at least two occasions. During the first, he stated, “That’s what makes our struggle the central struggle of our time, the central struggle of democracy and the central struggle for human rights. If gay people do not understand that, they do not understand the terrifying burdens they carry on their shoulders.”<sup>82</sup> On the second occasion, he explained, “I would like to be very hard with the gay community, not for the sake of being hard, but to make clear that, because we stand in the center of progress toward democracy, we have a terrifying responsibility to the whole society.”<sup>83</sup> Rustin’s appeal centered on commitment to the greater and societal good. GLBTQ people had the duty to advocate for change to preserve the quality of the democracy in the United States; the success or failure of their struggle would showcase the success or failure of America’s democratic experiment.

Framing the situation in terms of duty to others furthermore provided a rationale to join the movement and continue working to foster a more inclusive society even after obtaining initial civil rights victories for GLBTQ individuals. For instance, Rustin argued, “The gay community cannot work for justice for itself alone. Unless the community fights for *all*, it is fighting for nobody, least of all for itself.”<sup>84</sup> In addition, Rustin connected this duty to “fight for all” to the necessity for GLBTQ individuals to start being or remain politically active. Rustin explained:

Gay people should recognize that we cannot fight for the rights of gays unless we are ready to fight for a new mood in the United States, unless we are ready to fight for a radicalization of this society. You will not feed people *à la* the philosophy of the Reagan administration. Do you really think it's possible for gays to get civil rights in that kind of society? Do you really think that a society that deprives students of food will confer rights to gay people?<sup>85</sup>

By highlighting the interrelatedness of economic and social struggles, Rustin urged the gay individuals to focus on both and recognize that their struggle for equal rights could not remain separate from other political struggles. Such a framing provided the motive to help others and place societal needs and other communal needs ahead of or with the needs of the gay community. Rustin's promotion of working for justice for all functioned to connect the gay civil rights struggle to larger human rights and social justice efforts, encouraging gay individuals to continue campaigning for rights for all and not only for their own community. Significantly, Rustin's words worked to inoculate gay individuals from becoming inactive, complacent, or complicit regarding other economic and social issues, even if GLBTQ communities did obtain legislative victories. The duty to others could propel and motivate the GLBTQ community to remain engaged politically if society did not reach justice for all. Under Rustin's framing, because gay individuals could not ensure equal protections for themselves unless they also satisfied their duty to society and other communities, they needed to become active in other economic and social justice struggles, motivating and rationalizing that action. The echoed value of collective betterment and placing others' needs ahead of one's own needs enabled Rustin to justify GLBTQ political activism on a broad array of economic and social justice issues.

In addition to recirculating the value of collective good and commitment to communal betterment, Rustin’s GLBTQ rights rhetoric showcased the value of unity both in terms of cultivating a unified GLBTQ community and working toward unity between the GLBTQ community and other marginalized and advocacy groups. Rustin’s repeated and frequent use of collective pronouns promoted unity in the GLBTQ community. His rhetoric referenced “our job” and “our aim,”<sup>86</sup> which positioned the community as needing to remain unified around the objectives of GLBTQ equality. The common use of “we” in Rustin’s rhetoric situated GLBTQ individuals as needing to work together as a collective: “we have to fight”<sup>87</sup> and “we stand in the center of progress.”<sup>88</sup> Rustin employed the pronoun “us” to highlight the collective risk that GLBTQ individuals shared. He claimed, “the job of the gay community is not to deal with extremists who would castrate us or put us on an island and drop an H-bomb on us.”<sup>89</sup> Situating GLBTQ individuals as under threat of extermination motivated partaking in community to remain safe in a dangerous social landscape. Together, using the collective pronouns “our,” “we,” and “us,” Rustin enacted the value of unity, positioning GLBTQ individuals into a coalesced whole that shared duties, goals, aspirations, and threats. In addition, Rustin’s rhetoric challenged GLBTQ people to reflect on the community and ensure the community remained inclusive of all people, regardless especially of race. In writing of the responsibilities of gay people, Rustin suggested that “gay people should not practice prejudice. It is inconsistent for gay people to be anti-Semitic or racist.”<sup>90</sup> He also argued, “Gay people should look not only at what people are doing to us but also what we are doing to each other.”<sup>91</sup> Encouraging GLBTQ individuals to examine how the community treated its members encouraged the self-reflection necessary to ensure that the community remained inclusive of and open to others—that is, unified. By explicitly naming barriers to unity in terms of anti-Semitism and racism, Rustin

circulated awareness about the need to actively guard against threats to a collective and inclusive community. Underlying this caution against racism and the promotion of self-reflectively was an overarching belief in the unity of the community and sanctity of all rights to inclusivity. On a whole, the repetition of collective pronouns and the warning of the threat of disunity framed GLBTQ individuals as members of a collective, cultivating a communal identity and securing that communal image from degradation.

The value of unity also undergirded Rustin's appeals to develop and maintain coalitions to address societal ills. In developing a rationale for why GLBTQ individuals should work to cultivate justice for all, Rustin also encouraged coalitional advocacy, connecting the need for alliances with the political urgency of opposing the Reagan administration. The promotion of political alliances offered members of the GLBTQ community an understanding of their improved political strength should they branch out to work with other communities and advocacy groups. Rustin started his explanation by stating, "I think the most important thing I have to say is that they should try to build coalitions of people for the elimination of *all* injustice."<sup>92</sup> Rustin continued his rationale for coalitional work with the following argument:

And we will win the rights for gays, or blacks, or Hispanics, or women within the context of whether we are fighting for all. A good example of this is the present Reagan administration. If anyone thinks they're going to get anything out of the Reagan administration for any particular group, they're wrong! You have to all combine and fight a head-on battle—in the name of justice and equality—and even that's going to be difficult. But if we let ourselves get separated so that we're working for gays or school children or the aged, we're in trouble.<sup>93</sup>

In this passage, Rustin associated unity of many diverse people with political strength. Encouraging coalitional work offered GLBTQ community members a strategy through which they might advance their own interests if and as they worked together with others to advance an agenda of justice and equality for all. Highlighting the potential connection with other groups through the opposition to Reagan's agenda empowered alliances that might have a better chance of fostering widespread social change. As Rustin emphasized the strength of unity to make possible action in his 1960 resignation letter, drawing on unity served a similar function in his GLBTQ rights advocacy. Highlighting that people could obtain strength through numbers encouraged and empowered coalitional advocacy efforts.

Echoing his 1960 resignation rhetoric and the movement's defense of him in 1963, Rustin's GLBTQ rights advocacy drew on the values of sacrifice, commitment, and unity. Throughout his advocacy work, these values constituted a trajectory that warranted social change and justified the cultivation of inclusive communities. Even though Rustin's *persona* and apparent identity dramatically shifted over the course of his advocacy, the cluster of these values held the progression of his efforts together and animated his continued endeavors to secure human rights for all.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter's central focus involved tracing Rustin's rhetorical career to highlight one specific model for how opaque rhetorics can productively animate social change and cultivate community: value trajectories. Throughout his extensive history as an advocate, Rustin and his allies had to navigate the potential scandal of the revelation of his sexual identity. On two specific occasions in the 1960s, Rustin and others needed to develop a rhetorical response to the



queer constraint that publicity of his sexuality could hamper the moral authority of the movement. Later, Rustin crafted visible GLBTQ rights rhetorics after he disclosed his identity. The argument of this chapter has been that the affirmation of a cluster of values—sacrifice, commitment, and unity—undergirded the consistency of Rustin’s rhetoric throughout these contexts. Rustin’s value trajectory animated his transition from a closeted rhetor who produced opaque rhetorics to the out advocate who visibly argued for GLBTQ rights. The trajectory directed by Rustin’s affirmation of these values provided the motivation and rationalization for efforts to foster social transformation and cultivate inclusive communities with equality for all. Significantly, this argument and study offer several portable lessons for rhetorical scholarship.

First, illuminating the complicated and nuanced rhetoric that Rustin needed to develop in 1960 and organizers needed to develop before the 1963 March on Washington enables a fuller appreciation of the civil rights movement and its rhetoric. The specific example of how the leaders of the movement developed a defense of Rustin’s, and thus the movement’s, moral character illustrates that a movement may rely on and utilize opaque rhetorics even during the height of the movement. The March on Washington constituted a highly visible call for legislative change, but, to ensure authority for the movement, leaders employed the opaque tactic of distraction to minimize attention to the identity of one of the members of its leadership. Broadly speaking, this case illustrates that a movement may need to develop diverse and nuanced rhetorics, utilizing visibility and opacity simultaneously or in turns. Thus, this study contributed to the discipline’s quest to showcase the range and diversity of rhetorics deployed during the 1960s civil rights movement, specifically attuned to the contributions of lesser known figures. In doing so, this chapter also responds to calls for investigating the GLBTQ rhetorics of the past as it contributes to our understanding of the rhetorical range of the civil rights movement.

Second, this chapter offers a lesson about context and social movements. In the centennial special issue of *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Morris advocated that rhetorical critics undergo an audit of the discipline's understanding of context.<sup>94</sup> As a start to such theoretical work, this chapter highlights the contextual constraint of heteronormativity. The potential revelation of Rustin's sexual identity threatened the moral credence of the civil rights movement because of heteronormative societal beliefs. Thurmond, in particular, drew from this well of beliefs to threaten the authority of the civil rights movement as a whole. Until this chapter, the queer constraint created by Thurmond's heteronormative character attack did not emerge in our discipline's studies of the March on Washington or King's "I Have a Dream" speech, highlighting the need to consider the relation among opacity, societal beliefs, and context. Because heteronormative appeals can threaten the credibility and reputation of movements engaged in advocacy superficially unrelated to sexuality, critics should attune to the ways in which societal assumptions ostensibly unrelated to their texts still might constitute a constraint on the rhetoric being examined. Another example of this potential rests with Rustin's GLBTQ rights rhetoric in that he alludes to how racism can curtail unity in the GLBTQ community and thus the potential clout of the community. Theorizing about opacity and the case of Rustin's rhetoric should promote the examination and theorization of how the interrelatedness of social assumptions can inform how certain beliefs form constraints on advocacy, even when those beliefs do not initially appear relevant to the text under examination.

Third, this case study illuminates the significance of value trajectories for the purposes of long-term social change. Rustin's example remains apt for this theoretical insight as his value trajectory sustained advocacy work spanning half a century. Rhetorical critics have probed the limitations of rhetorical trajectories for sustaining movements and activist efforts. Dionisopoulos,

Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky argued that King's rhetoric embarked upon two trajectories that collided when King spoke about the Vietnam War. The character of King's rhetoric included both a pragmatic and moral dimension. The trajectory of moral aspects of his character prompted an expectation that King would speak about the war, but the pragmatic aspects cultivated an expectation that he would not.<sup>95</sup> To help stabilize trajectories, rhetors might draw from values that enable long-term change efforts, even when the character of the movement's leader or the leader of the movement itself changes. Uplifting the values of sacrifice and devotion, for instance, stirred anticipation of future challenges that supporters and auditors could and should overcome when they arise. These values prepare movement members for setbacks and for expending energy over a long period of time, which helps secure the movement from losing support if it does not secure initial victories or those initial victories also translate into the need for additional work. That is, value trajectories can empower and warrant commitment to social struggles through times when objectives do not appear achieved and even when the character of leaders dramatically changes or cannot sustain their initial luster.

Fourth, rhetors can co-create and reaffirm the direction of value trajectories, which can invite potential supporters to participate in the creation of discourse and of the movement from which that discourse originates. When Rustin resigned in 1960, he promoted the value cluster of sacrifice, devotion, and unity. Then, in 1963, Randolph and others reaffirmed these values to justify the moral character of Rustin. This connection remains significant, because it illustrates how transferable and communal value clusters can be. The values of sacrifice, unity, and commitment to others placed Rustin's allies and the movement on a trajectory which encouraged them to risk their reputations to defend and assist other members of aligned movement, including Rustin. As Rustin raised the expectations for sacrifice and commitment, other rhetors could

fulfill these expectations by risking their prestige to show their commitment to others by defending them in the crucible of public deliberation. Affirming the value of devotion and sacrifice created an incentive and motivation for others to participate in public discourse, and the act of that participation enacted an additional promotion of devotion and sacrifice. Speaking publicly in defense of others, for social change, or to cultivate community all showcase commitment to others and a willingness to sacrifice time, energy, and resources to community and society. Thus, the cluster underlying Rustin's rhetoric both enabled others to join the trajectory to defend him but also invited a community to embark with him on the journey toward larger communal betterment and societal transformation.

Finally, the value trajectories provide a model for how closeted rhetors and opaque rhetorics can foster social change and the cultivation of community, even amid apparent calamity. When rhetors move from the closet to out and back, the radical shift in their proclaimed identity minimizes their ability to embark on a trajectory based on consistent *persona* and character. Yet, embracing guiding values can enable movement towards inclusive visions of society, even as the seeming identity of the rhetoric shifts during the movement; values can stabilize the coming-out process the rhetor repeatedly undergoes. In the case of Rustin's rhetoric, affirming the value cluster of sacrifice, devotion, and unity as a closeted or outed rhetor in 1960 and 1963 constituted a foundation from which others could draw to defend his moral integrity and contributions to the movement when Thurmond attacked his character through heteronormative appeals. Moreover, as Rustin transitioned into an out GLBTQ rights advocate, the same value clustered animated his appeals, showing that opaque rhetorics can promote the values and beliefs necessary for continuity in later social change efforts. Even when rhetors remain closeted, they can begin circulating the values and beliefs necessary to ground the

affirmation of their closeted identity or their personhood when their marginalized identity becomes visible. That circulation prepares audiences to accept and embrace, or defend, the individual or the community marginalized by society. The cultivation of value trajectories therefore can serve as a model for how opaque rhetorics and closeted rhetors can inspire and animate social change and the cultivation of community.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Rustin, "Martin Luther King's Views on Gay People," in *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, eds. Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003), 292.

<sup>2</sup> Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise, "The Civil Rights Identity of Bayard Rustin," *Texas Law Review* 82 (2004): 1195.

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven R. Goldzwig, "History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan's Rhetorical Legacy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (2005): 661-90; J. Robert Cox, "The Fulfillment of Time: King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech (August 28, 1963)," in *Texts in Contexts: Critical Dialogues on Significant Episodes in American Political Rhetoric*, eds. Michael C. Leff and Fred J. Kauffeld (Davis, CA: Hermagoras, 1989), 181-204; George N. Dionisopoulos, Victoria J. Gallagher, Steven R. Goldzwig, and David Zarefsky, "Martin Luther King, The American Dream and Vietnam: A Collision of Rhetorical Trajectories," *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 91-107; Mark Gaipa, "'A Creative Psalm of Brotherhood': The (De)constructive Play in Martin Luther King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 279-307; David Johnson, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 1-26; Michael Leff and Ebony A. Utley, "Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric in Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'Letter from Birmingham Jail,'" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 37-51; Glen McClish, "The Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglass," *Rhetorica* 33 (2015): 34-70; Keith D. Miller, "Second Isaiah Lands in Washington, DC: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' as

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Biblical Narrative and Biblical Hermeneutic,” *Rhetoric Review* 26 (2007): 405–24; John H. Patton, “A Transforming Response: Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail,’” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 53–66; Gary S. Selby, “Framing Social Protest: The Exodus Narrative in Martin Luther King’s Montgomery Bus Boycott Rhetoric,” *Journal of Communication & Religion* 24 (2001): 68–93; Malinda Snow, “Martin Luther King’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’ as Pauline Epistle,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 218–334; Martha Solomon, “Covenanted Rights: The Metaphoric Matrix of ‘I Have a Dream,’” in *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse*, eds. Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and John Louis Lucaites (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 66–84; Mark Vail, “The ‘Integrative’ Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I Have a Dream’ Speech,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 51–78; Martha Solomon Watson, “The Issue is Justice: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Response to the Birmingham Clergy,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 1–22; Jansen B. Werner, “Building a ‘Dwelling Place’ for Justice: Ethos Reinvention in Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Where Do We Go From Here?’” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 20 (2017): 109–32; Kirt H. Wilson, “Interpreting the Discursive Field of the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Holy Street Address,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 299–326; Walt Wolfram, Caroline Myrick, Jon Forrest, and Michael J. Fox, “The Significance of Linguistic Variation in the Speeches of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,” *American Speech* 91 (2016): 269–300.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Blue and Vanessa Murphree, “‘Stoke the Joke’ and His ‘Self-Appointed White Critics’: A Clash of Values on Network Television News, 1966–70,” *Media History* 15 (2009): 205–20; Robert D. Brooks, “Black Power: The Dimensions of a Slogan,” *Western Speech* 34 (1970): 108–14; Parke G. Burgess, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54 (1968): 122–33. Victoria J. Gallagher, “Black Power in Berkeley: Postmodern

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Constructions in the Rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 144-57; Richard B. Gregg, A. Jackson McCormack, and Douglas J. Pedersen, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Street-Level Interpretation,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (1969): 151-60; Larry S. Richardson, “Stokely Carmichael: Jazz Artist,” *Western Speech* 34 (1970): 212-18; Charles J. Stewart, “The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 429-46.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas W. Benson, “Rhetoric and Autobiography: The Case of Malcolm X,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 1-12; Robert James Branham, “‘I Was Gone on Debating’: Malcolm X’s Prison Debates and Public Confrontations,” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 31 (1995): 117-37; Lisa Corrigan, “50 Years Later: Commemorating the Life and Death of Malcolm X,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 28 (2017): 144-59; Christopher Duerringer, “The Elision of Agency in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 25 (2014): 156-70; Josh Grimm, “Hegemonic Framing of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., in Northeastern Newspapers,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 26 (2015): 313-32; Kristen Hoerl, “Cinematic Jujitsu: Resisting White Hegemony through the American Dream in Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X*,” *Communication Studies* 59 (2008): 355-70; John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit, “Reconstruction <Equality>: Culturetypal and Counter-cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision,” *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990): 5-24; David R. Novak, “Engaging Parrhesia in a Democracy: Malcolm X as a Truth-teller,” *Southern Communication Journal* 71 (2006): 25-43; Robert E. Terrill, “Colonizing the Borderlands: Shifting Circumference in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86 (2000): 67-85; Robert E. Terrill, “Protest, Prophecy, and Prudence in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 25-53.



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<sup>6</sup> See Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback, “Working in ‘Quiet Places’: The Community Organizing Rhetoric of Robert Parris Moses,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 11 (2000): 1-18; Also see Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback, “‘Your Tools are Really the People’: The Rhetoric of Robert Parris Moses,” *Communication Monographs* 65 (1998): 126-40.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Hendrickson, “The Ladies before Rosa: Let Us Now Praise Unfamous Women,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 288.

<sup>8</sup> Mittie Carey, “The Parallel Rhetorics of Ella Baker,” *Southern Communication Journal* 79 (2014): 27-40; Marilyn Bordwell DeLaure, “Planting Seeds of Change: Ella Baker’s Radical Rhetoric,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 31 (2008): 1-28; Joshua H. Miller, “Empowering Communities: Ella Baker’s Decentralized Leadership Style and Conversational Eloquence,” *Southern Communication Journal* 81 (2016): 156-67.

<sup>9</sup> Maegan Parker Brooks, “Oppositional Ethos: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Vernacular Persona,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14 (2011): 511-48; Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice That Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> See Michelle Kelsey Kearn, “‘Is Gay the New Black?’: An Intersectional Perspective on Social Movement Rhetoric in California’s Proposition 8 Debate,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 63-82.

<sup>11</sup> Carbado and Weise, “The Civil Rights Identity,” 1138.

<sup>12</sup> Carbado and Weise, “The Civil Rights Identity,” 1136.

<sup>13</sup> See Charles E. Morris III, “Archival Queer,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 145-51.

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<sup>14</sup> Julie M. Thompson, “On the Development of Counter-Racist Quare Public Address Studies,” in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, ed. Charles E. Morris III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 140.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, “On the Development,” 140.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, “On the Development,” 140. E. Patrick Johnson coined the term “quare studies” as a challenge to queer theory and queer studies. Johnson’s work aimed to theorize the intersections of sexuality, race, and class. Johnson developed a nuanced understanding of the connection between discourse and material conditions. Johnson explained, “I want to maintain the inclusivity and playful spirit of ‘queer’ that animates much of queer theory, but I also want to jettison its homogenizing tendencies. As a disciplinary expansion, then, I wish to ‘quare’ ‘queer’ such that ways of knowing are viewed both as discursively mediated and as historically situated and materially conditioned.” See E. Patrick Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learn from My Grandmother,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 21 (2001): 3.

<sup>17</sup> Carbado and Weise, “The Civil Rights Identity,” 1137.

<sup>18</sup> Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky, “Martin Luther King,” 95.

<sup>19</sup> Leland M. Griffin, “When Dreams Collide: Rhetorical Trajectories in the Assassination of President Kennedy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 126-27.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 124.

<sup>21</sup> Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125.

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<sup>23</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff and Shawna H. Ferris, “John F. Kennedy at American University: The Rhetoric of the Possible, Epideictic Progression, and the Commencement of Peace,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 100 (2014): 409.

<sup>24</sup> Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Dionisopoulous, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky, “Martin Luther King,” 95.

<sup>26</sup> Michael G. Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?: Martin Luther King Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 76.

<sup>27</sup> John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 193.

<sup>28</sup> See Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 79.

<sup>29</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 78.

<sup>30</sup> Carbado and Weise, “The Civil Rights Identity,” 1139.

<sup>31</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 70.

<sup>32</sup> Eric King Watts, “Queer Harlem: Exploring the Rhetorical Limits of a Black Gay ‘Utopia,’” in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, ed. Charles E. Morris III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 175.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 120.

<sup>34</sup> Levine, *Bayard Rustin*, 120.

<sup>35</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 74-75.

<sup>36</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 75.

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<sup>37</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 76.

<sup>38</sup> See Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 76.

<sup>39</sup> The full text of Rustin's resignation letter was published in the *New Pittsburgh Courier*. See "Rustin's Resignation Fires-Up Powell vs. King, Randolph Rift," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 9, 1960.

<sup>40</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>41</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>42</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>43</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>44</sup> See Kathryn M. Olson, "Rhetorical Leadership and Transferable Lessons for Successful Social Advocacy in Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 44 (2007): 90-109. Also see, Miller, "Empowering Communities."

<sup>45</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>46</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the relationship among sacrifice, devotion, and authority, see Miller, "Empowering Communities," 161-2.

<sup>48</sup> "Rustin's Resignation."

<sup>49</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 84.

<sup>50</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 84.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis as quoted by Long who interviewed Lewis for his book. See Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> See Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 85.

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<sup>53</sup> William P. Jones, “The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 7 (2010): 44.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, “The Unknown Origins,” 44.

<sup>55</sup> Levine, *Bayard Rustin*, 141. For an analysis of J. Edgar Hoover’s strategy of providing resources to discover and go after GLBTQ individuals as a type of passing strategy, see Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 228-44.

<sup>56</sup> Long, *Keeping the Dream Straight?*, 86.

<sup>57</sup> D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 348.

<sup>58</sup> William Moore, “Calls Rustin Convicted Pervert: Thurmond Bares March Leader’s Police Record,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 1963.

<sup>59</sup> Moore, “Calls Rustin Convicted Pervert.” A similar article was published in the *New York Herald Tribune*. See Andrew J. Glass, “Thurmond Assails,” *New York Herald Tribune*, August 14, 1963.

<sup>60</sup> D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 348-9.

<sup>61</sup> Levine, *Bayard Rustin*, 147.

<sup>62</sup> Bayard Rustin as recorded by the *New York Times*. See M. S. Handler, “Negro Rally Aide Rebuts Senator: Denies Thurmond’s Charge of Communist Membership,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1963.

<sup>63</sup> A. Phillip Randolph as quoted by the *New York Times*. See Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

<sup>64</sup> Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

<sup>65</sup> See Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

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<sup>66</sup> See Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

<sup>67</sup> Glass, “Thurmond Assails.”

<sup>68</sup> See Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

<sup>69</sup> See Glass, “Thurmond Assails.”

<sup>70</sup> See Handler, “Negro Rally Aide.”

<sup>71</sup> See Glass, “Thurmond Assails.”

<sup>72</sup> See Rustin’s writings entitled “From Montgomery to Stonewall” and “The New N\*ggers Are Gays” to view texts in which Rustin compared ostensibly different forms of oppression and different movements to challenge oppression, by focusing on connections between the 1960s civil rights movement and gay liberation. See Bayard Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall” in *Time on Two Crosses*, eds. Carbado and Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003), 272-4. Also see Bayard Rustin, “The New N\*ggers Are Gays,” in *Time on Two Crosses*, eds. Carbado and Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003), 275-6.

<sup>73</sup> Carbado and Weise, “The Civil Rights Identity,” 1195.

<sup>74</sup> Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise, “Introduction,” in *Time on Two Crosses*, eds. Carbado and Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003): xxxviii.

<sup>75</sup> Carbado and Weise, “Introduction,” xxxviii.

<sup>76</sup> Bayard Rustin, “The Importance of Gay Rights Legislation,” in *Time on Two Crosses*, eds. Carbado and Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003), 295.

<sup>77</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.

<sup>78</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.

<sup>79</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.

<sup>80</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.

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- <sup>81</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 274.
- <sup>82</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.
- <sup>83</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 275.
- <sup>84</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 276. Italics in original.
- <sup>85</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 276. Italics in original.
- <sup>86</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.
- <sup>87</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.
- <sup>88</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 275.
- <sup>89</sup> Rustin, “From Montgomery to Stonewall,” 273.
- <sup>90</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 276.
- <sup>91</sup> Rustin, “The New N\*ggers,” 276.
- <sup>92</sup> Bayard Rustin, “Brother to Brother: An Interview with Joseph Beam,” in *Time on Two Crosses*, eds. Carbado and Weise (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2003), 279.
- <sup>93</sup> Rustin, “Brother to Brother,” 279-80.
- <sup>94</sup> Charles E. Morris III, “Context’s Critic, Invisible Traditions, and Queering Rhetorical History,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101 (2015): 230.
- <sup>95</sup> See Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky, “Martin Luther King.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Coalitional Fronting and Shared *Ethos* Cultivation in the Case of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual

“A lot of attitudes in our society need to be changed, and it will take discretion and courage to accomplish it.”<sup>1</sup>—Reverend Ted McIlvenna

In 1964, 15 clergy members and 15 GLBTQ individuals met for a three-day retreat near San Francisco to promote dialogue between churches and early homophile movement organizations. Based on positive reaction among the participants to this initial meeting, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH) formed for the purpose of continuing the conversation between clergy and GLBTQ individuals.<sup>2</sup> The founders of the first lesbian rights group, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, would later recall that “the catalyst for the Council on Religion and the Homosexual was a Methodist minister, Ted McIlvenna, who decided something needed to be done about getting the church and homosexuals to understand each other better.”<sup>3</sup> Prior to the retreat, McIlvenna oversaw the Young Adult Program of Glide Memorial Methodist Church, a program designed to reach out to young adults and help meet their needs.<sup>4</sup> McIlvenna’s mission had an unexpected result: discovering that GLBTQ young adults constituted a significant number of the runaway youth he served; the parents of many of these individuals had rejected them and sent them into the streets.<sup>5</sup> Sensing that division between GLBTQ youth and the Church would persist unless dialogue occurred,<sup>6</sup> McIlvenna called for what would become a successful retreat and the start of the CRH—a coalitional organization that would continue to pursue an ongoing dialogue between clergy members and GLBTQ San Franciscans.



The unique nature of CRH's coalition between GLBTQ individuals and clergy members propelled the organization to "a high level of visibility" both nationally and locally.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the group struggled financially, so, with the assistance of homophile movement organizations, it held a fundraising New Year's Eve Ball. Despite approving the ball, the police raided the fundraiser, photographed and harassed attendees, and arrested several individuals.<sup>8</sup> The actions of the police prompted CRH action. According to Nan Alamilla Boyd, "When a police dragnet attempted to shut down a community-sponsored benefit for San Francisco's Council on Religion and the Homosexual, gay organizations launched a multi-dimensional protest that forever changed the character of San Francisco's queer communities."<sup>9</sup> Providing evidence that CRH's advocacy changed the social and political landscape in San Francisco, historians argue that the CRH's protest of the police raid proved crucial to the empowerment and visibility of San Francisco's GLBTQ community. Although GLBTQ groups developed in San Francisco prior to CRH's advocacy, Mendenhall articulates that CRH "galvanized, through a single event, the attention of a mass movement and focused the political intentions of organizations like SIR and the San Francisco Tavern Guild."<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, both the Society for Individual Rights (SIR), an early homophile organization focused on fostering GLBTQ community, and the Tavern Guild, an association of gay bar owners, benefited from and participated in CRH's advocacy after the police raid. Furthermore, Mendenhall details how the ministers' participation in protests following the ball "galvanized the [GLBTQ] community in ways no other event had previously been able to."<sup>11</sup> CRH's continued advocacy after the police raid, in tandem with the efforts of early homophile organization empowered by CRH's efforts, lent "more credence to the notion that gays were a significant political constituency."<sup>12</sup> Given the historical significance of CRH's advocacy in fostering a visible and politically powerful GLBTQ community, their advocacy

deserves serious consideration and examination as a model for how rhetoric can enable social transformation.

CRH's protest remains intriguing and potentially explains the historical significance of the moment. Even though CRH began as a coalition group between members of the clergy and early homophile movement organizations, such as the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis, the group's clergy members, lawyers, and married opposite-sex couples largely carried out the public response to the raid. Regarding this reaction to the police raid, historian Randy Shilts wrote, "Heterosexuals saw what it meant to be gay in San Francisco. The ministers held an angry press conference the next morning, likening the [San Francisco Police Department] to the Gestapo and demanding an investigation."<sup>13</sup> Openly GLBTQ persons remained largely absent from the negotiation that ensued.

Taking CRH's response as its example, this chapter advances a theory of coalitional fronting wherein alliances' rhetorical appeals strategically and publicly put forward and capitalize on particular, typically privileged or normative, identities over other, potentially maligned or "deviant" identities that comprise the coalition's membership. Such a strategy enables public discussion about concerns of the vilified and marginalized members of the coalition without those members needing to reveal their identities, thus shielding those coalitional participants from the possibility for discrimination and violence. In addition to enabling safety and survival, the tactic also enjoys the advantage of circulating criticisms and rebukes of the social order not from those most harmed by the social order, which can appear less self-serving than if only those harmed by the social order forward the critique. Moreover, the strategy of fronting takes advantage of the *ethos* that some members of the coalition more readily will enjoy with members of the target audience. Specifically, CRH moved between cultivating

*ethos* based on its clergy members' moral and scriptural expertise and its lawyers' authority on legal matters, emphasizing the "straight" members of the organization in its dispute with the police—a tactic that highlights how coalitions might share resources for *ethos* cultivation. The alliance's strategy allowed GLBTQ persons to protect themselves from police retribution and also to change the hearts and minds of fellow San Franciscans by formulating religious, moral, legal, and straight authority in public dialogue based on the identities of those who, in part, constituted CRH's alliance. CRH's coalitional fronting amplified the presence and powerful alliances of the GLBTQ community living in San Francisco, showing that it already successfully convinced clergy members and lawyers to join their cause. The strategy also protected the GLBTQ members of the coalition by enabling them to hide their individual identities, allowing them to remain anonymous while still fostering further political action efforts.

To develop these arguments, I first theorize fronting as a coalitional tactic that shields maligned members of a coalition, which in turn advances understanding about closeted eloquence, *ethos* cultivation, and coalitional rhetorics in the process. The rhetoric of CRH remains particularly useful for this endeavor, because fostering relationships with potential allies constituted a central tactic of early GLBTQ rights organizations.<sup>14</sup> Second, I detail the heteronormative culture of San Francisco during the period in which CRH's rhetoric operated, highlighting why GLBTQ individuals might have decided to pass and how the police raid disrupted GLBTQ individuals' passing strategies. Third, I analyze newsletters, articles, and press releases concerning CRH's response to the police raid to elucidate CRH's strategies of passing and shared *ethos* cultivation. Analyzing this historical moment remains significant as it constituted "one of the most important events in the history and development of the homophile movement."<sup>15</sup> Because CRH's tactics after the raid were multifaceted, examining a plethora of

artifacts remains necessary to elucidate fully the group's endeavors and the functions of their rhetoric. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on the significance of CRH's fronting and shared *ethos* cultivation to illustrate how rhetoric can foster change and rupture silence in situations where the potential for retaliation persists and the potential for the marginalized to foster *ethos* on their own remains limited or less-than-ideal.

### **Coalitional Fronting and Shared *Ethos* Cultivation**

The following examination of CRH's protest after the police raid offers an expanded understanding about the rhetorical tactics of opacity, highlighting the potential communal dimensions of these rhetorical strategies. Typically, scholars exploring the communicative functions of what Goffman termed passing and covering examine both as individual tactics deployed to manage one's own identity information.<sup>16</sup> Expanding on this individual dimension, the case of CRH illuminates how communities, organizations, and coalitions might deploy opacity in efforts to create social change while individuals of the organization's membership pass to survive until the actualization of social transformation. Specifically, the following analysis of the CRH reveals how the coalition, at times, worked to pass as a "straight" organization and, at other times, covered, through minimization, the markers of "homosexual" participation in the organization—an act that also enabled the organization to maintain a socially acceptable and normative *persona*. Simultaneously, working through a coalitional framework, GLBTQ members of the CRH hid markers of their identity in a way that enabled public discussion of GLBTQ concerns, which prevented the public, including persecutors, from identifying which individuals identified as GLBTQ. As such, the case of CRH provides insight into the dual communal, front-facing, and yet opaque, strategies for social change—an important

insight that enables scholars to expand the texts to which they might apply the concepts of passing and covering, as well as opacity, to include organizational and coalitional rhetorical endeavors.

In addition to expanding theories of opacity to include a communal and dual-sided dimension, the following analysis of the way CRH shaped its public image after the police raid also highlights the ways in which alliances among different advocacy groups allow them to share inventional resources to develop *ethos*. Rhetors, and by extension social movements, organizations, and coalitions, develop *ethos* in each and every encounter that they have with their audience, because “every text projects an implied character for the rhetor” based on that rhetor’s choices in various situations.<sup>17</sup> When engaging in protracted advocacy efforts, members of coalitions and coalitions themselves might publicly portray themselves in diverse ways among the differing audiences they encounter to formulate new forms of *ethos* in their interactions with broader publics and “present a diversity of approaches to achieve political goals, mount successive waves of activism, and incorporate diverse constituents within a social protest movement.”<sup>18</sup> CRH’s case illustrates how coalitions can tactically use the diversity of their constituents and identities to shape and define the coalition’s relationship to the broader public, developing and sharing resources for *ethos* development in the process. In doing so, coalitional rhetors invite members of the broader public to understand their coalitions in fluctuating ways, altering the grounds on which they might engage in dialogue and deliberation. For instance, Alyssa A. Samek articulated a theory of “pivoting” wherein a member of an alliance might strategically emphasize, although not completely obscure, particular identity markers over others in an interaction to maintain certain coalitional linkages and identifications; pivoting enables the formation and continuation of the coalition itself.<sup>19</sup> The case of CRH extends Samek’s

conceptualization of the pivot and reveals how coalitions themselves might tactically maneuver to establish particular types of *ethos* in public deliberation. Pivoting to pass as a straight organization might completely obscure certain LGBTQ identities that comprise the coalition's membership. Similarly, covering the organizations' connection with "homosexuals" might cultivate an *ethos* that minimizes identity information about some of its membership and emphasizes key aspects of other members' identities to cultivate a strategic *persona* during times of crisis or dispute.

Although generally portrayed as associations that complicate and resist simple and binary understandings of identity, coalitions, as they cultivate *ethos* in specific interactions, might strategically simplify how they present the identities that constitute the alliance. When describing how coalitions operate, Sara Beth Evans and Elyse Janish posited that "coalition work, by its very nature, is a conjoining of diverse groups working toward a shared outcome, despite fundamental differences individual members of the groups may have among them."<sup>20</sup> Coalitional politics "utilize difference as a resource rather than a hurdle to be overcome."<sup>21</sup> Despite coalitions' rhetorical efforts to conjoin and utilize difference to actualize a goal, coalitions' public cultivation of *ethos* does not necessarily represent the diversity among the coalitional members. The case of CRH reveals that coalitional work might be more richly understood as the strategic work of revealing and concealing identities in fleeting moments in ways that might advance the shared interests of the members of the group. In conjoining together in coalitions, activists share inventional resources wherein they might craft *ethos* in unique and complex ways via their diverse identities and experiences, or they might establish simplistic forms of *ethos* and highlight one of the many identities that might comprise the alliance's constituents. In these strategic moments, coalitions unpack and streamline the public presentation of the complicated

identities developed when the coalition formed—a process that provides the coalitions with new opportunities to respond to specific situations and marginalization. Elucidating that coalitions provide activists new possibilities for shaping how local communities might come to understand these alliances and what unifies their membership enhances knowledge about the “diversity of approaches” that coalitions and activists can use to achieve cultural, social, and political objectives.

Revealing how coalitions might pass or cover provides additional understanding about how coalitional work might involve streamlining and shared *ethos* cultivation. Coalitions can establish a passing or closeted *ethos* by hiding, concealing, or minimizing the identities of coalitional members in these alliances’ public portrayals of themselves, formulating public images based on normative or privileged identities. For individuals, Helene A. Shugart details how passing involves both “denying yet retaining” membership in a marginalized community or group of people.<sup>22</sup> For coalitions, fronting involves emphasizing and making visible the members of the coalition with privileged or normative identities to secure a public reputation, hiding and downplaying “deviant” counter-parts on whose behalf they work in the process. Such moves—acts of coalitional fronting—foster forms of authority for the alliance, because the act of passing, and covering by extension, formulates a closeted form of eloquence and *ethos*. Charles E. Morris III articulated a relationship between passing performances and *ethos*, writing that passing involves “self-fashioning that constructs and preserves an ethos of gender and sexual ‘normalcy.’”<sup>23</sup> For individuals and coalitions, successful closeted eloquence necessitates crafting and “convincing certain audiences of an ‘acceptable’ persona,”<sup>24</sup> which might continually change based on the situation in which the passers find themselves. Coalitional fronting constitutes strategies by which hiding or minimizing aspects of the coalitional members’ identities to craft

*ethos* might enhance the likelihood of achieving a strategic goal or of protecting members of the coalition in certain contexts.

For individuals, surviving forms of oppression might require the opaqueness provided by the closet or enable fleeting and momentary “camouflage[d] resistance.”<sup>25</sup> In coalitions and advocacy efforts, the protection provided by the closet for individuals can still be maintained even as other members of the coalition visibly advocate for the marginalized. As such, deploying the tactic of coalitional fronting can shield maligned alliance members from discrimination and violence that can accompany a visible performance of a “deviant” identity in a way that amplifies the perceived political force of the “deviant” groups. By showing that “normal folks” already support the causes of “deviant” groups, coalitional efforts can make forceful and visible maligned groups’ politics and concerns, while simultaneously allowing for the invisibility of the individuals who comprise those groups. Participating in coalitional fronting, although painful for some members of the coalition, might enable people with marginalized and stigmatized identities to share their grievances against their oppression in a public manner and continue passing as an individual. This is the case with CRH’s rhetoric after the police raid. Yet, before I analyze CRH’s performance, I first detail the context under which CRH’s rhetoric operated.

### **A Passing Exigency**

Prior to and during CRH’s reaction to the police raid, secrecy and the passing strategies of individual GLBTQ stakeholders diminished the ability for homophile organizations to grow and engage openly and visibly with San Francisco’s broader populace. John D’Emilio wrote that, for GLBTQ people, “exposure promised punishment and ostracism. It hovered about gay life as an ever present danger, always reminding homosexual men and women of the need for secrecy



and careful management of information about their sexual preferences.”<sup>26</sup> The threat of repercussion made crafting public messages difficult and risky for members of the early homophile movement, and the need for secrecy made spreading messages to others challenging. Potential harassment and discrimination against the GLBTQ subculture increased the burden of forming homophile organizations and minimized the potential for shared action against the problems and hardships faced by many GLBTQ individuals.<sup>27</sup> The difficulty of promoting the development of community compounded when police raided establishments for GLBTQ people. In particular, the police raid on CRH’s ball threatened to hamper the passing strategies of the GLBTQ individuals who attended.

On the night of the New Year’s Ball, the police raid highlighted the difficulty of visible GLBTQ community formation and organization and simultaneously disrupted the work many GLBTQ people underwent to pass and avoid discrimination. Before the police raid, many early homophile movement organizations had a maligned reputation. As this section details, police policies and societal presumptions about GLBTQ people undercut many homophile movements’ attempts to cultivate community and further encouraged passing strategies to prevent harassment and discrimination on the part of both individual GLBTQ people and GLBTQ-affirming organizations. The police raid threatened to undermine the passing strategies of GLBTQ people; the exposure of party attendees without action on the part of CRH risked backlash and discrimination against CRH’s GLBTQ membership.

At the time, police practices and local policies incentivized GLBTQ individuals to pass as non-GLBTQ to survive harassment and discrimination. Businesses with GLBTQ owners or clientele also benefited from passing or from maintaining a low profile to avoid harassment from the police force. Police frequently raided places believed to be gay bars, and the Alcohol

Beverage Control Commission worked to close these businesses indefinitely. After long protracted legal battles and continued pressure from the police, one notable gay bar in the area, The Black Cat, closed. This initial closure created a cascading effect wherein only eighteen of San Francisco's thirty gay bars survived the year.<sup>28</sup> Members of the police force felt justified in punishing and targeting GLBTQ establishment because they saw it as part of their duty to defend the morality of society.<sup>29</sup> Particularly important for understanding the police actions on the night of the New Year's Ball, police forces equated the gathering and presence of GLBTQ individuals as a violent threat to society, informally viewing "any gathering of more than one hundred homosexuals as an armed insurrection."<sup>30</sup> Police actions reinforced the criminalization of GLBTQ people by defining them as a threat to society and by raiding GLBTQ establishments. Police intimidation and harassment encouraged passing strategies so that these establishments might remain open but as seemingly non-GLBTQ, and thus non-threatening, operations.

Societal views and presumptions about GLBTQ people further encouraged and often necessitated individual passing strategies. Being either a visible movement or GLBTQ person risked backlash. A heteronormative presumption pervaded society. Powerful religious traditions and medical authority ensured the continuation of that presumption, undergirding societal beliefs about the criminality and sickness of "deviant sexualities."<sup>31</sup> Hostility against GLBTQ individuals manifested itself in employment discrimination and stereotypical views that GLBTQ individuals constituted child molesters. The risk of losing one's job for being GLBTQ provided reason to hide one's sexuality and pass as a heterosexual individual. So, many GLBTQ persons choose to survive through living isolated existences.<sup>32</sup> To avoid discrimination, GLBTQ individuals "developed intricate symbols and codes as a means of communication and self-

protection.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, societal assumptions encouraged GLBTQ people to pass to avoid harassment, discrimination, and mistreatment.

When the police raided the CRH fundraising ball, they disrupted the passing strategies of individual GLBTQ people who attended the event. Photographers ensured that the police would have evidence of who attended the ball—evidence that could be placed in newspapers and, as a result, shared with employers and family members. Martin and Lyon later recalled:

The police had bathed the hall’s entrance with floodlights and were busy taking both still photos and films of everyone who entered. Paddy wagons waited ominously nearby while nearly fifty uniformed and plainclothes officers filtered through the crowd. Over five hundred gays walked this gauntlet, upset at its propositions but not particularly surprised, given the years of similar police harassment.<sup>34</sup>

According to George Mendenhall, the police “ordered police photographers to record the face of everyone entering the dance hall.”<sup>35</sup> The decision to photograph those who attended the ball constituted a form of surveillance that threatened the passing efforts of GLBTQ attendees. The photographs seemingly could provide evidence about who in the community were GLBTQ individuals or GLBTQ-allied people. This threat against the passing strategies of GLBTQ attendees necessitated a response from CRH. To secure the continued ability of coalitional members to pass and to foster a social climate in which the acceptance of GLBTQ individuals could emerge, CRH responded to the police raid and the passing exigency it caused by enacting a tactic of coalitional fronting and sharing resources for *ethos* cultivation.

## CRH's Coalitional Fronting and Shared *Ethos* Cultivation

After the police raid, CRH defined the situation as a conflict between the police and CRH's clergy members, lawyers, and married, heterosexual couples. To define the controversy in this manner, CRH's public representatives adopted clergy member, lawyerly, and straight *personae*, enabling a public understanding of the events that did not out GLBTQ members of CRH. Defining CRH as a religious, lawyerly, law-abiding, and straight organization enhanced CRH's authority and claim to a right to define what occurred during the raid. The public response from CRH's clergy members and lawyers shielded GLBTQ members from increased marginalization. Protected by CRH's coalitional masquerade, GLBTQ persons adopted and deployed anonymous *personae* which invited the development of a significant voting bloc under the concealment of CRH's clergy members, lawyers, and straight membership.

### *Sharing Inventional Resources and Cultivating a Right to Define*

CRH's membership provided it with the inventional resources necessary to challenge the police's right and authority to define what happened at the fundraiser. As the dispute between the police and CRH emerged, CRH's clergy members, lawyers, and married, heterosexual couples publicly challenged the police action, which denied the police's justifications based on moral, legal, or protection of "traditional" family grounds. Concealing the organization's GLBTQ membership in this moment enabled CRH to frame itself in a manner that might strategically allow GLBTQ members to avoid public detection and scrutiny while simultaneously undercutting the police's authority.

For instance, emphasizing CRH's clergy members provided the organization with the resources to claim that it had the right to define what constituted moral action, which enabled CRH to cultivate moral authority at odds with the police's definition. Furthermore, CRH's clergy

provided the coalition with the ability to develop a likely superior moral authority to the police's moral authority, which still existed. By arguing against the actions of the police, the clergy's response implied that the police actions failed to represent the most moral—sanctioned by the divine—action. For example, in the initial press conference statement, CRH reported, “At the Mardi Gras New Year's Ball held January 1st at the California Hall The Council on Religion and the Homosexual and the cooperating homophile movement organizations were treated to the most lavish display of police harassment known in recent times.”<sup>36</sup> The contrast between the term “cooperating” to describe the homophile movement organization and the terms “lavish” and “harassment” to describe the police positioned the actions of the homophile movements in good terms and the actions of the police as excessive and immoral. The phrase “lavish display” suggested that the police's outsized public displays should be viewed with distaste. Because clergy members represented authoritative voices when it came to how scripture defined good moral judgment, their position undermined the presumption that being GLBTQ constituted a sin. Instead, because of their biblical authority, those clergy members renegotiated immorality as being characteristic of the police force, not the GLBTQ members of CRH or the GLBTQ individuals who attended the fundraising ball. Such framing signaled to San Francisco's public that they should act in opposition to the police's immoral actions. In this way, the presence of the clergy members, their collars, and the vocal nature of their critique of the police force undercut one potential appeal that members of the police force might have used to defend their actions.

As the controversy developed, CRH also invited the media to describe the coalition through another *persona*—a lawyerly *persona* associated with CRH's legal experts. The emergence of this *persona* highlighted the way in which CRH shared inventional resources for the cultivation of *ethos*; by pivoting toward an emphasis on the lawyer members of the

organization, CRH crafted an *ethos* based on legal expertise. Crafting this expertise on legal matters opened argumentative options for CRH and further allowed the organization to claim a right to define the, according to CRH, “tenuous legal grounds” for the police actions.

Specifically, the January 6<sup>th</sup> report in *The Examiner* included reference to the three lawyers who the police arrested at the New Year Ball. The report stated, “Attorneys Herbert Donaldson, Evander Smith, and Elliot Leighton, appearing at a conference called by the American Civil Liberties Union, reiterated their intention to fight charges of interfering with a police officer.”<sup>37</sup>

*The Examiner* also indicated that Leighton stated, ““We [the attorneys] feel this was an intimidation. Donaldson and I were whisked away and not told why we were under arrest.””<sup>38</sup> By defining the police’s action as whisking them away, Leighton positioned the police as out of control, hasty, and as the actual law-breakers because they did not specify the charges. Another account published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the American Civil Liberties Union involved in the case also positioned the dispute as being between lawyers and the police. The report on the matter indicated:

The American Civil Liberties Union announced here yesterday it will defend three lawyers arrested at a homosexual benefit ball when they objected to the police moving in. Flanked by the attorneys involved, ACLU lawyer Marshall Krause told a press conference the three were victims of “police harassment.”<sup>39</sup>

The framing of this report placed the lawyers as the individuals who need to be defended from police aggression. Even though the arrests occurred at a GLBTQ benefit ball, the report emphasized that the police and the lawyers constituted the active parties involved in the incident. Underemphasizing the presence of GLBTQ persons at the event marked the occasion and the ongoing controversy as not being about the question of GLBTQ individuals’ legal standing in

society. The CRH opted instead to frame the situation as being about whether the police were justified for arresting, and for how they arrested, the lawyers. This framing enabled CRH to cultivate its own legal authority and right to define and object to the situation, which simultaneously undercut the comparative legal authority and ability for the police to justify its actions by claiming it had an undisputed legal basis for them.

CRH's membership also cultivated authority based on sexual normalcy—that is, heterosexuality. The cultivation of this *ethos* enabled CRH to deny the police's ability to claim that its actions served the purpose of protecting “traditional” families, which further lessened the potential argumentative burdens of future GLBTQ activists; those future advocates might have less of a need to deny that they threatened the “nuclear” family. In letters to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, several of the straight, married couples among CRH's ranks expressed dismay and disgust at the police actions. In doing so, these individuals denied both the logic that being photographed at the fundraiser meant an individual was GLBTQ and the logic that the affirmation of GLBTQ individuals would harm “traditional” families. That is, these married couples enacted an argument that undermined the assumption that GLBTQ affirmation would threaten in any way, let alone trade-off with, the existence of “traditional” families. For example, Mr. and Mrs. C. Smith signed a letter that explicitly highlighted that married couples attended the event: “My wife and I attended, as representatives of our church, the ball given by the Council on Religion at California Hall.”<sup>40</sup> Opening their letter by referencing their marriage and their church, the Smiths highlighted that upright opposite-sex couples attended the ball, which modelled that both straight couples and their religious faith were compatible with actions affirming GLBTQ individuals. In describing their marriage and their attendance at the ball, the Smiths enacted an argument about the compatibility of “traditional” families and GLBTQ

acceptance. This, in turn, undermined a common rationale against the promotion of GLBTQ rights and acceptance. By cultivating an understanding that affirming GLBTQ people did not undermine “traditional” families, heterosexual couples, like the Smiths, lessened the argumentative burden on GLBTQ people, because those GLBTQ people would need to spend a reduced amount of time refuting the charge that their affirmation would harm “traditional” families.

#### *Emphasizing Police Actions: Providing Cover for GLBTQ Stakeholders*

As the clergy’s, lawyers’, and married couples’ critiques of the police undercut police authority on the matters of morality, law, and “traditional” families, it simultaneously deflected attention away from revelations about GLBTQ individuals, which afforded those individuals the ability to continue their passing performances. CRH’s rebuke of the police also minimized the threat of the GLBTQ identity revelations by showing GLBTQ individuals and organizations as a non-threat to society in comparison to the actions of the police force.

For instance, by critiquing the police practices and defining them as disingenuous, CRH’s clergy shifted attention away from questions about the status of “homosexuality” in society towards questions about the propriety of police actions; this pivot provided cover and space for GLBTQ people to avoid harassment and organize as a political constituency. At the press conference the day after the police raid, while CRH’s GLBTQ members remained silent, members of the clergy, several donning their clerical collars, visibly accused the police of hostility and intimidation, crafting an *ethos* for the organization based on the clergy’s religious and moral authority. This tactic enabled CRH to define the situation initially as a dispute between police and clergy, concealing and protecting its GLBTQ members. According to a statement released by CRH, “Clergymen representatives on the Council, contending that the



police broke faith, held a press conference Jan. 2 at Glide Memorial Methodist Church to clarify this contention with newspaper and other news media.”<sup>41</sup> The indignant and angry tone in the clergy’s accusation helped solidify the point of contention as being between clergy and police, because their tone heightened the visibility of the clergy. The voice of the clergy and clerical attire established a compelling *ethos* on matters of scripture and used it to reprimand the police’s actions, placing the focus of the events on the inappropriate actions of the police, positioning the situation as a referendum on the police, not GLBTQ San Franciscans. By legitimizing a deflection towards focus on police actions, adopting this clergy *persona* allowed CRH to shield its GLBTQ members from public scrutiny after the police raid.

Comparable to how the clergy’s response functioned to erode the police’s moral standing for the raid, the arguments deployed by CRH’s lawyers helped undermine the police’s legal positioning. Statements from the lawyers and media accounts of them positioned the police as acting on questionable legal grounds. The development of CRH’s legal authority enabled them to frame the police’s actions as harmful to all law-abiding citizens, which further emphasized the need for San Franciscans to focus attention on the police rather than on the actions of GLBTQ individuals and organizations. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle* report, “The three lawyers said they were hustled away by uniformed police on the instructions of plainclothes inspectors when they said police needed either a warrant or information that a crime was being committed to enter the premises.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, *The Examiner’s* statement that police failed to notify the lawyers why they were being arrested framed the police as acting on precarious legal grounds.<sup>43</sup> The narrative depicted in these reports suggested the police acted unlawfully by arresting lawyers without charges when the lawyers specifically confronted them with a legal argument about why the police could not do what they intended to do. The lawyers’ status

provided CRH with legal authority, curtailing the comparative authority of the police’s legal arguments that could justify their actions on the night of the New Year’s Ball. By potentially diminishing the ability of the police to justify their actions as legal, CRH’s lawyers offered another layer to the rationale for San Franciscans to focus on police, rather than GLBTQ individuals, actions—the police had acted outside of their legal authority. Accumulating additional reasons for the public to concern itself with the police also enabled additional layers of protection for GLBTQ individuals.

CRH’s heterosexual couples, in vocalizing their presence at the fundraiser, also stymied the logic that photographs of the event could demonstrate who had an GLBTQ identity, which afforded GLBTQ individuals with the ability to continue their individual passing strategies. In a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* published on the same day as the Smiths’ letter, Mr. and Mrs. G. R. Mon connected their attendance at the ball with the police photographers, writing, “We attended the Masquerade Ball . . . and were dismayed and angry to see about a half-dozen uniformed policemen and a few police photographers there to greet our arrival.”<sup>44</sup> Here, the Mons implied that the police photographed them. By connecting their status as a heterosexual couple with the police photographs, the couple denied the logical conclusion that the photographs constituted evidence of who in San Francisco was GLBTQ. If the photographs included some straight individuals, then the photographs could not aid in determining who had a GLBTQ identity. The fact, according to the Mons, that the photographs included straight people furthermore enabled the continuation of GLBTQ individuals’ passing strategies, because those GLBTQ individuals, if they choose to do so, could note that heterosexual individuals attended the ball and thus deny that photographs of anyone meant that they were GLBTQ. The public proclamation that married, heterosexual couples attended the ball pivoted the organization

towards a straight *persona*, offering cover for the GLBTQ members of the group and enabled them to deny their sexualities and to continue to pass even after explicit surveillance by the police.

These married couples further fostered the continued ability for concealment to GLBTQ individuals by placing attention on, according to the couples, the problematic and unwarranted police behavior. Doing so again focused the attention of the newspaper's readership on the police, which deflected San Franciscans' gaze away from GLBTQ people. The Smiths wrote, in part, "to protest the unjust action of the San Francisco police" and to defend the ball as having, in their view, "no lewd conduct, no drunkenness, and in short, the guests behaved themselves in a manner that would be acceptable anywhere."<sup>45</sup> The Mons also contended, "What reason could there be for taking these pictures other than to harass homosexuals. We have never seen such avid interest by police in other such dances where there have been drunkenness and even fights. We support the enforcement of law and order, but not harassment of any minority groups."<sup>46</sup> These two letters of criticism of the police offered cover to GLBTQ individuals. First, by arguing that the guests of the ball acted acceptably, the letters denied the justification for police presence at all and framed the police actions as unnecessary harassment. Based on that framing, the letters positioned the police actions as unacceptable, which deflected attention away from the acceptably-behaving attendees towards the inappropriate actions of the police. In doing so, these letters proclaimed the acceptability of GLBTQ individuals in society and warned fellow San Franciscans to concern themselves more with the actions of the police than with the existence of GLBTQ residents.

*Amassing a Diverse Opposition to the Police: Further Protecting GLBTQ Stakeholders*

In addition to focusing on police actions, CRH's response defined opposition to the police as diverse, which offered protection to GLBTQ stakeholders based on the wide array of individuals who vocalized support for the emerging GLBTQ community. The process of proclaiming CRH's diverse constituents, including clergy members, lawyers, and heterosexual couples, further invited others to join in the critique of the police actions for reasons other than protecting GLBTQ individuals. For example, by defining the police actions as an attack on clergy members, CRH provided a motive for action based on protecting religious communities and their independence from state intervention. Framing the opposition to the police as a diverse coalition and providing motive to expand the coalition dampened the ability of the police to target GLBTQ individuals and establishments based on the perceived, ever-expanding support for GLBTQ rights and protection.

Inviting the media to represent the dispute as one between clergy members and the police, CRH defined the situation as the police aggressively hampering a church organization, which encouraged opposition to the police based on the freedom of religious organizations and fostered the potential for diverse resistance against police actions. By framing the initial press conference as being held by members of the clergy, CRH's statement initially worked to shape the ministers as being the only acting agents in the condemnation of what the police did, enabling CRH to act without "outing" its GLBTQ members. CRH's statement first indicated that "clergymen representatives [. . .] held" the press conference. Even though the report also stated "present [at the press conference] were many outraged ministers, attorneys and representatives of homophile organizations,"<sup>47</sup> the document's emphasis on the tone of the ministers directs attention to the angry spokespeople, the clergy. Although the document mentions the presence of attorneys and GLBTQ people, the document did not identify who they are. However, using

active voice, the document situated the clergy as CRH's more active members in the critique of the police than the others, framing the clergy as those who levied the accusation at the police. Because the clergy as members of CRH actively accused the police and other members of CRH remained passive, the clergy response marked the situation as being between clergy and police. Select media outlets picked up the story and framed it in the manner that the clergy did, further solidifying the situation as being between clergy and police. On January 3, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an article reporting that "Ministers of four Protestant denominations accused the Police Department yesterday of 'intimidation, broken promises and obvious hostility' in breaking up a private benefit for homosexuals at California Hall Friday night."<sup>48</sup> The title of this article "Angry Ministers Rip Police" framed the response to the police raid as a reaction from members of the clergy, not from "homophile" organizations. *The Examiner* continued the thread, defining CRH as "a new organization formed by seven Protestant ministers in The City for the purpose of orienting the clergy on aspects of homosexuality."<sup>49</sup> *The Examiner* also reported that the New Year Ball "was a church-sponsored function," which also provided a First Amendment grounds to opposed the police actions.<sup>50</sup> Together these media reports heightened the visibility of the clergy members' response, shielding homophile groups and GLBTQ individuals from continued condemnation. Because the media framed the ministers as being the active agents rebuking of the police and forming of the organization, interlocutors would need to respond to the actions of the clergy, not GLBTQ persons. CRH's strategy enabled public discussion of police violence without GLBTQ individuals needing to reveal their identities during the public negotiation. In addition to functioning to shield these GLBTQ people, this framing challenged police actions on the basis of encouraging independence of religious institutions, which invited additional stakeholders to participate in debate for reasons other than the protection of GLBTQ people.

Inviting additional participation could have augmented the apparent strength of the resistance against the police actions and thus the apparent strength of the support for GLBTQ individuals.

Together, lawyers and clergy developed an argument about the police acting in bad faith by raiding the fundraiser, enacting the position that the support of the GLBTQ community remained diverse. Moreover, defining the police actions as being misleading and as failing to fulfill the obligations of being a public servant fostered a view that San Franciscans should no longer trust police statements and actions; this definitional tactic attempted to deny the police's ability to claim a credible explanation for their actions and promoted an additional reason for unified action against the police. For instance, CRH's initial press conference statement indicated, "This heavy show of force displayed by the San Francisco Police Department followed a conference on Dec. 23 between two ministers from the Council and the Chief of the Bureau of Inspectors and the Sex Crimes Detail at which plans for the ball were told in good faith to the police."<sup>51</sup> Conversely, the statement declared that the police acted in bad faith.<sup>52</sup> The juxtaposition between how the statement framed the police and the clergy positioned the police as deceptive and clergy as faithful, inviting San Franciscans to view future police statements with skepticism. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* January 3 article took up this framing and indicated that CRH's ministers "charged the police acted 'in bad faith'—for example by having a police photographer snap pictures of most of the arriving guests when they had promised not to."<sup>53</sup> Because the police broke their promises, they could not be trusted. Through this appeal, the clergy reclassified the police as being untrustworthy and as hiding their true malicious intentions. Framing the police in this manner provided CRH, other supporters of GLBTQ rights, and the rest of San Franciscan community with a common enemy around whose harmful actions the groups could mobilize; a police force that would lie and act deceptively threatened all of San Francisco,

not just the GLBTQ persons living there. CRH did this while still concealing its GLBTQ membership and avoiding the need for GLBTQ to out themselves publicly.

### **Anonymity and the Formulation of a Political GLBTQ Community**

As CRH's *personae* of clergy members, lawyers, and married couples enabled its GLBTQ membership to continue their passing strategies, members of the organization and other homophile movement organizations developed anonymous means of resisting and responding to the actions of the police; these actions invited other GLBTQ individuals to join an emerging voting bloc of GLBTQ residents that might act as a united whole to change San Francisco's political landscape long term while maintaining individual anonymity. Anonymous responses to the police raid had two significant functions: (1) justifying continued anonymous actions to challenge the police's response and to promote GLBTQ rights and (2) modelling how GLBTQ individuals could develop as a political force while allowing GLBTQ residents to continue their own individual passing strategies.

In praising the actions of those who attended the ball, CRH's press release justified communal action as significant and necessary, encouraging additional responses to the police raid. Even though the report did not mention the GLBTQ attendees' sexualities, the report's effort to applaud those who attended the Ball suggested to GLBTQ individuals and their allies that they should continue their courageous and exemplary actions. Calls for GLBTQ involvement remained anonymous and called for additional actions that would not require GLBTQ stakeholders to reveal their identity. CRH's report, for example, praised the actions of the GLBTQ people and their allies who attended the fundraiser: "We are grateful to all who attended the Ball under these unfortunate circumstances. We are proud that they were present,

entered into the spirit of the event and without exception behaved themselves in a courageous and exemplary manner.”<sup>54</sup> By defining the attendees’ actions as exemplary, the report positioned supporters of GLBTQ rights as model citizens who upheld the societal standards. The response, however, did not state the sexuality of any who attended the ball, enabling the press release to encourage continued action without risking outing those who would carry out the action. By not articulating the sexualities of the attendees, the report crafted a public *persona* for those attendees who did not include their sexualities, further capitalizing on the flexibility provided by the straight *ethos* that was publicly offered by some members of CRH. Moreover, the report included a specific call for continued action alongside this praise for the actions of those who attended the party: “This is a beginning and not the end of this determination to achieve full citizenship for homosexuals and all minorities, without discrimination and intimidation.”<sup>55</sup> The report positioned the police raid as further reason for social change and used the police harassment as evidence that society persisted in its denial of full citizen status for GLBTQ persons. Framing the police raid and its response as a start in the fight for full citizenship highlighted the need for additional pursuit of GLBTQ rights following the police raid.

Protected by CRH’s clergy, lawyerly, and straight *ethos*, other homophile movement organizations reacted by defining the police raid as the first act of aggression in a war, which raised the stakes of the situation and offered a motive and rationale for protesting the police. Although this rhetoric mostly circulated in internal newsletters addressed to members of homophile movement organizations, these responses created a sense of urgency that called on GLBTQ individuals to act against the aggressive police. For example, in the second issue of *Vector*, the newsletter for the homophile movement organization the Society for Individual Rights, an anonymous author wrote:



On January 1<sup>st</sup> the Vice Squad openly declared war on the local homophile community. A task force of 55 was ordered to intimidate, harass and make arrests; and to in any fashion destroy the ball held by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual. This they did, in the most brutal and ugly manner, yet in contrast, 600 ticket holders behaved with exemplary courage and personal pride in the face of this outrage.<sup>56</sup>

Framing the police as an agent of destruction encouraged GLBTQ individuals to work to preserve themselves, their safety, and their developing community. Defining the situation in existential terms then pushed GLBTQ individuals to unite around their shared interest in fending off the aggressive and destructive police. This framing also instructed members of CRH and other homophile movement organizations that they must hold themselves to a higher standard. GLBTQ individuals needed to act with courage and with pride, and not as brutes as the police did. The report positioned courage and pride as necessary for GLBTQ survival against police harassment, but did so in a manner that enabled courage and pride even while in the closet and using anonymous *persona* under the protection of CRH.

In an anonymous letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, one individual modelled how GLBTQ communities could rally without individuals needing to reveal their sexuality publicly. The letter cultivated a sense that CRH could function to both connect with others in support of anonymous GLBTQ individuals and an emerging, yet largely hidden, community. This letter also affirmed the work of CRH, encouraging that work's continuation and illuminated a path for GLBTQ communities to develop. Displaying anger and disgust as a motive for continued action on behalf of GLBTQ individuals, the letter writer stated:

Some time ago you [*San Francisco Chronicle* editor] published an article pertaining to the establishment by the Christian community of a dialogue between the Church and

homosexuals. Having myself been the recipient of such aid, I was indeed encouraged.

Later I read of the arrest of some of the members participating in the first of such meetings. I am disgusted and furious by this harassment on the part of the police.<sup>57</sup>

In the opening of this letter, the writer expressed that CRH aided the writer, providing readers with an understanding of the importance of the organization for individual San Franciscans. The letter also supplied emotional motivation for acting to protect CRH and protest the police—anger. Anger justified action, and the letter expressed one way in which GLBTQ individuals and their allies could act. The writer stated, “As I would like to give financial assistance to this group [CRH], please indicate their title and address. I cannot sign my name. Yours Truly.”<sup>58</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* included the contact information for McIlvenna immediately following the letter. The writer and the letter’s publication modelled a way in which LBTQ people and their allies could support efforts to aid GLBTQ people in their community without revealing their own identities: financial assistance of the coalition. That is, CRH and McIlvenaa provided an avenue for developing and supporting community without the need of individuals revealing their identification with or support of the community. The coalitional politics of CRH allowed individuals to continue their individual passing strategies in a manner in which they could contribute to the formation and growth of a community that could, as a result, develop into a force in local politics.

Moreover, newsletters positioned the GLBTQ community as a significant political force, empowering and encouraging ongoing and continued political action and organization as an appropriate response to police intimidation. The *Vector* reported, “Decisive political activity is also under way, for this marks a beginning and not the end of our determination to achieve full citizenship for GLBTQ individuals; and to exercise our considerable voting power at ensuing

elections.”<sup>59</sup> The anonymous writer defined the situation as being marked by the beginning of political activity in a manner that suggested the question of whether action would occur was already settled. Even though many in the budding GLBTQ community may have had reservations about continuing action after the police raid, stating the decision to act as an already-agreed to belief limited the available options for the homophile movement organizations and their supporters. Imploring action could embolden the continuation of advocacy for the community or the beginning of political activity if individual audience members had not done so already. Identifying GLBTQ persons as having “considerable voting power” established them as a significantly influential political constituency. Such a move empowered GLBTQ persons, because it told them that their actions would not be in vain; they could dramatically alter their current circumstances by acting.<sup>60</sup>

Because *Vector's* anonymous author wrote the report, the report also modelled to GLBTQ persons that they should establish anonymous *personae*, leaving the public face and open response to the police raid to the lawyers and clergy members. In other words, GLBTQ individuals could act with pride and courage but do so in a manner that would prevent retribution from being exacted on them. GLBTQ people could enact political influence in the city without exposing themselves to continued discrimination. Establishing an anonymous *persona* highlighted the risk associated with revealing one’s sexuality. However, voting enabled action without requiring GLBTQ stakeholders to reveal their sexuality to the public as they attempted to create change. The predominant public response to the police raid could be through the clergy members and the lawyers of CRH, but the force of the political response could occur anonymously in the voting booth. In this manner, these anonymous reports provided GLBTQ persons with an anonymous *persona* that they can “adopt and enact.”<sup>61</sup> For CRH, GLBTQ

individuals' choice to adopt such a *persona* enabled the CRH to define itself as clergy members and lawyers when engaged in disputes against the police while empowering GLBTQ stakeholders to remain active in their actions against the discrimination they faced.

CRH's response to the police raid crafted public clergy and lawyerly *persona*, enabling CRH to frame the controversy as being between the police and the clergy or lawyers. Such rhetorical positioning insulated GLBTQ members of CRH from the potential for increased marginalization. Based on the role of clergy members and lawyers in society, their vocal response to the police raid fostered credibility for the narrative told by CRH and undercut the arguments the police could make to respond to CRH's condemnation of their actions. Given the cover the clergy members and lawyers provided for GLBTQ individuals, GLBTQ persons could empower themselves to act as an anonymous but significant political force.

As such, CRH's coalitional masquerade, after the police raid, provided space and the rationales necessary for GLBTQ individuals to maintain their individual passing strategies and survival. Yet, CRH's rhetoric, both after the ball and moving forward through the later part of the 1960s, also helped cultivate a vibrant and empowered GLBTQ community as well as significant political clout for San Francisco's GLBTQ community.

### **Conclusion**

CRH's protest following the police raid offered protection from continued discrimination and harassment to GLBTQ persons. By re-defining the conflict as being between the police force and privileged members of the coalition, CRH's members shared intentional resources for developing *ethos* in a manner that hid, while defending and affirming, its GLBTQ members. For example, CRH's vocal clergy members positioned the police in a way that would require the

police to respond to the clergy members, not to the homophile movement organizations. Defining the situation as such curtailed the police force's appeal to the moral and legal high ground. Because the clergy members had biblical and moral authority, they could frame the police actions as morally bankrupt. Moreover, when CRH's lawyers responded to the situation, they too undercut an argumentative option for the police. Since the lawyers had legal authority, their rhetoric eroded the ability of the police to justify their actions in terms of what the law allowed them to do. The married couples also undercut the potential argument that GLBTQ individuals threatened traditional marriage. Because acting openly remained risky for GLBTQ individuals, the *ethos* cultivated by CRH—a clergy, lawyerly, and straight *ethos*—enabled their closeted action against oppression. Together, CRH's response to the police raid invited union among the GLBTQ community and their supporters for action against the police's oppressive actions in a manner that protected those GLBTQ individuals from continued marginalization. CRH's coalitional masquerade invited both social transformation and communal cultivation.

Thus, CRH's rhetoric offers insight into how coalitions can rupture the silencing of marginalized groups. To survive oppression, people may silence themselves because they fear retaliation for speaking. When CRH first formed and started advocating for the inclusion of GLBTQ individuals, anti-sodomy laws criminalized being GLBTQ. Individuals and institutions could legally discriminate against GLBTQ persons.<sup>62</sup> Fear of discrimination such as being fired meant that people would guard their sexualities, ensuring that no one would be able to use their sexuality to discriminate against them. As such, GLBTQ individuals reported living “double lives” where they would modify their behavior and actions to fit in amongst heterosexual society but also “lived within the confines of their own reference group.”<sup>63</sup> Police harassed, raided, and closed locations that they thought might serve GLBTQ patrons, and encounters with the police

risked that GLBTQ persons would be outed to their families and employers.<sup>64</sup> These factors constrained the available rhetorical options for early GLBTQ rights movement advocates. By aligning within the coalition of CRH, however, what GLBTQ persons could not state openly or credibly became utterable by CRH's clergy members, lawyers, and married couples. The coalition thus opened new inventional and rhetorical possibilities for those fighting against discrimination and criminalization of GLBTQ persons as certain members, namely the clergy members, of the coalition might not have needed to fear backlash and retribution to the extent that other members experienced those fears. Working within the coalitional structure of CRH offered additional inventional resources and possibilities for advocates' efforts to expand GLBTQ inclusion. Specifically, the clergy members, lawyers, and married couples offered CRH inventional resources for cultivating certain types of *ethos*, forms that would not have been available to solely the GLBTQ membership of other early homophile movement organizations.

The case of CRH also contributes to scholarship's understanding of opaque rhetorics, further developing Goffman's theories about concealing identity information: passing and covering. CRH highlights how opaque rhetorics and acts that conceal identity can constitute communal and cooperative affairs. Like how an individual might hide or downplay markers relating to one's identity, groups and coalitions might attempt to pass or cover some identity information either about the organization itself or about its membership. When organizations and alliances work to maintain a specific public *persona*, they might undergo a process of streamlining or simplifying which face of the membership of their group they show publicly for strategic purposes as in the case where CRH defined itself as a group of clergy members in its press conference after the police raid. In cases involving individuals within an organization's membership, the organization itself might cooperate with or assist in individuals' strategies for

hiding or minimizing their personal identity information. This identification of how passing and covering can interact with a communal dimension productively expands the concepts' utility, enabling critics to examine how organizations, communities, and groups might enact coalitional fronting to obscure or downplay collective identity markers.

This analysis of CRH's significance also rests in what it reveals about the strategies of coalitional fronting. By strategically defining their coalition based on some of the public facing identities that comprised the group, CRH reframed and renegotiated the boundaries of and participants in the controversy over GLBTQ individuals and their right to exist in public spaces. Although fraught with pain in the form of hiding authentic identities that comprise the alliance's members, coalitional passing can enable resistance by enabling the cultivation of *ethos* most likely to achieve strategic goals and by shielding the coalition's "deviant" membership, which provides the space and protection necessary for those "deviant" members to foster a political force. Broadly then, CRH's case shows how privileged members of a coalition might use their privilege as a rhetorical resource on behalf of and to defend others marginalized in society. This insight shows how coalitional rhetoric might encourage and enhance possibilities for social change, offering an explanation of how rhetoric factored into one of the most consequential developments in GLBTQ inclusion and acceptance.<sup>65</sup> As our field continues its "tireless cruising in vexed pursuit of the elusive artifacts of our queer histories,"<sup>66</sup> it should remember CRH's endeavor to share resources for *ethos* cultivation and to utilize coalitional fronting to protect its membership from violence, police retribution, and continued marginalization.

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted by Del Martin, “Minutes of CRH Membership Meeting on January 5, 1965,” LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Hubbub of Meetings and Activities, accessed on January 30, 2018,

<<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=5&CID=23&AID=69>>.

<sup>2</sup> Although many of the historical documents I analyze in this chapter refer to GLBTQ people as solely “homosexuals,” I opt to use the GLBTQ, because scholarly research continues to distance itself from the term. For an example of a criticism of the use of the term “homosexual,” see Karma R. Chávez, “Beyond Complicity: Coherence, Queer Theory, and the Rhetoric of the ‘Gay Christian Movement,’” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 24 (2004): 255-75.

<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Lyon, “Phyllis Lyon & Del Martin Recollect Why CRH Was Formed,” LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Coalition Proves Mutually Beneficial, accessed on February 20, 2016,

<<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=2&CID=8>>.

<sup>4</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Community: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Community*.

<sup>6</sup> Michael G. Long, *Martin Luther King Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gays Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2012), 66.

<sup>7</sup> “Dr. Ted McIlvenna,” *LGBT Religious Archives Network*, accessed on February 20, 2016, last modified on July 8, 2005, <<http://www.lgbtran.org/Profile.aspx?ID=125>>.



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<sup>8</sup> George Mendenhall, “Queer Cooperation and Resistance: A Gay and Lesbians Movement Comes Together in the 1960s,” in *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* ed. Nan Alamilla Boyd, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 233-4.

<sup>9</sup> Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Introduction: San Francisco Was a Wide-Open Town,” in *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*, ed. Nan Alamilla Boyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Mendenhall, “Queer Cooperation and Resistance,” 232.

<sup>11</sup> Mendenhall, “Queer Cooperation and Resistance,” 234.

<sup>12</sup> Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life & Times of Harvey Milk* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 59.

<sup>14</sup> George Chauncey, *Why Marriage?: The History Shaping Today’s Debate Over Gay Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books Group, 2004), 28.

<sup>15</sup> Roxanna Thayer Sweet, *Political and Social Action in Homophile Organizations* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1975), 153.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Goffman, *Stigma*, 48 and 102. Also see, for examples, Torin Monahan, “The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 159–78; Anna L. Spradlin, “The Price of ‘Passing’: A Lesbian Perspective on Authenticity in Organizations,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 11 (1998): 598-605; Catherine R. Squires and Daniel C. Brouwer, “In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 283-310; Lauren Wagner, “Using Silence to ‘Pass’: Embodiment and Interactional Categorization in a Diasporic Context,” *Multilingua* 34 (2015):

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659-86; Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (New York, NY: Random House, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Kathryn M. Olson, "Rhetorical Leadership and Transferable Lessons for Successful Social Advocacy in Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 44 (2007): 102.

<sup>18</sup> Will Hathaway and David S. Meyer, "Competition & Cooperation in Movement Coalitions: Lobbying for Peace in the 1980s," in *Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze*, eds. Thomas R. Rochon and David S. Meyer (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 64.

<sup>19</sup> Alyssa A. Samek, "Pivoting Between Identity Politics and Coalitional Relationships: Lesbian-Feminist Resistance to the Woman-Identified Woman," *Women's Studies in Communication* 38 (2015): 399.

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Beth Evans and Elyse Janish, "#INeedDiverseGames: How the Queer Backlash to GamerGate Enables Nonbinary Coalition," *QED: A Journal of GLBTQ Worldmaking* 2 (2015): 133-4.

<sup>21</sup> Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Helene A. Shugart, "Performing Ambiguity: The Passing of Ellen DeGeneres," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23 (2003): 32.

<sup>23</sup> Charles E. Morris III, "Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover's Sex Crime Panic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 228.

<sup>24</sup> Morris III, "Pink Herring," 230.

<sup>25</sup> Shugart, "Performing Ambiguity," 51.

<sup>26</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Community*, 13.

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<sup>27</sup> Charles E. Morris III, "The Responsibilities of the Critic: F. O. Matthiessen's Homosexual Palimpsest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 261-82.

<sup>28</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*.

<sup>29</sup> Sweet, *Political and Social Action*.

<sup>30</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Community*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Meeker, "Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 78-116.

<sup>33</sup> Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, "'A Queer Ladder of Social Mobility': San Francisco's Homophile Movements, 1953-1960," in *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*, ed. Nan Alamilla Boyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 164.

<sup>34</sup> Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin paraphrased in Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Mendenhall, "Queer Cooperation and Resistance," 233.

<sup>36</sup> "Here's What Really Happened: Statement Released at Press Conference on January 2, 1965," *LGBT Religious Archives Network*, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 27, 2016, <<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=4&CID=17>>.

<sup>37</sup> "Arrested Lawyers To Fight, Protest Police Action at Ball: *Examiner* Reports ACLU Press Conference with Arrested Lawyers," *LGBT Religious Archives Network*, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 27, 2016,

<<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=4&CID=18&AID=58>>.

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<sup>38</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>39</sup> “ACLU Joins Homosexual Dance Case: *Chronicle* Reports ACLU Press Conference with Arrested Lawyers,” LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 27, 2016, <<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=4&CID=18&AID=57>>.

<sup>40</sup> On January 8, the *San Francisco Chronicle* published a series of letters to the editor about the police raid all under the same heading of “Police and Homosexuals.” See “Police and Homosexuals,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 8, 1965, accessed at LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 20, 2016, <<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=2&CID=8>>.

<sup>41</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>42</sup> “ACLU Joins Homosexual Dance Case.”

<sup>43</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>44</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>45</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>46</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>47</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>48</sup> “Angry Ministers Rip Police: Press Conference Reported in Next Day’s *San Francisco Chronicle*,” LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 27, 2016, <<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=4&CID=17>>.

<sup>49</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

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<sup>50</sup> “Arrested Lawyers To Fight.”

<sup>51</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>52</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>53</sup> “Angry Ministers Rip Police.”

<sup>54</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>55</sup> “Here’s What Really Happened.”

<sup>56</sup> “Private Benefit Ball Invaded: *Vector*, Newsletter of the Newly-Formed Society for Individual Rights, Reports on California Hall Affair,” LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 27, 2016,

<<http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=4&CID=18&AID=57>>.

<sup>57</sup> “Keep the Dialogue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1965, accessed at LGBT Religious Archives Network, Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Clergy Express Outrage and Spark Resistance, accessed on February 20, 2016,

<<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Image.aspx?AID=56>>.

<sup>58</sup> “Keep the Dialogue.”

<sup>59</sup> “Private Benefit Ball Invaded.”

<sup>60</sup> See Joshua H. Miller, “Empowering Communities: Ella Baker’s Decentralized Leadership Style and Conversational Eloquence,” *Southern Communication Journal* 81 (2016): 160-61.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Leff and Ebony A. Utley, “Instrumental and Constitutive Rhetoric in Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail,’” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 48.

<sup>62</sup> Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*; Also see Sweet, *Political and Social Action*, 129.

<sup>63</sup> Sweet, *Political and Social Action*, 6.

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<sup>64</sup> Sweet, *Political and Social Action*.

<sup>65</sup> See Sweet, *Political and Social Action*, 153.

<sup>66</sup> Charles E. Morris III, "Archival Queer," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 148.

## CHAPTER SIX

### William R. Johnson's Anticipatory Appeals: Preparing the Way for Social Change

“Never before has any major religious group *knowingly* ordained a homosexual.”<sup>1</sup>

On April 30, 1972, William Reagan Johnson appeared before 96 members (40 ministers and 56 lay delegates) of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in San Francisco for them to decide if they would confirm his ordination as a minister. In doing so, Johnson became the first openly GLBTQ individual to seek ordination in a mainline denomination.<sup>2</sup> Johnson's ordination process and eventual confirmation generated controversy. A “pastor of a large congregation” assertively opposed Johnson's ordination, and several churches boycotted the ordination.<sup>3</sup> Both before and after the Johnson's confirmation, letters supporting and opposing his ministerial aspirations entered the fray. Letters opposing Johnson's ordination frequently cited the GLBTQ “texts of terror” and argued that “biblical standards must be maintained.”<sup>4</sup> A report produced by the UCC stated, “One representative negative letter came from a woman in New Jersey. ‘New Testament testimony speaks against man with men as evil,’ she wrote. ‘Please move to an island so if fire and brimstone fall the whole country won't suffer. O repent!’”<sup>5</sup> Others voiced concern that ordaining Johnson would fracture the church.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, letters sent to Johnson also supported and affirmed his ordination. According to a United Church of Christ's report concerning Johnson, “Most came from gay men and women who found hope and affirmation in the very fact of the ordination.”<sup>7</sup> The rebukes against Johnson and his sexuality ensured that, to succeed in his ordination efforts, Johnson would need to navigate this controversy, anticipate, and respond to these negative reactions and the potential for additional ones. He needed a strategy and rhetoric that could manage the potential of his sexuality from hindering the committee's perception of his moral character, allegiance to scripture, and potential for ordination. That is, he needed to

convince the members of the ordination committee that they should affirm his aspiration despite their awareness of his sexuality and the controversy itself.

Reports also circulated which framed Johnson's ordination as a highly visible effort to cultivate more inclusive communities for GLBTQ individuals. For example, an article in the *United Church Herald* suggested, "Johnson's public affirmation that 'gay is good' forces the church to consider openly exactly how good homosexuality is for the life and future of the church."<sup>8</sup> In another report, W. Evan Golder detailed how Johnson "is a man who knows what he is about, and who decided while in seminary to be 'up front' with the church about his sexual identity. Consequently, at a seminary symposium on homosexuality in November 1970, Bill Johnson voluntarily 'came out of his closet' and affirmed that he is gay."<sup>9</sup> Together, these reports positioned Johnson as an "out" and visible GLBTQ advocate whose actions encouraged and necessitated open discussions about "homosexuality" and the church. On initial inspection, Johnson's ordination efforts appeared as a highly visible pro-GLBTQ advocacy effort.

Yet, in this paper, I argue that his rhetoric during the ordination process utilized opaque rhetorical strategies that helped prepare for and secure his confirmation from the 96 members of his denomination. Specifically, Johnson's ordination paper utilized what I term "anticipatory appeals" that enabled him to justify and prepare his audience for the acceptance of his gay Christian identity before he pivoted to a visible discussion of his identity. Johnson needed to both encourage the ordination committee to accept GLBTQ clergy in principle and affirm him as an acceptable GLBTQ potential clergy member in this specific context. To respond to this complex challenge, Johnson momentarily minimized his sexual identity, enabling him to defend his identity and justify all GLBTQ inclusion before he explicitly mentioned his sexual orientation. To do so, Johnson used examples from his advocacy to end racial prejudice and his affirmation



of the values of freedom from oppression, inclusion, honesty, and trust. Moreover, the way in which Johnson developed his arguments through allusion and enthymeme enabled him to showcase his qualifications, leadership skills, and moral authority to lead a congregation as an ordained minister. To develop this argument, I first detail a theory of anticipatory appeals, explaining the theoretical significance of such a critical tool for rhetorical scholarship. Then, I turn to an analysis of Johnson's ordination document, explaining the functions of both moments in which he revealed his identity and the ways he prepared and equipped his audience to affirm this sexual identity once he proclaimed it. I conclude with a reflection on the lessons learned from the analysis of Johnson's rhetoric for rhetorical scholarship and theories of opaque rhetorics.

### **Anticipatory Appeals: Preparing *Kairotic* Pivots and Revelation**

This chapter develops a theory about one type of opaque rhetoric that can equip and prepare audiences for the later revelation of potentiality discrediting information and, specifically, for a rhetor to “come out” in textual moments of revelation. These anticipatory appeals enable rhetors to cultivate *kairotic*, opportune and timely, moments to reveal their identities. The concept of anticipatory appeals furthermore develops rhetorical theory in significant ways. First, such a theory enables rhetorical critics to more fully appreciate and analyze “coming out” as an ongoing rhetorical process rather than a single revelatory moment, aligning rhetoric scholarship's conceptualization more closely with social scientific research's insights concerning “coming out.”<sup>10</sup> Aligning rhetorical theory with the insights provided by social scientific scholarship helps ensure a fuller understanding of the fluid and dynamic ways in which people actually deploy rhetoric in their lives and throughout advocacy efforts. Second, a

theoretical lens based on anticipation allows critics to capture more fully the liminality or “in-between” involved in “coming out,”<sup>11</sup> which challenges the prevalent dichotomies of passing-visibility and in-out in rhetorical scholarship. In other words, using anticipation as a lens highlights how even “out” rhetors use opacity to generate *kairotic* moments to reveal their identities in ongoing rhetorical negotiations with new audiences and in new contexts. Adding nuance to the distinction between visibility and passing enables scholarship to understand and appreciate the many diverse ways that rhetors manage identity in advocacy efforts. Moreover, as this section details, the concept of anticipatory appeals enhances Alyssa A. Samek’s scholarship on “pivoting.”<sup>12</sup>

Samek’s theory of “pivoting” provides a useful starting point related to the development of a theory of anticipation, which equips scholars with another tool for understanding how opacity functions in liminal contexts. In liminal spaces, transitions, translations, transformations, and transactions occur.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Robert E. Terrill explains that “liminal spaces are simultaneously spaces to be crossed and spaces that foster crossings.”<sup>14</sup> Samek’s theorization of pivoting productively captures the fluid nature and transitional capability of liminality. Samek explained pivoting as follows:

Instead of a vertical or hierarchical move associated with privileging one identity over another, pivoting references a horizontal move, akin to shifting one’s weight in basketball. Pivoting becomes a way to rhetorically work the space between identity locations, emphasizing one identity for one audience and another for audiences of differing subject positions.<sup>15</sup>

The way Samek foregrounded movement in her description of pivoting allows for the concept to help explain how rhetoric operates in the liminal spaces between being “in” and “out of” the

closet. As rhetors navigate the many situations in which they advocate, they can develop an ongoing process of emphasizing and de-emphasizing information about themselves. As they do so, they move and pivot among diverse stances that represent themselves in different ways. More specifically, as GLTBQ advocates navigate the complex relationships among self, identity, *persona*, audience, and textual production, they might shift among different identity locations to aid how they identify with and persuade members of their audience. Thus, Samek's theory of pivoting provides the groundwork from which rhetorical scholarship can analyze how rhetors balance the demands of liminality on their advocacy work.

This chapter extends Samek's conceptualization of the pivot by introducing the notion of anticipatory appeals. Pivoting implies movement, and rhetors can prepare their audiences for that movement. As rhetors develop a shift in how audience members might perceive them, they attempt to invite strategies and tactics to enable that shift. For instance, Tony E. Adams explained that "when a person fathoms coming out, she or he anticipates another's response" and determines how to best prepare for and navigate the plethora of ways one could respond.<sup>16</sup> The rhetorical work of equipping and readying audiences for the movement of a pivot constitutes the strategic maneuvering that I term "anticipatory appeals." Anticipatory appeals signal, prepare audiences for, and justify shifts in how rhetors represent themselves, relate to their audience, or frame their situation. In preparing for the pivot and in the process of pivoting, rhetors can signal and justify how they alter their representation of their self, even as they begin to alter and to change the manners in which they balance, emphasize, and de-emphasize information about themselves.

In tandem with developing the concept of anticipatory appeals, this chapter develops theory about pivoting in two additional ways. First, the rhetorical work on pivoting can involve

more than shifting priority of certain identity locations and can involve the fluid affirmation of values, beliefs, and traditions to identify with audiences in anticipation of a pivot. For instance, upholding the value of freedom from discrimination can allow a rhetor to identify with an audience and prepare that audience to affirm GLBTQ rhetors when that rhetor reveals identity information. Second, this chapter expands the number of situations in which rhetorical critics may look for and find pivoting. Although Samek's work details how pivoting works in efforts to build coalitions,<sup>17</sup> pivoting can help rhetor set up and the execute identity revelations and identify with potentially hostile audiences. Rhetors' textual choices can develop a rationale for the acceptance of their identity before they reveal their identity and any discrediting information that might undermine their ability to cultivate *ethos*.

Developing an understanding of how rhetors might develop appeals that prepare for and anticipate pivoting towards identity information enables rhetorical scholarship to conceptualize the effort GLBTQ rhetors undergo in determining when and how to come out. Social scientific research concerning "coming out" highlights the significance of timing and context in the ongoing process of revealing identity. In other words, rhetors develop appeals enabling them to "come out" in *kairotic*, opportune and timely, moments. Aaron Hess explained two ways to conceptualize *kairos*: "First, *kairos* can be understood as the decorum or propriety of any given moment and speech act, implying a reliance on the given or known. Second, *kairos* can also be understood as the opportune, spontaneous, or timely."<sup>18</sup> Both of these definitions of *kairos* reflect well how scholars have described the moment of identity revelation. As Jimmie Manning's research illustrates, GLBTQ people come out in certain contexts, and those contextual factors influence individuals' decision-making processes concerning whether they should come out or how they should come out.<sup>19</sup> Adams explained, "Because coming out can be dangerous, a person

with same-sex attraction may feel a need to try to find the right time to disclose this attraction.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, single instances of “coming out” often occur in moments where rhetors view most timely and opportune. Importantly, anticipatory appeals, by preparing and equipping audiences for the revelation, cultivate timely and opportune future moments for revealing potentially discrediting information. Rhetorical critics, in their close examination of texts, can illuminate these appeals that build toward the *kairotic* moment of revelation.

### **Anticipating Revelation: Preparation, Implication, and Allusion**

As an example of how even “out” rhetors utilize opacity strategically, Johnson’s ordination document develops through a series of anticipatory appeals based on implication, allusion, and enthymeme. The constellation of these appeals enabled Johnson to prepare his audience members for the revelation of his identity. Johnson postponed revealing his identity as a gay man until several pages into his ordination document. When Johnson did “out” himself, he had already established a framework for the audience to accept his sexuality and the ordination of GLBTQ individuals without developing those arguments explicitly. After revealing his identity, Johnson still mainly alluded to his sexuality both to justify his qualifications for ordination despite his sexuality and to continue warranting the affirmation and inclusion of all GLBTQ people.

All the while, Johnson’s rhetoric anticipated and justified the second moment in which he explicitly mentioned his sexuality in his ordination document. He did so in three ways. First, Johnson crafted specific arguments about racial discrimination which anticipated and equipped the audience to transfer the lessons learned from cases based on racial marginalization to cases of GLBTQ marginalization. Second, Johnson explicitly affirmed universal principles concerning

social justice, alienation, and inclusion in ways that implicitly supported GLBTQ inclusion and affirmation, providing his audience with a framework for accepting of GLBTQ people based on already-agreed-upon values and beliefs. Finally, Johnson anticipated his identity revelation through an affirmation of honesty and trust, equipping the committee members to accept his ordination based on his honesty about his identity. The following analysis unfolds as follows: (1) I detail how Johnson “came out” in his ordination document to illustrate what Johnson’s anticipatory appeals preceded, and (2) illustrate how each of Johnson’s anticipatory appeals both downplayed his identity until his revelatory moment, created the grounding for the affirmation of his identity once revealed, and justified voting in favor his ordination.

*Johnson’s Identity Revelation: Justifying, Sacrificing, and Modeling*

To illustrate how the anticipatory appeals in Johnson’s rhetoric developed into two moments in which he explicitly revealed his identity, I first detail how Johnson “outed” himself in his ordination paper. Starting with the moments in which Johnson states his identity provides important context to develop a full analysis of Johnson’s anticipatory maneuvers. Johnson only explicitly mentioned his identity twice in his ordination document. This section details how Johnson contextualized his ordination as sacrificial, cultivating moral authority for his ordination efforts. Then, I argue that Johnson used his personal experience to develop a justification for responding to the discrimination that GLBTQ people faced. Finally, this section illustrates how Johnson developed a model for how the United Church of Christ could work to face fears and illuminate a better path for following the will of God.

As Johnson revealed his sexual identity to his ordination committee, he defined his pursuit of ordination as about following God’s desire for him, cultivating moral authority based on his willingness to sacrifice to answer God’s call. Johnson first explicitly mentioned his sexual

orientation four pages into his paper as he explained his struggle with deciding to pursue ordination. He wrote,

I have come to the terrifying, joyous realization that I am compelled by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in my life to witness to the living Gospel of the Christ. During the summer of 1970 I was tormented in mind and spirit by the knowledge that I personally could not enter the ordained ministry without disclosing to the persons responsible for the ordination the fact of my gay sexual orientation, which, as a matter of personal survival, had remained well hidden.<sup>21</sup>

The juxtaposition between “terrifying” and “joyous” created a sense of the significance of Johnson’s decision to undertake the ordination process, foregrounding both Johnson’s willingness to serve but also the risks of his service. Even though Johnson remained “joyous,” he also positioned his openness in the ordination process as sacrificing a means of “personal survival.” Defining the situation through the terms of sacrifice and survival showcased Johnson’s devotion and commitment to the ordination process. Moreover, using the word “compelled” framed his pursuit of ordination as not a choice but as a necessity. This word choice created the impression that Johnson’s remained willing to follow God’s call, no matter the dangers involved in answering the call. Emphasizing his willingness to give up the securities of his life to follow God, he cultivated an appeal to highlight his moral authority and the moral authority behind his ordination efforts.

As Johnson explained his need to reveal his identity as a part of this ordination process, Johnson also modelled to the members of his ordination committee how to face fears and follow God’s will. Importantly, using his experience to craft the model showed both Johnson’s ability to shepherd God’s people and encouraged committee members to follow what they believe was

correct, without worrying about the potential for controversy in doing what they thought right. When Johnson transitioned away from an explicit reference to his sexuality, he discussed the situation both in terms of lack of choice and as about following God. As he did, he implicitly justified his coming out before the ordination committee as a need and positioned the revelatory act as fulfilling his calling from God. He claimed,

I know that I have been called to the ordained Christian ministry. The realization of that fact terrified me at first, caused me to quake in my boots at the realization of what it would require of me, but today I know in the very depths of my being that it is God's will that brings me to this moment and His grace alone that will sustain me as I seek, through word and deed, to witness to the Gospel and share in the effort of the church to be true to its mission.<sup>22</sup>

Articulating how grace was enabling his effort to become an ordained clergy member, despite his concerns about needing to reveal his identity, modeled to members of his ordination committee that God could empower them through controversy and difficulty—specifically, the potential fallout from affirming him. Johnson's reference to the sustaining power of grace not only functioned to respond to fears committee members might have about his ordination, but also warranted his qualification to provide advice to and lead fellow Christians. He both rationalized the decision to affirm his ordination, despite reservations about potential repercussions and enacted a reason to vote in favor of ordination based on his demonstration of his ability to minister and stand up openly for what he believed, regardless of consequences.

When Johnson explicitly referenced his sexual orientation for the second time in his ordination paper, his appeal built on his argument about grace and facing fear, using his personal experience to proclaim a rationale for the ordination committee to affirm GLBTQ clergy and



GLBTQ people broadly speaking. In part, this appeal focused on how affirming his GLBTQ identity now could correct a wrongdoing by the church: harming GLBTQ individuals. To do so, Johnson first developed a framework under which the ordination committee could understand their decision as not only about Johnson's specific ordination but also the current unhealthy relationship between GLBTQ people and the church. Johnson argued, "In our society, social and religious condemnation, based on fear and ignorance, have forced gay persons to live lives of dishonesty and fear in which, for the most part, psychological and emotional suffering has been silently endured."<sup>23</sup> Johnson set his second explicit statement about his sexuality within a context concerning the plight facing GLBTQ people. He highlighted how "religious condemnation" factored into the "psychological and emotional suffering" of GLBTQ people, foregrounding the role that the church, broadly, and the ordination committee, narrowly, had in the continuation or resolution of marginalization. Stating this connection raised the stakes of the decision faced by the ordination committee; they had to decide how they would relate to and respond to the possibility that the United Church of Christ could continue the marginalization. They also had to determine if and how they would challenge what Johnson referred to as the "fear and ignorance" circulating about GLBTQ people but also, in another moment of allusion, the "fear and ignorance" in the criticisms of his ordination.

Within this framework, Johnson revealed his identity and used his personal experiences to show a potential path forward, providing the ordination committee with an alternative to the "fear and ignorance" of the status quo. In highlighting how the denomination and his ordination committee could avoid the pitfalls of "fear and ignorance," Johnson once again illustrated his leadership capabilities to his ordination committee. He allowed, "As one who finds genuine meaning and fulfilment in relationships with persons of my own sex, I allowed the fear of

exposure to control my life for many years. But having affirmed my personhood in all of its dimensions, I have become, by the grace of God, a man free from fear.”<sup>24</sup> As Johnson explicitly referenced his sexual identity, Johnson provided a model for how one could grow from fear to freedom. God’s grace and accepting all of one’s dimensions contained the transformative potential to move an individual, and synecdochally a community or society, out of “fear and ignorance” and toward freedom.<sup>25</sup> Just as Johnson’s willingly accepted himself with the grace of God, the ordination committee too could accept Johnson in his entirety with the grace of God as a way to intervene in the societal and communal marginalization faced by GLBTQ people and to help create more inclusive communities. Yet, before Johnson cultivated this model for how the ordination committee could proceed, he anticipated his identity revelations, equipping his audience members to accept his identity before he “came out” to them.

#### *Using Cases of Racial Discrimination to Rationalize GLBTQ Acceptance*

To build into the moment where Johnson “outed” himself to his ordination committee, Johnson drew on his personal experience with combating racial discrimination in a manner that prepared his audience for his later identity revelation. In doing so, Johnson positioned Christians as having the choice to affirm others and grow or to deny inclusion and remain naïve. Although Johnson’s explicit argument developed reference cases involving racial prejudice, his rhetorical efforts cultivated a framework from which the ordination committee could understand the case before them involving the affirmation of GLBTQ clergy. As this section will showcase, using his personal experience, Johnson enlarged the stakes of making the choice and of choosing correctly, augmenting the significance of the committee’s decision when they did decide whether to affirm his ordination and sexual orientation. Moreover, he cited scripture to equip the audience to accept others and choose and defend to others the path of growth rather than naiveté. Finally,

Johnson justified his ordination by detailing his devotion to the United Church of Christ's social justice tradition, which also prepared his audience to extend that tradition to include the support and affirmation of GLBTQ people.

Johnson's ordination paper drew on his experience with advocating for integration to frame the situation of his ordination as a choice between remaining naïve and growth. Chronologically, Johnson developed this appeal before revealing his sexuality in his ordination document, which enabled him to use the example of civil rights to prompt his audience to accept risk and to grow on the issue of sexuality. After briefly introducing his family, Johnson wrote,

We were all members of the First Evangelical Church of Houston, a conservative, status-quo conscious congregation that was related to the United Church of Christ. I grew up in the church and believed, with certain naiveté, the fundamentals of the Christian faith I was taught in church school and confirmation.<sup>26</sup>

Indicating that his previous congregation remained naïve in their conservative and status-quo-oriented mindset, Johnson contended that his ordination committee should err on the side of progress. Johnson developed this point with an explicit reference to integration, stating, "It was my involvement with the inter-denominational, inter-racial Christian Youth Council that caused me to begin the growth from naiveté to understanding concerning the Gospel and Mission of the church in contemporary life."<sup>27</sup> In this passage, Johnson delineated growth from remaining naïve, portraying his previous experiences as enabling him to grow through his inter-denominational and inter-racial immersion and as allowing him to avoid the problem of naiveté. He utilized his past experiences with integration to frame his audience members as needing to choose either growth or naiveté. Using his experiences, Johnson modeled how his ordination

committee should navigate the choice in front of them; they should promote growth and change as opposed to remaining naïve and of the status quo.

Furthermore, Johnson referenced his experiences to highlight to the ordination committee that many churches still decided to remain status-quo-oriented and naïve, illustrating the stakes of decisions to either grow or continue naiveté. Specifically, Johnson suggested that churches can remain naïve when confronted with controversial issues. Johnson stated, “My open association with Black youth in Houston was frowned upon in my home church. My advocacy of civil rights for minorities and of integration in church and school was not warmly received.”<sup>28</sup> Johnson used this example of his home church as an illustration of how churches can choose to remain naïve, promoting a presumption against remaining status-quo-oriented and promoting growth on important social issues of the time. Although Johnson did not reference his sexuality in this opening framing, promoting the significance of choosing growth over naiveté on matter of inclusion created a framework within which the ordination committee could vote for Johnson’s confirmation. Under Johnson’s framing, the committee could choose the proper path of growth and affirm GLBTQ individuals based on Johnson’s explicit experiences with observing churches fail to grow on the issues of racial prejudice and discrimination.

As Johnson developed this framework, he utilized scripture to support the need for growth on the issue of racial discrimination. Although the citation of the passage seemingly only supported his position on the importance of challenging racial discrimination, the passage also anticipated and equipped his audience for the revelation of his sexual orientation. After explaining how he attended a forum in Atlanta concerning “the basic human rights denied to Black Americans because of racial discrimination,”<sup>29</sup> Johnson argued that the forum “gave me an understanding of the challenge that faces the contemporary church as well as a theological basis

for my commitment to the civil rights struggle.”<sup>30</sup> Immediately following this statement, Johnson cited scripture, “The words of I John became real to me: ‘*If a man says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar.*’”<sup>31</sup> Johnson’s use of this passage served several functions. First, citing I John supported his argument that he made the proper choice in advocating against racial discrimination, showing his capability to reflect and grow based on his engagement with scripture and with the social justice issues. Second, reasoning from scripture helped establish his authority and credence as a potential Christian leader as Christian discourse should reason from scripture to maintain coherence.<sup>32</sup> As Johnson attempted to gain the assent of the ordination committee, it remained necessary for him to display his ability to work with and reason from scripture. Showing his ability to engage with scripture in this moment helped affirm his qualification as a potential ordained minister, because he enacted his ability to apply scripture and make it relevant to modern affairs. Lastly, Johnson’s selection of this specific passage to develop his argument in favor of challenging racial discrimination equipped his readers with a biblical framework to accept and affirm GLBTQ individuals. Although Johnson never explicitly develops the argument, this passage from I John can also apply to cases of discrimination against GLBTQ individuals, framing any Christian committee member who would vote against an GLBTQ candidate for office for the sole fact of the candidate’s sexuality as a “liar” who does not “love God.” Citing the passage in the explicit context of racial discrimination alludes to the relevance of the passage in the implicit context of GLBTQ discrimination, cultivating a rationale to affirm Johnson’s sexuality as a part of his ordination process.

After citing a specific piece of scripture, Johnson reaffirmed the significance of making a choice and developed his authority as someone who would challenge tension between the church’s ostensible mission and its actions. In doing so, Johnson highlighted his devotion and

commitment to the social justice tradition of the United Church of Christ<sup>33</sup> and minimized his sexuality, which enabled him to portray his later pivot to discuss his sexuality as an extension and affirmation of the social justice tradition of the church. Johnson proclaimed, “I realized for the first time that an overwhelming inconsistency often exists between the Gospel of the Christ and the attitudes and activities of the church which has been charged with the responsibility of proclaiming and personifying that Gospel.”<sup>34</sup> Although Johnson made this claim within the specific context of racial discrimination, he affirmed a universal principle—that the church should align its beliefs and values with its actions. Reasoning from the specific issue of racial discrimination to the universal principle of enacting the Gospel challenged those who could ordain him to value the need of aligning action with belief in all instances, including the issue of human sexuality.

Furthermore, suggesting that belief and action, at times, fail to align in Christian communities allowed Johnson to establish a value hierarchy wherein he could advocate for the significance of creating the alignment between the two overt concerns about creating controversy. Although Johnson established this value hierarchy within the context of racial discrimination, the value hierarchy anticipated and affirmed the necessity of affirming GLBTQ clergy above ways that the decision to ordain him might cause strife in the denomination. According to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, rhetors may establish a preference for one shared value over another shared value when audiences accept both values and when the values appear to conflict in certain situations. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explained, “Value hierarchies are, no doubt, more important to the structure of an argument than the actual values. Most values are indeed shared by a great number of audiences, and a particular audience is characterized less by which values it accepts than by the way it grades them.”<sup>35</sup> Johnson’s

ordination paper established such gradation of placing the value of maintaining consistency between one's principles and actions ahead of the value of preventing controversy. Johnson affirmed the continued promotion of social justice and the social justice tradition of the United Church of Christ as having priority over the impulse to avoid dispute. With his personal experience in advocating for integration, Johnson warned that churches can fail to uphold this universal principle and that controversy can ensue when people challenge the church to follow the witness of Christ. Johnson contended, "Disdain at my involvement with Black youth through the Christian Youth Council was but an expression of a deeper anger that my relatives at First Evangelical Church expressed to me ... anger that I would so openly challenge their belief in segregation and discrimination against Black persons."<sup>36</sup> In this passage, Johnson highlighted one of the potential consequences of advocating for social justice, the potential that others would challenge or condemn the work.

Yet, even though Johnson faced anger for continuing efforts to end segregation and racial discrimination, he concluded that this engagement with social justice remained more significant than avoiding this anger and controversy. Johnson stated,

I was convinced that my position and involvement were consistent with the Gospel of the Christ and the ongoing mission of the church. I used money I earned by delivering newspapers to support the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Houston Council. I realized that I found joy and purpose in sharing in the mission of the church.<sup>37</sup>

Here, Johnson affirmed consistency between the Gospel and the actions of individuals and the church remained necessary despite the backlash that advocates might face for their actions. His reference to the joy and purpose he found in face of anger and controversy established the

priority of maintaining the alignment between the actions of the church, mission of the church, and the Gospel of Christ ahead to any desire to prevent anger and disagreement. Cultivating joy constituted a rationale for affirming the social justice work of the denomination despite the potential downsides in terms of tension. Moreover, highlighting how Johnson used his meager monetary means to promote the social justice work warranted his commitment to the social justice mission of the United Church of Christ, which positioned him as a devoted potential clergy member and provided another reason to affirm his ordination. As such, Johnson's model demonstrated to his ordination committee that the desired response to anger and controversy should be to continue to expend time, energy, and financial means to promote social justice. Although Johnson cultivated this value hierarchy in the context of controversy over integration and racial discrimination, the preference for valuing the denomination's social justice tradition over avoiding controversy provided a framework by which his ordination committee might affirm GLBTQ clergy members despite the potential for discord.

#### *Implying GLBTQ Acceptance from Explicit Universal Principles*

In a similar anticipatory appeal to the way he used the specific case of fighting racial discrimination to equip his audience to accept efforts to remedy discrimination against GLBTQ individuals, Johnson developed an appeal based on the universal value of freedom from oppression and the universal duty to help the alienated and oppressed. Although Johnson developed this argument in universal terms, the argument itself alluded to the specific case of GLBTQ individuals' alienation and marginalization in society. With this anticipatory appeal, Johnson used a form of the reasoning different from his argument about confronting racial injustice, providing additional grounding for this revelation.



In anticipation of his identity revelation, Johnson drew from his personal experience and development to articulate the universal principles of caring for the needs of others and of coming to the aid of those who remain alienated in society. By framing his beliefs in universal terms, Johnson implicitly encouraged the application of these universal principles to the specific case of GLBTQ people; such application would support the affirmation of GLBTQ people and efforts to aid those individuals experiencing alienation and marginalization in society. Johnson established principles that the church should affirm and follow in universal terms, claiming, “I sought to understand the demand of the Gospel upon contemporary issues, especially issues related to human dignity, freedom from oppression and peace.”<sup>38</sup> According to Johnson, scriptures demand that believers uplift the universal values of human dignity, freedom from oppression, and peace. In addition, Johnson cultivated a belief that the church should assist all who remain alienated. He wrote,

The call of God is intangibly reality. It is felt and known in my life as a swelling tide that floods every dimension of my life with a compelling desire to serve human need, to reach out to those who are alienated and proclaim, in word and deed, the Good News of what God has done and is doing out of His love for human beings.<sup>39</sup>

In both passages, Johnson emphasized universal values that, when applied to the specific case of GLBTQ marginalization, could support the affirmation of both GLBTQ clergy and Christians’ duty to aid GLBTQ individuals. If, as Johnson suggested, a principle of freedom from oppression existed and the church had the duty to fight for that freedom universally, then one could conclude that the church also retained the duty to fight for GLBTQ individuals experiencing marginalization in a specific case. As Johnson highlighted his desire to uplift those marginalized in society and to support them and their needs, he proclaimed that his willingness to serve

constituted a “compelling desire.” The word choice of “compelling” framed his position as not about his choice but about the necessity of following the will of God. Johnson implied that he and his ordination committee had the duty to support others and especially the alienated.

Moreover, in using the phrase “swelling tide” to describe how people experience their desire to support others’ needs, Johnson framed the duty of service in terms that emphasized growth. The implied movement created by the term “swelling” encouraged his audience to anticipate in what ways and in what contexts their duty to others would appear next. Cultivating the belief that one’s duty to others grows, although stated universally, enabled audience members to conclude that their support of others should grow as well, even in the specific context of sexuality.

Without stating the connection explicitly, Johnson developed a rationalization for anticipating that the audience should expect to come to the aid of GLBTQ people in society.

Even after Johnson revealed his sexual identity in his ordination paper, Johnson emphasized words and phrases such as “all” to emphasize that arguments based on universal values had specific implications on the issues of sexuality in his ordination and for the United Church of Christ. Johnson’s rhetorical work framed inclusion of GLBTQ people as naturally a part of the church’s mission in a manner that de-emphasized his sexuality as well as an explicit discussion of sexuality. Johnson capitalized the word “all” in his argument that Jesus “offered his love, acceptance and forgiveness to ALL men, regardless of their condition and status in society. He proclaimed the Good News of the redeeming grace which God offers to all men.”<sup>40</sup> Johnson’s emphasis on “ALL” signaled that the universal argument he developed applied to every single case, including how the church threatened GLBTQ individuals. As Johnson articulated that Jesus showed acceptance to everyone, he positioned the church as having the responsibility to follow suit in universal terms: the church should love, accept, forgive, and minister to all people.

The implication of this statement remained that the church also had the duty to show love and acceptance to GLBTQ individuals, including Johnson during this ordination proceedings. Furthermore, Johnson repeated the word “all,” connecting fighting for “all” to the mission of the church to challenge alienation, marginalization, and rejection. He wrote,

The mission of the church, in our time, must include ministry to all persons, especially those who experience isolation and alienation in our technological society, whether they be within or outside the church institutional [sic]. The church, if it would be true to its mission, has a special responsibility to open itself to all persons who, because of the church’s doctrine, arrogance or self-concern, have felt rejected by the church and, have felt rejected by the church and, consequently, by the Christ whose Body the church professes to be. The church must be socially and politically the unfailing voice crying out and working for justice, human dignity and peace.<sup>41</sup>

As Johnson proclaimed, Christ’s ministry should reach out to people alienated and isolated, he avoided explicitly stating that the mission included ministering to GLBTQ people and supporting GLBTQ clergy. Yet, the affirmation of the universal principles of fighting isolation, welcoming the rejected people of society, and striving for justice combined with the repetition of “all” created an implied connection between the universal principles and the specific case of GLBTQ marginalization. Implicitly, then, the “unfailing voice” of the church, if it would remain truly unfailing, would also need to pursue justice for GLBTQ people. In that manner, Johnson’s use of the word “all” situated the need to address the plight of GLBTQ individuals in society as a natural extension of the church’s mission to promote justice and human dignity. Cultivating this sense of the natural extension of the church’s mission positioned the decision in front of the ordination committee to support an GLBTQ candidate as already decided as opposed to up for

debate. In contrast, an explicit argument about the committee's need to affirm GLBTQ people would have framed the committee as needing to decide the merits of Johnson's case. As such, Johnson's use of implicit arguments, alluding to a specific application of the arguments he had made in universal terms, de-emphasized the question of his sexuality, challenged objections to his sexuality as un-Christian, and promoted his ordination based on apparent naturalness of including GLBTQ people within the mission of the church.

#### *Anticipating Acceptance of "Out" Rhetors Based on Honesty, Trust, and Genuine Relationships*

In a similar reasoning process to how Johnson drew on universal values expressed in universal terms to allude to the affirmation of GLBTQ people in a specific case, Johnson also explicitly promoted the cherishing of honesty and trust before mentioning his sexual orientation. Johnson's appeal allowed him to imply that the ordination committee should privilege affirming "out" and honest GLBTQ clergy rather than ensuring that GLBTQ people would have to remain "closeted" to receive ordination. This argumentation strategy started as Johnson detailed his development as a college student. Johnson wrote, "My life at Elmhurst College resulted in a profound commitment to interpersonal relationships founded upon honesty, trust and responsibility. My commitment to the ongoing struggle for justice and peace was significantly deepened."<sup>42</sup> Upholding honesty and trust in this moment of his ordination document allowed Johnson to equip his audience to value his revelation about his sexuality later in the document to establish a genuine relationship. Johnson's reference to honesty provided an additional frame for affirming his identity—that the ordination committee should respect potential clergy members who remained honest about their identities. As such, Johnson's anticipatory appeal about valuing honesty framed his soon-to-commence identity revelation in a positive light by establishing the importance of honesty.

After Johnson first explicitly stated his sexual orientation in his ordination document, he still highlighted the value of honesty and truth to support implicitly the ordination of GLBTQ people. As Johnson detailed his views of what Jesus called Christians to do, Johnson first indicated that Jesus wanted people to integrate “all dimensions” of their “individual personhood into a meaningful whole.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Johnson wrote, “By enabling persons to grow toward a living, integrated consciousness of their own true identity, Jesus the Christ was affirming their individual worth as unique persons.”<sup>44</sup> Although never explicitly stated, this passage affirmed and justified his previous revelation of his sexuality in several ways. First, claiming that “all dimensions” of a person mattered alluded to Johnson’s position that his sexual orientation constituted a critical part of his identity. The same statement implicitly framed his sexual orientation as a part of the “meaningful whole” of Johnson as a follower of God. Second, the phrase “true identity” created a moment of dissociation, splitting the word identity into the negative and alluded to “false,” partial identity from the positive, true, all-inclusive form of one’s identity. Johnson’s dissociative move relied on previous GLBTQ clergy remained closeted during their ordination process and people advising him to do the same.<sup>45</sup> In his reference to “true identity,” Johnson implied that the ordination committee should value his honest and open revelation rather than the alternative of potential GLBTQ clergy members hiding their identity until after the ordination process. Such a bifurcation created a sense of inevitability about the existence of GLBTQ clergy members with the only question remaining being if those clergy members decided to “out” themselves before or after their ordination. This inevitability framing positioned the ordination committee members as not having to decide if there would be GLBTQ clergy but how honest and affirming their ordination process would be. As such, the anticipatory appeal of promoting honesty enabled Johnson to develop an enthymematic argument that both

justified his sexual orientation and warranted the affirmation of his willingness to “out” himself as a part of the ordination process.

After using the values of honesty and truth to justify his “out” ordination process, Johnson continued to explain the significance of honesty in a broad sense, although still alluding to the specific case of his sexual orientation and the potential “uniqueness” of his ministry. Johnson argued that the church’s mission included “ministry to hemorrhaging persons.”<sup>46</sup> He explained,

We are a people hemorrhaging to death – hiding ourselves from one another, bleeding silently inside, hungering for communion with God and with fellow man, yet fearful of the risks involved in honest trust [sic] relationship. The church alone has the Gospel that has the power to bring health to suffering lives.<sup>47</sup>

Johnson’s vivid use of the term hemorrhaging painted a picture of the significance of affirming those who choose to discuss their identities openly, raising the stakes of the discussion that the members of the ordination committee would hold. In connecting the issues of honesty with the continuation of harm to the souls of people (“bleeding silently inside”) and the loss of people’s relationships with God (“hungering for communion with God”), Johnson explicitly warranted why Christians should exalt honesty. Implicitly, this statement also justified GLBTQ people openly proclaiming their identities as it warned of the dangers of continuing the practice of “hiding ourselves from one another.” In explaining the dangers of forcing people to hide from others, Johnson provided the grounding for members of his ordination committee to conclude that, in the interests of the mission of the church, they should affirm the open and honest way he discussed his sexual orientation. According to Johnson, failing to do so would harm individuals and the ability of those individuals to connect with Christian communities and God. Johnson’s

appeal therefore raised the stakes of his ordination proceedings to involve a referendum about the significance of honesty and genuine relationships rather than being solely a question of accepting his sexual orientation. In demonstrating the value of honesty universally, Johnson also substantiated the value of GLBTQ people affirming their identities implicitly and in the specific context of his ordination proceedings.

As Johnson built into the second time in his ordination document where he explicitly referenced his sexual orientation, Johnson once again stated the significance of honesty, allowing him to pivot and claim unique authority to minister to those who feel alienated in society. His claim to “unique” authority provided his ordination committee with a rationale to affirm his sexuality and support his ordination. Johnson stated, “As a candidate for ordination to the ministry of the United Church of Christ, I share these facts about my life with you with as much honesty and integrity as possible.”<sup>48</sup> Given that this statement occurred after Johnson had already explicitly stated his sexuality, this moment in the ordination document created the impression that Johnson might once again discuss his sexuality. Even though Johnson did do that later, he first pivoted to describe the three commitments of his life, which did not explicitly involve his sexual orientation. In several paragraphs, Johnson detailed his commitment to God, the church, and human life. These paragraphs built toward the next allusion to his sexuality in which Johnson wrote,

My commitments to God, the church and to human life, [sic] have led me to make specific commitments to certain social and political struggles that seek to alleviate human suffering. I have become intellectually and emotionally deeply committed to these concerns because I have had to personally relate to the suffering that these struggles seek to alleviate.<sup>49</sup>

Although Johnson did not explicitly state his sexual orientation in this passage, he alluded to his experiences, and all GLBTQ persons' experiences, with marginalization. Johnson's reference to his own suffering framed his sexual orientation as a resource for equipping him for ministry to people who face "social and political struggles." In other words, in Johnson's account, his suffering provided him with deep motivation and dedication to minister to and aid others who also experience suffering, marginalization, and oppression.<sup>50</sup> Framing his experiences as a gay man as a resource for ministry, Johnson provided a specific warrant by which members of his ordination committee should affirm both his sexuality and his mission to minister. Through his use of anticipatory appeal of affirming honesty, Johnson both crafted a rationale for affirming "out" GLBTQ ordination seekers and justified his own ordination based on his unique experiences with discrimination.

### **Conclusion**

When Johnson appeared before his ordination committee, his sexual identity had already ensured that the committee's decision would be met with controversy. To give himself the best opportunity to become an ordained minister, Johnson had to develop a strategy to manage and negotiate the situation in which an aspect of his proclaimed identity could hinder the committee's perception of his good moral character and authority, his allegiance to scripture, and thus his potential ordination. To navigate this situation, this chapter argued that Johnson utilized anticipatory appeals that prepared his audience for the revelation of his identity and provided a framework through which this audience could affirm GLBTQ people and clergy before he explicitly stated his sexuality. The analysis isolated three of Johnson's anticipatory appeals. First, Johnson drew on cases of racial discrimination in a manner that alluded to the United Church of



Christ's duty to protect and fight for GLBTQ individuals. Second, Johnson's ordination document upheld universal principles such as the freedom from oppression, implying that the church should affirm this principle in the specific case of GLBTQ discrimination. Third, Johnson proclaimed the importance of honesty and trust, creating an enthymematic argument wherein the ordination committee could decide in good conscience to affirm openly GLBTQ clergy members as opposed to forcing GLBTQ ordination applicants to remain in the closet. Such an argument expands understanding of opaque rhetoric and advocacy in several ways.

First, the concept of anticipatory appeals enables rhetorical critics to examine the complex and ongoing process of "coming out" in a way that helps scholarship more fully understand and appreciate the communicative labor involved in the process. As the term allows for examining "coming out" as an ongoing process, it challenges the binary of visibly "out" rhetoric and passing "closeted" rhetoric. Social scientists have demonstrated that GLBTQ individuals must continually reveal their identities to new audiences and in new contexts.<sup>51</sup> The concept of anticipatory appeals provides rhetorical critics with a tool to explain and identify this process in texts. To help navigate this continual exigence, GLBTQ people often anticipate the most opportune times and ways to reveal their identity. Even "out" rhetors still do rhetorical work to justify, defend, and introduce their identities to others. Using anticipatory appeals constitutes one way in which GLBTQ rhetors might navigate the ongoing demands related to revealing or concealing identity. As anticipatory appeals equip and prepare audiences for a moment of identity revelation, they enable GLBTQ rhetors to better construct the opportune moment to reveal their identity. In moments when a rhetor's identity remains hidden, this opaque tactic readies the rhetor's moments of visibility. The rhetorical process involved in this anticipation and eventual pivot showcases how GLBTQ rhetoric can function in the space

between being in or out of the closet. Because anticipation shows how rhetors move from “closeted” to “out,” the concept itself shows that the rhetoric process of “coming out” cannot be condensed to the simple bifurcation of “out” visible rhetoric and “closeted” passing rhetoric.

Second, this chapter expands Samek’s concept of the pivot in two ways. The chapter first illustrates how values and beliefs factor into the rhetorical process of pivoting. In Samek’s articulation of how pivoting works, she emphasized how pivoting involves horizontal movement as rhetors highlight an aspect of their identity over other aspects of their identity. The case of Johnson’s ordination document reveals how pivoting can involve upholding and accentuating existing values and beliefs. As Johnson drew upon the values of freedom from oppression, honesty, and trust, he prepared his audience to affirm and accept his identity before he revealed his identity in the text. The strategic uplift of values and beliefs enables identification and the creation of a framework for affirming identities before rhetors pivot to share their identities with their audience. In addition, the chapter builds on Samek’s work by illustrating that pivoting occurs in situations other than efforts to build coalitions. In contexts where audiences may be less willing to accept or less able to understand an identity, rhetors might develop anticipatory appeals and then pivot into the revelation of their identity. Just as pivoting can enable identification in coalitional contexts, anticipating and then pivoting in potentially more adversarial contexts can enable identification before the revelation of the potentially controversial identity or belief.

The concept of anticipatory appeals also constitutes an additional tool by which rhetorical critics can explain how opacity can enable social change. For example, using the issue of racial discrimination, Johnson’s ordination document equipped his audience to accept the affirmation of GLBTQ clergy members based on growth in opposition to remaining naïve. Although

Johnson's explicit reference to the choice between growth and naiveté occurred in a discussion of racial discrimination, the concept alluded to the choice about including GLBTQ individuals in the church. Thus, the opaque and implicit connection to the issue of sexuality prepared the audience for the affirmation of GLBTQ people. Using anticipatory appeals therefore enables rhetors to craft more opportune moments to reveal their identity or to openly engage in discussion or debate. Anticipatory appeals can frame a situation toward inclusion, develop the stakes of a later choice, or provide evidence to support a claim that has not yet been articulated. In all these ways, anticipation as a method of opacity can help illuminate the path forward and towards social change.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> W. Evan Golder, “The Ordination of Bill Johnson,” *California Living*, June 25, 1972, The Historic Ordination of William R. Johnson, LGBT Religious Archives Network, accessed on March 1, 2018, < <https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Johnson/index.htm>>. Italics in original.

<sup>2</sup> “Report from Northern California Conference of UCC, 1973,” 3-4, Johnson, LGBT Religious Archives Network, accessed on March 1, 2018, <<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Johnson/index.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> “Report from Northern California Conference of UCC, 1973,” 8, 12.

<sup>4</sup> “Report from Northern California Conference of UCC, 1973,” 13.

<sup>5</sup> “Report from Northern California Conference of UCC, 1973,” 14.

<sup>6</sup> Golder, “The Ordination of Bill Johnson.”

<sup>7</sup> “Report from Northern California Conference of UCC, 1973,” 14.

<sup>8</sup> “Toward Honest Dialogue,” *United Church Herald*, July/August 1973, Johnson, LGBT Religious Archives Network, accessed on March 1, 2018, <<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Johnson/index.htm>>.

<sup>9</sup> Golder, “The Ordination of Bill Johnson.”

<sup>10</sup> See Tony E. Adams, *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011); Stephen M. Didomenico, “‘Putting a Face on a Community’: Genre, Identity, and Institutional Regulation in the Telling (and Retelling) of Oral Coming-Out Narratives,” *Language in Society* 44 (2015): 608-28; Jimmie Manning, “Positive and Negative Communicative Behaviors in Coming-Out Conversations,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 62 (2015): 67-97.

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of this argument, see E. Tristan Booth, "Queering *Queer Eye*: The Stability of Gay Identity Confronts the Liminality of Trans Embodiment," *Western Journal of Communication* 75 (2011): 202; Mary L. Gray, "Negotiating Identities/Queering Desires: Coming Out Online and the Remediation of the Coming-Out Story," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14 (2009): 1162-89; Benny LeMaster, "Queer Imag(in)ing: Liminality as Resistance in Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In*," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8 (2011): 108; Charles E. Morris III, "Contextual Twilight/Critical Liminality: J. M. Barrie's *Courage at St. Andrews, 1922*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 208; Natalie T. J. Tindall and Richard Waters, "Coming Out to Tell Our Stories: Using Queer Theory to Understand the Career Experiences of Gay Men in Public Relations," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 24 (2012): 451-75.

<sup>12</sup> See Alyssa A. Samek, "Pivoting Between Identity Politics and Coalitional Relationships: Lesbian-Feminist Resistance to the Woman-Identified Woman," *Women's Studies in Communication* 38 (2015): 393-420.

<sup>13</sup> See LeMaster, "Queer Imag(in)ing," 107; Robert E. Terrill, "Going Deep," *Southern Communication Journal* 71 (2006): 165.

<sup>14</sup> Terrill, "Going Deep," 165.

<sup>15</sup> Samek, "Pivoting Between Identity," 399.

<sup>16</sup> Adams, *Narrating the Closet*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Samek, "Pivoting Between Identity Politics," 399.

<sup>18</sup> Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62 (2011): 138. For additional research on the concept of *kairos*, see J. Blake Scott, "Kairos as Indeterminate Risk Management: The Pharmaceutical Industry's

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Response to Bioterrorism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 (2006): 115-43; Dale L. Sullivan,

“*Kairos* and the Rhetoric of Belief,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 317-32.

<sup>19</sup> Jimmie Manning, “Coming Out Conversations and Gay/Bisexual Men’s Sexual Health: A Constitutive Model Study,” in eds. V. L. Harvey and Teresa H. Housel, *Health Care Disparities and the LGBTQ Population* (Lexington, KY: Lexington Books, 2014), 27-54.

<sup>20</sup> Adams, *Narrating the Closet*, 99.

<sup>21</sup> William Reagan Johnson, “Ordination Paper, published in *In Unity*, November 1971,” The Historic Ordination of William R. Johnson, LGBT Religious Archives Network, accessed on March 1, 2018, <<https://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Johnson/index.htm>>.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>25</sup> For a further illustration of providing this form of redemptive path, see Kathryn M. Olson, “Rhetorical Leadership and Transferable Lessons for Successful Social Advocacy in Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 44 (2007): 90-109.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.” Italics in the original.

<sup>32</sup> See Robert Stephen Reid, “A Rhetoric of Contemporary Christian Discourse,” *Journal of Communication & Religion* 31 (2008): 109-42.

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<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the social justice tradition in the United Church of Christ, see Jerry A. Gladson, “Spiritual Direction, Social Justice, and the United Church of Christ,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 30 (2002): 346-54.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>35</sup> Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 81.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>37</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>43</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>45</sup> See “Toward Honest Dialogue.”

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, “Ordination Paper.”

<sup>50</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s work on appeals based on “womanhood” provides a useful parallel to the way Johnson articulates his uniqueness in this passage. Campbell described how some

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advocates for women's suffrage utilized a similar logic in their argumentation. Campbell explained some arguments relied on a "personhood" logic and others used a "womanhood" logic. Personhood arguments warranted suffrage based on premises grounded in the belief that all people should be treated equally and fairly. Conversely, womanhood arguments posited that women had "unique" characteristics, which justified their right to vote as a counter to the "unique" and, in some appeals, framed-as-negative characteristics of men. See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman," *Communication Quarterly* 31 (1983): 101-8. See, also, Bonnie J. Dow "The 'Womanhood' Rationale in the Woman Suffrage Rhetoric of Frances E. Willard," *Southern Communication Journal* 56 (1991): 298-307.

<sup>51</sup> See Adams, *Narrating the Closet*; Didomenico, "Putting a Face on a Community"; Manning, "Positive and Negative Communicative Behaviors."



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

In 2014, Matthew Vines, who identifies as a gay Christian, published the book *God and the Gay Christian* developing a case about how the Bible affirmed same-sex relationships. Vines concluded with a call to action, providing several ways in which Christians can make communities more welcoming and inclusive of GLBTQ individuals. Echoing Harvey Milk's demand to "come out,"<sup>1</sup> Vines also suggested to GLBTQ Christians that they should reveal their identities to their family members, their friends, and their congregations. Specifically, he wrote:

Coming out is one of the hardest things you will ever do, but it's also one of the most rewarding and freeing. If you are concerned about threats to your physical safety or whether you'll be kicked out of your home, waiting to come out until you feel more safe—even if that may be years away—is likely the wisest approach. But while you should approach the timing of your coming out carefully, Christians have a duty to be honest. Choosing to be open about your sexual orientation or gender identity is important not only for you. Your courage will make a difference for others who are afraid to come out, and it will open the door to a stronger, more peaceful relationship with Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after this passage, he also penned the following:

Coming out as an LGBT Christian or as an LGBT-affirming Christian can carry significant risks. It could jeopardize your career and your reputation, and could cost you a number of friends. Again, be prudent, and do your best to put together a robust support system in advance. But ultimately, there are things that matter more than our reputations, and our faithfulness to Christ is undoubtedly one of them.<sup>3</sup>

Vines' reflection on "coming out" demonstrates the continued applicability and significance of this dissertation's focus on opacity, social change, and communal cultivation as well as the rhetorical processes involved in revealing one's identity, values, or beliefs. Although Vines ultimately called for "coming out," his writing carefully considers the dangers of doing so and recommends waiting for an opportune and relatively safe moment to do so. As Vines briefly detailed the risks and dangers associated with revealing one's identity, as literature on passing often does,<sup>4</sup> he also highlighted the potential power of visibility: being a model and a light for those worried about revealing their identity to others. Yet, Vines' discussion of "coming out" hints at the transformative capacity of opacity, referencing how one can build community ("a robust support system") as one prepares to exit the closet. Such a suggestion illustrates the significance of this dissertation's thesis: rhetorics of opacity, although potentially risky, can foster social transformation and communal cultivation. This concluding chapter reviews the theoretical contributions of the notion of opacity, broadly, and each case study, specifically. Afterwards, I articulate ways in which scholars can continue to develop the insights contained in this dissertation about opacity.

### **Review of Opacity's Scholarly Implications**

This dissertation reorients and reframes scholarship on passing and the hiding of identity. Previous scholarship has framed the purpose of passing as a passive or spineless rhetoric that generally concerns survival or a momentary act of resistance against those in power. In contrast, much of the literature on visibility portrays it unequivocally as a courageous rhetoric that enables social change. This dissertation fundamentally challenges this dichotomy. Instead, this dissertation demonstrates that opaque rhetorics, such as passing, can constitute a strategic and

risky rhetoric that enables social transformation and communal cultivation. Especially in cases where rhetors face persecution and oppression, embarking on a strategy based on opacity might constitute the most conducive path in the ever-challenging and treacherous pursuit of creating a more inclusive and just society.

Moreover, based on social scientific findings describing how “coming out” constitutes a life-long process rather than a single moment of revelation, this dissertation developed a theory and method of “coming out.” Doing so importantly complicates the visibility-passing binary in rhetorical scholarship, demonstrating that GLBTQ rhetorics rest on a continuum of possibilities with visibility and passing occupying opposite ends of the spectrum. As appeals that hide, downplay, minimize, and distract, opaque rhetorics, as a theoretical concept, encapsulates the wide array of rhetorics situated in the middle of that continuum. Challenging the visibility-passing binary importantly helps rhetorical scholarship accurately reflect and describe both how “coming out” functions as a process that considers one’s different audiences, not a single text or direction of revelation, and how rhetoric animates the fluctuation in how advocates present themselves for different audiences and in diverse, changing contexts.

To disconnect hidden and opaque rhetorics from the assumption that they solely help ensure survival and enable assimilation rather than societal transformation,<sup>5</sup> I recommend the field of rhetoric distance itself from the terminology and assumptions undergirding Goffman’s work on stigma. Although the concepts of passing, covering, and converting do help rhetorical scholars theorize certain texts that hide information about identity for the purposes of individual survival or avoiding detection, scholars need additional theoretical tools that can illustrate how opaque rhetorics can foster social change and transformation; these tools show how advocates can find means of persuasion even when they must hide or choose to hide parts of their

identities.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this approach highlights the communal possibilities involved in hiding or downplaying marginalized identities unlike Goffman's focus which centers on individual "stigma management" strategies.<sup>7</sup> In this dissertation, I have developed four of theoretical concepts that show how opacity can enable social change and communal cultivation: (1) seeding, (2) value trajectories, (3) coalitional fronting, and (4) anticipatory appeals.

First, the theory of seeding illustrates one way in which opacity can help inform a long-term plan for social change. In certain circumstances, advocates may believe that audiences' lack the willingness or ability to accept their positions if openly promoted. Moreover, safety risks may prevent visible and open efforts to promote social change without quelling the willingness to pursue it. In these situations, advocates instead may opt to hide subversive material, which lies in wait of an opportune moment for its public revelation. Seeding in this manner requires a nuanced rhetoric that both downplays and hides the subversive material from those in power while simultaneously cue confidants in on its subversive possibilities. The 1973 Christian Reformed Church study report contains a pattern of such rhetoric. The document cited and encouraged the reading of literature that explicitly argued for the affirmation and inclusion of same-sex couples. These referenced positions ostensibly disagreed with the conclusions of the report itself, providing people who disagree with the document the ability and resources to sustain the controversy and refute the official position established by the report. When social systems marginalize and oppress the possibility for people to advocate openly and to remain safe in their advocacy, seeding becomes one of the potential options for advocates wishing to fundamentally alter the social structure in which they find themselves. Although a risky and uncertain path toward social change and transformation, seeding subversive beliefs can help foster challenges to the dominant social system and reorient the argumentative landscape to

create a more favorable future environment for the arguments and advocacy necessary for change.

Second, the concept of value trajectories provides a model for how rhetors and movements can utilize values to center their advocacy through times of transition when their *personae* shift, during moments of identity revelation, or when they encounter new situations and issues to confront. The affirmation of clusters of values fosters a coherent core of an advocacy efforts that remains intact when the leaders of the advocacy efforts face character assassination, actual physical violence, and so may radically alter how they present their identity. The core values then stabilize the movement or advocacy effort in times of transition. Bayard Rustin and his allies drew on the same values of duty to the collective, personal sacrifice, and unity in both 1960, 1963, and during Rustin's career as an "out" advocate later in his life. As Rustin's advocacy did, the utilization of values can help expand the coalition as the advocacy effort remains centered on common and shared values as opposed to a focus on the *persona* of a leader, a specific policy issues, or single form of marginalization. Significantly for the thesis of this dissertation, the theory of value trajectories provides another explanation for how opacity can foment social transformation. When opaque advocacy efforts or "closeted" advocates promote a cluster of values, they help justify and prepare audiences for later visible forms of advocacy based on those previously-affirmed values. Specifically, after Strom Thurmond outed Rustin in 1963, movement leaders utilized the same value cluster to defend Rustin's moral authority that Rustin used in his resignation letter, a time when his identity was hidden from the broader public.

Third, the model of coalitional fronting also provides an example of how communities and groups of people might develop opaque appeals in ways that publicly advocate for social change while simultaneously working to reduce the possibility of harm befalling marginalized

people. The strategy of coalitional fronting involves the strategic cultivation of an authoritative public face of a movement or coalition, using spokespeople for the group who have privilege and ability to develop acceptable public *personae*. Doing so enables the coalition to advocate openly and credibility about the concerns of marginalized people without needing those people to risk harm by revealing themselves and their identities as a part of the advocacy effort. For example, because the clergy members of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual became the public face of the coalition's advocacy immediately following the police raid, GLBTQ members of the group were able to continue hiding their identity and avoid retribution. In addition, the clergy, donning their clerical collars, claimed moral authority and credibility as few others could attempt. Importantly, the theory shows how opacity can constitute a communal and strategic affair, rather than solely being an individual's choice. As communities and coalitions navigate oppressive conditions, they retain the option of sharing the inventional resources necessary to develop the most appropriate and potentially effective means to challenge the dominant social order. Through the strategic, although challenging and complex, work of developing *personae* and appeals to authority based in their coalitional cooperation, advocates can both develop communal ties based on the implicit rules guiding their strategy to confront the oppressive social order so that one day their advocacy might no longer be necessary.

Fourth, I articulated a theory of anticipatory appeals, which shows how rhetors can equip and ready their audiences for the revelation of their identity. Carefully crafting a message can prepare audiences to affirm an "out" rhetor before that rhetor "comes out" to them. The significance of this theory rests in how it demonstrates that "coming out" constitutes an ongoing rhetorical process as rhetors develop appeals to prepare their revelation and ways to reveal their identities to new audiences and in new situations. In the case of William Johnson's ordination

document, his affirmation of civil rights and his argument that church had to choose between growth and naiveté justified the affirmation of GLBTQ people. As such, his appeals, although ostensibly not primarily concerning sexuality, opaquely carved a path forward toward social change. The theory of anticipatory appeals also usefully expands the critical lens of pivoting, showing that people strategically downplay or magnify aspects of their identities in many situations, including both adversarial and coalitional contexts.

Together, the four theories of seeding, value trajectories, coalitional fronting, and anticipatory appeals afford rhetorical critics the ability to start investigating the intricate ways in which advocates and rhetors, especially those from marginalized communities, might work to transform society or to cultivate community. When faced with oppressive social conditions and norms, one available option for persuasion remains to cloak one's advocacy in a manner that prevents those with power and authority from understanding and thus curtailing one's advocacy efforts. Although this dissertation provided several tools to conceptualize and theorize opaque rhetoric, the discipline should continue to build on these insights. Much scholarship focuses and explains visible advocacy rhetoric. In comparison to the scholarship on visible advocacy efforts, the dearth of criticisms of opaque rhetoric unfortunately prevents rhetorical studies from fully explaining the complicated and nuanced rhetoric involved efforts to foment social change and empower vibrant communities. As this dissertation has illustrated, opaque appeals constitute significant and critical rhetorics—multifaceted, complex, and waiting for careful analysis by rhetoric critics to explain their inner workings.

## Opacity and Its Continued Study

This dissertation highlighted the utility of the concept of opacity for rhetorical studies. In this section, I briefly detail why scholars should continue to study the concept and pioneer future directions for this inquiry. Throughout this study, I tried to focus on generative uses of opacity, such as helping create a more GLBTQ-affirming community in San Francisco or a long-term plan for creating change in a conservative denomination. It should be noted, however, that not all opacity might be generative; some rhetors might develop opaque appeals towards destructive ends, to curtail social change, and to damage community. For example, James Chase Sanchez detailed how coded and camouflaged rhetoric can aid the spread of white supremacist ideology while denying opponents the ability to clearly and convincingly label the rhetoric as such.<sup>8</sup> Thus, all scholars should remain aware of the potential for opaque rhetoric to enable nefarious, harmful, and dangerous forms of advocacy that deny the humanity of others and prevent open and equal deliberation.

As scholarship about opacity and hidden forms of rhetoric continues to unfold, this dissertation should serve as a challenge to rethink assumptions about what constitutes ethical rhetoric and argumentation, providing an account of why openness and transparency might not be possible, safe, or effective for some rhetors. In his description of what critics should view as the ideal and ethical form of argumentation, Wayne Brockriede included openness and transparency as central aspects of ethical rhetoric and argumentation. He wrote that the ideal arguer “asks for free assent, advancing arguments openly and asking for open criticism. He risks his own self and asks for that same risk from coarguers.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Brockriede suggested that only people who argue transparently “respect themselves as risk-taking, choice-making beings.”<sup>10</sup> In its illumination of opacity as a form of advocacy and an argumentative strategy, this



dissertation fundamentally questions how openness and transparency should factor into whether critics find rhetoric ethical. When marginalized people work to challenge the oppressive policies and societal beliefs of their social environments, one should not demand transparency as that opens the advocates up to retribution, discipline, and censor. As I write this, GLBTQ Americans in 30 states can still be fired or denied housing because of their identity, causing half of GLBTQ Americans to remain in the closet while on the job.<sup>11</sup> People have argued that we are entering an epidemic of violence and murders against trans people, especially women of color.<sup>12</sup> Undocumented people risk arrest and deportation should their identities be revealed.<sup>13</sup> That is, some people risk much more than others when engaging in open and transparent deliberation; rhetorical and argumentative ethics should account for this. One should not demand transparency and openness when transparency and openness risk security, safety, and life—the bases of future rhetorical participation—especially if the risk taken remains unequal between the marginalized and those with authority, control, power, and privilege. Instead, scholarship should continue to develop theories of rhetorical and argumentative ethics based on Henry W. Johnstone’s concept of “chain of persuasion.” Johnstone argued that ethical rhetoric perpetuates people’s “capacity to persuade and be persuaded.”<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, rhetoric is ethical if it allows for and enables future rhetorical endeavors and exchanges. Opacity meets this ethical standard. Opacity preserves the capability of additional rhetoric in the future when conditions become more conducive to the safety of participants and ability for advocates to develop persuasive rationales to convince their interlocutors.

Although this dissertation concentrated on opacity in GLBTQ Christian advocacy efforts during the 1960s and early 1970s, the concept of opacity remains highly portable and can potentially help rhetorical critics analyze a multitude of types and forms of advocacy efforts and

rhetorical endeavors. Scripture tells the story of Esther, whose opaque rhetoric saved her people. She hid her Jewish identity until the most opportune moment when the revelation of her identity could persuade King Ahasuerus to save her people from a plot to destroy them.<sup>15</sup> During the times of the Roman Empire, traditional and open eloquence could result in severe punishment, so advocates would craft appeals in ways that would hide their criticism of the emperor.<sup>16</sup> In medieval times, political philosophers would develop coded messages in their writing to communicate with other philosophers and to avoid the censure of religious leaders of the time.<sup>17</sup> According to Erik Neilson, slave songs enabled slaves to avoid the surveillance culture of the antebellum South. He wrote, “Many songs like ‘Go in the Wilderness’ shrouded themselves in the veil of the wilderness to make themselves visible yet impenetrable, public but private.”<sup>18</sup> People suffering under colonization would develop coded messages to challenge their colonizers.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the ongoing efforts of undocumented immigrants and GLBTQ people to pass in the United States illustrate the continued relevance of theorizing opaque rhetorics.<sup>20</sup> This short list of examples demonstrates that opaque rhetoric persists and occurs where oppression stymies open deliberation. This dissertation equips rhetoric critics to understand more fully all these instances of opacity as it pushes critics to consider how opacity might enable social change and communal cultivation as opposed to only survival or assimilation.

When rhetors must traverse dangerous paths through oppression and toward more inclusive, loving, and accepting communities and societies, they may hide, shield, and downplay their efforts in a strategic manner to help ensure success. Embarking on this perilous road requires care, nuance, and courage. The road can also be lonely. When people must strategically hide themselves and their advocacy efforts, as Rustin did, few others remember or celebrate their devotion, dedication, and rhetorical skill. Few of these advocacy efforts find their way into the

journals that populate the discipline focused on illuminating how rhetoric creates social change and empowers communities. I hope this dissertation helps shine light on the many brave advocates who risked their reputation, livelihood, and lives to use their available means of persuasion to better the lives of others for a chance at and a hope for inclusion, acceptance, and a transformed, beloved community. Let us celebrate them.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Harvey Milk, “Gay Freedom Day Speech,” in *An Archive of Hope: Harvey Milk’s Speeches and Writings*, eds. Jason Edward Black and Charles E. Morris III (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 210.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2014), 176.

<sup>3</sup> Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 176-7.

<sup>4</sup> See Jeffrey A. Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood: Rhetorics of Citizenship, Contagion, and Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009); Charles E. Morris III, “Passing by Proxy: Collusive and Convulsive Silence in the Trial of Leopold and Loeb,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 264-90; Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 228-44; Charles E. Morris III, “Richard Halliburton’s Bearded Tales,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 123-47; Charles E. Morris III, “‘The Responsibilities of the Critic’: F. O. Matthiessen’s Homosexual Palimpsest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 261-82; Helene A. Shugart, “Performing Ambiguity: The Passing of Ellen DeGeneres,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23 (2003): 30-54; Anna L. Spradlin, “The Price of ‘Passing’: A Lesbian Perspective on Authenticity

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in Organizations,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 11 (1998): 598-605; Catherine R. Squires and Daniel C. Brouwer, “In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 283-310; Lauren Wagner, “Using Silence to ‘Pass’: Embodiment and Interactional Categorization in a Diasporic Context,” *Multilingua* 34 (2015): 659-86.

<sup>5</sup> See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, NY: Jason Aronson, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> See Aristotle, “*Art of Rhetoric*,” trans. John Henry Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1.ii.

<sup>7</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 41-2, 51.

<sup>8</sup> See James Chase Sanchez, “Trump, the KKK, and the Versatility of White Supremacy Rhetoric,” *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 8 (2018): 44-56.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Brockriede, “Arguers as Lovers,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 5 (1972): 7.

<sup>10</sup> Brockriede, “Arguers as Lovers,” 10.

<sup>11</sup> See Kari Paul, “Why 50% of LGBT Americans are in the Closet at Work,” *MarketWatch*, July 7, 2018, <<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/half-of-lgbtq-americans-are-not-out-to-co-workers-2018-06-27>>.

<sup>12</sup> See Trudy Ring, “These Are the Trans People Killed in 2018,” *The Advocate*, <<https://www.advocate.com/transgender/2018/6/04/these-are-trans-people-killed-2018#media-gallery-media-10>>.

<sup>13</sup> See Tal Kopan, “Arrests of Immigrants, Especially Non-Criminals, Way Up in Trump’s First Year,” *CNN*, February 23, 2018, <<https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/23/politics/trump-immigration-arrests-deportations/index.html>>.

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<sup>14</sup> Henry W. Johnstone, "Toward an Ethics of Rhetoric," *Communication* 6 (1981): 308.

<sup>15</sup> See Susan Zaeske, "Unveiling Esther as a Pragmatic Radical Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 33 (2000): 193-220.

<sup>16</sup> See Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Chautauqua: The Cunning Rhetor, the Complicitous Audience, the Conned Censor, and the Critic," *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990): 73-4.

<sup>17</sup> See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952).

<sup>18</sup> Erik Nielson, "'Go in de Wilderness': Evading the 'Eyes of Others' in the Slave Songs," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 35 (2011): 114. Also see Jamieson, "Chautauqua," 77.

<sup>19</sup> Jamieson, "Chautauqua," 77.

<sup>20</sup> For a recent study concerning how undocumented immigrants pass, see Audrey Scranton, Tamara Afifi, Walid Afifi, and Katlyn Gangi, "Networks of Passing: Experiences of Undocumented Latin American Immigrants' Identity Negotiation," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 45 (2016): 449-69. For evidence that GLBTQ people continue to pass, see Jeff Green, "Half of LGBT Workers Stay Closeted, Unmoved by Diversity Efforts," *Bloomberg*, June 25, 2018, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-25/half-of-lgbt-workers-stay-closeted-unmoved-by-diversity-efforts>>; Nico Lang, "LGBTQ Elders Are Being Forced Back in the Closet, Now Trump Wants Them Erased," *Out*, March 21, 2017, <<https://www.out.com/news-opinion/2017/3/21/lgbtq-elders-being-forced-back-closet-now-trump-wants-them-erased>>.

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<<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1977agendaacts.pdf>>.
- “1992 Acts of Synod.” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 9-19, 1992.  
<<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1992agendaacts.pdf>>.
- “1993 Acts of Synod.” *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, June 8-18, 1993.  
<<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1993agendaacts.pdf>>.
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- Watts, Eric King. "Queer Harlem: Exploring the Rhetorical Limits of a Black Gay 'Utopia.'" In *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, edited by Charles E. Morris III, 174-94. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007.
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- Wilson, Kirt H. "Interpreting the Discursive Field of the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Holy Street Address." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2005): 299-326.
- Wilson, Nancy. *Outing the Bible: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Christian Scriptures*. Indianapolis, IN: LifeJourney Press, 2013.
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- Yoshino, Kenji. *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*. New York: Random House, 2006.
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Zarefsky, David. "President Johnson's War on Poverty: The Rhetoric of Three 'Establishment' Movements." *Communication Monographs* 44, no. 4 (1977): 352-73.

## Curriculum Vita

**Joshua H. Miller**  
millerjh@uwm.edu

### Position

Assistant Professor 2018-  
Texas State University

### Education

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2018  
**Ph.D., Communication**  
*Rhetorical Leadership Certificate* 2016  
Committee: Kathryn Olson (Chair), Leslie Harris, Erin Parcell, Demetrius Williams  
(Religious Studies)  
Dissertation: *Rhetorics of Opacity, Social Change, and Communal Cultivation: Case Studies of GLBTQ Christian Advocacy from the 1960s and Early 1970s*

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
**M.A., Communication Studies (Rhetoric)** 2014  
Committee: Sara VanderHaagen (Chair), Thomas Burkholder, David Henry, Gregory Borchard (Mass Communication and Journalism), Marcia Gallo (History)  
Thesis: *The Rhetoric of Gay Christians: Matthew Vines and Reverend Nancy Wilsons as Exemplars*

Michigan State University  
**B.A., Social Relations and Policy** 2012  
Senior Paper Advisor: Illana Blumberg (English). Senior Seminar Advisor: Anna Pegler-Gordon (American Studies).

### Publications

#### *Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles*<sup>1</sup>

“‘Until Death Do We (Queers) Part’: (Queer) Biblical Interpretation, (Invented) Truth, and Presumption in Controversies Concerning Biblical Characters’ Sexualities,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 4 (2017), 42-67.

**Joshua H. Miller**, Carly Danielson, Erin Sahlstein Parcell, Kristine Nicolini, & Theresa Boucher, “Blurred Lines: Privacy Management, Family Relationships, and Facebook,” *Iowa Journal of Communication* 48 (2016), 4-22.

<sup>1</sup> Single-Authored Unless Otherwise Indicated.

“Empowering Communities: Ella Baker’s Decentralized Leadership Style and Conversational Eloquence,” *Southern Communication Journal* 81 (2016), 156-167.

#### *Book Reviews*

“Review of Leah Ceccarelli, *On the Frontier of Science: An American Rhetoric of Exploration and Exploitation*,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 39 (2016), 107-112.

#### *Encyclopedia Entries*

“Debate and Forensics,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, ed. Mike Allen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2017), 352-355.

**Joshua H. Miller** and Christopher J. E. Anderson, “Birdo,” in *100 Greatest Video Game Characters*, eds. Jaime Banks, Robert Mejia, and Aubrie Adams (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, In Press).

Christopher J. E. Anderson and **Joshua H. Miller**, “Dragon’s Lair,” in *100 Greatest Video Game Franchises*, eds. Jaime Banks, Robert Mejia, and Aubrie Adams (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, In Press).

#### *Contributions to Journal Special Forums*

“Introducing a Conversation on Disability & Debate,” *National Journal of Speech & Debate* 4 (2016), 3-4.

Natalie Nelson and **Joshua H. Miller**, “Dyslexia & Debate,” *National Journal of Speech & Debate* 4 (2016), 5-7.

#### *Textbook Chapters*

“Engaging Your Audience” in Christopher Anderson, Leslie J. Harris, Marnie Lawler McDonough, Josh Miller, Stacey Mirviss-Jossart, Emily Mueller, Megan Orcholski and Kristin Woodward, *Stand Up, Speak Out: The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking* (Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin Libraries, 2016), 63-90.

“Developing Strong Arguments” in Christopher Anderson, Leslie J. Harris, Marnie Lawler McDonough, Josh Miller, Stacey Mirviss-Jossart, Emily Mueller, Megan Orcholski and Kristin Woodward, *Stand Up, Speak Out: The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking* (Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin Libraries, 2016), 351-382.

#### **Conference Presentations**

##### *Paper Presentations*

“Embodiment, Christian Communal *Parrhesia*, and the Case of the 1965 Bloody Sunday March,” competitively selected, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism, Central States Communication Association, Milwaukee, WI, 2018.

**\*Karlyn Kohrs Campbell Top Paper Award**

“Coalitional Passing, Covering, and Shared *Ethos* Cultivation in the Case of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual,” competitively selected, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus, Central States Communication Association, Milwaukee, WI, 2018.

**\*Top Paper Award**

“Oppositional and Collaborative Rhetorical Leadership in Senate Democrats’ Protests Against the Affordable Care Act’s Repeal,” in the competitively selected paper panel, “Difference in Rhetorical Leadership Scholarship: Practical and Applied Lessons,” Rhetorical Theory and Criticism, Central States Communication Association, Milwaukee, WI, 2018.

“Passing Ideological Inspection: The Subversive Tactics of Footnoting and Seeding in the Christian Reformed Church’s Study Report on ‘Homosexuality,’” competitively selected, Public Address Division, National Communication Association Convention, Dallas, TX, 2017.

“*The Normal Heart* and Sickly Body: The Case of Matthew Bomer’s Extreme Weight Loss,” competitively selected, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Minneapolis, MN, 2017.

**\*Received David Zarefsky Award for Top Student Paper**

Christopher J. E. Anderson and **Joshua Miller**, “Strike One, You’re Out! Scapegoating and Purification in Major League Baseball’s Biogenesis Scandal,” competitively selected, Kenneth Burke Society, Central States Communication Association, Minneapolis, MN, 2017.

**\*Top Paper Panel**

**Joshua Miller** and Christopher J. E. Anderson, “Using Post-It Notes to Create Understanding about the Purpose of Rhetorical Criticism,” competitively selected, Great Ideas for Teaching, Central States Communication Association, Minneapolis, MN, 2017.

“Optimistic and Pessimistic Readings of Troye Sivan’s ‘Blue Neighborhood’: Queer Criticism as Osculation,” competitively selected, Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender, Oak Park, Illinois, 2016.

“Rhetorically Constituting the CSI Effect and an ‘Uneducated’ Jury: How Legal Experts Responded to the Casey Anthony Trial,” competitively selected, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Grand Rapids, MI, 2016.

“The Epideictic Dimensions of Public Controversy: Holland, Michigan’s Non-Discrimination Dispute,” competitively selected, Religious Communication Association, Las Vegas, NV, 2015.

“Portrayals of Sex and Romance in Male Same-Sex Romantic Films,” competitively selected, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Communication Studies Division, National Communication Association Convention, Las Vegas, NV, 2015.

**\*Received Division’s Top Student Paper Award**

“The Comic and Tragic Framing of a Gay Christian Prophet,” competitively selected, Public Address Division, National Communication Association Convention, Las Vegas, NV, 2015.

“‘Innocent’ Memories of Trayvon Martin and Emmett Till,” competitively selected, Media Studies Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Madison, WI, 2015.

**\*Received: Past Officers’ Graduate Student Debut Program Award**

“The Self-Immolation of Tibetan Monks as Complex Visual Argument,” competitively selected, Political Communication Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Madison, WI, 2015.

“Reverend Nancy Wilson’s Constitution of Gay Christian *Parrhesiastea*,” competitively selected, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Communication Studies Division, National Communication Association, Chicago, IL, 2014.

“\_\_\_\_\_”: Silence and the Vagina Battle of Michigan,” competitively selected, Rhetoric Society of America Convention, San Antonio, TX, 2014.

**Josh Miller**, Carly Sorenson, Erin Sahlstein Parcell, and Theresa Boucher, “‘Why’d You Post That?’: Family Conflict and Facebook,” competitively selected, Interpersonal Communication Interest Group, Western States Communication Association, Anaheim, CA, 2014.

“Responding to Anti-Gay Face Attacks: Towards a More Holistic Impoliteness Theory,” competitively selected, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Communication Studies Division, National Communication Association Convention, Washington, DC, 2013.

#### *Panel Presentations*

“Sanctioning Discrimination through Texas HB3859: The Varied Implications of Texas’ Child Adoption Legislation,” invited presentation, National Communication Association First Vice President Sponsored, National Communication Association Convention, Dallas, TX, 2017.

“The Legacy of Evidence and Research: Debate Practices in the World of Fake News,” competitively selected, Cross Examination Debate Association Division, National Communication Association Convention, Dallas, TX, 2017.

“Creating Conflict and New Avenues to Mental Wellness through Augmented Reality Gaming: How Pokémon Go Players’ Drive to ‘Catch ‘em All’ is a Blessing and a Curse,” competitively selected, Media Studies Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Minneapolis, MN, 2017.

“Civic Callings of Promoting Diversity in Debate: A Discussion of Enhancing Diversity and Strategies for Implementation,” competitively selected, Cross Examination Debate Association Division, National Communication Association Convention, Philadelphia, PA, 2016.

“Debate’s Civic Callings,” competitively selected, Cross Examination Debate Association Division, National Communication Association Convention, Philadelphia, PA, 2016.

“Embracing Difference and Disability: An Opportunity for Conversation,” competitively selected, Cross Examination Debate Association Division, National Communication Association Convention, Las Vegas, NV, 2015.

### **Awards and Scholarships**

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell Award for Top Paper CSCA’s Rhetoric Theory and Criticism Interest Group	2018
Top Paper Award CSCA’s Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus	2018
Renee A. Meyers Scholarship Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2017
Melvin H. Miller Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research, 2016-2017 Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2017
Graduate School Travel Funding Award (Spring)	2017
David Zarefsky Award for Top Student Paper CSCA’s Rhetorical Theory and Criticism Interest Group	2017
Melvin H. Miller Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research, 2015-2016 Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2016
Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship Award University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2016-2017
Department of Communication Travel Funding Award (Fall) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2015
Top Student Paper Award NCA’s GLBTQ Communication Studies Division	2015
Department of Communication Travel Funding Award (Spring)	2015
Past Officers’ Graduate Student Debut Program Award Central States Communication Association	2015



Graduate Teaching Assistantship, UWM	2014-2018
Chancellor's Fellowship Award, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2014
Outstanding Graduate Student Award	2014
Department of Communication Studies, UNLV	
Department of Communication Studies Graduate Student Travel Funding Award	2014
University of Nevada, Las Vegas	
Graduate & Professional Student Association Travel Funding Award, UNLV	2014
Graduate Teaching/Debate Coach Assistantship, UNLV	2012-14
Lambda Pi Eta Membership	2013
Dean's Associates Travel Funding Award, UNLV	2013
Department of Communication Studies Travel Funding Award, UNLV	2013
Debate Team Scholarship, MSU	2009-12
Dean's List, MSU	2008-12
Advanced Placement Scholar with Honor	2008
State of Michigan Merit Scholarship Award	2008

## Teaching Experience

### *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

#### Instructor of Record:

#### Communication 335: Critical Analysis of Communication

Fall 2017, Section 203—Online (25 students)

Spring 2017, Section 001 (23 students)

Fall 2016, Section 001 (24 students)

#### Communication 103: Introduction to Public Speaking

Summer 2017, Section 007 (22 students)

#### Guest Lecturer:

Rhetoric of the 1960s, K. Olson, Fall 2017

“Publishing & Ella Baker”

#### Teaching Assistant:

#### Communication 103: Introduction to Public Speaking

As the teaching assistant for this online-offline hybrid course, I taught the offline lab sections which occurred twice a week. My responsibilities included developing lesson plans for lab sections, creating homework assignments, and grading speeches and exams.

Course Director: John Jordan

Spring 2016, Section 801 (22 students)

Spring 2016, Section 802 (22 students)

Spring 2016, Section 803 (22 students)  
Fall 2015, Section 807 (21 students)  
Fall 2015, Section 808 (22 students)  
Fall 2015, Section 809 (20 students)  
Spring 2015, Section 816 (21 students)  
Spring 2015, Section 817 (19 students)  
Spring 2015, Section 818 (21 students)  
Fall 2014, Section 801 (22 students)  
Fall 2014, Section 802 (22 students)  
Fall 2014, Section 803 (21 students)

#### Mechanical Engineering 110: Engineering Fundamentals I

As the teaching assistant for this course, I taught lab sections that related to oral and written communication. I developed lectures tailored to engineering students about how to communicate orally and in writing. I taught basic principles of argumentation and persuasion. I graded written assignments and three speeches.

Course Director: William Keith, Dan Bellar

Spring 2016, Section 801, 802, 803 (51 students)  
Fall 2015, Section 801, 802, 803 . . . 807 (112 students)

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

#### Guest Lecturer:

Argumentation Theory Course, J. Thompson, Spring 2014  
“Presence and Argument”

Public Memory and Rhetoric Course, S. VanderHaagen, Fall 2013  
“Diffuse Texts and John Jordan’s Cinematic Memorial”

Rhetoric of Women’s Rights Course, T. Burkholder, Fall 2013  
“A Rhetorical History of Frances Willard”

#### Instructor of Record:

Communication Studies 101: Introduction to Public Speaking  
Summer Session Two 2013, Section 2 (21 students)

#### Teaching Assistant:

I was the lab instructor in a course that had both lectures and lab sessions throughout the semester. My responsibilities included creating lesson plans for lab days, leading lab activities, and grading speeches.

Course Director: William Belk

Communication Studies 101: Introduction to Public Speaking  
Spring 2014, Section 32 (26 students)  
Fall 2013, Section 36 (25 students)  
Spring 2013, Section 10 (24 students)  
Spring 2013, Section 22 (25 students)

Fall 2012, Section 36 (24 students)

## Research Experience

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

Research Assistant for Dr. Leslie Harris 2016  
I wrote public speaking chapters to use in UWM's public speaking classroom.

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Research Assistant for Dr. Erin Sahlstein Parcell 2013  
I coded data for Dr. Erin Sahlstein Parcell's military families study.  
She currently plans to seek publication with this data set.

## Debate Work Experience

Office Assistant, Spartan Debate Institutes 2013-2015  
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI  
Assistant Debate Coach, University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2012-2014  
Assistant Debate Coach, Green Valley High School 2014  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
Instructor, Traverse City Central High School Debate Institute 2012  
Traverse City, MI  
Assistant Debate Coach, Traverse City Central High School 2012  
Resident Assistant, Spartan Debate Institutes 2009-2012  
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI  
Assistant Debate Coach, West Des Moines Valley High School 2010-11  
Assistant Debate Coach, West Ottawa High School 2008-09  
Holland, MI

## Service

*To Discipline*

Panel Chair

Critical and Cultural Studies Division, NCA, Dallas, TX, Fall 2017  
Critical and Cultural Studies Division, NCA, Philadelphia, PA, Fall 2016  
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus, CSCA, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2016

Manuscript Reviewer

Great Ideas for Teaching, CSCA, Fall 2017 (3 Reviews)  
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus, CSCA, Fall 2016 (2 Reviews)

*Communication Quarterly*, Fall 2016 (1 Review)  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Communication Studies Division, NCA,  
Spring 2016 (4 Reviews)  
Public Address Interest Group, NCA, Spring 2016 (1 Review)  
Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division, NCA, Spring 2016 (2 Reviews)  
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus, CSCA, Fall 2015 (2 Reviews)  
Political Communication Interest Group, CSCA, Fall 2015 (3 Reviews)  
Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division, NCA, Spring 2015 (2 Reviews)  
Public Address Interest Group, NCA, Spring 2015 (2 Reviews)  
Political Communication Interest Group, CSCA, Fall 2014 (3 Reviews)

### *To Department*

NCA Graduate Open House, Department Representative, Fall 2017  
Undergraduate Majors Fair, Department Representative, Fall 2017  
Awards Selection Committee, Fall 2017/Spring 2018  
Comm. Graduate School Council  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Fall 2017  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Spring 2017  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Fall 2016  
Professional Development Coordinator, Fall 2016/Spring 2017  
Comm. Graduate School Council  
Awards Selection Committee, Fall 2016/Spring 2017  
Comm. Graduate School Council  
NCA Graduate Open House, Department Representative, Fall 2016  
UWM Day, Wisconsin State Fair, Department Representative, Summer 2016  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Spring 2016  
UWM's Graduate School Open House, Department Representative, Fall 2015  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Fall 2015  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Spring 2015  
UWM's Public Speaking Showcase, Judge, Fall 2014  
UNLV's Public Speaking Contest, Invited Judge, Spring 2014  
UNLV's Public Speaking Contest, Invited Judge, Spring 2013  
UNLV's Public Speaking Contest, Invited Judge, Fall 2012

### *To University*

Invented Lecture, UWM's Golda Meir Library, Fall 2017  
"Spontaneous Advocacy: Communicating the Importance of Libraries"  
Student Representative, Graduate Assistant Appeals Panel, Spring 2015

### *To Community*

Interim Tri-Chair, Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign 2018  
Action Coordinator, Indivisible Wauwatosa 2018

Wauwatosa, Wisconsin	
Volunteer, Voter Registration, League of Women Voters	2017-2018
Research Team, Indivisible Wauwatosa	2017-2018
Letter to the Editor, “Urge Congress to nix taxes on grad students” <i>The Cap Times</i> , December 13, 2017	2017
Letter to the Editor, “Don’t Increase Taxes on Graduate Students” <i>Holland Sentinel</i> , December 6, 2017	2017
Invited Speaker, “Higher Education, DACA Students, and Institutional Racism” Conversations on Race, Brown Deer United Methodist Church Brown Deer, Wisconsin	2017
Letter to the Editor, “Don’t be silent in face of oppression” <i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> , August 15, 2017	2017
Invited Speaker, Back to School: Bullying Conversations (August) Bay View Library, Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2015
Judge, Milwaukee Debate League Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2014-2015
Judge/Coach, Marquette Debate Team Marquette University High School Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2014-
Judge/Coach, Las Vegas Debate League University of Nevada, Las Vegas Las Vegas, Nevada	2012-2014
Tutor	
Wainwright Magnet School, Lansing MI Speech and Debate Tutor	2011
Waverly Middle School, Lansing, MI History, Geography, and Government Tutor	2010
Everett High School, Lansing, MI History, Geography, and Government Tutor	2009

## Course Work

### *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

Constituting Community and Social Controversy—K. Olson

Independent Study—K. Olson

Presidential Debates—K. Olson

Classical Rhetoric—S. Graham

Rhetorical Leadership and Ethics—K. Olson

Critical Analysis of Communication—L. Harris

The Bible & Literary Analysis — D. Williams

Argumentation in Theory and Practice—L. Harris

Rhetoric and the Body—J. Jordan

Advanced Feminist Theory—A. Westlund

The Digital Mirror—J. Jordan

The Rhetoric of the 60s—K. Olson  
Philosophy & Practice of Communication—M. Allen  
The Rhetoric of Kenneth Burke—K. Olson

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Thesis—S. VanderHaagen, T. Burkholder  
Argumentation Theory—J. Thompson  
Rhetoric and Public Memory—S. VanderHaagen  
The Rhetoric of Women's Rights, 1832-1920—T. Burkholder  
Conflict Management—E. (Sahlstein) Parcell  
Independent Study— S. VanderHaagen, T. Burkholder  
Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods— S. VanderHaagen  
Empirical Research Methods—T. McManus  
Survey of Communication Studies—E. Sahlstein  
Theories of Communication—D. Conley  
College Teaching in Communication—W. Belk

**Professional Organization Memberships**

National Communication Association (NCA)  
Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)  
Central States Communication Association (CSCA)

**Other Work Experience**

Factory Assembly Worker  
R-BO, Zeeland, MI

2007-09