SCISCO, PETER L., Ph.D. Organizing Rhetoric: Situation, Ethos, Identification, and the Institution of Social Form (2014).
Directed by Dr. Stephen R. Yarbrough. 218 pp.

This project theorizes the relationship between ethos, situation, and identification at the site of organizations. Specifically, it focuses on the rhetoric's constitutive role in organizations. The study of rhetoric in organizations is longstanding, but little if any attention has been paid to the social consequences of this specific rhetorical relationship.

The project's theoretical base employs frameworks from the fields of rhetoric, sociology, communication, and management science. Rhetorical theory, in particular the Aristotelian view of ethos and Burke's concept of identification, as well as structuration theory, dialogic theory, sensemaking theory, and actor-network theory, all contribute to the project's conceptual structure and approach. The project uses a rhetorical analysis of public texts—documents, artifacts, public displays—to demonstrate how organizational rhetoric promotes direction, alignment, and commitment among organizational members and affiliates.

This project finds evidence that motive in organizational rhetoric defines situations and thereby influences ethos, and that identification is a strategy of sustainability. The project also finds theoretical support for the claim that social forms, such as organizations, are instituted discursively. The project's theory promotes ethos as social recognition, which is extended, through a process of identification, to encourage the association of diverse interests and contribute to organizational durability.

ORGANIZING RHETORIC: SITUATION, ETHOS, IDENTIFICATION,

AND THE INSTITUTION OF SOCIAL FORM

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2014

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To Debbie, Taylor, Jack, and Gibson

APPROVAL PAGE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the 2012 U.S. presidential race, Republican candidate Mitt
Romney's claim that "corporations are people" drew derision from Democratic
opponents, from the audience to which he spoke, and from several media outlets
("Mitt Romney"). But Romney was only reiterating what the U.S. Supreme Court
had reminded us of in 2010: "Corporations and labor unions have First
Amendment rights" ("Bloomberg Law"). In fact, the court's 2010 decision was a
contemporary iteration of a legal concept that in the United States dates back at
least until 1819, when the Supreme Court described corporations as persons.
Charles Conrad's overview of the rise of the American corporation describes a
series of decisions, in lower courts and above, that developed, refined, and
reinforced the concept of the corporate person (15-36).

During that process, the courts expanded the concept of the corporation
beyond its original purposes of protecting individual entrepreneurs from the risks
associated with corporate activity and enabling judicial guidelines for the
relationship between commercial organizations and the government (23-8).
However, even if it is reasonable to grant corporations the right to enter
contracts, to own property, or to sue (or be sued) for example, it does not
necessarily follow that personhood attaches to corporations in terms of human

rights, voting, or other things that most people place in the realm of an individual citizen (Williamson).

In their review of organizational rhetoric, George Cheney and Jill McMillan describe the long-standing concept of the corporate person as "explicitly designed to transcend the lives, energies, resources, and powers of the natural persons who created them" (96). Pragmatically speaking, an organization's collective agency is capable of generating consequences, and the profile of an organization's character and influence emerge from the meaning we make of its actions. Perhaps Mitt Romney will get the last laugh. Corporations are *functioning* as people. They do speak as if they were citizens. And they are among the most powerful rhetors in our midst.

That organizations use rhetoric comes as no surprise to anyone who has seen a television advertisement, watched a press conference in which a company spokesperson (embodying the corporate person as rhetor) explains a corporation's transgression, browsed a charitable organization's Web site, or has read an annual report. These examples illustrate our everyday acceptance of institutional discourse as on par with our other conversations. One nonchalantly relates that "the school said" or "my company told me" without thinking too much, if at all, about what it means to believe that an organization talks or about what the consequences of that talk are. We should give some thought to the concept of agency as applied to corporate persons, especially since I have labeled them rhetors. We might start with Michael Reed's overview of the agency

problem as manifest in organizational theory. Reed identifies four themes: the problem of agency as a dominant, recurring intellectual exercise that influences the field of organizational studies; a means of providing clarity to theoretical and technical debates within the field; an ongoing conversation about the complexity of organizations and in particular the ambiguity arising from the struggle between their individual and structural components; and a focus on the tension between collectivism and individualism (33-4).

The last two themes in Reed's list are most relevant to my project. The division posed by the juxtaposition of individual choices (action) and normative power (structure) as a binary relationship calls for some remedy if we are to hold to the very idea of organizations. What are organizations if not a type of social collective comprised of individual members? Reed highlights this problem as the unsettling question of whether organizational members have "the primacy of individual ethical choice over the normative imperatives entailed in institutions" (37).

Reed reports the work of Philip Abrahms as one answer. Abrahms' argument conceptualizes the individual-structure binary as a persistent process marked by duration rather than a divided, ambiguous play of agency. In response, Reed writes, organizational studies should direct its attention toward the "social practices through which social structures are created, maintained and transformed over time" (42). Sociologist Anthony Giddens adopts a similar perspective, arguing for the adoption of a process model to remedy the division

between individual and organization agency. Agency is commonly linked to intent, he writes, but agency is not about intent but about capability (*Constitution* 9). Given our common experience with organizations, either as members or as outsiders interacting with the organization, it's plain that organizations create consequences that suggest agency. It is appropriate and theoretically useful to question the ontology of organizations as agents, but as a pragmatic understanding of what organizations say to us, we clearly respond to organizational discourse as we respond to individual speech.

The Project at Hand

In this project I use rhetorical theory to provide a different kind of response to the individual-organization division. Under the general concept of persuasion, I will look at the rhetorical situations shared by organizations and their members and their interested publics. In such situations, I will argue, ethos manifests as a process of social recognition—easing the development of trust among interlocutors and establishing credibility of the rhetor (an organization, in this case). My position aligns with Aristotle's concept of ethos, drawing support from Aristotle's principle that ethos is created during rhetorical encounters. With the stable support of social recognition, rhetors and their audiences can identify common interests, attitudes, and approaches. The process of identification is, as Kenneth Burke theorizes, persuasion itself. Identification does not exist without division, and rhetoric is the tool we use to engage with this inescapable dialectic (*SS* 186-88). If persuasion is successful, division dissolves, more or less, and for

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some matter of time, and consensus permits organizations and the individuals affiliated with them to continue mutually constitutive activities.

Ethos and identification do not operate outside of the situations in which we are called to use persuasion to reach a desired outcome—circumstances that occur regularly in organizations and, for that matter, in our lives away from organizations. In reaching consensus, the audiences affiliated with an organization—its members, clients, customers, government, and the general public—move toward identifying with the organization by judging it as altogether fitting and capable of addressing their common interests.

In our social interactions, we must interpret situations on the fly. We may rely on habits of thought and past interactions to guide us, but there is never a guarantee that a situation will unfold as before or be very similar to past situations. Nor are the situations we encounter always unplanned. If you are invited to a wedding, for example, you know it was probably planned and that you can depend on your experiences attending previous weddings to guide your participation in the event. The invitation you received, the customs that dictate gift giving and congratulatory rituals, expectations of how you will dress—these are all elements of an invented situation. Organizations also invent situations, and they use them rhetorically. How an audience responds to a situation it creates, what audience is part of the situation, and other factors can be strategic components in organizational rhetoric.

The relationship between situation, ethos, and identification operates in and extends across any number of organized social forms, such as political parties, social movements, and corporate organizations. Organization scholars have for many years focused attention on organizational rhetoric as a force of influence, communication, and legitimacy. But the relationship at the heart of my project has received less attention. Practically speaking, this theory gap may not negatively affect the potential for individuals and the organizations with which they are affiliated to sustain mutually beneficial activities. Nevertheless, I believe the gap hinders our fully understanding the dynamics at play in the relationship between and among us and organizations.

My project's guiding questions ask: What is the nature of the situation-ethos-identification relationship in terms of how it constitutes the shared common sense such as we find in organizations? And what are some of the consequences of that constitutive relationship? But before we contemplate a response to those questions, there is another question I must address first. What exactly do I mean by "organization?" A reasonable definition, upon which I will expand in chapter 2, might be this: An organization is a social entity formed to coordinate activity directed toward a goal. However, that reasonable definition masks assumptions, such as people naturally coordinate their actions toward a goal, people share decisions already made by others, or an organization's representatives can influence other people to align their actions toward that goal by persuading them to "see" the same reality.

The genres of organizational discourse—the texts and talk produced by its members as policy, procedures, reports, memos, protocols, managerial speech, assembly-line talk, and so on—often operate in response to those assumptions. Organizational discourse is often rhetorical: it addresses an audience, it speaks with purpose, and it aims to affect belief and action. Organizational rhetoric achieves many outcomes, and one of them is to maintain the organization itself. Conrad underscores the compelling logic of organizational rhetoric in his investigation of organizational power, exercised internally with its members and externally with stakeholders (in the case of publicly owned corporations), government, and other affiliates. An organization's most important feature is its identity, he writes—the image of stability and permanence with which people can identify, even if that image varies among different audiences (171). Organizations use rhetoric to foster a persistent belief in their legitimacy and thereby ensure their sustainability. But how exactly do organizations use rhetoric to achieve those ends?

Rhetorical theory gives us a lens on to how the human capacity to form alliances and community extends to constitute the institutions and affiliations that are predominant markers of contemporary life. Likewise, it also helps us understand how organizations recognize the power manifest in that capacity, and how they rely on it for their substance and sustainability.

Theories Past and Present

Rhetorical theory, among other methods and theories that analyze and explain the use of language in organizations, opens useful examinations into a number of issues: for example, how organizations use language, how language operates within and transverses organizational boundaries, how meaning emerges from linguistic transactions, and how organizational language operates as a normative practice. Robert Westwood and Stephen Linstead, for example, acknowledge the centrality of language in organization studies. However, they write, scholars in the field generally view language as a transparent medium that carries ideas and positions back and forth between interlocutors (1). That potent view originates in C. E. Shannon's mathematical theory of communication (fig. 1), which identifies communication's salient problem as the challenge of accurately reproducing a message sent from one point to another. Shannon proposed his theory as a means for solving a vexing engineering puzzle: How can a particular message be distinguished from a range of messages and how can the noise of extraneous messages be reduced and even eliminated so that the message travels intact from one point to another?
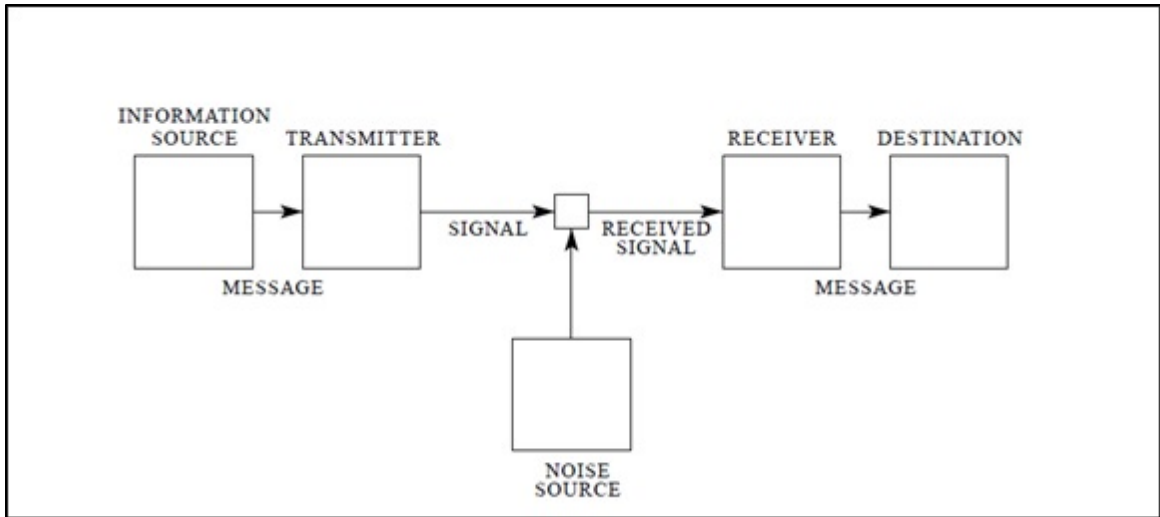
Figure 1. Shannon's Communication Model. *Bell System Technical Journal* (Short Hills, NJ: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1948) 2.

What complicates communication, in Shannon's view, is that "messages have meaning; that is, they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities" (1). The limits of Shannon's theory are clear enough: He expresses less interest in the message's meaning and its persuasive capacity than in its transmission. One might argue, however, that my summoning those limitations only repeats rhetoric's old substance-versus-style debate: Is rhetoric a practical theory for how communicators reach common sense, or is it a grammar of style and delivery used to achieve dominance among competing discourses, without regard to substance? That critique is fair enough— although we should remind ourselves that Shannon's attitude toward messages is an engineer's attitude: He is interested in reducing technological impediments to communication. His theory is not rhetorical but technological. Even so, the metaphor in his text, the "noise in the channel," reiterates a profound, common,

intuitive, and utterly mistaken understanding that language represents how we perceive the objects of our experience.

However, not all managerial theory falls prey to the siren of representation. In the years following the linguistic turn in social sciences (including organization studies), the idea that organizations are texts that we can read, that they can be classified as genres, and that we can investigate them as collections of narratives has gained intellectual capital. Many organization scholars seeking alternatives to the positivist accounts of social psychology that dominate their field recognize that language is not a package for ideas and perceptions and that communication is not a channel that delivers language whole from one person to the next, as depicted in Shannon's model. At the very least, according to Mats Alvesson and Dan Kärreman, organization scholars recognize the complicated nature of language (136-37).

As a result, scholars engage with organizational discourse on a number of fronts. David Boje, Cliff Oswick, and Jeffrey Ford categorize four approaches in their overview of discourse theory methodology: (1) making discourse the focus of study (treating organizations as sites of language investigations); analyzing different levels of discourse (conversations versus broad patterns of discourse, for example); practicing a particular mode of discourse analysis (a monological or dialogical perspective, for example); and selecting a method of discourse study (selecting a specific analytical type, such as conversation analysis, narrative theory, or deconstruction). However, they note, selecting from among these four

kinds of theoretical engagements is not simply an academic choice. Choosing one approach over another reveals a scholar's stance toward the debate between the ontological and epistemological nature of organizations as constructed by language or represented in language (571-73). "At one extreme," they write, "authors assert that organizations are discursively and linguistically constituted. On the other side of the debate are important institutional and political economy situations beyond text and talk" (573).

Choice and Consequence

In the broadest sense, organizational discourse studies observe how text and speech operate and are practiced in and by organizations. Jonathan Potter et al. describe the analytical tools at its disposal as distinct strands that include (a) a cognitive perspective that examines such phenomena as recall and understanding; (b) speech act perspectives; (c) a perspective rooted in social philosophy and cultural consequences, in particular Continental semiotics and post-structuralism (Foucault's work is an example); and (d) a focus on scientific discourse itself. These four strands produce three interrelated streams of research: (1) a functional approach to the workings of language; (2) research into the constructive mechanics embedded in the functional orientation; and (3) a critical awareness of the consequences and the variability inherent in discourse-orientated investigations (205-6). Within such investigations, rhetorical theory operates as one of several analytical approaches brought to bear on organizational discourse.

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Functional Orientation

Examples of a functional discourse orientation can be found in the methodologies of discursive psychology. Because its theoretical roots draw from social psychology and sociology, organization studies is available to such methodologies. Discursive psychology challenges the empirical models and methods most favored in the sociological study of organizations. Discursive psychology takes a materialist position toward language, Michael Billig writes, using a "conception of language . . . that it is rooted in the practicalities of what people say and do" (para 1). Rhetoric fits that description. It emphasizes argumentation and persuasion, including how interlocutors respond to one another in "particular discursive contexts" (para 5), or what Lloyd Bitzer defines as rhetorical situations ("Situation" 5).

Constructionist Orientation

Social constructionists conceive of discourse as drawing from an already existing system of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. From that point of view, organizations construct discourse from those resources by selecting terms, tropes, and narratives to fashion a particular account of experience (Potter et al. 207-8). Organizations strategically shape their discourse in order to encourage their affiliates to value one interpretation of experience over another.

Rhetoric's persuasive power also relies heavily on selection, particularly the choices that a rhetor makes to demonstrate the advantage of one view over another, and the choices that an audience makes in accepting (or denying) and

aligning (or separating) itself with the rhetor's argument. In the classical view, Aristotle's catalog of topics articulates a systematic review of the persuasive arguments common to justice, science, and politics. Persuasive arguments can be common to more than one area because they draw from the relationships common to different situations; for example, general to specific, or a hierarchy of best to worst. Specific relationships are those that do not cross disciplines; for example, a relationship important to physics—particles and waves, for example— does not carry the same force in a political argument as it does in a cosmological one (1.2.1358a). Rhetors choose which of the relationships articulated in the scope of a topic to use so as to strengthen their logical appeals and influence audiences toward one position or another. If practiced effectively, rhetoric can be used to construct audience responses in an expected way. In contrast to the mechanics of constructionist discourse, however, rhetoric does not construct from pre-existing materials but responds actively and contingently to a situation. Because rhetoric holds that some topical relations are suited to specific situations and not to others, rhetors can guide, to some degree, the audience's perspectives by establishing the situation from which topical relations emerge and within which they are expected. As perspectives gather into general understanding, relationships are constituted and meaning settles for the time that it is useful— which in the case of an organization may be a long period.

Critical Orientation

Critical discourse studies focus on power relationships and their exercise, such as the normative influence discourse exerts on organizational members and on the language employed to maintain an organization's internal hierarchical structure and its public legitimacy. Further, critical theory carries a measure of emancipatory purpose. In practice, critics employ this critical attitude to deconstruct or otherwise dismantle assumptions and expose ideologies embedded in organizational discourse as a means of releasing organizational affiliates from the subservient positions they occupy relative to the organization. I would add another important critical investigation: the reflexive examination of discourse theory itself and its application in organizations. Although organization theorists recognize that relationships comprise organizations, that recognition can itself rest on functionalist or constructionist assumptions, which must also be subject to critical analysis.

From a Burkean perspective, an important guide to the application of rhetorical theory in this project, symbolic interaction (discourse) does not simply pitch dominant and subservient positions against one another in a struggle over control and discipline as a critical position would have it. Instead, control and discipline arise as the joint action among any number of positions, including the positions of rhetor and audience. In rhetorical encounters, control and discipline express themselves as agreement and alignment. The ethical choices we make to produce those outcomes support and derive from our recognizing one another

and the situation we are part of and from aligning ourselves in response to that situation. Our responses may be temporary (albeit effective enough to move us from one situation to the next) or they may persist as lessons of experience—results Burke refers to as dialectical and ultimate, respectively (*RM* 187). Alignment requires that we choose to negotiate consensual agreements to hierarchy, class, organization, and other manifestations of social order. Our guiding principles may appear to operate as preordained, objective, normative stances. But we dissuade ourselves from the limits of positivism when we recognize those stances as habits of experience, which we use to inform the choices we make when confronted by situations that call for a response.

A Role for Rhetorical Theory

Rhetorical theory brings a very specific analysis to organizational discourse. According to Loizos Heracleous, rhetoric is one of five interpretivist methods applicable to organizational discourse, joining hermeneutics, metaphor, symbolic interactionism, and critical discourse analysis. Heracleous defines discourse generally as "situated symbolic action" (177), and he argues that rhetoric's interpretive stance toward discourse puts scholars in a critical position from which to explore the "situation, the audience, the rhetor and textual features" of organizational texts (182).

However, Heracleous's cognitive approach limits his argument for locating rhetorical theory as a distinct interpretive attitude. He describes the study of discourse as an examination of the schemata that link discourse to action. In his

view, discursive interactions construct scripts that guide action among organizational affiliates and contribute to their ongoing collective meaning making.

Following the work of George Mead and Herbert Blumer, Heracleous correctly assesses that action depends on the meaning we make of situations, that meaning arises from our interactions with others, and that we modify meanings through further interactions. But in other important ways, Heracleous's attitude veers sharply from Mead's and Blumer's interactionist perspective and takes a constructionist attitude. For example, to support his theory that rhetoric calls out the schemata that influence our perceptions of experience and propel us to joint action, Heracleous claims that rhetoric scholars share a presupposition that "rhetoric [is] a potent tool for constructing social reality" (182).

Heracleous's take on rhetoric has limits. As James Berlin writes in his trenchant analysis of contemporary rhetorical theories, to claim cognitive constructivism at a social level implies that "structures of the mind correspond in perfect harmony with the structures of the material world, the minds of the audience, and the units of language" (480). Further, Heracleous does not clarify how interactionist and cognitivist positions support his constructivist claims about rhetoric or, for that matter, how those three positions relate to one another. If rhetorical theory is to provide an interpretive stance toward organizational discourse, then those relationships should be clear enough to provide line of sight between theory and practice.

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When Heracleous draws on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman to claim that "through discursive symbolic interaction, . . . meanings become institutionalized or 'objectified'" (185-6), he is arguing that rhetoric produces objects of knowledge and that those objects correspond to our mental models and stabilize persistent social forms such as organizations. However, it is not necessary for rhetoric to perform a cognitive function for it to be effective. Rhetoric deals with the potential and the probable; when we employ rhetoric to construct a useful order from any possible orders, one result is that we form a context out of which we can design solutions, fashion tools, and arrive at answers. As these things continue to be useful, the context persists. And in turn, the persistence of context supports the expectations we form from our experiences.

The analogy of a rummy card game may help to make this point. In rummy, the persistence of context is comprised of the rules for that particular rummy game, the players, the cards, and so on. For two or more people to play rummy, all must understand that context in the same way. At the beginning, players agree to the parameters of the game; for example, how many decks of cards will be used, card values, and how discarded cards will be used.

Armed with that understanding, our rummy players have an idea of how to play the cards they hold. Each player's actions are influenced by the actions of the other players and by the situation at hand, which is in flux (the cards played and discarded are not fixed; how many cards other players have in their hands varies; the decision to match, to hold, or to play off cards already played depends on the

player's evolving strategy). However, because each player's hand of cards is dealt from a randomized deck, it can be difficult to know the best play to make because one does not know which cards the other players hold. Players must take risks and depend on making their best guesses about what information they do not know and what the information of the current situation tells them about the overall state of the game. The context of the game defines what risks are more and less acceptable. If a player throws away two-thirds of a set (a set in this case being three cards of the same kind or a series of three cards of the same suit), the degree of risk depends on the information available and how the player interprets that information.

In general, our rummy players move toward the same end: to order the random cards into sets that are counted as points. The context of gameplay persists even after a winner is declared and the cards are packed away. When it comes time to play again, the players rely on past experience to set the game's parameters and to play. It is this persistence of experience, buoyed by joint action (playing the game) and built from discursive (symbolic) interactions (reading the cards), that lies at the heart of social forms such as organizations and motivates the rhetoric that sustains them.

Analogically speaking, the context of our card game is like that of an organization. Organizational members know the parameters under which they operate, which are determined by assigned roles, training, organizational goals, management, and other factors that members become familiar with over time—

some of that knowledge is even carried from organization to organization. Organizational members deal with evolving circumstances and fluid situations, and in response make decisions based on incomplete information as how to get on with things together. Rhetoric is often employed in this work, as organizational members make claims, negotiate positions, and make common sense in willing cooperation, sustaining the organization's social context as a continual ordering of one set of circumstances to another.

Scholars of many disciplines, including rhetoric, are of course familiar with how lessons of experience and the situations of symbolic interactions tend to reify social forms. Whether it is Pierre Bourdieu's mapping the fields of cultural production or Michel Foucault's genealogical studies of discursive formations, there is a strong and persistent school of thought regarding the capacity of human activity to constitute social forms. As part of the catalogue of human action, rhetoric's persuasive capacity plays an important role in sustaining social forms such as organizations. This reason alone is enough to encourage the study of organizational rhetoric, although scholars have described many other reasons as well.

Mary Hoffman and Debra Ford, for example, point to the obvious: Organizations are powerful social forces and, quite simply, organizations produce a lot of rhetoric. If we examine the messages that organizations use to influence audiences, they argue, then we can more easily mark their responsible actions and strategies and challenge irresponsible ones (15-17).

Organizations provide sites of study for analyzing the nature of social groups and the systems that constitute and maintain them. Conrad encourages us to apply rhetorical theory to organizations as a means of gaining more insight into social systems in general. However, Conrad notes, the results of rhetoric cannot be predetermined but are ambiguous and can produce unforeseen consequences. Those results can become problematic, he writes, because complex, established social systems tend to restrict rhetoric to a supporting role (14-33).

In terms of the contingent nature of the results achieved through rhetoric, I agree with Conrad. However, I take exception with his Platonic suggestion that rhetoric is reduced to a supporting role within social systems. In my view, we cannot separate rhetoric from the situations in which it is used or from the social outcomes that it produces. Rhetoric does not support social form—it *is* the social form. It is vital that we not trivialize rhetoric as a tool for asserting one interlocutor's position over another, even as we recognize how organizing institutions and disciplines use rhetoric to define relationships of power. It is equally vital that we recognize that beneath the veneer (as omnipresent as it seems) of the social systems that Conrad correctly emphasizes, the organizations (social systems) with which we affiliate ourselves interact among themselves, with us, and with their world in profoundly adaptive and generative ways and with powerful consequences.

Whatever our reasons for studying organizational rhetoric, we can hope from our efforts to gain insight into the nature of a particular kind of social system. If we can more clearly understand the rhetoric of organizations, then we can more fruitfully respond to and participate in situations in which organizations are prime actors. And we can more fully appreciate the role organizations play when they take their places among the dominant rhetors of our times.

Methods

In this project, I rely on rhetorical theory to frame my examination of situation, ethos, and identification as evident in a selection of organizational texts. These texts include publically available work and a sample of archival material gathered from a single organization: Center for Creative Leadership. [Author Note: I was employed by the Center for Creative Leadership in 1999 and at the time of this writing serve as a book editor in its publishing program.] My focus on the interplay of situation, ethos, and identification draws a key assumption from E. Hartelius and Larry Browning: "Identity is a rhetorical construct: It is a continual negotiation and performance that take place in a social context. . . . Rhetoric resolves and retains the tension" between individual identity and organizational membership (27).

Hartelius and Browning avoid functionalist assumptions that often define rhetoric as a tool of manipulation and control. Instead, they write from the perspective of exploring rhetoric as a promising tool for analyzing organizational

work. Rhetoric is first a means of "persuasion that is in some way available to every symbolic being—every human being. As such, it is a practical art and the faculty of theorizing" (19). In management research, they write, scholars generally work within five themes in using theories of rhetoric as interpretive tools: rhetoric as dialectic (theory and pragmatic action); as the substance that maintains and/or challenges organizational order—especially in employing enthymemes to create organizational identities; as constituting individual and organizational identity; as a strategy for persuading in that managers employ the same techniques and strategies as classical rhetors; and as a framework for organizational discourses in that rhetorical theory is ground for the debate between common sense and rationality. Because the environments in which organizations operate and because organizations themselves are in constant flux, they argue, the flexibility and artfulness of rhetoric makes it suited to studying how organizations and their members respond to their environments and to one another (19-33).

Of these five themes, those dealing with the constitution and maintenance of identity are most salient to my project. In regard to identity, my starting point is Aristotle's triad of rhetorical essentials—ethos, logos, and pathos—of which he argues that ethos (a kind of constituted identity) is the most effective tool for persuasion (1.2.1356a). Burke's concept of identification extends ethos beyond the set of shared values at the core of Aristotle's idea to the mechanics of persuasive power inherent in shared interests and motives. Neither of these

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concepts can be separated from the situations in which they are expressed, recognized, interpreted, and acted on.

In terms of analysis, I rely on the work of Hoffman and Ford and their model for analyzing organizational rhetoric in terms of creating and maintaining identities, responding to issues, dealing with risk and crisis, and creating a path for identification among organizational audiences. Organizations exist, they write, only if members agree on what its goals are and believe those goals are worth achieving by joining and participating in the organization's activities (6). As a point of critical emphasis, I do not believe that goals are distinct objects but that they are contingent processes of discursive action. Organizational members share their organization's goals insofar as they are persuaded to share them.

In a critical survey of applied rhetorical theory, Cheney and McMillan describe the strong desire among organizational members to identify with the organization of which they are part. Rhetorical theory broadens the array of critical tools at our disposal for studying that phenomenon. We can use those tools to examine the persuasive actions of organizations and their members and other affiliates (94). The study of rhetoric and its uses is critical to understanding organizations, they argue, just as it is critical to understanding other kinds of social forms and the beliefs and actions of individual people. Rhetorical theory speaks to the "centrality of persuasion in human society" (96).

CHAPTER II

ORGANIZING RHETORIC

We might accept, following the judicial history and consequent implementation of regulatory and statutory corporate governance, that organizations in the United States represent themselves as persons. We might acknowledge that such a representation is essential to the operation and the sustainability of organizations even as we recognize that the corporate person has no foundational position of its own outside of the historical discourse that constitutes it. Second to that premise, we might also accept the ways in which the concept of the corporate person represents organizations to us as actors in the public sphere—actors who, at the time of this writing, are legally granted certain rights and capabilities, including the capacity of individual speech. Finally, we might conclude from those premises, and from our observations, that the discourse of organizations exercises such force and effect that organizations occupy a privileged position among contemporary speakers. But how do we account for organizations in the first place? Common sense and historical evidence say that economic, judicial, and governmental forces produce and sustain organizations. However, none of those social forces can be separated from the discourses that they produce and that recursively constitute them.

This chapter gives a rhetorical accounting for organizations. Rhetorical theory is not the only way to examine organizational discourse. Neither is rhetoric the only means of generating order in organizations, although it is so pervasive that it is hard to imagine any other organizational practice operating outside its domain. Applying rhetorical theory to organizational discourse generates questions such as, Who speaks when we hear organizations in the media? How do we read or hear texts emitted by an organization? How far does the inclusiveness of such pronouns as "we" or "our" extend? Who does organizational speech represent? Cheney, whose rhetorical analysis of a papal letter describes how U.S. bishops in the Catholic Church managed multiple identities in composing that text, deploys such questions in his observation of the problems inherent in organizational rhetoric: "We are perplexed by the practical and theoretical aspects of messages that cannot be easily identified with individual persons" (*ROS* 3).

Whether we think of organizations as individual entities speaking with a single voice or as a collective that manages multiple voices, the use of rhetoric plays a constitutive role that is as necessary to organizations as governmental, judicial, and economic forces. As a collecting and collective practice, organizational rhetoric follows what is described as *constitutive rhetoric*, a rhetoric that claims a common, shared identity for its audience, that demonstrates that identity through narrative, and that calls the constituted audience to act in ways that affirm its identity (Charland "Politics" pars. 2-3).

If we follow the lead of Kenneth Burke, David Proctor, and others, we can formulate an idea of rhetoric as communication that engenders and maintains social forms. In Burke's view, social groups form around collective symbols; what is shared among group members is experience, requiring a common use of symbols and common meanings. Symbolic transactions are natural, human acts—as Burke emphasizes by defining humankind as symbol-using animals (*LSA* 3, *SS* 32). Burke's argument suggests a systems view of organizations, which tends toward a functionalist view of rhetoric, rather than toward a constitutive one. However, Burke emphasizes the idea of shared experience over a system of symbols. He treats our use of symbols as rhetorical and motivated by purpose, rather than a means to access linguistic structures or as a component of cognitive psychology.

Social groups are sites of shared experience. As John Dewey puts it, human experience is social because it involves contact and communication. Experience embodies two principles: continuity and interaction. In terms of continuity, each experience changes us in some way and so modifies our experiences going forward. The principle of interaction holds that we live in a series of situations, and that the concepts of situation and interaction are inseparable (33-50). Social groups, as a continuity of situations, are spaces in which the collective's use of symbols generates common meanings among people associated with the collective.

In organizations, as in other social situations, common meanings do not arise from a representational system of signs but rather from the common experiences and relationships shared by organizational members and affiliates. Those common experiences and relationships enable the people in an organization to form expectations about what others in the organization are experiencing and to respond to actions that others take. The mutuality of social context calls for rhetoric because any individual's experience can't reduce to another individual's experience—we must take or be persuaded to take the other person's point of view.

In his theory of the *dynamic spectacle*, Proctor suggests that rhetors use symbols to "transform some event into enactment of their social order" (118). In other words, the rhetorical use of symbols constitutes social form, such as we find in an organization. To apply rhetorical theory to social forms is to move "beyond recognizing that symbols create, sustain, and destroy community to discuss how symbols accomplish these social functions" (117). Rhetoric's organizing force, Proctor argues, can be regarded as a dramatic reconstruction of experience. Audiences recognize in that dramatic presentation the salience of an event and from that recognition move to see the event from the rhetor's position (119).

The production and reconstruction that Proctor singles out as rhetoric's organizing force imply arrangement. We cannot personally experience every event; so, we rely on others' discourse to fill the gaps. Often, the discourses we rely on are produced by organizations. Taking Proctor's perspective, we can see

organizational rhetoric as the means by which an organization constructs the spectacle of itself as a dramatic event. Further, we can look at how an organization's members and affiliates connect themselves to the organization by communicating their shared experiences. Other than the legal and economic forces that organize, the kind of constitutive rhetorical activity Proctor describes contributes to the sustained social form we know as organizations.

Organizations Defined

In 1939 Chester Barnard described an organization as "a system of consciously coordinated activities of two or more persons" (qtd. in Cheney *ROS* 3). Mary Hoffman and Debra Ford draw out the implications of Barnard's definition, focusing on three characteristics to establish the basis for their own method of rhetorical analysis. One, organizations and communication are inseparable (system); two, there is common purpose (coordinated activities), implying that organizations work only if its members agree on what its goals are and believe those goals are worth achieving; and three, there is willing cooperation (conscious activity)among a voluntary membership in that people join an organization if they believe it will benefit their individual goals and, to secure that benefit, they are willing to pass some individual control over to the organization. The interchange of interactions embedded in those three principles, write Hoffman and Ford, means that "members must communicate with one another and the leadership in order to negotiate understanding of the common purpose" (6).

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Cheney's research demonstrates how such interchanges produce consequences. He extends Barnard's common definition to issues of identity in his analysis of the production of the Catholic Church's 1983 pastoral letter on nuclear disarmament, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Cheney describes an organization's crafting a rhetorical appeal that manages multiple identities and in the process produces a more-or-less shared identity from common purpose. "The challenges of achieving, maintaining, and transforming identity bring one simultaneously into the realms of persuasion and organization" (*ROS* 15), he writes. When Cheney connects organizational order and rhetorical appeals, he defines identity as a relationship between individuals and the social structures to which they belong or with which they otherwise engage. A group isn't a collective mind or a collective agent, he writes, but a display (or, in Proctor's terms, a spectacle) of shared identity arising from shared interests—even if in some particular cases interest is faked (13-18).

One of Cheney's goals here is to escape identity essentialism so that he can give a rhetorical basis to collective identity. From reading his study, we can conclude that an organization is rhetorical, and rhetoric is organizational, because the relationship between people and the organization with which they affiliate themselves relies on negotiation and position taking, both of which figure in persuasion. However, we still do not have a complete picture of an organization's use of rhetoric as a means of producing the organization itself, nor do we have precise insights into the symbolic mechanics underlying those

discursive transactions. Cheney may persuade us that we can identify an organization as rhetorical, but we might still ask how it came to be so.

That is precisely the dilemma inherent in studying social forms such as organizations and defining them as systems. Analysis of individual interactions or of group dynamics too often separates individual from group without acknowledging, let alone explaining, the practical relationship between them. Alternatively, as Anthony Giddens has argued with his theory of structuration, social study should focus on the processes by which the practices of individual agents bind to general principles aligned with the structures inherent in the general application of routine to experiences (*Constitution* 14). Those general guidelines, which Giddens calls "rules," are no more or less than products of ongoing practice, or everyday routine (22-3; 281-84). Giddens' theory explains how sociology might refocus its interest in social groups, such as organizations, toward the practices, discursive and otherwise, used to generate and maintain systems as a consequence of their use. A system, in Giddens' formulation, is not a set of interrelated objects but is the "reproduced relations between actors or collectives, organized as regular social practices" (25). Similarly, we might apply rhetorical theory to examine the discursive activities that constitute and sustain organizations as relational activities: acts that establish roles and class, acts that exercise power, acts that produce consensus from division, and so on.

What Giddens is arguing here is that viewing social practices as either isolated interactions or as the outcome of hierarchical, discursive, or judicial

power does not account for the way relations among and between social forms are constituted, reproduced, and organized. His position makes us understandably skeptical of reifying "system" as Barnard understands it: a whole defined by the interdependence of its parts and isolated from its environment. Given that skepticism, we find ourselves facing the dilemma Cheney highlights in his work: the difficulty of assigning a single voice to an organization. When we speak of organizational rhetoric, who is the agent of that discourse?

      To answer that question, we rely on the work of the Montreal School, a tradition of communications scholarship that takes the position sympathetic to Cheney's: communication is not an activity in organizations; organizations themselves are communication (Taylor). Of particular relevance in the Montreal School's work are the theories of Daniel Robichaud and François Cooren, both of whom draw from actor-network theory (ANT) to advance relational views of agency that argue for it as an organizational capacity. As Cassandra Crawford explains, ANT is most often attributed to the work of Bruno Latour, Michael Callon, and John Law. At its simplest, ANT explains agency as the effects of relationships in the social and natural worlds. Its nonessentialist consideration of agency provides an alternative to the agent-structure dichotomy prevalent in social theory. Relevant to my project, ANT argues that nonhuman actors (texts, animals, machines, and so on) produce consequences and so exercise agency in the same way that human actors do (1-3).

Robichaud defines agency as a "relational configuration . . . , a situationally embedded connection of connections between heterogeneous entities" (102). Rather than attributing agency to a single actor, Robichaud follows Latour in emphasizing that agency occurs through a network of human and nonhuman actors. Robichaud is careful to insist that a relational view of agency does not dismiss questions about intent and power, both of which we might assume lie under the domain of single or collective actors. ANT frames intent and power as continually shifting in a network of action and actors. Given this formulation, Robichaud argues what we consider agency is best described as the result of action, not as the source of action (105-6). In other words, we recognize agency in its consequences, not in its generation.

How might we further extend the relational view of agency to understand organizations as rhetors, as collectives with discursive agency? For one, we might take the ANT view that agency occurs in a network of actors, including nonhuman actors, to explain some what is meant when we say that our company did something or that the government said something. However, we must still account for the idea that acts attributable to a singular actor can also be assigned to an organization. Cooren bridges that gap with what he calls "logic of agency" (88). Because actions are shared between human and nonhuman actors (for example, the author of a memo, the memo, and the memo's reader) human actions can extend outside of their local situation. Cooren uses the phrase "telecast action" to describe the transfer of action in one locale to another (90).

"If we can indeed dislocate the local, is it because things that happened in the past can be transported (by memory, by machines, by documents, by wires, etc.) from one locality to another" (91).

Such chains of action represent the organization as a single agent, Cooren writes (91). To be clear about what he means here, we must pay careful attention to how Cooren intends the term *represent.* The term does not indicate, for him, the sense of "standing in for." Rather, it indicates a chain of events that transfer the corporeality of an entity from one location to another. Imagine, for example, that your co-worker, a person at the same level of the organization as yourself, tells you that her supervisor told her that the organization is considering layoffs to compensate for revenue losses. Your co-worker is not a representative of the organization in the sense that what she says can be officially attributed to organizational policy. She is representing the action of her supervisor (his mentioning layoffs) to you. The supervisor's action has traveled from a past interaction of which you were not aware to the present interaction, where it produces consequences—you feel panicked, or disappointed, or angry. Likewise, it is probable that your co-worker's supervisor was representing to her an interaction he was not part of. All of these acts of communications are linked (along with the building that houses the organization, the protocols and policies of the organization, the working habits of organizational members, and so on), forming a logic of action that we can describe as "the organization."

ANT's nonessentialist view of agency responds to the questions embedded in Barnard's definition of organization, which is based on the modernist view of agency as a capacity of individual human actors. In Barnard's formulation, individual actors join in a system of willing cooperation that coordinates activity to achieve organizational goals. We might ask: Does coordination arise from the interaction of individuals or does the organization set coordinating acts in motion? How, exactly, do actions by one person or among more than one person become coordinated? How aware are those actors of such coordinating actions? What are the consequences of such orchestrated actions? What responses do the coordinated actions of some provoke in others, and what is the role of those responses in furthering a system of consciously coordinated activities?

We might ask similar questions of rhetoric. What rhetorical practices reproduce social context such as an organization? Are organizations legal and economic entities only, or are they also—perhaps more so—spaces for interpretive and communicative action? Is it more helpful for us to understand organizations as systems, in Barnard's sense of the term, or is it more practical to see organizations as persistent fields of relations that constitute and are constituted by a network of rhetorical actions? Such questions imply that one might observe and participate in organizations, but that without rhetorical actions, organizations are anything but organized.

Organizing Communication

Given the perspective ANT gives us, we might read Barnard's list of organization characteristics as emphasizing that activities are coordinated by communicative acts, which are not isolated from the organization in which they occur. Cheney's investigation into an organization's construction and management of rhetorical identity suggests such—organizations cannot be treated as objects separate from individual social interactions (*ROS* 2-3).

Acknowledging the structurating effect of discourse has become commonplace in organizational theory, despite the relative mystery regarding the practicality and intent of utterances that we cannot associate with specific speakers as originators of organizational discourse. Outside of the academy, however, the consequences of organizational discourse include granting organizations voice. As we go about our daily activities, we accept the idea that organizations speak, that they have points of view, and that the talk of organizations resembles and works like ours.

However, questions do arise regarding discourse's constitutive effect relative to organizations. Norman Fairclough takes a realist position, for example, writing, "Organizing is subject to conditions of possibility which include organizational structures" he writes (918). Practices and norms and communicative possibilities already exist as constituents of the organizational form, he writes, prior to any discursive activities. "Texts are points of articulation and tension between two causal forces: social practices and, through their

mediation, social structures; and the agency of the social actors who speak, write, compose, read, listen to, interpret them" (925). Even if we were to take Fairclough's position, which separates agency from the tools of agency (counter to ANT), the tension he addresses—between what is possible for an organization to achieve by way of discursive activity and what is constrained by preexisting social practices, rules, and resources—resolves only through strategic actions and intent. Strategic and intentional organizational activities take many forms, including the use of rhetoric and its capacity to establish a collective identity among individuals by removing the divide between an organization and its members and affiliates.

Charland's framework for understanding the rhetorical mechanics of this process, in which collective identity and individual identities are merged, brings ideology, Althusser's concept of interpellation, and Burke's theory of identification to bear on the question. Charland takes Quebec's independence movement as his example, and in particular how the movement's rhetoric creates the idea of a unique Quebec identity independent of the identities of Canada's other provinces and independent of the collective identity "Canadian." Rhetorical theory makes a fundamental mistake when it assumes that there is an audience to be persuaded, Charland writes. Much of what rhetorical theorists regard as the consequence of discourse is actually outside of the realm of persuasion, and "rhetorical theory usually refuses to consider the possibility that the very existence of [an audience] is already a rhetorical effect" ("Constitutive" 133).

From that premise, Charland argues that persuasion is ineffective unless an existing audience with an identity and ideology is already in place. Drawing from Althusser's concept of *interpellation*, Charland describes how an audience comes into a rhetorical situation already defined as possessing a certain social identity comprised of shared experiences and beliefs about those experiences. Interlocutors are constituted in a system of signs, within an ideology. Interpellation occurs the moment a subject encounters a rhetorical situation and recognizes that it can be addressed (138).

Although Charland regards an extra-rhetorical audience as conceptually (fatally) compromised, he also thinks that Burke's theory of identification offers a way out of that impasse. [I discuss identification more closely in chapter 5.] Two aspects of Burke's theory play critical roles in Charland's case. One, identification can occur instantly and without provocation, which separates it from our traditional understanding of persuasion (133); and two, our identity is integrated into our nature as symbol-using animals (137). Charland describes the consequences of Burke's theory of identification as "collapsing the distinction between the realm of the symbolic and that of human conceptual consciousness." Furthermore, Burke presents identification as an ongoing socialization process achieve by rhetorical action. Given Burke's theory, Charland writes, we have to account for "the textual nature of social being" (137).

Charland's framework helps us to understand more clearly how an organization, as a communication system, establishes an identity from its

discourse. We can see how an organization's rhetoric constitutes its members, who in turn constitute the organization by responding as a collective social identity. This is precisely the picture that structuration theory presents when one projects it through the lens of rhetoric. [I revisit structuration theory in more detail in chapter 6.] Speech and texts are objects of study; they are outcomes of discursive practices, and they produce durable organization by means of persistent, ongoing reciprocal acts marked by rules and routines. Just as organizational members speak as they align with their organizations, so organizations speak as they organize.

Common Purpose

Organizations are designed and constituted to serve a purpose. They are used to direct activity toward a desired effect, and they are sites of common sense. Organizations constitute a field of negotiated meaning and are not themselves intrinsically meaningful objects. In short, organizational rhetoric sustains the recursive relationships among itself and its members and with others outside of the organization but connected to it as customers, vendors, clients, and so on. Richard Crable argues that organizational rhetoric occupies a place along rhetoric's development trajectory, following classical, prescriptive, and social rhetoric as a fourth historical movement. In this fourth movement, rhetoric "is produced by organizations, not individuals; it is organizational rhetoric" (117).

An organization's rhetorical activity is not simply the discourse that individual people engage in to reach consensus, overlaid on collectives. Rather,

says Crable, organizational rhetoric represents the organization's interests and masks individual speakers in order to exercise, with minimum distraction, discursive power on its audiences (117). However, we might ask whether or not his claim only restates the old argument about the use of rhetoric to deceive rather than to communicate. If we grant that organizational rhetoric's purpose is to mask individual speakers, then how does it organize? What role does organizational rhetoric play in making it possible for organizational members to interact with the aim of reaching common ground?

We might be challenged to identify a speaker from an organization's rhetoric, but that does not mean necessarily that we are being deceived. Nor does it mean that applying rhetorical theory to organizational discourse falls short in analyzing the invention, presentation, and effect of collective speech and text. To gain an understanding of how organizational rhetoric constitutes the organization itself, our investigations must go beyond analyzing the organization as rhetor to consider the mechanics of common sense and the circumstances and the consequences of organizational discourse. For us, Crable's question shifts from why rhetors engage in deception to why audiences respond to being deceived. For example, why did so many U.S. citizens leave their money with banks after 2008, when it became clear that many banks and other financial institutions had defrauded (or at best, misled) them about the shaky financial environment that those same organizations had created with speculative investment schemes (Conrad 4-5)? By attributing an individual agency to

organizations, Cheney does not fully investigate what it means for a collective to speak with common purpose. Nor does Barnard's concept of an isolated and independent system of coordinated activities explain the rhetorical basis of those activities other than to acknowledge the essential role of communication as an information conduit.

The idea of a corporate voice seems the logical starting point for analyzing rhetoric's role in constituting common purpose. We should first distinguish the corporate voice from the individual voice and from the clamor of many different voices speaking at once. Burke's exposition of rhetorical motives provides us with some valuable assistance here, especially his typological approach to our use of positive, dialectical, and ultimate terms. Positive terms name tangible objects and concern motion and perception. Absent from this formulation, Burke writes, is the answer to whether positive terms apply to the relationships that objects have with one another and the world in addition to the objects themselves. For relational concerns we have dialectical terms that, according to Burke, refer to concepts and concern actions and ideas. However, those vocabularies are insufficient for describing the rhetorical motives alive in organizations. For that work we need ultimate terms, which Burke says arrange dialectic's competing concepts in a developmental order that coalesces around a guiding principle, a unifying concept (*RM* 184-7). Setting aside the limitations of positive terms, the dialectic and ultimate vocabularies generate different organizing consequences—those produced by individual voices and those produced by a collective voice.

Dialectical relationships, focused on action and ideas, compel competition between positions as a consequence of taking one position or another. This competition between views is reasonable, Burke writes, in that human beings naturally compete to achieve some advantage or another (*RM* 61). Dialectical exchanges, Burke writes, "leave competing voices in a jangling relation to one another" (187). In organizations, those clamoring voices compete for resources, work out differences, and generate public and hidden conversations that the organization cannot control and may even be unaware of.

Consider as an example the ideal of political wrangling in the U.S. Congress. To advance their interests, politicians may compromise on their principles. One party may not get all that it wants, but it can get enough to satisfy the demands of the position it represents. Without a give and take there is no clear alternative for accomplishing legislative work. Likewise, without a competition of views among its members, an organization cannot invent, strategize, or step toward its goals, to name a few consequences. [At the time of this writing, the process Burke describes is noticeably absent from the legislative branch of the U.S. government. We are challenged to think of it as organized.]

Willing Cooperation

In the arrangement of organizational voices, we recognize coordination as an outcome of organizational discourse. Organizational rhetoric persuades audiences to take one position over another, to adopt one belief over another, to determine the best course of action in given circumstances, and to take that

action together. Willing cooperation operates as discursive transactions, contributing to the organization's emergence and persistence. Burke's insight into the mechanics of cooperation as discourse—as the use of symbols—can provide support for this position.

Burke argues that symbols are not reflections or representations; rather, symbols are tools for interacting with our environment, "a set of labels, signs for helping us find our way about" (*LSA* 5). Our capability to share experience depends on our nature as the "symbol-using animal" (*LSA* 3). However, Burke writes, our use of symbols produces positive and negative consequences, linking us to our world while simultaneously screening us from it (5). Burke relies on a distinction between the verbal and nonverbal (symbols and reality) to make his point, veering toward a social constructionist take on symbolic interactions. "What is our 'reality' for today . . . but all this clutter of symbols?" he asks (5). Nonetheless, I believe we can pull Burke back from a purely constructionist attitude by focusing on the consequences of symbolic interactions (such as discourse) in terms of how it constitutes a sense of shared experience that supports willing cooperation.

Burke uses the terms *substitution* and *transcendence* to characterize symbol use as something other than the summoning of a grammar to explain our experiences to ourselves and to others. He builds his framework from Freud's work on the symbolic nature of dreams, particularly the processes of "condensation" and "displacement." As manifest in dreams, condensation refers

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to how a single idea represents a series of cognitive associations. Displacement refers to the defensive redirection of emotions from one object to another object related to the first by a chain of associations (Colman).

In regard to symbols, Burke relates condensation to substitution, which he describes as a "natural resource to symbolism" (*LSA* 7). To use symbols is to use the property of substitution. We can describe one thing by describing something else (as with metaphor), we can paraphrase, we can translate (Burke does not refer to Lacan, who worked along these same lines at about the same time.) Burke's *transcendence* is a correlative to displacement, and it is grounded in the idea of substitution: "Substitution sets the condition for 'transcendence,' since there is a technical sense in which the name for a thing can be said to 'transcend' the thing named" (LSA 8). In other words, the name we give an object is beyond the object itself.

In Burke's definitions of substitution and transcendence, we can find support for a view of symbols as the means of sharing experience rather than simply the means for representing experience. Here it is useful to review Burke's position about the formative quality of symbols, which is grounded in the idea of patterns of experience. Burke describes experience as "a relationship between an organism and its environment" (*SS* 108). That relationship is marked by adjustments—the adaptations an organism takes in response to its environment. Adjustments simply means, Burke writes, that the organism takes the conditions of its environment into account. Broadly speaking, there are universal

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experiences (dislike, hope, mourning)—universal states into which any human being is capable of arriving, barring a malady that prevents it. Burke does not claim that we all experience the same thing when we participate in similar environments. Rather, he writes, a universal experience includes many modes of that experience, each mode corresponding to our relationship with the environment at hand (108). For example, fear is a universal experience, and the mode of fear associated with a roller coaster ride differs markedly from the fear of finding oneself in the woods without a light when the sun sets. Nevertheless, we have access to the universal experience, and we can use symbols to evoke that experience in others.

We should remember here that Burke does not argue that a rhetor asserts an experience as a persuasive device. The rhetor does not need to convince the audience to accept a "proper" interpretation of an experience to persuade the audience to a particular point of view. Rather, the rhetor evokes an experience toward which the audience can identify and, in fact, the audience anticipates in and completes the rhetor's evocation of experience (*RM* 58). Rhetor and audience work together, drawing from what they know about patterns of experience to align their attitudes toward the current situation. Their patterns of experience may be quite different because the mode in which each has encountered a pattern (universal)of experience differs from one another. If that is the case, it may take longer for the rhetor and the audience to align; nevertheless, rhetor and audience

collude in using symbols as tools for making their way toward consensus and order.

In Burke's idea of symbols as the tools we employ to make our way to shared experience, we have a rhetorical substitution for Barnard's organizational requisite of willing cooperation. As consciously coordinated activities, the collusion of rhetor and audience is not an intentional grasp at truth, argues Burke, but rather represents the principle of hierarchy, which constitutes social order as natural when in fact it is comprised of rituals and belief structures that form the field within which we make sense of ourselves and which enable us to make sense of others (*RM*, 137-41). [I return to this theme in chapter 6 in a discussion of Burke's rhetoric of form.] Burke's claim of collusion partially answers Conrad's question as to why audiences respond to deceptive rhetoric as they do. Such rhetoric relies on the acceptance of common principles; for example, many people interpreted the 2008-2009 credit crisis as an opportunity to invest at rock bottom prices and not as a call to withdraw money to guard against fraudulent money managers who had turned public investments into private gains: "buy low, sell high."

Social interactions in the form of symbolic actions and the tendency to organize are important components to the willing cooperation that organizations foster. However, we are cautious about Burke's insights into the nature of symbols and the organizing consequences of our using them. On the one hand, one might read Burke's theory as a representational perspective that emphasizes

symbols as objects to be manipulated. That position is not out of line with how many scholars approach organizational rhetoric (see, for example, Westwood and Linstead). Or, in another instance, Hoffman and Ford posit that organizations use symbols in order to influence thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. When audiences respond to an organization's rhetoric, they acknowledge their suitability as the targets of rhetoric, even if different audiences respond differently to the same message (6-8).

If rhetorical encounters are nothing more than transactions—using symbols to purchase influence, to spur emotion, to change behavior—we might ask how horse trading of this kind generates willing cooperation. Certainly, at that level, rhetorical encounters are as likely to generate resistance or compliance as creating the commitment inherent in willing cooperation. Where might we look for a link between what Burke describes as the transcendent nature of symbols and the pragmatic need for willing cooperation? In defense of Burke's ideas, as discussed previously, Burke argues that symbols operate in a transcendent field based on the principle of substitution. That principle makes it possible for us to use symbols to evoke in others and to recognize in ourselves universal experiences in particular circumstances—to access experience as an "associational cluster" (*PLF* 30).

Our willing cooperation arises from our use of symbols as the means by which we can identify the experiences of others and share our own experiences. When we use symbols to constitute shared experience, Burke notes, we are doing

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no more than fulfilling the pragmatic intent of our species. We might object that

the idea of transcendence removes us from rhetoric's concrete, pragmatic

interactions; however, Burke reminds us that "much pragmatic behavior itself

has symbolic elements" (*RM* 186). We use symbols to align our experiences with

each other and to constitute identification with one another because

"participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained in any other way"

(*ATH* 266). The symbolism embedded in our language use depends on the social,

not on the representational:

> The symbolism of a word consists in the fact that no one quite uses the word in its dictionary sense. And the overtones of a usage are revealed "by the company it keeps" in the utterances of a given speaker or writer (PLF 35).

The rest of the answer to how transcendence and pragmatics jointly foster

willing cooperation lies in the nature and in the motives of our symbol use. Here,

a somewhat unlikely source suggests itself: Susanne Langer's philosophical

approach to the subject of human development. The human capacity to produce

symbols, she writes, displaces the instinct we find in other species and which

drives their actions. We acknowledge instinct as an animal's way of knowing;

without it, an animal cannot maintain its involvement with the continuing

process of its species nor preserve itself as an individual. Likewise, Langer

continues, the human capacity to produce symbols calls us to see symbolic value

in the world around us. We produce meaning (use symbols) to know the world,

not in response to it but in the act of perceiving it. We augment our world using

symbols, and although our habit of using symbols breaks what Langer calls the strongest bond a creature has with its kind (a shared set of instinctual traits), that habit also binds us to a "greater life of mankind." Our responses to the world are not instinctual but interpretive—our way of knowing our environment. As we make meaning in this way we signal our "lifelong commitment to the ways of [our] kind" (131).

We gain some advantage from Burke's argument, then, if we regard what he labels the constituents of symbols—substitution and transcendence—as pragmatic extensions of what any one person knows about the world. Insofar as people willingly cooperate to extend their relationship to one another and to the organizations to which they belong, they extend the discursive fields that comprise organizations. The willing cooperation of organizational members emerges in language. In this case we do not take language in the sense of specific signs (isolated symbols), but as a process that produces different outcomes under different situations (Langer 125). Here we pause to recognize Langer's description as an echo of Aristotle's definition of rhetoric: a process of determining the best means of persuasion in a given circumstance.

Now that we have a pragmatic perspective on Burke's treatment of symbolic action, we might ask whether Burke's theory of the ultimate order is a teleological stance that excludes change in its assumption of a final outcome. Can Burke's terms of ultimate order, the ground that rhetoric works, fully account for how organizations adapt to changing circumstances in their bid for

sustainability? Or is ultimate order only the progression of a foregone enterprise constituted and sustained by rhetoric? (I note that Burke accommodates change in his concept of *identification*, which I discuss in chapter 5.)

In support of making a rhetorical accounting of organizations, it is reasonable to take Burke's logical and terminal typologies of positive, dialectical, and ultimate as suggestive of the order such as one finds in an organization. The hierarchy of the organization chart, the separation of worker and executive ranks, naming and separating *professional* from *trade*, the division of labor that accompanies mass production of goods, services, and knowledge—these are simultaneously acts that divide and yet coordinate voices into a single speaker with an identity and a recognizable stance. An organization's members and its other affiliates attribute its rhetoric to that collective voice, whether or not the organization's discourse emerges from a diversity of voices or dampers voices into a single, low hum of corporate assent. As a consequence of ordering many voices into one, an organization's members see themselves as included, and outside affiliates recognize the organization as an individual entity with the capability and the right to speak. The result is that organizations can refer to "we" and "our" without evoking questions about how inclusively or how broadly it applies those terms. The ultimate order of members, clients, customers, the public, government, and regulators coordinates the willing cooperation of those organizational affiliates to accept organizations as social actors, capable of speech

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and possessing the capacity to use rhetoric to constitute and sustain themselves as organizations.

Rhetorical Genres in the Organizational Context

It is hardly radical to claim that organizations emphasize social regularities and that order arises from discursive (and other) interactions among organizational members. Likewise, it is not unexpected that, when participating in rhetoric, organizational members draw from an ordered common sense at the same time that their rhetoric constitutes that order. However, despite the influence of constructionist and critical theories that establish that organization arises from the use of language, "most institutional theory has been dominated by realist investigations in which the examination of organizational practices has been disconnected from the discursive practices that constitute them" (Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy 635). The clash of critical positions occurs along this implacable front: community as communication versus community as required for communication.

However, only the first of those two positions supports the idea that before organization there is disorganization. When Fairclough writes that

> research on organizational discourse [tends] . . . to distance itself from
> more conventional work in organization studies by rejecting conceptions
> of organization as organizational structures in favor of conceptions of
> organization as an interactive accomplishment in organizational discourse
> (916),

he criticizes analytical approaches that question whether organizations exist independently of human activities. We might ask Fairclough whether there is a motivation for people in an organization to communicate other than their motive to organize. We ought not to assume, as Fairclough does, that the organization with which we align ourselves remains isolated from the actions we take to accomplish that alignment. If that were the case, there would be no need to communicate because the organization's interests and the interests of its members would never intersect and the contrast between the two would be insignificant, to put in Burkean terms (*SS* 184). Disorganization (the division between individual and organization in this case) is our motivation to communicate.

Overcoming division is not the same thing as achieving common goals, however, nor is it altogether necessary. Organizations can forge common sense without an overt appeal to shared identity. For example, as Hoffman and Ford describe, rhetoric also operates as a "strategic use of symbols by organizations to influence the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of audiences important to the operation of the organization" (7). In terms of creating order, organizational rhetoric enables interaction between actors (institutional and individual), cultural predispositions, and social structures—what Conrad calls "a complex process through which people develop and refine their beliefs, values, and views of reality by communicating with others" and a means to "create distinctive

social, political, and economic structures that are legitimized through strategic discourse" (x, 2-6).

In our use of symbols to align interests and to share experiences, we have at hand a rhetorical basis for Barnard's definition of organization, unfolded as communication, common purpose, and willing cooperation. Beyond these, we can recognize other characteristics of organizational rhetoric that invite scholarly investigations. Hoffman and Ford mark situation and audience for special attention: (11-12). Neither of those characteristics comes as a surprise to rhetoric scholars. However, the nature of organizations complicates what we can otherwise read as two components of the traditional rhetorical triangle. For example, situation in the organizational context refers to the open-system nature of organizations, which take in information from outside and reproduce that information as products and services. [See my discussion of *situation* in chapter 3.] In terms of audience, organizations address diverse audiences with different and sometimes interrelated interests, who sometimes compete with one another—quite different from how classical rhetoric operated among hegemonic audiences (10-14).

Organizational rhetoric shares with classical rhetoric the concept of form, the idea that different rhetorical forms, or genres, can be applied to different audiences and to different effects. By *genre*, I refer to Carolyn Miller's definitional argument for genre as social action. When we refer to genre, Miller argues, the idea of specific forms does not apply to substance but to purpose and

audience: "the action [genre] is used to accomplish" (151). Because we can interpret human actions only against the background of their historical and physical circumstances, genre also accounts for motive and situation in representing action. In citing motive, Miller works from Burke: motives are not simply a source of behavior, as much of mainstream psychology would have it. Rather, motive is a way to make meaning and so is inseparable from action and response. Burke describes this relationship as part of a single situation (*SS* 11). We use texts (symbolic action) to respond strategically; to "size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them" (*PLF* 1). As a strategic response—moreover, as a constitutive response—organizational rhetoric adopts forms according to the situation in which it is used and in light of the audience it addresses. We are, so it seems, a long way from Aristotle's three rhetorical forms: political, forensic, and ceremonial—or perhaps not. The classical genres, like their contemporary counterparts, take their distinctive forms from the purpose, the situation (including whether the situation is past, present, or future), and the audience that each addresses. The sampling of organizational rhetoric's genres that follows describes how they operate, for whom, and in what circumstances.

Identity genre: addresses how an organization is known.

Audience: organizational members, affiliates, and the general public.

<u>Rhetorical situation</u>: an ongoing need to maintain credibility and manage how it is perceived.

<u>Critical and Theoretical Views</u>

Used to persuade audiences . . . who an organization is, what it does, and what its values are (Hoffman and Ford 122).

Presents the organization as a whole and "connects individual identities to that . . . collective identity" (Cheney *ROS* 14).

Projects the "central, enduring character" so as to be perceived and interpreted by others" (Kuhn 199).

<u>Example</u>: A nonprofit organization's response to reports on financial malfeasance highlights its history as one of service and trust.

Issues genre: persuades audiences to perceive the environment in which the organization operates in such a way that its interests are accounted for and its actions are perceived favorably.

<u>Audience</u>: regulators, government, shareholders, and the general public.

<u>Rhetorical situation</u>: pending or existing regulations and legislation threaten or interfere with organizational operations or strategy.

Critical and Theoretical Views

"Strategies used in issues rhetoric . . . often feature logical

argument and evidence" (Hoffman and Ford 152).

Issues rhetoric draws on existing cultural assumptions to

make defensive or offensive statements about

particular policies (Cheney et al. 90).

"When . . . a tension exists between 'the way things are' and

'the way things should be,' the resulting situation

becomes a focus for deliberation and decision" (Kuhn

195).

Example: Wall Street's responses to the impact of implementing the

Dodd-Frank Act on U.S. financial institutions.

Risk genre: addresses the perception of risk based on the organization's

anticipated actions.

Audience: regulators, government, shareholders, and the general

public.

Rhetorical Situation: the organization wants to begin or expand

operations in ways that affect communities or are perceived

to affect communities.

Critical and Theoretical Views

The "challenge is to convince audiences that either the risk

does not exist or the risk is not as significant as it is

being perceived or presented" (Hoffman and Ford 170).

Risk rhetoric "has at its goal the creation of consent, either via belief in the truth of the information or a range of persuasive strategies" (Grabil and Simmons 426)

A discourse employed to "engage in risk communication to inform and educate the public, to improve and correct their perceptions, and to persuade them to change their behavior" (Katz and Miller 116).

Example: Transcanada's 2012 proposal for constructing the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Crisis genre: generates good will and support.

Audience: the general public, shareholders.

Rhetorical situation: to repair organization's image (identity) in the wake of events that negatively impact its credibility and sustainability.

Critical and Theoretical Views

Crisis rhetoric "co-creates a meaning that benefits the organization as well as people who hold and seek stakes from it" (Millar and Heath 15).

In analyzing crisis rhetoric, "suggestions for effectiveness can

be derived from our understanding of persuasion

generally" (Bennoit 183).

"Identifying a debate's core issue – can provide a hierarchical

structure for crisis response strategies" (Marsh 41).

Example: BP and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Depending on the circumstances surrounding an instance of organizational rhetoric, a genre might manage identities, as Cheney suggests, or energize a dialectical exchange in the constitution of hierarchical order, as Burke claims. An organization's rhetoric may mark it as a participant in a global economic system or exercise political, judicial, or governmental power. To whomever its genres are addressed and in whatever situation those situations manifest, organizational rhetoric is inseparable from motives that manifest in symbolic actions. Consequences of organizational rhetoric include the organization itself: a discursive field comprised of organizational members, the public, the government, and other social entities, all of which take positions and participate in rhetorical activities as they negotiate toward common sense.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZING SITUATIONS

Aristotle defines rhetoric as the craft of finding the best means of persuasion in a given situation. What are the constituents of such a situation? Aristotle's answer to that question distinguishes between three kinds of rhetoric, each determined by its audience, its purpose, the genres each is associated with, the topics it addresses, and its temporal circumstances. Deliberative rhetoric is suited to circumstances that call for a choice between attitudes or a decision to take action and addresses topics associated with the future, such as lawmaking; judicial rhetoric fits those situations when facts must be proven or defended against, as in a court, when evidence and the accounts of witnesses focus on the past; and ceremonial rhetoric, such as a eulogy, addresses people in the present moment with invocations of praise or blame (1.3.1358a-b). Aristotle's idea of a rhetorical situation, with its hard distinctions, operates deterministically upon a rhetor's and an audience's expectations and the responses. A rhetor bent on achieving his or her purpose should align his or speech with the situation, or the audience will recognize the disharmony and resist the speaker's intent.

This chapter provides an accounting of rhetorical situations in the context of organizations. In chapter 2, I discussed the role that organizational rhetoric plays in establishing the kinds of interactions and relationships an organization

has with its members, with interested outsiders, and with the general public. My purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate how organizations rhetorically construct situations as the scenes of those interactions and relationships, and the purpose of such constructions.

What Rhetorical Situations Are

Contemporary rhetorical theorists talk about rhetorical situations in a markedly different way from classical rhetoricians. Lloyd Bitzer's keystone position, one of the most influential contemporary statements on the idea, defines the rhetorical situation as

> a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence ("Situation" 6).

Bitzer holds that the situation in which rhetors and audiences find themselves is separate from the actors themselves. Rhetorical discourse is called into existence by a particular situation: "the existence of a rhetorical address is a reliable sign of the existence of a situation, [but] it does not follow that a situation exists only when the discourse exists" (2). The rhetor addresses the situation when he or she becomes aware of it and is called to respond, and thereby "the rhetor alters reality" to produce convergence from divergence so that the situation is resolved (4). However, it is necessary to ask whether an actor can alter reality unless occupying a position outside of that reality. An altered reality

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only appears altered if there is a way for us to measure the difference of one state of reality from another. In later writings, Bitzer deals with some of those objections, but he remains consistent in his assumption: rhetorical situations arise from objects, physical and mental, that are independent of the situation's observers ("Functional" 28).

That question aside, if we follow Bitzer's work we can see how a rhetorical situation is comprised of more than fitting a speech to a specific occasion. Given the at-times normative function of organizational rhetoric, we might ask whether or not rhetorical situations, as Bitzer defines them, arise on their own or are products of an organization's discourse. Clearly, the answer depends on whether we believe that situations exist independently of discourse or instead that situations arise from discursive activity and do not appear except as we speak of them—which implies that we can construct situations to serve specific purposes.

Bitzer's model has provoked no small number of critical conversations. Mary Garret and Xiaosui Xiao review some of those conversations in their argument to include the influence of audience and discourse traditions in the definition of rhetorical situation. According to Garret and Xiao, positions critical to Bitzer include

- that the speaker creates the exigency at the heart of Bitzer's model;
- a modification of Bitzer's model to accommodate its relational structure and operation;

- the resolution of Bitzer's idealist position with opposing materialist positions through the use of Aristotle's topics;

- a move to shift the idea of the rhetorical situation away from the speaker's response to an exigency and toward the position that the rhetorical situation is a mutually defining activity that establishes the identity of the speaker and the audience;

- and the addition of factors other than Bitzer's list of speaker, audience, exigence, and constraints (31).

The Object of the Situation

Even a cursory reading of Bitzer's critics uncovers what I believe is most salient about rhetorical situations in the context of organizations: the question of emergence or construction. If situations exist independently of discourse, then organizational rhetoric is a means reaching consensus. At critical junctures—a downturn in the economy, the failure of a key product, the public exposure of a critical executive's brush with the law—an organization speaks to its audiences to rally support and to find a way forward together.

However, if rhetorical situations emerge from discursive activity, then organizations are empowered to manufacture the exigencies that spur that activity. From that perspective, we see that organizations routinely construct exigencies and present themselves as the solution to problematic situations. A crisis is not required for an organization to rally support for new products, for new marketing campaigns, for restructuring, and the like.

The distinction between emergent and constructed situations is one of motive. Depending on the purpose of its rhetoric, an organization can respond to either emergent or constructed situations—it is not limited to one or the other, or, for that matter, limited from moving back and forth between the two positions. Nor is the organization's construction of situation limited by the level of exigence (from benign to ruinous) or limited to which of its constructed situations to address.

In reference to the position that situations emerge from discourse, Richard Vatz faults Bitzer's objectivist stance as not remotely reminiscent of rhetorical situations: "No situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it" (154). Vatz's argument draws from the Chicago School of social theory and its interactionist perspective. He is especially hostile to the assumption that meaning resides in things, as Bitzer's theory demands. Consider the idea of exigence, which Bitzer places at the core of a rhetorical situation. Speaker and audience must recognize the specific rhetorical response that fits the situation at hand. Such an exigence demands that all of the participants in the rhetorical situation share the same perspective on the situation, Vatz argues. Unless we take for granted that the participants in a rhetorical situation bring with them and share among themselves common meanings for the objects within the situation, we have to accept that interlocutors can perceive a situation only in the act of communicating about the situation (155-56).

With the benefit of Vatz's critique, we might wonder why rhetoric is even necessary under Bitzer's formulation, which implies a readymade commonsense. If speaker and audience recognize the situation and its rhetorical solution because they carry with them knowledge about both, all either needs to do is wait for the other to hit upon the fix. There is no need to create commonsense—it is already present. If, as Bitzer argues, the meaning of objects is in the objects themselves, then meanings do not shift over time or change because of place; nor, for that matter, does meaning shift from situation to situation. If it did, interlocutors would have nothing to share because they would never have anything in common.

That said, to argue broadly against Bitzer's position is to overlook his argument's most potent aspect: Rhetorical situations are inherently problematic and demand action. Bitzer himself emphasizes that aspect when in later arguments he moves from an idealist position to a constructionist one. Rhetoric is a practical interaction between us and our environment, he writes, and the ingredients to that interaction are an exigence and a remedy ("Functional" 23). Unexpected events force us to respond, to adapt, because the natural world is made up of physical objects and mental conceptions. The physical and mental worlds are interrelated in complex ways that we design ourselves. Our relationship to that environment is marked by the drive to resolve conflicts between experience and belief, to balance short-term and long term-actions and consequences, and to resolve contradictions in and among belief systems (22-3).

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The shift in Bitzer's argument, however, is hardly any shift at all. Bitzer uses the term *pragmatic* to describe rhetorical conditions and encounters. However, any connection with pragmatist philosophy is markedly absent from his argument. That is unfortunate, as a more pragmatic approach would better support his position regarding the relational nature of our place in the world. For example, a pragmatist position would ameliorate Bitzer's inclination to assign meaning to objects and, instead, would demonstrate how our construction of meaning arises from the mediating symbolic actions we use to get on with things as participants in the world. Symbolic action is common to human beings. It is precisely because of our symbolic actions that we perceive problems and recognize rhetorical situations.

Reluctant to shed his idealist roots, in refining his concept of the rhetorical situation Bitzer only transplants those roots into social constructionism. The critical attitude he takes toward our relationship to our environment weakens under his idealist division of physical from conceptual. As a consequence, we are left with an intriguing, empowering paradox: If interlocutors see the same situation but it means something different to each of them, how can they participate in solving the problem that the situation presents? Alternatively, if interlocutors are divided about what a situation means, then rhetoric becomes credible as a means of generating a common situational perception—an agreement about what problem lies at the heart of the situation (commonly referred to as *stasis*).

Against charges of inconsistency, Bitzer admits that an exigence may not be immediately recognizable and that it may not be apparent that a situation can be modified with discourse. In that case, the rhetor decides to speak because he or she perceives the exigence as urgent, and there is a probability that it can be modified ("Functional" 26-7). Bitzer is arguing specifically against Vatz, who insists that what Bitzer leaves out of his definition of the rhetorical situation is the creative capacity interlocutors bring to any situation. While Vatz argues that our capacity to invent raises the possibility that rhetorical situations are created because they are inseparable from our talk about them, Bitzer constrains creative intent to the act of the rhetor's responding to rhetorical situations even if an exigence is not apparent to the audience.

Scott Consigny frames the positions represented by Bitzer and Vatz as antimony between deterministic circumstances that control the rhetor, in the first place, and, in the latter, an unbounded creativity that somehow frees the rhetor of any constraint imposed by time and place. According to Consigny, the rhetor's purpose in a rhetorical situation is not to solve a problem but to urge the kinds of questions that can lead to a productive formulation of a problem. Problems are not to be found in a rhetorical situation (as Bitzer would have it), nor are problems solely the rhetor's invention (as in Vatz). Instead, rhetorical situations are indeterminate. The exigency that Bitzer calls a recognizable object and that Vatz calls an invention is, for Consigny, an incoherence that negatively

affects the rhetor and the audience and calls for a response. The rhetor's task is to compose order so that the underlying problem becomes available (176-78).

In describing the tools and the practice necessary to fulfill that task, Consigny summons Aristotle's concept of rhetoric as an art; specifically, the art of sensing the particularities of a situation and the capacity to apply general principles to a situation without relying on a predetermined course of action (180). The alternative to Bitzer and Vatz, according to Consigny, is to apply Aristotle's topics to the idea of rhetorical situations. The topics are a shared space for objective and subjective treatments of the rhetorical situation—an interplay between the instrumentality of topics and the "realm in which the rhetor thinks and acts" (182). Within the dynamics inherent in Consigny's model, the antimony of Bitzer's situation-centric and Vatz's rhetor-centric positions dissipates under the influence of common cause (185).

Does Consigny's argument help us to imagine a rhetorical situation that is neither an objective phenomenon nor a discursive invention? In Bitzer's case, topics are a field of reference that speakers and audiences draw from to characterize an exigence as a rhetorical situation. For Vatz, topics are heuristics for establishing the meaning and for communicating the characteristics of a rhetorical situation. Consigny's resolution of those opposing positions is welcome; however, in the end he does not explain the mechanics that allow Aristotle's topics to transcend Bitzer and Vatz's theoretical differences.

When it comes down to it, despite varied approaches to the concept of rhetorical situations, the core of Bitzer's argument remains largely unquestioned—there are situations in which rhetoric is called to do its work. The disagreements and refinements surrounding Bitzer's concept ask only what the constituents of a rhetorical situation are, according to Donna Gorrell. They do not question that there are rhetorical situations (399). Whether we insist that rhetors and audiences together recognize an exigence at the heart of a rhetorical situation, or whether we believe that in the act of interpretation and composition a rhetor invents a rhetorical situation that an audience can recognize, we privilege the rhetor's role. If organizations are webs of communicative action, as Barnard, Cheney, and others imply, then we should be wary of attitudes that highlight the rhetor's actions in relation to the other elements of the situation.

As Gorrell points out, to emphasize one actor over others is to miss the significant interplay among all of the actors in a rhetorical situation (411). To illustrate, Gorrell replaces the traditional rhetorical triangle with a Venn diagram. Whereas the points of a triangle separate rhetor, audience, and subject, a Venn diagram illustrates how these constituents of a rhetorical situation relate to one another, sometimes overlapping, sometimes combining, sometimes taking a more or less dominant role toward one another (400-2). When considering a rhetorical situation, our emphasis should highlight the relational positions and roles of rhetors, audiences, and the circumstances of time, place, and other constraints inherent in rhetorical situations.

Bitzer attempts to circumvent the rhetor-centric position of his model; however, even his modified stance continues to separate rhetorical actors from the situation in which they find themselves. He calls rhetoric a kind of pragmatic communication that operates as a practical interaction aimed at restoring harmony to disorder. Wherever we are, Bitzer writes, we are "actively engaged in adjusting, responding, overcoming, planning, laboring, making and acting" in an effort to adapt our understanding to our experience ("Functional" 22). What is important to remember in discussing rhetorical situations, Bitzer continues, is that they are comprised of "environmental constituents which form a structure" (23). But it is hard to imagine just what kind of structure accommodates the dynamics in play during discursive events when Bitzer's model stabilizes structure along a line that separates event from actors—exigence from rhetor and audience. The exigence is something seen by both, yet Bitzer does not fully account for their participation in that seeing. He acknowledges the "influence of the individual's creativity in the apprehension of situations" (25); however, he steadies himself upon "factual conditions [that are] . . . independent of one's personal subjectivity" (28). Based on these claims, structure already exists. We have to go beyond Bitzer's words to accept that what he describes is a process-oriented structure rather than an objective one. This seems to be the only answer to how a predetermined structure molds itself to specific situations. But it is an answer that generates more questions—about agency, about governance, about the phases of a situational process. What other attitude can we take toward the

rhetorical situation and specifically what alterations can we or must we make to our understanding of it to assist us in bringing that idea into the field of organizational discourse?

Rhetorical Situations in an Organizational Context

The rhetorical situation in which organizations speak is complicated by the fact that organizations operate in a context that is broader than any one rhetorical situation. Hoffman and Ford describe how an organization must be attuned to what is going on in its environment and the effect that external happenings have on its work (11). Using that characterization, organizational context refers not only to where and how an organization carries out its work, but also to the historical and discursive forces that surround them, infuse them, and define them:

> All communication is situated in a context. Events or conversations that occur prior to an instance of communication have an impact on what is said, how it is said, and the meaning that is assigned to it (56).

The broad context in which organizations operate makes it difficult to discern the specific, controlling event that Bitzer describes as an exigence ("Situation" 7). Likewise, as I discussed in chapter 2, because it is difficult to point to a specific speaker or to a specific audience when considering organizational rhetoric, it is hard to identify the agents of change involved in a rhetorical situation. To understand how exigence, rhetor, audience, and

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constraints operate in such a broad focal area, we need an idea of the rhetorical

situation that operates at the same theoretical level as organizational context.

One step we can take toward such an idea is to assume, with Keith Grant-

Davie, that rhetorical situations can encompass several rhetors, and that those

rhetors aren't necessarily singular actors. A rhetor may be composed of groups of

people. Likewise, when a rhetor speaks to an exigence, that discourse can target

or meet different audiences with different purposes and different attitudes

toward the exigence. And finally, we should be attentive to the idea that all of the

aspects of the rhetorical situation—constraint and even the exigence itself, in

addition to rhetor and audience—can be plural. To apply the rhetorical situation

idea in the realm of organizational context, we should account for the interrelated

interactions that occur between and among multiple rhetors and audiences and

the dynamics of multiple exigencies and constraints (266).

An example of how we might analyze interrelated rhetors, audiences,

exigencies, and constraints can be found in Garret and Xiao's altering of the

rhetorical situation. By directing our attention away from the rhetor as the

principle actor in a rhetorical situation, Garrett and Xiao make it possible to ask

different questions about rhetorical situations. Garrett and Xiao argue that the

audience, not the speaker, is "the pivotal element" in a rhetorical situation. We

should regard the audience as an "active entity which is crucial in determining

exigency, constraints, and the 'fittingness' of the rhetor's response" (30). In

addition, they write, we should be aware of the "powerful influence of a culture's

discourse tradition in shaping both speaker and audience perceptions," and we should be more aware of the dynamic nature of rhetorical situations (31).

Examining the rhetoric inside China during the Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1857-1860, Garrett and Xiao analyze the change in rhetorical situations as described by successive government administrations and public intellectuals. Despite Britain-friendly concessions granted by treaty after the first war, Chinese public rhetoric still positioned China as civilized and the West as barbaric. As a result, China did not feel that its privileged position was at risk because it regarded the concessions as a way to pacify the barbarians and bring them under Chinese control. Warnings that China was surrendering its preeminent place among nations were ignored because those remarks fell outside of the historical discourse of cultural superiority and so escaped the notice of the intended audience (32-3). Those discursive circumstances changed following the second war. Commonsense notions about the aims of commercial and colonialist foreign powers and about how to deal with them (set limits with treaties and provide some trade and profit to appease them) gave way to the recognition that foreign forces were disciplined, well equipped, and that the greed of foreign power could not be satisfied with well-defined offers of trade and profit. As a result, China's vision of itself as ultimately more sophisticated and civilized than other nations gave way to reformist attitudes and to suspicions that its culture suffered from a moral decline (32-7). China might have avoided its slip into self-criticism and reduced its losses from the war had its political and cultural rhetoric evolved to

make it possible for its public audience to take a different position toward foreign nation states and commercial enterprises.

Case in Point

Discourse traditions exert powerful influence on the way rhetors respond during rhetorical situations. Further, according to Garrett and Xiao, discourse traditions affect whether rhetors and audiences even recognize the exigence that calls for rhetorical action. And finally, when rhetors and audiences do recognize an exigence, more often than not they construct responses that rely on a tradition of discourse rather than on the situation at hand. In thrall to histories of experience, to a traditional socio-cultural environment, and to a long-standing way of knowing, rhetors and audiences are not so much on different sides of an exigence (requiring rhetoric to dissolve the division between them by persuading a change in attitude toward action) but rather are cooperative agents working to modify the discourse tradition in a way that lets them recognize and respond to exigencies and use rhetoric to resolve them on an ongoing, contingent basis (37-8).

Rhetorical Situations and Discourse Traditions

The discourse tradition at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) rests on its identity as innovative, risk-taking, and inventive. In 1999, on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary, CCL commissioned an oral history that was edited and published privately as *Herding Cats: An Oral History of the Center for Creative Leadership.* In its earliest years, CCL faced the challenge that many

young organizations face: a fledgling identity. It was not a university and wanted credibility in academia. It was established as a nonprofit education and research institute, but wanted recognition among corporations. The rhetoric in *Herding Cats* invites readers to identify with CCL's image as a renegade, somewhat mysterious institute. Employees who worked at CCL since its early days see themselves in the book's anecdotes and photographs, identifying with the people they were thirty years ago—the organization's originals.

The rhetoric of *Herding Cats* connects employees who do not share that thirty-year history with CCL's founding members. It introduces readers to CCL as a "tapestry of extraordinary people doing extraordinary things" and "a place where people have gone off in all directions" (3, 5). What employee, reading this text, would not want to be extraordinary or to have that level of autonomy? *Herding Cats* does not explicitly state its intentions, but in allowing readers to imagine themselves shoulder to shoulder with the organization's founders, the book's epideictic rhetoric moves its readers toward a certain attitude from which they can recognize and participate in CCL's ethos. But just what is the rhetorical situation that calls for this text?

The timing of the book's publication is telling. At its thirtieth anniversary, one of CCL's two main concerns was the imminent departure of original members and the loss of their tacit knowledge. CCL's second concern arose from the expansion in executive education services, and especially the growth in the number and size of CCL competitors. The exigence of meeting more robust

competition while losing its attachment to its identity as an innovative pioneer creates an immediate rhetorical situation: how to instill the self-described frontier, can-do spirit of its founders into more recently hired employees.

The book's epideictic rhetoric works differently from the limited ways Aristotle sanctioned for its use. However, as Kennedy explains, ceremonial rhetoric can not only praise and blame but can also sustain, teach, and enhance cultural values (22). The rhetorical work of *Herding Cats* transposes a rhetorical situation across thirty years and onto an organizational exigence. The exigence of credibility and identity becomes a response to an exigence of legacy, commitment, and sustainability. The discourse tradition that constitutes CCL's identity as innovative and groundbreaking preserves those attributes and, through *Herding Cats*, presses them into its employees.

Discursive Constructions and Rhetorical Situations

An organization's discourse tradition affects the way in which it sees and responds to a rhetorical situation. But what about the question of how an organization constructs a rhetorical situation? These are not exclusive positions—a discourse tradition can affect how and when organizational rhetors and audiences recognize an exigence and become active in a rhetorical situation; that discourse tradition can also influence how an organizational rhetor constructs exigence and situation to achieve a strategic aim. To demonstrate, consider the following example of CCL and how it constructs a situation so that it can respond

as an organization whose identity is bound up in the ideas of invention and unconventional thinking.

In its 2011-2012 annual report, CCL draws attention to the continuing effect of the global credit failures of 2008 on the kinds of organizations that are buyers of CCL's services. At the time of this writing, employment, production, and trade around the world have not yet returned to pre-2008 levels. Against that backdrop, CCL identifies the exigency of failed leadership. The rhetorical situation surrounding that exigence, according to CCL, involves an audience seeking answers as to whether there are new solutions that can solve the aftermath of the global recession and prevent that situation from reoccurring. It is a masterful rhetorical choice: during the global recession, even everyday conversations far removed from multinational corporate settings routinely reflect on the missteps of political and commercial leaders.

In response to the exigence of inadequate or failed leadership, the text of this annual report addresses "What's Next for Leadership: 5 Big Ideas." CCL presents itself as the authority of current thinking in organizational and leadership studies. The report's rhetoric assumes that, as Bitzer and others have argued, the audience is crucial to the emergence and the amelioration of a rhetorical situation. If that is the case, CCL can depend on the report's audience also to see the exigence of failed leadership, and it can expect the audience to take an attitude toward potential solutions. However, what the text identifies as the frontiers of leadership studies and practice does not encompass nor does it

survey the field of leadership studies. Rather, the report articulates five areas of interest that CCL is pursuing in its work.

From a rhetorical perspective it is noteworthy that its 2011-2012 report does not discuss "what's next for CCL," or some equivalent. The title instead makes a broader statement that locates CCL at the peak of the discipline and practice of leadership studies, from where it can survey the world around it and pronounce what is coming. "What's on the minds of leaders these days?," the omniscient text asks (Ryan 2). CCL has in this report set out a rhetorical situation in which the exigence of uncertainty arising from economic catastrophe calls for different perspectives of leadership. CCL, anchored in its identity as a place for new ideas, responds to the situation so as to suggest that the areas of its attention are common to the reader's areas of concern. What are the frontiers of leadership studies and practice? Why would the audience need to know? The answer, for at least some of the audience, lies in how CCL connects itself to the exigence it constructs. The exigence of failed leadership exercises its rhetorical power by drawing from the very real consequences of a worldwide recession. In turn, the CCL report channels that power to create the rhetorical situation for which its audience seeks a solution. Insofar as the audience has an interest in staying current with leadership ideas because those ideas may solve problems associated with global economic retrenchment, CCL wants to define those important ideas—the next big things—because those are the things that CCL has set as its own strategic imperatives.

In terms of a discourse tradition that reinforces its identity as an innovative pioneer, the report positions CCL as the pre-eminent institute in its field, which is a position that can be attained only with next-generation ideas. In its beginning, CCL's researchers "were considered an outrageous fringe group" (*Herding Cats* 33). That fringe element emerges in the way that CCL highlights and discusses its research agenda in the 2011-2012 report: neuroscience, democratizing leadership, network theory, nonprofit entrepreneurs, and the amplification of individual performance through coaching.

In the organizational context, as in any other social context, rhetorical situations are a mix of linguistic forces. They are constituted in mutual, discursive acts and, because they are embedded in a discursive mix, they are subject to the influences that affect and arise from discourse. As an organization responds to threats and opportunities, its discourse traditions influence what it and its audiences see as a rhetorical situation and what kind of responses they will accept. In constructing the situation, the organization's rhetoric engenders audience support for the organization's strategic responses. In the last instance, invention is not simply happenstance but is purposeful. In the next section I will discuss situational purpose in general, and then I will demonstrate one particular kind of rhetorical purpose—identity—that rhetorical situations serve when generated in the course of organizational rhetoric.

The Purpose of the Situation

If we can return for a moment to Aristotle's three forms of rhetoric, we note that each form is tied to a specific time. Political rhetoric urges its audience to take or refrain from an action under consideration; its focus is on the future. Forensic rhetoric is employed to attack or defend a position using different kinds of evidence; its focus is on the past. Ceremonial rhetoric, consisting of praise or censure, focuses on present (1.3.185a-186b). To these time distinctions Aristotle adds *telos*—the purpose, or the ends, to which the speaker intends to bring an audience—as a determining factor in each. *Telos* relates to the audience's interests (1.3.1358b). *Telos* is embedded in any particular situation as a motive for persuasion.[1]

Organizations have many purposes for their rhetoric, given their multiple audiences and various goals. As an example of what I mean by the purpose of a situation, I turn to Tim Kuhn's examination of how organizations create situations to deal with issues that affect their operations. The messages designed for these purposes can be gathered under the general heading of *issues management*. Kuhn's argument addresses whether or not organizational rhetoric related to critical issues constitutes a genre, and his work is instructive in the way it reveals the purpose of an organization's attempt to construct a situation.

Kuhn's structurational approach defines genres as "social institutions that are produced, reproduced, or modified when social actors draw on the rules [that govern a particular genre] to engage in conversation" (192). Issue management

campaigns are decidedly rhetorical in that they are responses to an exigence that cannot be solved but only resolved, or managed, for some period of time. The tension inherent in an issue reverberates between *what is* and *what should be.* However, Kuhn cautions, what an issue is and how to deal with it are not always the questions to ask. Rather, we ought to examine the manner in which issues emerge. Organizations often create issues by calling the public's attention to them, and then they offer themselves as a means of resolution (195).

From the rhetorical perspective, an issue is an exigence. However, Kuhn treats exigence much differently than Bitzer, who, we are reminded, places the objective exigence at the heart of a rhetorical situation. Kuhn's position is closer to Vatz's, which locates exigence in the mutually affective discursive situation that arises between rhetors and audiences. More to the point, however, is the strategic implication of creating an exigence and giving rise to a rhetorical situation that an organization can answer with a specific rhetorical response that an audience recognizes as a resolution. Kuhn explains:

> Whether the organization attempts to convince stakeholders to pay attention to an issue it defines as important or it attempts to manage the importance of an issue forced upon it from the outside, the rhetorical shaping of meaning is central to any [image management] campaign (195).

The situation-constituting agency embedded in issues management meets a key requirement of Bitzer's concept: That to say "a rhetorical response fits a situation is to say that it meets the requirements established by the situation" ("Situation" 10). Further, because a rhetor can establish a sense of urgency to

stand in for an exigence (7), we can read Kuhn as a demonstration of how an

organization rhetorically constructs situations. The purpose of that construction

is to position its audiences to recognize, in a specific way, the specific exigence of

a situation and to predispose the audience toward an attitude that adopts the

organization's solution. More often than not, the solution relates to the products

and services the organization provides or to its identity as the authority capable

of resolving the situation.

Case in Point

Organizations construct situations for many more reasons than issue

management. One of the most important purposes is the careful presentation and

management of an organizational identity. An organization's persistent

characteristics are critical to its operation, reception, and sustainability. An

organization continually produces messages to influence how its audiences

experience and respond emotionally to its goods and services and to its behavior

in the public sphere. Those objects and actions are the core of an organization's

identity. They are meant to make the organization distinct from other

organizations, and they are meant to remain consistent over time (Hoffman and

Ford 119-23).

Annual reports are public texts with an emphasis on constituting and

maintaining an organization's identity. I discussed previously how CCL's 2011-

2012 annual report derives from and relies on a discourse tradition that

emphasizes its identity as a pioneer. CCL's 2010-2011 report demonstrates a

corporate identity that is less bound to legacy and closer to what it wants to be known for now. The report is an example of how an organization uses a text to construct or to bring attention to a situation, the resolution of which depends on the organization's characteristics. If a reader recognizes or even acknowledges the exigence as presented in an organizational text, it becomes easier for the organization to persuade that reader that an organization with just its capabilities and reputation can resolve that exigence.

The theme for CCL's 2010-2011 report is "rethinking boundaries." If a reader is puzzled as to what that means, the issue is addressed at the very start of the report. The text cites a survey from IBM, a widely recognized, praised, and credible organization, in reporting that working across geographical and cultural boundaries is "crucial for driving business performance" (Ryan 1). Directly following that remark, the report references a CCL survey with similar findings. Presented in close proximity, the statements garner some measure of mutual strength and credibility. The report's opening article goes on to create a connection with the reader by saying how much CCL learns from organizations about what it calls *boundary spanning*—a practice of working across time zones, with different departments within an organization, and with people of different backgrounds whose experience generates unfamiliar behaviors. CCL is "extremely privileged" to work with "talented women and men," and it not only shares its knowledge with them but learns from them at the same time (1). A reader—a talented one no doubt—can place himself or herself in the same

position, the role of a learning partner who recognizes the difficult circumstances of globalization and, with CCL's assistance, adopts boundary spanning as a way to resolve them. The report goes on to cite several well-recognized organizations with whom CCL has worked, generating more credibility and establishing its authority to speak to this particular situation (1).

One could argue that the situation that this text describes is not invented but is a consequence of globalization and an extant challenge to organizational work. In response to that situation, the text outlines approaches and suggests practices that people in organizations can use to bolster the organization's performance and sustainability. However, while the shadow of globalization falls on CCL's activities, the report focuses on the terms *boundaries* and *differences*, constructing a situation that CCL can more readily manage than globalization.

One way to characterize the report's rhetoric and to see the motive of situation-construction embedded in it is through Burke's dramatistic pentad: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. In brief, *act* describes what happens; *scene* is the setting for the act; the *agent* performs the act; *agency* refers to the means by which (or the tools with which) the agent performs the act; and *purpose* describes the reasons for the act (*GM* xv). Burke delineates the relationships among the terms as resources for guiding analytical methodologies. The pentad terminology can be used as "generating principles," and it has an advantage over other methodologies in that the terms are by and large "understandable almost at a glance" (xv). The pentad's elegant simplicity works for examining the motives

embedded in statements because such statements emerge and end within the pentad's scope (xv-xvi).

In CCL's 2010-2011 annual report, the scene is globalization, portrayed as a competitive environment comprised of boundaries and differences, the managers profiled in the report are the agents, and the managerial practices linked to CCL's concepts of boundary spanning and leading across differences provide the agency. One purpose of the report is to present an identity of CCL as a global, culturally and psychologically savvy knowledge organization that empowers its clients to meet the challenges that boundaries (national and psychological, for example) and differences (cultural and ethnic, for example) pose to business performance.

We have one more term, *act*, to assign. In doing so we shine some light on the report's motive, which is not simply to fulfill the purpose of presenting CCL's identity in a favorable light or to report on its work. The report also strives to ignite an act of identification between readers and CCL's work and identity. The fact that most of the report's readers already have an interest in or a relationship with CCL does not subtract from the degree of resolve in CCL's rhetorical motive. CCL wants to strengthen and reinforce the identification process enacted by the report's readers so as to hold onto them as potential clients for its services. If new readers respond by identifying themselves with CCL, all the better; however, the organization fields a substantial salesforce for the purpose of recruiting new clients. The report is not necessary to secure new business.

Burke's pentad becomes an even closer examination of the report's rhetorical motives if we consider what Burke referred to as the ratios among the pentad's five terms. The terms are not simply labels, but constituents of order—there is cause and effect in their relationships to one another and among them that leads to a purpose (*GM* 15-20). In the case of CCL's 2010-2011 annual report, the proportion of agents to the other pentad elements is exaggerated. Of the report's 26 pages, 11 of them, or 42 percent, are profiles of various leaders in health care, financial services, education, computer network technology, and other fields.

Compare that proportion to the report's emphasis on globalization, which is discussed in passing on only four pages—a scant 6.5 percent. That is an astoundingly small ratio, given the worldwide financial crisis that, at the time of this writing, continues to affect organizations and their members. Agency, which is represented by what CCL calls "boundary spanning," occupies 46 percent of the report. That is not a surprise, given that in this example agency is tied directly to the agents (their actions are described as boundary spanning) and to CCL (in particular to the 10-year research project that supports CCL's boundary spanning practices and curriculum). In the ratio of scene, agent, and agency, scene plays only a minor role. The emphasis falls to the agents and to the agency they exercise—the latter as a set of tools and approaches designed by CCL to serve its clients.

The ratio of act to the other pentad constituents is more difficult to measure. With so much emphasis on agents and agency, the report encourages the process of identification—whether with the agents or with the agency by which they span boundaries. In considering identification as the act, we are able discern a motive for this particular piece of CCL rhetoric. Highlighted by an emphasis on agents and agency, the report achieves its purpose of emphasizing its role in training executives in the skills of boundary spanning, thus enabling them to fully exert their agency to achieve positive results for their organizations. The successful executives profiled in the report, with whom readers identify in no small part because of the skillful narratives that tell their stories, persuade readers to take a positive attitude toward CCL's work—especially because that work is cast against the constant churn of globalization. By turning the reader toward its work, CCL demonstrates an ethos that ensures its credibility and sustainability, which is the report's purpose. Readers, acting to identify with the report's agents and their agency, recognize the virtue, wisdom, and goodwill evidenced by CCL's demonstration of ethos because they, like the agents profiled in the report, value those qualities in terms of the benefits accrued in putting them into practice. In recognizing that their own ethical stance aligns with CCL's stance, readers are more easily persuaded (they more easily identify with CCL, its work, and its clients) to trust CCL and its activities, thereby ensuring the organization's sustainability.

Conclusion

It is not beyond imagining that an organization would create the grounds for a response so as to control the response to its benefit. As Hoffman and Ford point out, "The ability to describe a rhetorical situation and to recognize and employ the strategies of organizational rhetoric is central to creating effective messages" (114). Advertising, for example, is based on that equation: An organization's marketing function creates the urgency of need among the public, which responds to the urgency of a manufactured exigence by taking up what the situation offers—the use of the organization's products or services as the means for quelling the urgency and returning to harmony. This fact doesn't discount the inevitable occurrence of exigencies and the roil of situations among historical happenstance, environmental events, and other singular events. Analytically, however, one can see that organizations can operate in a rhetorical environment in which is created a stream of situations that they can address and, further, that organizations can constitute the necessary audience for that situation: an audience capable of participating with the rhetor in the situation and resolving it.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZING ETHOS

Aristotle describes ethos as one of three rhetorical appeals a speaker can make (joining logos and pathos). In practice, according to the *Rhetoric*, ethos is the most effective mode of persuasion of the three: "We believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others]," which makes the speaker's "character almost the most authoritative means of persuasion" (1356a 8-9). Aristotle goes on to say that a speaker's character does not precede the rhetorical situation but arises as a result of his or her discourse. The authority and credibility that an audience grants the rhetor is constituted during the speech and does not depend on the rhetor's reputation (1.2.1356a 11-12).

Ethos operates most persuasively when it exhibits three characteristics: practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. A lack of practical wisdom suggests that the speaker does not correctly form his or her opinions; a lack of virtue can be seen in a speaker who hides his or her opinions from the audience; a speaker who does not give the audience the full measure of his or her expertise demonstrates a lack of goodwill (1378a 8-19). A speaker who does not present a strong front on all three reduces the chances for persuading his or her audience. In short, an effective speaker is credible as an authority, logical in reason, and understanding of human emotions and their affects. Which brings us to essential questions:

What does it mean to say that an organization demonstrates ethos—that it presents and practices wisdom, virtue, and goodwill its rhetoric? Given the theoretical uncertainty surrounding speech that is not identified with an individual speaker (Cheney *ROS* 3), what does the concept of ethos tell us about what an organization's rhetoric makes possible, and what do audiences take from an organization's ethos that encourages them to grant an organization credence?

One strategy for addressing these questions is to accept organizations as contextually bounded; in other words, to speak of an organization as an individual rhetor. However, we should remain mindful of the possible missteps from that position. To equate groups and individuals as if the latter are fractals of the former risks a reliance on ideal forms that can pass from the single to the collective without change. Inviolate forms detract from rhetoric's capacity to deal with possibilities because no choices become available outside of those forms. Further, to equate groups and individuals occludes their binding, reciprocal relations—the rhetor's presentation and the audience's acknowledgment—masking differences and commonalities so as to conceal the rhetorical mechanisms necessary to make and sustain the bonds among and between them.

This chapter gives an accounting of ethos in the context of organizations. In chapter 3 I discussed how organizations can construct rhetorical situations to persuade audiences that its goods and services make suitable responses to an exigency. In this chapter, I give theoretical support for the social aspects inherent in the concept of ethos, and then I demonstrate how a social ethos promotes the

idea of organizational ethos. Further, I examine how organizations employ ethos for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the organization's credibility, competence, and concern for community (that is, virtue, wisdom, and goodwill) toward the purpose of sustaining the organization.

What Ethos Is

Scholarship into the development of ethos as a concept describes how Aristotle arrived at his framework by adapting Plato's insistence that the successful speaker will possess good character, be knowledgeable, be willing to consider the audience's position in regard to the situation at hand, and be capable of adapting to the audience (Sattler 56-7). In adapting his teacher's position, Aristotle addresses the limitations imposed by Plato, whose ideal rhetoric may suit one-to-one conversation between social equals but is unrealistic for public address (Kennedy 15).

Common sense dictates that arguing from a position of authority is a stronger, more persuasive position than simply trusting that your audience will take your argument at face value. Michael Halloran calls this the believe-me-because-I-am-the-kind-of-person-whose-word-can-be-believed argument, suggesting that ethos is bound to the character of the rhetor and that presenting one's character for the judgment of the audience acts as a persuasive technique. When a speaker uses ethos as an appeal, Halloran writes, he or she "will construct [the] speech with an eye toward the sort of character it portrays" (60). We might read Halloran generously and understand his claim as consistent with

the Aristotelian definition of ethos insofar as Halloran says ethos is created during the rhetor's actions. However, a close look at Aristotle's definition undermines that reading. If we were to construct our speech "with an eye toward the character it portrays," as Halloran urges us to do, then we would assume that there already exists an ethos (character) to which we can direct our eyes. That is not Aristotle's premise. Aristotle says that the rhetor does not use speech to present or to clarify an already existent character; rather, the rhetor uses speech to encourage trust, agreement, and belief. As conceived that way, ethos becomes part of strategic discourse. As Aristotle puts it:

> [There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; . . . And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person (1.2.1356a 6-12).

Quite simply, an audience that recognizes a stranger in its midst does not easily extend the same authority it grants to a member of its community. Ethos does not accompany the rhetor like a cultural relic, enveloping the rhetor with an authoritative halo. Nonetheless, we should guard against the easy acceptance of authoritative demonstrations and recognize, as Craig Smith points out, that the *Rhetoric* does in fact delve into the speaker's reputation. Aristotle's descriptions of virtue in Book 2, Chapter 9, for example, to which a rhetor can refer when the situation calls for epideictic rhetoric, include many characteristics that an audience would know only by way of reputation. Smith argues that in order for an audience to understand that a speaker acts from a positive ethos, it also has to

understand that the speaker's attributes are positive; in other words, what the audience believes are good characteristics must align with what the speaker presents as good characteristics (6).

In regard to reputation, Aristotle works against a reified ethos and instead focuses on how the rhetor and audience come to recognize the character and stance of the other during a rhetorical transaction. However, if we accept Aristotle's claim that ethos arises as part of a rhetorical situation, we still have not settled on a way to read his list of virtues that does not define them as the basis for reputation.

Etymological studies of *ethos* suggest one alternate reading. A body of scholarship indicates that the word *ethos* derives from the Greek terms for habit or custom. "In its earliest signification [it] refers to the usages, habits, and traditions of one social group as distinguished from another" (Sattler 55). Philological investigations into *ethos* suggest a metaphorical connection to the term *haunt*, connoting an animal's territory—the environment with which the animal is associated. According to Margaret Zulick's research, the linguistic record shows a use of *haunt* that evokes *character.* This metaphor, Zulick writes, becomes identified with "the constellation of habits, thoughts, manners, and reputation that constitutes a rhetorical subject" (20)[2].

We commonly refer to that cluster of attributes as *character.* In terms of environment and habitation, we can exercise the metaphor for which Zulick argues and look at character as the position and attributes with which the rhetor

and audience associate with the specific situation that a text or speech addresses—the rhetoric must fit the situation if it is to persuade an audience.

Critical speculations that link *ethos* to *habit* do not avoid confrontation or modification. Thomas Corts, for example, argues against a linguistic connection between the two. That faulty conclusion, he writes, arises from an imprecise transliteration that confuses two similar Greek words, one connoting character and the other signifying habit (201). Thorton Lockwood extends Corts's critique, not on lexical grounds but ethical ones. To equate character and habit implies that one can build character—construct ethos—by means of habitual behavior. That position, he writes, overly simplifies Aristotle's intent by separating behavior from intellect and implying that one can construct virtue without attention to reason. Further, Lockwood argues, while the classical terms for ethics, character, and habit may be interrelated, they do not correspond to contemporary usage. We can discuss a person's habits (possession) and we can also say that a person learned by habit (repetition). Ethos connotes the latter sense, Lockwood writes, but Aristotle uses another term, *hexis*, to signify the former (2013).

Support for a view of rhetoric as social recognition—that an audience identifies with the speaker because they share interests and take a common attitude toward situations—comes from Stephen Yarbrough, who argues that because of the social nature of discourse, and the temporal nature of social actions, ethos can be regarded as a phase of discourse—*phase* because temporal

implies duration, which is necessary to social interactions. We can make sense of one another's discourse, Yarbrough argues, only if we can shift our ethical fields so that they align in such a way as to allow what makes sense for one to make sense for the other; that is, the objects in a common field of action can mean one thing to one person and something else to another. In a meadow, (Yarbrough's example), the same object (say, a level area of tall grass) would mean something different to a farmer, a hunter, and a developer (7). During the ethos phase, participants in a field of action move toward a common view of the rhetorical situation in which they find themselves. They can accomplish that move only when they choose to see things as the other sees them—only when they recognize one another as possessing a similar or the same perspective.

As illustrated in my brief sampling of positions, we find no shortage of alternatives to arguments that make an easy linguistic connection between habit and character, and we can find many conceptual frameworks for ethos besides those that focus on character, ethical development, and textual studies. Therefore, we lose little if we set aside the etymological excursion of Zulick's argument to focus instead on its exposition of Kenneth Burke's "psychology of form" (as expressed in *Counter-statement*) and how it constitutes identity (or, in Zulick's formulation, character). The echo of Aristotle carries through Zulick's argument: As the speaker creates and presents an ethos during speech, the audience does not recognize that ethos as good or not but identifies its form—the forms that Aristotle catalogs in Book 2, Chapter 9, of the *Rhetoric*. Zulick writes:

The calculus of identification is not external, but is embedded in the form of the work itself. Therefore, the work not only springs from this identification but also reproduces it (25).

We can synthesize Zulick's reading of Aristotle and Burke thus: The speaker's cognition of form and the audience's recognition of form can be explained by a common psychology that results from their experiences in the world and the ways in which those experiences are imprinted as habit on their actions, symbolic and otherwise.

Reading Burke, Zulick emphasizes a commonplace theme regarding invention: It reveals what awaits discovery. The emphasis is in some respects misplaced, relying as it does on Plato's idealist view of invention, which Aristotle roundly contradicts. However, if we consider that rhetoric makes it possible for consensus and common sense to arise in rhetorical situations, we can trade Zulick's dependence on idealist positions for the symbolic mechanisms that contribute to consensus and common sense. Burke's psychology of form describes just that mechanism, which he identifies as the "creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (*CS* 31). Zulick explains that pattern recognition and invention operate as the same thinking process: "The inventor and the audience of any formal expression share in its production at the formal level as well as the social level" (25).

Zulick's argument is intriguing and even enlightening, but we need not move all the way to Burke to claim that ethos functions as a public recognition rather than as a private statement of identity, such as contemporary notions of

self would have it (Halloran 60, 63). Granted, Halloran's argument is troubled in its separating intellectual and ethical development, and, most seriously, by its misstating Aristotle's definition of ethos. Nevertheless, where Halloran situates ethos in its classical environment aligns his argument with Burke's theory: Because ethos can be attributed to an individual and to the collective, Halloran writes, we can speak of a person's ethos, but we can also talk about an ethos associated with a certain type of person or a formal group of people, and even at the scale of culture and historical periods (62).

As the component of rhetoric that, through the mutual actions of rhetor and audience, bestows authority, ethos taps into the social flow of group communication and expectations—into the habits of response that, in practice, become norms of behavior and so are recognized within a community as virtuous or not. What I am calling a social flow is consistent with what Yarbrough describes as "a set of social relations we assume to hold in a situation" (*Inventive* 154). The rhetor's credibility—his or her cognition of the situation and the audience addressed—relies on such habits of assumption to indicate the situation in which a particular ethos is apt to persuade. In turn, the audience's recognition of the rhetor's credibility relies on its attributing to the rhetor an ethos that is suitable and at home in the habitat that both the audience and the rhetor understand as the situation in which they find themselves. Audience and rhetor are members of the same community—whether one takes the position that community is generated in practice, such as when interlocutors come together in

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unique circumstance to address a situation, or that community is the polis, classroom, organization, or some other extant social form.

Aristotle's list of virtues in the *Rhetoric* are worthy characteristics and available for development. However, given that ethos arises during the rhetor's speech, those character traits do not come into play until the situation calls for them. Further, the rhetor does not use one trait or another during a speech but presents himself or herself as possessing those traits. At the same time, the audience makes a judgment about the rhetor's credibility and grants authority based in large part on the characteristics it sees the rhetor display.

Another way to say this is that rhetor and audience make something of one another by adapting their attitudes toward one another. To put it in the terms of my project, organizations and their members and affiliated publics engage rhetorically during particular situations to establish the character of each. Ethos either conforms to or deviates from—and so supports or undermines—the intent of an organization and its audiences to communicate with each other and among themselves, to generate common sense, to maintain common purpose, and to promote willing cooperation.

The Object of Ethos

A rhetor depends on an audience to complete the ethical transfer of trust and belief that engenders persuasion. However, the attributive dependency that ethos relies on complicates the way in which it enables persuasive power. When Aristotle separates ethos from ideas of essential, durable, universal traits, he

challenges the notion of a more or less static identity to which an audience can respond. To what, exactly, is the audience attributing fair mindedness, courage, or other virtues? Lockwood and others reply that the answer relies on the developmental component embedded in Aristotle's concept. Ethos involves ethics, the learning and practice of virtue, that manifests in "deliberate choice of actions as developed into a habit of mind," while at the same time it "seems to refer to qualities, such as an innate sense of justice or a quickness of temper," with which a rhetor and audience are by nature possessed and that contribute to the choices that each makes (McTavish 68).

In the rhetor-audience dynamic that constitutes ethos, Aristotle synthesizes theory and practice upon the common ground of ethical choice. Kennedy explains that, for Aristotle, "rhetoric is a mixture . . . [comprised of] a theoretical element and . . . [the capacity] to 'produce' persuasion, speeches, and texts" (16). The capacity to produce is not a freewheeling source of invention, however. Rather, it is an intentional negotiation made complete by the participation of rhetor and audience to reach consensus on the degree to which a rhetor's ethos expresses what are, to the audience, communal expectations and beliefs. Recognition in this case operates as socially fulfilled expectations. The audience agrees that the rhetor's character is positive because it agrees that its own character is positive in the same way. In turn, the rhetor must understand the audience and its beliefs (Smith 6).

Examinations and speculations about ethos have a broad range, opening a way to review how ethos relates to organizations. Most importantly, for that purpose, critiques such as those discussed move attitudes toward ethos from an individual to a social focus. The origin of that trajectory justifies itself from a historical point of view, as Aristotle and his contemporaries dealt with issues of courts and other public forums that individuals were called to address. The rhetorical impetus then was the one speaking to the many, as it is with organizations now.

The recognition of virtue and the consequential granting of authority are possible only if we address ethos as a social concept. This seems obvious because rhetoric is a social practice and so ethos, as a key rhetorical concept, should adhere to the general principles of the governing practice of which it is part. Ethos dwells in the rhetor's act of presenting evidence of character so as to be more persuasive to the audience at hand, and it dwells in the audience's sanction or disavowal of the rhetor's ethos relative to its suitability to the situation at hand.

The rhetor chooses when and how to speak, what kinds of appeals are likely to invoke the audience's interest, and by what means to generate a sense of wisdom, goodwill, and virtue that makes it possible for an audience to grant credibility. In turn, the audience chooses which virtues are evident in the rhetor's performance and align with the values of the community of which it is part. In both cases, choice is the operating factor. Rhetor and audience make practical

judgments and distinctions, relying on the position each takes toward the other and toward communal norms. From there each chooses how to align character and situation. When the alignment is true, in the sense of being in balance, or is close enough to true so as not to be distinct from it, the audience marks its recognition by granting the rhetor credibility.

In contrast to Smith, who turns Aristotle's list of virtues into an objective benchmark, Halloran stresses that Aristotle's list indicates the ongoing consensus of Athenians as to what behaviors and attitudes are best suited to their surroundings and most likely to favor Athens' sustainability during uncertain circumstances. According to Halloran, "To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks" (60). Seen from the perspective of Halloran's insistence on a social sense of ethos, Smith's interpretation of the virtues listed in the *Rhetoric* misses the point in regard to how cultural norms operate—in classical terms, how rhetors and their audiences exercise the values held in common by the polis. Ethos does not exist outside of the situation in which it comes into play. Audiences do not recognize a rhetor's virtue by referring to a list and comparing that to their observations or to their rational or emotional experiences of the speech that addresses them. Instead, audiences recognize virtue as those attributes or characteristics valued by the community and in doing so take the rhetor as part of that community. As Aristotle's list makes clear, socially accepted virtues are traits worth developing and they provide the grounds for credibility.

Ethos as a communal act, a strategic alignment of choices on the parts of rhetor and audience and, further, as an act that draws from social norms to promote the potential for persuasive speech, presses Smith to read Aristotle while holding an appreciation of the time, language, and philosophical haunts familiar to Aristotle, his contemporaries, and his progenitors. That mix, Smith claims, anchors ethos to the ways in which language practices of the classical period project meaning (2-4). In this respect, Smith takes an attitude toward the social-ethos position.

Unfortunately, Smith's structuralist viewpoint (his claim that language projects meaning) threatens to supplant the agency required for making choices and for participating in the give and take of a social situation. We question claims that language projects meaning because (a) a predetermined pool of meaning conceals the social mechanisms that produce common sense among organizations and their affiliates; (b) a representational view of language imposes limits on how organizational members might imagine and generate meanings different from those inscribed by the exercise of power, such as hierarchy, position, and selection; and finally, (c) a representation-based insistence that interlocutors produce language as a container for ideas (words carry meaning) hinders organizational members' capacity to modify their beliefs so that they can move from one course of action or an attitude to another in the face of change. Nonetheless, Smith's appeal to situated ethos can be useful insofar as it synthesizes some of the arguments supporting the idea of ethos as social practice

and social site. A sense of language and meaning as a social tool, which we employ in specific circumstances to establish relationships with the objects of our attention, becomes important to our understanding the rhetorical mechanics at play in organizations.

Ethos in an Organizational Context

Ethos is of singular importance to the success or failure of organizations. Consider, for example, Aristotle's claim that an audience is likely to believe a speaker's argument if it believes that the speaker can be trusted. Likewise, organizations foster a positive ethos to strengthen the organizing ties among and between organizational members, affiliates, and customers. Hoffman and Ford place organizational ethos under the concept of *organizational credibility*; organizational ethos relies on competence and community. The public's recognition of an organization's positive ethos and its subsequent grant of credibility largely depend on (a) how well an organization balances the cost that accrues to the community of which it is part against the benefit it brings to that community; and (b) the competence the organization musters to achieve that balance (27).

Organizational credibility, so dependent on ethos, becomes readily apparent during times of crisis. Tim Kuhn's example of issues-management rhetoric describes the discourse that organizations employ in response to external pressures, such as an environmental disaster or new regulations. As Kuhn writes, an organization manages such issues by framing them in language that presents

the organization as ideally suited and skilled to deal with such unexpected circumstances. Central to issues-management rhetoric is an organization's identity, which operates in terms of an organization's "enduring character" (199) that "develops over time in a dialectical relationship between the organization and its stakeholders" (200).

In Kuhn's work, the term *identity* substitutes for *ethos*. However, I want to be careful here to acknowledge the distinction between those terms. Ethos, as I have described it, is the alignment of the rhetor with community values and the audience's recognition of those values in the person of the rhetor, which results in the audience's granting authority and making the rhetor's case more plausible. Identity, on the other hand, and in the social sense, refers to an association with a group as a way of making oneself distinct from other groups—the quintessential we-versus-them arrangement.

Hoffman and Ford acknowledge that organizational ethos accommodates reputation in ways that Aristotle's concept of ethos did not. Organizational rhetors, they write, can draw from and build on an inherent credibility, or they can use organizational credibility in reciprocal transactions in certain situations (26-7). A similar kind of divide occurs when an organization's identity is defined as a set of enduring characteristics. Kuhn's definition works against Aristotle's emphasis on how ethos is generated in the discursive dynamic between rhetor and audience. If a rhetor generates an ethos suitable to the circumstances the rhetor and the audience are in, and if ethos does not depend on reputation but on

a strategic alignment with accepted community virtues, then it becomes difficult at best to say exactly what characteristics endure outside of the polis of which the rhetor and audience are part.

Case in Point

As I wrote in chapter 3, CCL describes its enduring characteristics as those of an innovative, risk-taking, inventive organization. Beyond indicating a set of characteristics, however, CCL's ethos links to a long-standing discourse that continually renews the organization's origins. That discourse presents CCL to its audiences and to its members as a research pioneer and the creator of solutions for business problems.

CCL ethos as a research pioneer is captured in its self-published *Unconventional Wisdom: A Brief History of CCL's Pioneering Research and Innovation.* That work tells the story of H. Smith Richardson, the inventor of Vick's VapoRub. Richardson was a small-town pharmacist whose home remedy grew to become the Vick Chemical Company. Richardson was concerned about the sustainability of his business. Because of his company's origins, he was especially interested in why so many family businesses fail when passed from one generation to the next. Vick Chemical Company profits were used to create a foundation, which in turn funded the start of CCL. CCL's origins are found in the attempt to answer Richardson's question about why organizations fail (Glover and Wilson 4).

However, CCL's origin story is not the summation of the organization. Rather than a static text, the story continues a rhetor-audience relationship to support the ongoing social recognition of its pioneer, risk-taking ethos. The organization often repeats its origin story to itself and to public audiences. For example, a mural that adorns one hallway of CCL' headquarters in Greensboro, North Carolina (USA), presents the story to visitors and to the managers who come to CCL (fig. 2). Befitting the thirtieth anniversary that commissioned it, the mural tracks CCL's development from 1970 to 2000. It highlights the opening of satellite campuses, the growth in the number of staff, and the rise in the number of organizational leaders with whom CCL has interacted (and, presumably, positively affected). Not only does the mural communicate CCL's identity to the building's visitors, its placement along one of the building's main corridors creates a frequent reminder to organizational members about CCL's identity. In addition, a permanent archive in CCL's special library makes available artifacts related to the organization's beginnings, from newspaper reports, to photographs, to objects such as an original flask of VapoRub (fig. 3). These installations— the mural and the archival library—invoke an audience that recognizes CCL's ethos as an experimental pioneer that "meets the needs of business and, ultimately, all organizations" (Glover and Wilson 5).

Figure 2. The Public Mural at CCL. The mural narrates a story of a pioneer that grows steadily in its influence on organizations.

Figure 3. Artifacts of CCL's Origins. The display contributes to the constitution of CCL's organizational ethos of pioneer and thought leader.

Invoking an audience as a rhetorical strategy is described in Walter Ong's 1975 study about the relationship between a composition and its audience, specifically the differences between the audience for speech and the audience for text. Ong claims that texts, unlike speech (and in contrast to ANT), do not address an audience but instead define a role for readers. Ong argues that this perspective is necessary to understand how communication works if we do not accept what I have previously identified as Shannon's model of communication. That model of moving "corpuscular units of something labeled 'information' back and forth along tracks between two termini," Ong writes, only works if we believe that the audience for written text and the audience of spoken word are alike and only differ in that the audience for a speech is immediate and visible, and the audience for a text is not (910).[3]

The invoked audience concept lends explanatory power to the way that an organization's texts and other rhetorical artifacts constitute an audience that can participate in the social recognition required for an organization's sustainability and credibility—an audience that can contribute to the development of organizational ethos. However, CCL's ethos does not rely only on CCL's ability to invoke a specific audience through rhetoric, as depicted in a mural or catalogued in a library's special collection. Its ethos continually develops and shows itself in CCL's contemporary communications: an organization comprised of groundbreaking research and innovations. In chapter 3, I discussed a specific situation in which CCL established an identity that gave it credibility with

academia and among businesses. The ethos CCL established then has become an enduring set of characteristics that it continues to develop in league with its employees, clients, and other publics.

For example, consider CCL's ethos as demonstrated in the text of its annual reports from 1999 to 2012. A most telling example involves CCL's first Distinguished Alumni Award, created in 1999. The award's first recipient, U.S. Army General Norman Schwartzkopf, is well known in the public sphere for leading the 1991 Gulf War military campaign. By associating itself with Schwartzkopf, CCL strives to establish authority and competence. CCL's capabilities create the ideal place for positing models of leadership that influence the field of management studies and the work of managers (*Annual Report 1999-2000* 9). Marking its thirty-year anniversary, CCL's president writes that CCL "helped revolutionize the way leadership is understood and developed" (Alexander 3). In regard to community, the second aspect of organizational credibility, CCL's 1999-2000 report highlights its work with hundreds of teachers and principals and other educators in several states. Its work with educational and other nonprofit organizations is made possible by the partnerships that CCL creates as a clearinghouse for innovative ideas (*Annual Report 1999-2000* 2, 8-9).

In subsequent annual reports, CCL continues to demonstrate an ethos whose origins can be found in its earliest artifacts. For example, it is a "pioneer" that ventures into "uncharted lands, always moving forward" (*2000-2001* 3). It

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demonstrates credibility by noting that newspaper and magazine journalists look to CCL as "one of the media's foremost sources on leadership" (*2002-2003* 19). Later, it reinforces claims to credibility by reporting that the *Financial Times* ranks it as one of the top 10 executive development programs in the world (22). These statements appear alongside testimonials from past attendees and among profiles of successful leaders who cite CCL as an influence on their work. All in all, its series of annual reports consistently catalogs CCL's enduring characteristics and socializes an ethos of credible authority, of a knowledge pioneer and caretaker of knowledge, and of a participant in local and global communities.

The Purpose of Ethos

Rhetors who display an ethos that audiences accept positively increase their ability to persuade. In organizations, the same purpose prevails. However, an organization's persuasive purpose may be not only to encourage different attitudes or actions but to sustain the characteristics with which it is publically identified. Here, we return to the question posed previously in this chapter, slightly modified: For what purpose does an organization demonstrate ethos, which Aristotle attributes to the demonstration of wisdom, virtue, and goodwill?

In regard to wisdom, for example, a commercial organization might spend part of its resources to periodically survey its customers so that it knows what practices they consider virtuous. In response, the organization works to meet those expectations, and to the degree it is successful its customers regard its

ethos as positive. The opposite example might be the banks, mortgage brokers, and local lenders involved with the 2008 credit market collapse and subsequent ruinous recessions around the world. None of the organizations along the entire transaction chain can claim wisdom. In the face of limited personal capital, lenders and buyers generated and acted on unwise beliefs that ignored commonsensical and historical evidence regarding economic speculation. Their lack of wisdom discounted the interdependency of globalized capital, the insecurity of financial holdings leveraged many times over, and the simple, on-the-face-of-it principle that all investments carry risk. In an indication of how the public accepts the ethos of financial institutions, a June 2014 survey from the polling firm Gallup measured the public confidence in banks at 26 percent. That compares to a 62 percent confidence rate for small business ("Confidence").

In regard to virtue, one can imagine an organization that engenders trust among its members, its community, and the public. Such an organization builds trust from its deeds within and outside of itself. It treats its members, customers, clients, and vendors fairly and ethically because it does not want those publics to believe that they are being cheated, misled, or otherwise exploited. When the organization's publics believe the organization treats them fairly, that belief aligns them with the organization's ethos. As a result, the public remains loyal to the organization, which benefits the organization and the community—close and distant—by contributing to economic and social stability.

An organization possessing goodwill should want to provide products and services, conduct research, or engage in other activities specific to its field that are mindful of the public, specifically of its customers and clients and in broader terms mindful of its important affiliates, such as suppliers, dealers, shareholders, regulators, and the like. A cosmetic company specializing in natural skin care products will practice non-animal product testing, for example, demonstrating goodwill insofar as it believes the public benefits from that practice. Provided an organization demonstrates a socially recognizable ethos, its members and other affiliates organize themselves in a manner that exceeds transactional arrangements.[4] They take a common stance, which allows them to work collectively to address problems, to innovate, and to thrive. Opposite to this sustaining effect are the temporarily shadowed practices that shun wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. An organization's willful inattentiveness to ethos amounts to replacing mutually constitutive practices with unilateral positions based on hierarchical power, disciplining technologies, and the contemporaneous erosion of social mores.

As an example, consider the 2010 mine disaster in Montcoal, West Virginia. Twenty-five miners died more than 1000 feet underground in a methane explosion. Subsequent investigation reported that the Mine Safety and Health Administration—the federal regulatory agency that polices mine safety in the United States—had issued 515 safety violations to the Massey Coal Company, owner of the Montcoal mine. Almost 50 of the citations pointed to ventilation and

escape plan problems. Massey's CEO, Don Blankenship, was quoted as saying that being cited for violations was just part of doing business as a mining company ("Peril" para. 5). It's not beyond imagination to say that the families of miners who work for Massey do not recognize goodwill or virtue in Massey's ethos as constituted in the words of its CEO.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the grounds of social ethos, its constitution in organizational rhetoric, and the purposes to which organizations put it to use. Individual rhetors demonstrate virtue, wisdom, and goodwill to establish credibility and strengthen their persuasive purposes. Similarly, organizations demonstrate an ethos of credibility, competence, and community to invoke an audience's participation in establishing specific kinds of interactions and relationships with the organization. Organizations continually communicate ethos to ensure that their publics recognize them as a set of enduring characteristics. The dynamic between the organizational rhetor and its audiences exerts a stabilizing power and contributes to the organization's sustainability.

The audiences invoked by an organizational rhetor recognize the ethical stance that the rhetor takes. As the audience aligns with the virtues demonstrated by an organizational rhetor, it grants credibility to the organization. In the previous chapter I discussed the construction of rhetorical situations to serve specific organizational purposes. Chief among those purposes, in terms of organizational rhetoric, is to define the conditions under which an organization

presents its ethos. The rhetor's demonstration of ethos must be attuned to the time and place of a rhetorical encounter so that it might be recognized by the audience. That recognition is different from the rhetor's and the audience's mutual recognition of the rhetorical situation; however, in each case, recognition helps to constitute the social form through which rhetor and audience can interact in meaningful ways. [5]

The dynamic of demonstration and recognition that operates between the poles of rhetor and audience makes persuasion more probable. As the public encounters a rhetorical situation and recognizes organizational ethos, the stage is set for it to identify common interests. Persuasion, as an alignment of interests, becomes more probable. This is the stage upon which identification operates, and that is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZING IDENTIFICATION

We live in times when the rhetoric of governments, corporations, and other organizations far outpace the capacity of contemporary, deliberative publics to serve as hubs of ethical action. A simple scan of our environment reveals a landscape of diffuse interests and organizational order where divisions and allegiances mix, shift, and drift into transitional patterns. Global institutionalization and corporate nation-states erase the ethical boundaries we rely on to define the values we can claim, aspire to, and recognize in one another. Anthony Giddens describes this state of things as a "time-space distanciation," in which localities are shaped by distant events and forces. The state, the corporation, and the city disconnect social relations and reconfigure them as symbolic tokens and expert systems (*Consequences* 19-22).

When we engage organizations in discourse, as organizational members, interested citizens, legislative bodies, and so on, what rhetorical mechanisms do they and we deploy to reach consensus? In the corporate circumstances we find ourselves in, how does rhetoric persuade and why? Are Aristotle's proofs of ethos, logos, and pathos adequate explanations, or do we look for something beyond them to operate rhetoric's deliberative function? My answer to those questions draws from Kenneth Burke's concept of identification. Briefly stated,

identification is Burke's remake of persuasion. It augments the deliberate design of Aristotle's proofs to explain our desire, which we are often not aware of, to identify with one social group or another ("Rhetoric—Old and New" 203). Burke grounds identification in the perceived shared interests among interlocutors (*RM* 20). Identification's explanatory power gives insight to the purpose and methods of the rhetoric with which institutions and individual citizens engage one another. As one pair of investigators puts it, "We find ourselves in the paradoxical position of declaring our essence, our uniqueness, in large part by expressing affiliation of identification with various organized groups, many being employing organizations" (Cheney and Tompkins 4).

This chapter examines identification in the context of organizations. Given that identification operates as a rhetorical theory, I will offer some examples of the rhetorical practices involved in producing identification as persuasive power. Specifically, I will look at identification as the rhetorical process that connects people to organizations and organizations to them.

In the chapter 4, I discussed organizational ethos and its role in producing credibility and sustainability. If ethos enables social recognition and makes rhetorical situations possible, as I have argued, then what is the role of identification? Does identification extend ethos, or does it transform it? How does identification relieve organizations, their members, and the public from the divisions that separate them? What role does identification play in the discourse between organizations and their members that makes it possible for them to

adopt mutually constitutive and interdependent positions, without requisite

consensus?

Burke's Identification

Burke works outs his identification concept across several years and

books. During that effort, he looks upon identification from various points of

view—ranging from a refinement of classical rhetoric's theories of persuasion to a

process of symbolic interaction that constitutes and is constituted by social

forms, such as class. In the first instance, Burke argues that while the rhetorical

canons and the proofs of ethos, logos, and pathos remain relevant to current

affairs, from our post-Cartesian perspective they are incomplete in that they do

not explain all modes of persuasion. Burke encourages us to change how we

understand persuasion, its motives, and its purposes. As applied to contemporary

circumstances, identification adapts Aristotle's art of discovering and using the

best means of persuasion in a given circumstance.

> If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the "old" rhetoric
> and a "new" (a rhetoric reinvigorated by fresh insights which the "new"
> sciences" contributed to the subject), I would reduce it to this: The key
> term for the old rhetoric was "persuasion" and its stress was upon
> deliberate design. The key term for the "new" rhetoric would be
> "identification," which can include a partially "unconscious"" factor in
> appeal. ("Rhetoric" 203)

A more specific definition of identification occurs early in *RM*.

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are
joined, A *is identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when

their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to do so (20).

In other words, it is easier to persuade someone if that person believes that his or her interests are the same as or very similar to yours. Or, to pursue Burke's line, if person A identifies with person B, then we can agree that A is persuaded to take B's position toward a given situation in that they have the same interest in taking that position.

Burke describes identification as different from persuasion—less stylistically designed, having the capacity to work without our being aware of it— but no less effective in arousing an audience's emotions or in reaching a decision. However, even though Burke offers identification as a replacement for persuasion, he does not sever its connection to the classical form. The concept of identification is a development of rhetorical theory, not a departure from it. According to Burke, we find an inkling of identification in the idea that rhetoric deals with opinion, not with truth—truth in the sense that a statement can be tested scientifically or in some other way. Audiences can be swayed to action based on opinion, Burke reminds us. As Aristotle demonstrates, a rhetor that links his argument to traits and behaviors that his audience admires can often encourage his audience to transform that admiration into agreement (*RM* 54).

Aristotle paid particular attention to that phenomenon by articulating topics, or relationships, from which rhetors can draw to create effective arguments (*Rhetoric* 1.3-15). Knowledge of the topics provides rhetors with the

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means for expressing an argument in ways that are familiar to audiences. The topics are of a general (common) and a specific (special) sort. For example, a rhetor may fashion an argument around the common topic of whether or not something happened. And the rhetor can depend to a great degree that the audience addressed shares the rhetor's understanding of what it means for something to have happened or not (1.3.1359a).

However, rhetors must also consider (and make effective use of) the special way the relationship manifests in specific situations and as part of one rhetorical genre or another. For example, in judicial rhetoric the purpose to which the common understanding of whether something happened (Did the plaintiff suffer an injury?) is different from the purpose the same understanding fulfills when applied in ceremonial rhetoric (Was there a battle in which the honoree performed heroically?).

Ed Dyck's analysis of the topics (and the debate surrounding them) is a helpful guide for understanding how rhetors might use them to compose a persuasive argument. In particular, Dyck's explication of one particular common topic, *less and more*, demonstrates how topics derive from a broadly understood relation. In a particular situation, and in line with the suitable genre, rhetors draw on the audience's general understanding of that relation to form the specific logical implication at the heart of the enthymeme, "the most important of the specific means of persuasion" (106).

In brief, Dyck uses *less and more* as an exemplar to walk the reader through different stages of analysis, beginning with the proposition that this particular common topic expresses a binary relationship. The rhetor can combine the audience's understanding of that relation with other relations and predicates to construct if-then statements. In one example, Dyck uses the *Rhetoric* to describe how the general less-more relationship can generate several if-then statements dealing with the property and measurement of good: "'If one of two things is an end, and the other is not, then the former is the greater good'" (108; 1364a).

Dyck calls if-then statements "deductions of some kind" (109), which leads him to discuss enthymemes and, finally, the relationship of the topics to enthymemes and their role in constructing them. However, most relevant to my discussion here is Dyck's general point about the topics as relations. Enthymemes work, he argues, by substituting a relation expressed as a topic for the if-then structure of the syllogism: "An *enthymeme* is a syllogism in which one or more premisses may be probable and a *topos* replaces *implication*" (111).

It is not the point of my discussion here to report the proofs that Dyck establishes to support his argument. Rather, the point is to emphasize (1) the claim that the topics are relations, (2) those relations manifest differently according to the parameters Aristotle established for his three genres of rhetoric, and (3) the rhetor and the audience share an understanding of those relations, either generally or as part of a specific situation. As I turn back to Burke, I want

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to hold on to the perspective of shared understanding, particularly in the case of identification, which leans heavily on a shared understanding of how things relate and on the constitution of those relationships as the making of social form.

Burke's treatment of Aristotle's topics is markedly less developed than Dyck's analysis or, for that matter, those analyses set out by the theorists that Dyck cites. In terms of understanding how identification works, Burke writes, we should understand the topics as rhetorical devices that perform a function. They are not window dressing but are "a survey of the things people generally consider persuasive" and common methods of persuasion matched to particular situations (*RM* 56.) As tactics, expression, and other stylistic strategies, the topics work to persuade audiences and form the core of identification (*RM* 56-7).

However, Burke's treatment of Aristotle's topics is worth a closer look, despite his narrow claim that they "derive from the principle of persuasion" (*RM* 56). After all, Burke calls identification the key term of the new rhetoric, connoting its "partially unconscious" workings, compared against persuasion, the old rhetoric's key term, with its "stress [on] deliberate design" ("Rhetoric" 203). Burke's brief on the nature of the topics only sets the scene for his thesis on how we use them as tools for achieving identification—the alignment of interests. Burke provides several examples of how Aristotle's special topics align interests. He calls it an attitude of "collaborative expectancy" brought on by "purely formal patterns" (*RM* 58). [I will return to Burke's ideas of form and discuss them more fully and in a different context in chapter 5.] We are reminded of the children's

tale, which begins, "for want of a nail the horse was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost" and continues in that vein until an entire kingdom falls. As soon as we grasp the pattern of the verse, our mind chases ahead and we "have the feel of collaborating in the assertion," Burke writes (58). In that collaboration lies identification, the joining of interests, the participation that Aristotle captures in his idea of the *enthymeme*.

A present-day example from organizational rhetoric is General Electric's (GE) television commercial, "Childlike Imagination - What My Mom Does at GE." The commercial's audience watches a series of fantastic images: planes with wings like birds, trees that nod to passing trains, moonlight-powered undersea fans that produce energy. A young girl's voiceover narrates the scenes, describing them as things her mom does while working at GE. As viewers, we are transfixed by the fantastic images and the captivating sense of fantasy, imagination, and the all-things-possible responses they generate. By the end (if all goes by plan), we are participating in the fantastic world GE makes possible and taking delight in the girl's descriptions. The commercial's pattern of imagery, its nearly recognizable, hauntingly familiar soundtrack, and its charming voiceover invites us to adopt the girl's imagination as our own. Our interest in the possible, as framed in this commercial presentation, aligns with hers. We are left anticipating what other fantastic things are coming, and in the best circumstances (for GE) we attribute our delight to the company who makes our enjoyment possible.

Aristotle's special topics are persuasive rhetorical tactics based on principles that do not rely on logic or facts, Burke writes, but on the evocation of a response from an audience. Among those principles is the principle of identification: "[T]he translation of one's wishes into terms of an audience's opinions [is clearly] an instance of identification" (*RM* 57).

In addition to linking identification with Aristotle's topics, Burke also argues that the classical concept of ethos enables identification as social recognition and as the key component of effective rhetoric:

> You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your way with his. (*RM* 55)

The social recognition that Burke alludes to depends upon hierarchies, and in particular the hierarchies of social classes. The principle of hierarchy, he argues, operates only when different ranks (higher or lower, before or after) accept the "principle of gradation itself." Each rank universalizes that principle to transcend division even as it emphasizes difference (*RM* 138).

In *RM*'s second section, "Traditional Terms of Rhetoric," Burke argues for identification as an augmentation to classical proofs. He examines a variety of texts to illustrate that although classical rhetoricians focus on the common idea of persuasion (influencing others to act or to take a position toward a proposed action), their theories vary widely. Ross Wolin uses his reading of this section to suggest that Burke recognizes that the divides separating competing views—

divides that we can trace to Plato's disagreements with the Sophists—pits the authority of facts against the deliberation of moral action (189-90). In response to the impasse he has created for us, Burke argues in *RM* and elsewhere that an accomplished presentation and recognition of credibility, a rational argumentative structure, and a skilled delivery that excites the audience's passions are not the only persuasive tools at the rhetor's disposal. Biological, psychological, and social motives—both intentional and unintentional—are also active in accomplishing persuasion.

Burke grants that identification can be as deliberate as persuasion, such as the case in political speeches when campaigners make themselves out to be just like the audiences they address. This deliberative notion of identification is largely sympathetic to Aristotle's *ethos* and *pathos*. However, identification works not only as a process of persuasion but also as an end to itself. For example, Burke writes, when people long to identify with one group or another, they do not necessarily act in response to an external provocation but may be acting on their own volition—without consciously persuading themselves. Idealistic motives, he explains, also produce identification. Whether in response to the persuasion of an external agent or as the unconscious process of pursuing an ideal, the rhetoric of identification mitigates the division separating the individual person from the group ("Rhetoric" 203). Once we enter the identification process, Burke writes, we enter the realm of transformation. Here, individual identity can align itself with others, with groups, and even with concepts. Whereas a single rhetor is one

voice, when several voices are brought together, each with its own assertions, and the voices act on one another in "cooperative competition," the ensuing dialectic can produce a view of the situation that is greater than any single perspective (203). Burke's evocative phrase brings to mind Barnard's description of an organization as a "system of consciously coordinated activities." Might we not also use Burke's phrase to evoke a sense of the organization as rhetor, one voice from many?

Before we jump to an answer, however, we might first articulate the difference between identification as Burke is using it and identification in its psychological sense. Both uses imply a sense of self that relies on our allegiance to an external agent. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke makes a careful distinction between the two. Identification provides a rhetorical identity when it fashions a group of two or more people from individual interlocutors. The psychological sense of identification, in comparison, is a therapeutic concept. It is also a flawed view, according to Burke, because it stems from a predilection in the natural sciences following Descartes to separate individuals from their environments. As a result, psychological identification posits that identity is specific to each individual person. Even after contemporary psychological investigations have repeatedly demonstrated the weakness of that position, Burke writes, positivist perspectives engender profound power; so much so, that it's common to pathologize views of identity not centered on the self. The cure to psychological trauma, according to this school of thought, is to separate us from

malevolent identifications that cause us problems (263-4). But in fact, Burke writes, identification is not pathological and it cannot be eradicated with medical treatment nor with any other treatment. On the contrary, we cannot participate in human activity without identification. "One's participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained in any other way," Burke argues. "'Identification is hardly other than a name for the function of sociality" (266-7)[6].

Identification moves beyond the three classical proofs of persuasion by embodying our most powerful dialectic: alienation and belonging. Humans evolved as a social species. The species does not survive, let alone thrive, without the capacity to support individual members of the group. It is worth noting that Burke's distinction relies on that individual-group polarity (a dialectical move we find often in Burke's work). At no time is identification separated from the dialectic of division and unity. After all, Burke writes, if we "were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim [our] unity" (*RM* 22).

Burke worked out his concept of identification against a background of historical situations and with various perspectives from which he analyzed human behavior as shaped by and as a response to those situations. Identification refers to our establishing relations with things outside of ourselves, to constituting social forms, to a transformative device or process, and to a materialistic link to economic systems and to property.

The rhetorical view of identification and the psychological view of it are each a remedy to separateness and alienation. Both senses of the term are constituents of division and both account for an adaptive sense of social connection (*PLF* 26-30, 77). Those commonalities can cloud our understanding of Burke's idea, and it is important to focus on his distinction. Psychology attempts to heal patients from the disease of identifying with bad actors by disconnecting them from that association and reconnecting them with what it defines as their authentic identities. In contrast, identification in the rhetorical sense subsumes the differences among individuals (*ATH* 263). In other words, it transcends differences. Burke's calls that outcome *consubstantiality*—association of self in relation to others (*RM* 20-3).

Dennis Day describes consubstantiality as a common sense that interlocutors develop during identification. Day argues that identification manifests in consubstantiality in part because, in Burke's usage, consubstantiality is itself drawn from a specific conception of *substance* (207). Classic philosophy regarded substance as an act, Burke writes, and so people acting together constitute a particular approach to living that they share through their common ideas, attitudes, images, and so forth. That sharing makes those people consubstantial (*RM* 21). When identification achieves consubstantiality, it does not unite two entities as selves in the psychological sense but unites them in the substance of common ideas, similarities, and social practices. For example, differences between Muslim and Christian have the potential (even if at the time

of this writing there is little chance of realizing it) to give way to the consubstantiality that believers are human and that both religions are Abrahamic.

Day's insight is significant in recognizing the capacity of Burke's conceptual framework to explain identity as essential to our being while avoiding the essentialisms of identity claimed by positivist psychology. The substance of identification is social; identity is not formed nor is it maintained in isolation from others or from the environment. Identity is realized only as a relationship between the self, others, and the world. No matter the depth of our shared ways of knowing, however, our relationships with others and with our environment are not enough to make us consubstantial with them—for that we need to experience identification, which we accomplish with rhetoric.

Identification does not immediately subsume all differences, however, as evident in the continuing malice separating some Muslims from some Christians. However, the point of identification is not to compare two or more people or groups as objects. According to Burke, identification aligns one interlocutor's cause with another's interests. If pure identification existed there would be no need of persuasion because contrasting interests would never intersect. But because we identify with different interests, we negotiate the intersection of those interests with rhetoric. (Or, to use our organizational terms, we willingly cooperate).

Burke urges us to read identification as the dialectic of division, not as the process of constituting responses to the consequences of division. Just as the concept of substance operates by the axiom of P is both P and not P, so identification and division recursively constitute and define one another. The result of their oscillating dynamic brings remedy to separateness and alienation; it makes change possible by enabling an adaptive sense of social connection (*ATH* 268-9). Burke's dialectic reveals identification as a contingent, renewable process that fosters adaptability and change to produce consubstantiality. Identification remedies alienation by constituting a shared response, no matter how transitory that consubstantiality is. Without such adaptive means to address the social divisions among us, negotiation and common sense would prove elusive.

The Object of Identification

Since Burke first articulated identification as a modern rhetorical concept on par with the classical treatment of persuasion, scholarly treatments have probed, compared, and extended the concept in tests of its theoretical suitability. In his explication of *Permanence and Change*, for example, Timothy Crusius helpfully puts his hands on the essential aspects of Burke's critical position: interpretation over positivism, the inseparable nature of mind and body, symbols as tools and language as a distinctive tool that brands the human being as different from other animals, the public and irreducible nature of language that demands a social understanding of humans, and the assertion that we cannot regard language as an objective instrument but only rhetorically—and so we come

to understand humans, the language users, rhetorically as well (455-56).[7] Where does identification fall in this mix? We can draw its coordinates from Burke's allegiance to the symbolic. Burke's interest is not in studying symbol systems, Crusius writes; rather, his interest is in the idea that the use of symbols implies motive. For Burke, motives are not static, objective, or necessarily rational objects that we manipulate. Motives are interpretive acts, outcomes of language (458-9).

We get a glimpse of Burke's preoccupation with motives and their symbolic expression—and a peek into identification's germination and its final object—in an unpublished, untitled paper recently discovered in his personal library. That paper shows Burke responding to contemporary critical conversations in psychology and language studies—specifically behaviorism and semantics. James Zappen, the text's editor, argues that Burke's article shows that he has already made the social turn, drawing inspiration from the work of George Mead and others ("On Persuasion" 333). From the standpoint of social psychologists such as Mead, communication creates community. Burke gave identification a key role in that constitutive relationship, presenting identification as the counterpart of division and suggesting, therefore, that identification is an inescapable piece of social forms—from communities to religions, from the political to the commercial (*RM* 19-20).

Identification and Association

Burke's identification-division dialectic is a prime rhetorical driver. We might ask, however, how the tension between those poles moves interlocutors beyond their very different experiences to consubstantiality. Those of us skeptical of universalist appeals desire to ground Burke's ideas in material concerns. We might, for example, look at the ways in which Burke summons the biological imperative of symbolic action and the response of the body to such action, such as detailed by Debra Hawhee. In attending to bodies in motion, Burke creates another of his dialectical formations, which he uses to escape essentialist and constructionist formulations. As an alternative, Hawhee writes, he develops a theme of bodies as rhetorically created but imbued with action and motion (1-11). Action and motion imply potential for change. Bodies move in space (physical and social); they are not static subject positions. Action arises from our motives to make those moves. We might say the same for identification, which allows us to move among multiple identities (a churchgoer, a software engineer, a parent). Here again Burke's attention falls to social forms and their rhetorical origins. Positivism concerns motion as dialectic concerns action (*RM* 184). Change, the transformative rise to ultimate order, relies on association—ourselves with one another, with social forms such as organizations, with the superstructures that support our social identities.

Association and its hierarchical power play an important role in how Burke conceptualizes identification. When we associate with one entity or

another, we turn away from other associations, creating rhetorical opportunities from that separation (Wolin 180-1). One person or one class or one nation associates with something different from what other people, classes, or nations associate themselves with. Such differences are the divides of the universal rhetorical situation—we cannot speak of identification without also speaking of separation. However, we are reminded that we are not limited to a single identification; we can shift among multiple corporate identities (*RM* 184). I believe one way to locate the mechanics of identification is to look at how the process is enabled by our associating with, among, and between disparate fields of interests.

To develop the theme of identification as a function of association, we draw from Christine Oravec's analysis of Burke's "Priority of the Idea," which appears in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. She argues that identification operates dialectically between the ideas of our individual agency and the historical context that surrounds each of us. Identification does not isolate human agents from the situations they find themselves (176-8). I agree, and I am suggesting that identification is the mechanism inherent in the individual-context dialectic. We cannot divorce Burke's ideas about association from his ideas about identity, Oravec writes, which means we cannot separate the associative function from the identification process (180-6). Association enables identification as part of the process leading to consubstantiality, which dissolves difference in a shared body of ideas, images and everyday practices.

Oravec's reading gives us an idea of how association enables the identification process. It is helpful for us to know what counts as an association in Burke's framework: Burke distinguishes between three types of associations, which relate closely to the vocabularies he describes elsewhere in *RM* as positive, dialectic, and ultimate:

1. Mechanical: At this level association produces reflexive responses. These are reactions we can describe from the perspective of behavioral psychology. Burke's example is of a child who, hearing the sound of a hammer, imitates a carpenter's actions.

2. Analogical: Association at this level consists of transferring the principles of one field to another. The underlying principle remains universal but manifests differently, depending on the field in which it operates. We see such associations in managerial studies when authors describe organizations as biological, mechanical, or cultural systems. Management scholars apply the principle of interdependent parts found in biological systems and mechanical systems as a heuristic for understanding an organization's strategy, its responses to crisis or competition, its capacity to sustain performance, and so on.

3. Ideological: This level of association connects a universal idea to practices that appear as manifestations of that idea. Ideological association differs from analogical association in that its principles are prior to the field, whereas analogical associations apply the principles of one field to

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another. Ideological association, for example, might apply the principles of capitalism across private, public, commercial, and nonprofit organizations. These types of organizations serve different constituencies, and one evaluates their effectiveness in different ways. When we hear a politician claim that "government should run like a business," for example, he or she is associating capitalism's profit motive with all organizations. The rhetoric of that statement disguises the different measures of success for corporations and for government. The latter measures success by how well it serves its public, whereas a corporation's success concerns how much profit it creates for its shareholders (*RM* 133-5)[8].

In regard to identification, I believe that we can assign an explanatory power to association. However, we might first question whether the identifying subject (as a unique identity) possesses the power to associate or has only the power to perform, normatively or not, within cultural and historical situations.

Burke's ideas about identification and association suggest an answer to that question. Identification works not only as persuasion, but also gives us an interpretive method that accounts for unconscious and ideal motives as well as overt ones. Burke writes that with identification as our heuristic, we can not only analyze the ". . . dialectical element in the structure of a social hierarchy, [but we can also] disclose the cohesive motives implicit in the thought of oneself as a participant in it" ("On Persuasion" 336). Association is a practice we engage in only because we understand that in rhetorical situations we participate as

interdependent interlocutors and do not occupy our positions as rhetors or audiences—even though we can invoke or assume those roles when we come to grips with our circumstances. Our participation is less about persuading others than it is about the associations we make from experience. It is by association that we establish an attitude toward our situation: How does our situation makes us react emotionally, physically, intellectually? Is our situation like other situations with which we are familiar?

We can gain another fruitful perspective onto the nature of identification as an organizing process by reading Burke's ideas about association within the frame of Frederic Jameson's definition of ideology. Jameson's discussion takes place in terms of literary criticism and is not specific to rhetoric. Further, for Jameson, privileging language, as Burke does, is "little more than a received idea or unexamined presupposition" (508). However, we might consider ourselves practicing what Burke calls "perspectives of incongruity," a metaphoric approach to investigation in which different categories of classifications are juxtaposed to shake free from the limits of one perspective and to generate a different one (*PC* 89-90). Specifically, we might use Jameson's perspective on ideology to examine Burke's perspective on association to create a material way to think about consubstantiality and persuasion—the path to and the outcome of identification.

Jameson describes ideology as a "mediatory concept" and "an imperative to re-invent a relationship between the linguistic or aesthetic or conceptual fact in question and its social ground" (510). Ideology does not anticipate sociological

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stereotypes. It does not simply pass judgment but rather reframes the questions at the base of critical analysis. The usefulness of the ideology concept, Jameson writes, is that it exposes the problem at hand and makes it necessary to reinvent that relationship to formulate a critical response to the problem (510-11).

Burke's notion of ideological association acknowledges the pre-existing principles from which ideology works, while suggesting that those principles manifest in different practices. When it comes to notions of the self and, as a correlative, to identification, ideological association sets the stage for a transformational move to consubstantiality. The transcendent medium in which that move occurs is the symbolic—specifically the use of language that Burke regards as our distinguishing feature.

Jameson charges that promoting the symbolic act—language use in particular—separates that aspect of human behavior from its materialist context because it "brings into being that situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction" (512). In other words, the context we produce with language paradoxically examines that context from the outside, when, in Jameson's view, the content of our language has to draw the very context it speaks to "into itself to give it form" (512). That, Jameson says, is the great divide. (he actually calls it the "initial fall" to signify the profound loss of meaning under which we labor). The divide is "a breach between text and context, [from which] can only spring mechanical efforts to reconnect what is no longer an organic whole" (513).

Burke's answer, as we might expect, is to reframe that breach as a dialectic, which reveals the associative principle enabling identification. He does not claim that situations exist before we use language to address them or that situations are illusions (what Jameson calls "extra-contextual"). For Burke, neither of those positions is possible without the principle of the symbol, which precedes any agonist perspective we might adopt toward them: "Insofar as each [text and context] performs its function, they are no more at odds than the stomach and the liver of a healthy organism" (*RM* 137). In response to any claim that separates language from context, Burke emphasizes that the "context of situation" (a phrase he borrows from anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski) applies to all expression—literary or rhetorical—because the situation can only be known to us symbolically.

> All such rhetorical concerns with the extraverbal circumstances of the verbal act, treated as an aspect of its meaning, are in the positive order of vocabulary, and have their grounding in the conditions of sensory experience (the realm of sensory images and concepts). But they also deal with relations and situations—and since these often require rationalized interpretations, we here move toward the dialectical order. (*RM* 206)

Even the simplest mechanical association relies on a system of signs, Oravec reminds us. If we describe a person as temperate, there must be a person we refer to who acts temperately. At the analogical level, we might associate that temperate person with the larger category of moderation. Analogical associations occur not only between people but also between areas of interest. One person's or group's concerns can be associated with those of another person or group. At the

ideological level of association, a single concern governs action across fields of interests. For example, the temperate person who practices moderation might embrace a moderate perspective toward political choices (184). None of Burke's three association types operate in isolation and none is exclusive. They relate to one another as dialectical strategies, a rising spiral of symbolic activity we use to bind categories and diffuse difference. Associations that cross categories are necessary for identification.

Burke's model of association explains the symbolic, natural way in which we cross the divides that separate us from the material world, from each other, and that cut between groups and between ourselves and the organizations with which we affiliate. His association thesis moves us closer to understanding our rhetorical motives for dialectically constituting identity as identification *of* and identification *with*, Oravec writes (183-6).

Identity and the symbolic action from which we construct it are constituents of the associations we perform as social actions—recursive and not always intentional actions that we share in the process of identification for purposes of unification. Or, to put it another way, our associative acts put into play the principles that, to a lesser or greater degree, join individual interests in consubstantial concerns. As Oravec writes, "Language is the strategy of transcendence by which the unification of subject/object, self/other, . . . and individual/collective can occur" (186).

People are not always aware of the motives that drive their use of symbols to create associations among themselves and with social groups. They do not need to be. However, they are aware of their positions in a social order, and their use of symbols supports and arises from those positions. People become and mark themselves as community members because the language they swim in makes the social possible. Whereas classical rhetorical canons speak to our overt use of symbols to persuade, identification satisfies our yearning for the group—a symbolic channel for motives that we might only dimly suspect.

Identification and the Motives of Social Order

We generally want to associate ourselves with corporate entities—with bodies larger than our own. As a result, we constitute identity from a chain of associations. Institutional identity (corporate, political, religious) and individual identity (defined as one's identification with other people, groups, organizations) are bound to one another. Class stratification, dominant and subversive power, economic variances, and other forms of division remain amid the unifying bonds of identification. We desire order, writes Burke. We recognize the principle of hierarchy, and we accept the idea of order because we accept the universal idea of gradations. Our acceptance is not merely a ranking of relationships higher and lower or before and after. Burke writes: The hierarchy of social order "is complete only insofar as it works both ways" (*RM* 138). The consummate rhetorical motive is grounded in the social form itself, not in competing interests, differences, or advantages (276).

Our desire to identify with something other than ourselves, and to recognize others as identified with something other than themselves, motivates us to associate ourselves with ideas that operate at a level that transcends difference. In mutual recognition and alignment of interests, we find what is common among us. Identification ebbs and flows between alienation and belonging, and social forms such as organizations arise when collective interest takes form by means of association. Here we find Barnard's "willing cooperation," one of the characteristics of organizations. Burke's expresses that idea differently, not from the perspective of the group's characteristics but from the perspective of the individual person's motivations to associate, identify, and cooperate: "He identifies himself with some corporate unit . . . and by profuse praise of this unit he praises himself" (*ATH* 267)[9].

Our desire to bond with one another and with groups across social barriers (which, in Burke's dialectic, are barriers we create in the very act of bonding) creates a strong call for rhetoric as a way to achieve the object of identification: social order. We get a feel for social order, Burke writes. It is not totally sociological (*RM* 183-7; 200). Order does not present itself to us as an object with which we associate. Order is itself comprised of principles that are in play before our experience of order. The notion of order is bound up in our symbolic interactions, and especially in our use of language (and rhetoric). We use symbols as tools to conduct a process of identification that leads to consubstantiality—the association of ourselves with others.

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The motive toward rhetorical action, writes Burke, is not only to persuade

but also to create cooperation. Our rhetorical action requires "the use of language

as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to

symbols" (*SS* 188). This is symbolic action unmoored from the positivist plane,

negotiating situations as relational and contingent, rising from mechanical,

analogical, and ideological associations. Rhetoric is not simply a conditioned

response, a language gesture, according to Burke. It assumes social structure (*RM*

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Identification in an Organizational Context

Our motivation to associate constitutes social order such as we find in

organizations. We employ mechanical associations when we name our roles, we

employ analogical associations when we determine our roles in relationship to

other organizational roles, and we recognize the idea of order itself because of

pre-existing principles—most especially the principle of hierarchies. For example,

the discourse of management acknowledges the contributions of workers to the

system while also enforcing the hierarchical power of management to control

workers.

It sounds somewhat obvious to say that we identify ourselves with others

and with social forms such as clubs, organizations, political parties, religious

orders, nation states, and so on. After all, Barnard's classic definition of the

organization implies that people voluntarily join organizations and surrender

some measure of their individual interests in return for the benefits of

association. Further, Barnard's definition suggests a dialectical push and pull, which Burke diagrams thusly: "Corporate identity must be of a two-way sort" (*ATH* 265), he writes. A person engages the process of identification to make himself or herself greater than he or she is alone, while the organization extends and sustains its identity through its members and beyond systems boundaries:

In terms of the dynamics of organizational identification, Mary Ann Glynn provides a useful perspective on the support that organizational studies give to Burke's claim. Although much of the field's literature classifies identification as a natural, universal attribute, Glynn's research suggests that different people need to identify in different ways. Her reading aligns closely with Burke's theoretical claim: People with a high need to identify are looking for something bigger than themselves as part of their search for meaning, she writes. Organizational identification helps people make sense of their environment, and it also maintains the identities people construct as sensemaking activities (238-41).

Glynn's examination captures the oscillation between organizational identification expressing itself through individual members and organizational members extending themselves by means of the organization's social capital: "Individuals typically experience ambivalence in the process of identification; they become torn between dual needs for organizational inclusion and individual distinctiveness," she writes (241).

In contrast to how their individual members conceive identity, how do organizations view their own identity? According to research by Albert and

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Whetten, an organization's identity is often questioned in the face of critical situations. At those times, an organization often looks beyond its strategy and the information at hand to develop a response based on what its discourse describes it to be and what its discourse describes as its aspirations. In practice, they write, organizational identity operates as a loose set of ideas, a framework for decisions and actions (264). Such a framework—normative organizational practices, distinctive organizational practices, and social legitimacy—gives shape to the organization's enduring characteristics as perceived by members, affiliates, and the public (Kuhn 200; Hearit 2).

However, the usefulness of identity and identification goes beyond their strategic value. Most organizations cannot rely any longer on top-down management to engage workers. Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton point to contemporary developments toward "flatter" infrastructures that make it more difficult for organizations to use institutionalized means to perpetuate themselves. "Increasingly, an organization must reside in the heads and hearts of its members" (13). That is an especially difficult challenge for contemporary organizations, according to these authors, because of the growing use of transactional employees compared to permanent ones: "The notion of identification with and loyalty to one's employer, workgroup, or occupation may seem quaint, even naive" (14).

For various reasons, corporate loyalty is no doubt weaker than in times past. However, we note that these authors mix economic arguments (contracted

versus permanent workers) with rhetorical ones (living in the hearts and heads of workers). The shape of organizations undoubtedly changes in response to their environments. They may flatten their reporting structures, or they may form a matrix, to name two shapes often mentioned in business magazines and books. Corporate practices may also change in the face of shifting economic climates, but those changes do not vacate the principle of hierarchy, which precedes those changes. When workers recognize and accept that principle they make organizations possible—whether or not economic forces contribute toward their attitudes. Although he does not say explicitly, Burke's treatment of identification is in part a guard against attributing identification-specific agency only to organizations, even for actions that sustain them. The rhetorical agency of organizational members and affiliates to identify with and so sustain organizations plays an equal part in adapting to a changing environment.

That said, we are quick to acknowledge that organizational rhetoric—such as that carried out by managers in various texts such as newsletters, memos, annual reports, and employees handbooks—contributes to the identification dialectic. It is altogether natural that organizational rhetoric aims to persuade and address organizational members and outside constituencies. As Cheney writes, "persuasion is inherent in the process of organizing" ("Rhetoric of Identification" 144). Each of us chooses which organizations to identify with, for how long, and how to juggle multiple identities. Organizations encourage those

identifications. In the resulting mix of interests, choice, and action, organizations spend substantial resources to encourage their members to identify with them.

Sustainability, and even the notion of organization itself, rely on our use of language to recognize social forms, to mark ourselves as participants, and to continually construct those forms to enable our participation. We are the symbol using animal, and language runs through us and through the organizations we associate with and back through us again in the ongoing identification-division dialectic. Organizations, like other social forms, are dynamic. Likewise, to a number of contemporary scholars, identity is a "temporary, context-sensitive and evolving set of constructions" (Alvesson, Aschcraft, and Thomas 6). Burke's dialectic captures the reflexivity of those constructions—the identification *with* and the identification *of*, as Oravec refers to it (180). We identify ourselves with others, with groups, with corporations, and with other social forms because our use of language socializes us to do so. At the same time, because our social interactions (such as those we experience in organizations) are embodied in our use of language, the texts and the speech we produce and engage with prompt our recognition and our sustaining of social forms. Without social form, we have no common space in which to align interests. Without constituting a shared interest in things, we are without sociality. At the scale of an organization, identification becomes a process for creating sustainability—engaging members in carrying out organizational interests as they would their own.

Case in Point

Cheney's 1983 methodology creates useful guidelines for analyzing rhetorical instances of identification in organizations. Broadly speaking, Cheney arranges Burke's identification-division dialectic between the poles of association and disassociation. The former describes an identification founded on similarity, and the latter describes an identification founded on alignment against a third party. Along that range, Cheney sets out three identification strategies (strategic in the sense of operational instruments and not in the sense of motives, which Burke treats as potentially unintentional or unconscious). From either the associative or the dissociative perspective, identification occurs as an alignment of interests. Cheney's three strategies are (a) common ground; (b) antithesis; and (c) the assumed "we" ("Rhetoric of Identification" 147-9). Using Cheney's method, I will examine these identification strategies as facilitated by CCL in several of its formal communications.

Identification of Common Ground

CCL's employee handbook gives us ample opportunity to see how an organization establishes common ground as an inducement to identification. The handbook begins with statements about CCL as an organizational entity and the provider of the handbook, which serves as an orienting, informational text for new organizational members. Following that introduction, a section attributed to CCL's president describes what it calls the "Center community," which is comprised of CCL staff. Curiously, the discussion maintains separation between

the organization and its members in its claim that "We are proud of our staff." As a result, ambiguity shades the handbook's rhetoric. Does the "we" refer to the consubstantial pairing of organization and its members (a "Center community") or to CCL as an organizational rhetor who adopts the royal "we" as a sign of division—a signifier of hierarchical authority.

However, faced with that ambiguity, we remind ourselves that corporate identification works both ways, according to Burke. He supplies an example in the form of the magazine editor, who exercises the power to accept or reject manuscripts—not merely as the representative of the magazine, but as the magazine itself. The editor makes "vague reference to his membership in an *institution*," Burke writes. At the same time that editors claim membership (albeit vaguely), and hide behind a group identity (such as when "the editors" reject a manuscript when in fact it is an individual editor), they are quick to "'cash in' on the privileges of such an identity" (*ATH* 266).

CCL invokes similar transactions. Its employee handbook ends by inviting the reader—a new CCL employee—to be a member of the Center community. We might ask about the motives of that invitation, because the organization has already selected the reader for membership. Readers can deselect themselves by declining employment; however, the benefits of identification are clear to workers who agree to become community members and who manage to hold on to their corporate identity. One former employee tells a story in which he and another CCL member stopped at a beer garden in the Alps on the way to a client

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meeting. The two men drank their beers and fell into a conversation about CCL. In that "absolutely remarkable" setting, the story goes, the two of them "thought how fortunate we were to be working for this organization" (*Herding Cats* 72). The benefit from organizational identification contributes not only to the organization's sustainability, but makes otherwise elusive experiences a possibility. From such a position, persuasion becomes relatively simple.

Identification by Antithesis

For the last several years, workers in CCL's marketing department have compiled dossiers that describe the state of the field in which CCL operates. Like any successful organization, CCL routinely analyzes its position relative to its competition and to the environment in which it operates. The "Market Trends and Forecast" reports induce identification by constituting an us-versus-them situation. At the macro level, for example, economic and political forces influence CCL's capacity to sustain itself at a level its board of governors considers sufficient. The 2013 report, for example, describes the continued stall of Europe's economic recovery as a test of CCL's ability to withstand the fallout from the 2008 global recession. The report also names acquisitions and mergers as threats. As competitors become bigger and acquire new capabilities, CCL's ability to distinguish itself becomes more difficult, threatening its identity. Neither of these examples overtly connects the organization with its members; however, both induce identification by calling out threats that CCL shares with its

members. Against these common threats, the organization's interests and those of its members become consubstantial.

Identification in "We"

CCL's inclusive use of "we" as an identification tactic occurs, in addition to the employee handbook and other places, in the values statement it communicates to its members (who regularly share it with nonmembers). The statement consists of four elements.

1. Our work serves society.

2. Our mission and our clients deserve our best.

3. Our organization will be a good place to work.

4. We do our work with regard for one another (Barron SS3).

This list illustrates how CCL includes itself in honoring the same values as its members. However, we might argue that CCL's highest priorities are found in specific objectives and in the strategy it formulates to achieve them—much like other organizations. That is not to say that CCL's values statement is a mystification or a distraction. CCL uses its values statement to signify that it is in league with its employees when it comes to practicing and defending common values. Further, the values statement is carefully worded to be consistent with CCL's strategy (as in the phrase "clients deserve our best") and its plans for global expansion (as in the phrase "our work serves society"). As an organization, CCL does not have the agency to fulfill those values. That work falls to its members,

and CCL persuades them to take up that work when identification occurs between it and its members as a result of the inclusive "we."

An organization's use of the inclusive "we" can sometimes cause confusion between rhetor and audience. For example, CCL's website describes the organization's impact this way: "CCL annually serves more than 20,000 individuals and 2,000 organizations. . . " ("Quick Facts" para.5). That statement is clear enough; however, the next sentence mixes the objective reference to CCL's organizational identity with the identity of its working members: "We funded 255 scholarships at a value of more than $1M" and "our knowledge was disseminated to nearly two million people" (para. 5). The knowledge referred to is the work of CCL researchers and its teaching faculty. CCL's strategic use of identification in "our" and "we" appropriates that knowledge labor, which the organization markets as a commodity. CCL's website does not attribute authorship to these claims(the company's media contact is identified, but the text is not attributed to that worker). Without naming a rhetor, the audience may assume that the text emerges from a community of individual contributors. But in fact the text is the voice of an organizational rhetor, who is accessible only through a process of identification that makes the organization consubstantial with its members and thereby shares in their authorial agency.

Identification and Its Organizational Purpose

Organizations continually work to persuade employees to act in the corporation's interests and to sublimate personal interests. Employees will often

give away the authority of their own identity in a bid to make common purpose. What Barnard has called a "willingness to cooperate" (qtd in Hoffman and Ford 5) we see in the purpose of identification as induced by organizations. When members agree about the aim of their work and agree to surrender their autonomy, consubstantiality arises. In terms of identification, Cheney explains, much of an organization's rhetoric aims to convince employees to align their interests with its own ("Rhetoric of Identification" 158). One purpose for organizational rhetoric is to help workers align themselves with corporate goals. Any organizational member can identify with the organization without prompting; however, organizational rhetoric often plays a role in making that shift in allegiance imaginable, achievable, and even desirable. Once identification achieves its consubstantial outcome, organizations can operate under the principle that its workers will be more open and less skeptical toward its decisions and communications. By stating its values, goals, and strategies (what Cheney calls the organization's own collection of identifications), organizations initiate a process that its members and its other affiliates complete when they adopt those identifications as their own (146-7).

When organizations and their members (as well as organizational affiliates and the public) make themselves consubstantial, organizations achieve the willing cooperation that marks formal social structures. Cheney and Tompkins describe willing cooperation as commitment, which they argue is tightly interrelated with identification. Identification refers to the substance of the

relationship between organizations and their affiliates, they write, and commitment refers to the form that those relationships take. In terms of its relational substance, identification is both operational and conceptual. We see evidence of the former sense when a decision maker in the organization chooses an action that best promotes what he or she perceive as the organization's needs. Conceptually, they write, identification refers to a process of association (1-2).

In keeping with Burke's assertion that identification is a process bound up in our symbolic interactions, Cheney and Tompkins describe it as "attuned to the ways one's talk *about* him/herself *becomes* him/herself" (6). They reiterate that organizations produce and reproduce identity "through the conversation of shared interests" (6). Their position opposes views of identity as independent of acting subjects, as a collective's essence, or as the recognition of collective agents (6).

Identification's importance to organizational sustainability becomes markedly clear if we pair that process with commitment—an important concern of contemporary organizations, which in most cases no longer hire workers for long-term jobs that tend to encourage loyalty. Cheney and Tompkins show that identifications are necessary to form commitments, which can vary in emphasis and change over time. Further, they align themselves with Kanter to argue that commitments go beyond situational obligations—they become obligations to social systems. As such, commitments do more than signify loyalty to an organization. In acts of consubstantiality, commitments suture the gap between

the needs of an organization to meet the demands of the system and the tendency

of people to, in Kanter's words, "orient themselves positively and negatively,

emotionally and intellectually to situations" (499). In other words, identification

moves organizational members out of the perspective of isolated situations and

into an intense connection to durable social forms. When common interests

support actions and beliefs among individuals and organizations, the dynamic of

identification supports a sustainable relationship that benefits both.

Conclusion

The process of identification extends the social recognition of ethos. Ethos

connotes a steadfast and predictable position that proves persuasive to audiences

because it establishes credibility. When circumstances change, however, ethos

may lack adaptive capacity because it is tightly connected to a community's

identifying traits that it attributes to virtue, wisdom, and goodwill.

By means of associations, identification transcends social differences and

makes it possible for interlocutors to align their interests. Aligned interests equal

persuasion, in Burke's calculation, making identification a powerful source of

dynamic social orders. As an adaptive measure, interlocutors engage the ongoing

constitutive process of identification to manage multiple identities in

unpredictable circumstances, aligning interests as the situation warrants.

We might think of identification as setting anchor in the shifting currents

of postmodern organizational life. The anchor may be temporary, but it is enough

to create a resting point. From there we take our bearings before negotiating the

next set of coordinates.

CHAPTER VI

ORGANIZING FORM

This chapter examines the role of rhetoric in discursive practices that reproduce social order, such as we find in the form of organizations. By social order I mean a persistent field of relationships that constitutes and is constituted in a network of interpretive and communicative action. As social order persists, we take it to be a durable, more or less permanent social form. As a context of interests, positions, and associations, social forms arise from and are recognized in everyday acts of language.

The social form of organizations is emergent, according to organizational theorist Karl Weick. His sensemaking theory depicts order arising from a process of reviewing and comparing past experience with present circumstances. Organizational members enact sensemaking to align their sense of self with their environment and to justify their decisions as those best suited for given circumstances. Sensemaking is comprised of seven properties.

1. It is grounded in the construction of identities, which are "constituted out of the process of interaction" (*Sensemaking* 20).

2. Sensemaking is retrospective, in that we know an experience only when we look back on it (24-6).

3. Sensemaking is enacted; our actions construct the environment in which sensemaking occurs (30-2).

4. Sensemaking is social (38-40).

5. Sensemaking is an ongoing process (43).

6. Sensemaking operates through cues, which Weick describes as familiar structures we use as scaffolding for interpretation (49-51).

7. Sensemaking is "driven by plausibility rather than accuracy" (55).

According to Weick's theory, making sense of situations depends quite a bit on how we interpret the way that others dealt before with similar situations. Their actions are captured and formalized in texts, carried as assumptions and tacit knowledge, and continually renewed in conversations. When we talk about an organization as a social form, Weick writes, "we are referring to an abstraction that has already been carved out and named." Discourse is neither formalized nor constantly in flux. Rather, it moves between these poles, a structured formation in one instance and a flowing cloud in another ("Bias" 407)[10].

Rhetoric and Social Consequence

Weick's sensemaking dialectic of conversation and text and Burke's identification dialectic of division and unification treat the oscillation between the poles of the respective theories as energizing a process that makes common sense (Weick) and transcends difference (Burke). One outcome of either process is organization, a social form marked by a persistent field of interest and constituted in discourse.

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Because sensemaking involves comparing present experience to past experience, it is worth asking whether reflective comparisons such as those actually produce the consensus for action that Weick cites. How does a review of the past illuminate the present? What role does discourse play in sensemaking?

Weick does not make a case for actor-network theory (ANT) playing a role in sensemaking, although his treatment of conversation and text is reminiscent of the Montreal School. However, whereas sensemaking emphasizes the means by which human agency constructs circumstances as a retroactive act (when confronted by a new situation, human actors look back on previous experiences, theirs or someone else's), ANT emphasizes a nonessentialist agency inseparable from a network of human and nonhuman actors. ANT considers texts actors; sensemaking theory regards texts as records of experience.

As Allard-Poesi points out in a summary of Weick's theory, the core of sensemaking remains a paradox: The theory attempts to create an objective body of knowledge and attitude from the study of subjective phenomena (169-71). Sensemaking is "created and situated in the micro-practices of interactions, conversations and coordinated between people" (170), Allard-Poesi writes, and the theory's explanatory power relies on objectifying the tension between experience and interpretation. Sensemaking theory shifts organizational analysis from group dynamics to individual interactions, including linguistic ones. But curiously, Allard-Poesi notes, that methodological shift has not generated further deliberations into what it means to use social constructionist theories, such as

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sensemaking, to analyze agency, deliberation, interpretation, and consensus in organizations (170).

Rhetorical theory provides an alternative explanation of the social mechanisms at work in organizations. For example, consider Burke's concept of terministic screens, which proposes that the language we use to define a situation limits the ideas we can have of the situation, our descriptions of the situation, and the questions we can ask of the situation (*SS* 114-25). Thus, terministic screens erect boundaries within which social forms take shape and operate. Some quarters have labeled Burke's terministic screens as constructionist, casting into doubt whether the concept can refer to anything so material as organizations or, for that matter, social forms. Paul Stob describes charges of constructionism as overlaying Burke's ideas with critical approaches that were not developed at the time Burke was writing (130). For example, Stob writes, some critics have applied the social constructionist label to Burke's view that we understand our world socially and share it symbolically, through language. Still other theorists point to Burke's attitude toward knowledge as constructed, not described, by language (130-31).

Burke's intense focus on symbolic activities and the structures that emerge from them certainly suggests a social constructionist at work. From that perspective, the reality of our social environment is not natural but discursive, Stob writes. However, "we apply [the label of social constructionist] retroactively, meshing together [Burke's] intellectual milieu with our own" (131). Stob's

observation does not dismiss constructionist claims on Burke's theories as anachronistic, of course. We continually develop interpretive frameworks through which we revisit texts we previously understood differently under different circumstances. The danger in labeling Burke's work as social constructionism, Stob notes, is that in doing so we conceal the historical situation from which Burke writes and which presses him toward a specific critical vocabulary. We might read Burke's terminology as that of social constructionism, Stob writes, but Burke's conceptual frameworks are rooted in the pragmatist tradition and in the psychological theories of William James (133-34).

David Blakesley calls Burke's work an investigation into "how interpretive frames exploit the resources of terminology to direct the attention and form the attitudes that motivate action" (71). We can see Burke's aim clearly expressed in *A Grammar of Motives*, writes Blakesley: "'What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?'" (xv, qtd in Blakeley 77). Burke does not focus his theoretical concerns so much on the nature of social forms as he focuses them on the question of how language works and the consequences if its use (which include social classes, the forms in which we arrange them, and the positions in which we arrange ourselves).

Burke acknowledges the influence of an unwitting agency that acts automatically to the symbolic cues of social context (*RM* 27). However, I do not believe that we can pick up on those cues or make sense of context without a terminological framework. Our terministic screens do not necessarily create

specific situations, even rhetorical situations, but they do influence the responses we use to make sense of the situations we find ourselves in. The situations we encounter, rhetorical and otherwise, and the responses we make to them constitute social consequences that can persist as social form. We do not have to adopt a constructionist approach to account for social persistence. However, we can use the constructionist perspective as a speculative lens and bring into sight some useful tools for analyzing the constitutive, rhetorical mechanics of social form.

Persistence of Form

In using the word *persistence*, I do not claim that social forms are collections of essential properties that we can objectify as knowledge and as targets of discovery. I do not believe that we can separate the objects of our attention from the language we use to name them. However, neither would I claim that nothing persists from the fluid, discursive interactions in which we continually engage. Our past experience with organizations allows us to recognize organizations—we know one when we see one.

We also know an organization when we make one. But as Ron Mallon rightly insists, there is nothing special (or interesting) in the claim that discourse (what he calls "human social and linguistic activities") causes things to be or to persist (1.3 par. 3). That routine claim forms the main support of social constructionism. Substituting a constitutive position for a constructionist one generates a more interesting set of problems: We know an organization when we

make one because the language we use to make an organization is the language we use to recognize an organization.

We do not find self-formed organizations, if by organizations we mean what Barnard means: "a system of consciously coordinated activities of two or more persons" (qtd. in Cheney 3). We can only make organizations and agree that we have done so. It is not a secret, nor is it a recent insight, that we can (and we do) observe social order in nature and often use it as a metaphor for social groups, such as organizations. For example, consider these lines from Shakespeare: "for so work the honey-bees,/Creatures that by a rule in nature teach/The act of order to a peopled kingdom" (1.2.188-9). Or, more contemporarily, see Gareth Morgan's cataloging of the images often applied to organizations, such as machine, organism, brain, and so forth (13, 54, 73).

Although an organization may have analogic predecessors, it does not have natural ones. It has only the social form we provide as we make sense of specific situations, and that social form enables us to recognize it as a social form. An adaptation of John Searle's description of a cocktail party makes the point: A key element of an organization is that we think of it as an organization (33-4).

Social constructionism privileges personal or impersonal agency, but a constitutive approach locates agency in the relationship between and among interlocutors—we and our texts exert agency. As an example of what I mean here, see Castor and Cooren's ANT-oriented investigation into how problem formation in organizations relies on the communicative actions of actors—but not the actors

we might expect. They argue that the agency behind communicative acts, in an organizational context, cannot be attributed only to human agency but is a hybrid of different agencies. The agents involved in organizational problem solving include not only human actors but also "other entities that appear to compose and structure this world—machines, documents, organizations, policies, architectural elements, signs, and procedures, to just name a few" (573). The social form in these circumstances encompasses the recognition of activities (such as solving organizational problems) and the duration of the activities themselves as a debate among several agencies (571-2). We might recognize that debate as rhetorical. It occupies space in the form of co-located actors, and it involves time in the continuing to and fro of deliberative actions.

It is at first difficult to see the advantage that Castor and Cooren's perspective holds over any number of other images with which we characterize organizations. We might question, for example, how they discuss agency's inherent intentionality. They agree that humans have intentions. However, they also insist that nonhuman actors can also act with intention (defined by the authors as the ability to act and make a difference). The artifacts of organizational life—documents, machinery, the workspace arrangements and so on—exert an agency of their own. Documents tell organizational members what to do, for example. Machines signal when they require maintenance, as in the case of a photocopier that asks for a new toner cartridge. "Intentionality is a relational phenomenon, which means that there is as much intentionality in a text, a tool,

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or a machine as there is in the human brain" they write (574). Organizations are hybrids of different agencies, human and nonhuman (572-4).

Treating organizations as hybrids of agencies seems no more difficult (and no less misleading) than regarding them as machines, organisms, or brains. In all cases, we are working from terministic screens, which Morgan captures in his examination of the folly of metaphor in organizational studies. He describes a paradox in which "each metaphor opens a horizon of understanding and enacts a particular view of organizational reality" (417). Morgan is not describing social construction but selective attention. While the metaphors we choose can highlight different aspects of organization, he writes,

> the use of metaphor implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally. . . . [M]etaphor exerts a formative influence on science, on our language, and on how we think, as well as how we express ourselves on a day to day basis (4).

It is difficult to imagine, as Morgan does, how metaphors exert a "formative influence" on language separate from the language we use to create metaphors. We cannot separate our views of organization from the metaphors we use to describe organizations. So we come back to Burke's focus on symbolic action. We see through a terministic screen.

A more fruitful way to consider Castor and Cooren's hybrid-agency perspective is to notice how its emphasis on situation and duration signifies an ongoing process, not a stable point in time and space. The circumstances of recognizing a problem and the duration of interacting agencies are markers

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toward which we can direct critical attention. Hybridity conjures the sense of a dynamic mixture. Social forms require dynamic forces to generate and to perpetuate themselves as social forms. Agency (or intent, or motive, or communicative action such as rhetoric), is a mechanism of persistence. Intentional action is at once part of the social form of organizations and, as a concept of ongoing constituting interaction, it supports the organizing of that social form.

Rhetorics of Form

Other than influencing the questions we can ask of a situation and how we might describe a situation, terministic screens also prepare us to communicate. The point of Burke's terministic screen concept is not to analyze how we construct a social world with language but to explain what people are doing when they say they are doing things. Terministic screens do not construct our world but orient us to it. Orientation implies location and a relationship (hiking cross country, for example, we orient ourselves to a landmark to stay on track), explain Sarah Mahan-Hays and Roger Aden. Rhetoric comes into play when we develop a strategy for dealing with the situation toward which we are oriented—we develop an attitude. Terministic screens are as much a consequence of our experiences as they are a perspective on our experiences. They orient us to our environment and they provide the selective terminology that "reflects our attitude" (35).

The selective attention we give to a situation, how we set ourselves in relation to that situation, and our decisions on how to respond to that situation

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frame our experience—they do not construct it. The fact that we have different views of the world is not because we construct it differently but because our attention is selective, because we peer through a terministic screen to choose one focus at the expense of another. As Burke puts it, experiences become meaningful (we enact sensemaking) because the language we use "selects certain relationships as meaningful" (*SS* 130). Elsewhere he writes:

> However important to us is the tiny sliver of reality each of us has experienced firsthand, the whole overall picture is but a construct of symbol systems (*LSA* 5).

Social forms require collective symbols. To share our experiences and to participate in the constitution of those forms, we draw on a common use of symbols and common meanings. We would be wrong to read Burke as a structuralist in this regard, however. Burke looks past constructions to find the consistently evoked human experience (*SS* 32). It is the constancy of experience that binds individuals to the collective through the rhetoric of form, a concept Burke works out in *Counter-Statement*: "Form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (31). The manner in which appetite is created and satisfied operates at the emotional level, not the conceptual level. Burke describes how an artist, a playwright, or a composer uses form to allow his or her audience to anticipate what is to come. The audience's anticipation can be satisfied, delayed, or denied by different forms (31, 45-51). The reason that an audience can anticipate and the reason that a

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rhetor can summon and satisfy an audience's appetite can be found in universal patterns of experience, Burke explains, "which seem to arise out of any system of living" (171). Universal experiences are those that all of us are capable of having if not otherwise disabled; for example, hate, sadness, and hope (149). Drawing from those universal experiences, which are individuated along lines of the rhetor's choosing, the audience participates with the rhetor in the constitution of form.

As social forms constituted in the habits of discourse, organizations are an especially rich target of attention for rhetoricians interested in how social structures sustain themselves. However, we might fruitfully push against the premise that rhetorical interactions form structures that persist in memory and in organizations as cultural expectations, laws, beliefs, and so on and ask: What is the nature of that structure, the object of its form? How does rhetoric reveal, exercise, and perpetuate social form in specific circumstances and contexts, such as those of organizations? What purpose is served by the rhetoric of form, beyond the evocation of experience? What are the discursive processes that constitute social forms such as organizations, and how do those processes operate to sustain organizations over time?

To get at the rhetorical mechanisms inherent in the process perspective adopted by Castor and Cooren, I turn to three more or less discourse-aware perspectives on social form: dialectical, dialogical, and structurational. Each of these theoretical perspectives helps us to see just what it is that discursive acts organize. I believe that we can apply these three conceptual frameworks to an

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analysis of organizational rhetoric as constituting and sustaining organizations as durable social forms. As Weick points out, there is a limit to using an objective analysis to explain how organizations work. The role language plays in constituting organizations cannot be overstated. Even though organizations devalue talk over action, "conversation *is* the action in organizing" ("Bias" 405). For Weick, the ways in which we make sense of our organizational lives (or make sense of any experience) can be regarded as a continual process of comparing our interactions with others and with our environment with past experiences.[10] Reading Weick's theory, Allard-Poesi concludes that shared ideas and common understandings are not necessary to generate organization. All that is required is the kind of social recognition that permits the members of organizations to predict one another's behaviors (171-4). I also believe this to be the case. Rhetoric, as I have been using the term in this project, is a constitutive discursive process. It draws on social recognition and the alignment of interests during specific situations to constitute the social forms with which we associate, including organizations. When rhetoric—ours and an organization's—persuades us toward alignment and commitment, it constitutes order from the potential and the probable. Out of that order, we design solutions, fashion tools, and arrive at answers. As these things continue to be useful, the organization persists. Dialectical, dialogical, and structurational theory each describes the dynamic processes that shape organizational rhetoric as a social form.

Burke's Dialectics of Social Forms

I argued in chapter 4 that ethos works as social recognition, supporting credibility when rhetors and audiences see in one another common values and attitudes (common in the sense that values and attitudes are recognized collectively as useful). Identification extends credibility, generating unity through association and bridging divides between and among us— aligning our interests directly, analogically, or ideologically. Interlocutors, whether individual or collectives (such as the organizations with which most of us affiliate), promote and establish situations that call for rhetorical action. The social recognition constituted as ethos finds expression in Burke's identification dialectic of division-unity, generating order in the form of classes, roles, positions, and so forth. Identification is not a passive outcome of interaction but is an outcome that perpetuates order among those interactions—an active outcome of rhetorical motives. "From the standpoint of rhetoric," Burke writes, "the implanting of an ultimate hierarchy upon social forms is the important thing" (*RM* 191). The ultimate rhetorical motive is embedded "in the persuasiveness of the hierarchic order itself" (276).

Hierarchy and Organizational Form

As hierarchy is equivalent to division, our rhetorical motive always is to bridge those divisions and so take advantage of an identity that surpasses our individual positions. Our motive is to promote social cohesion, recognizing it as the best outcome of our social interactions. We can express our motives overtly,

as in political speeches, and we can act automatically on our motives, as when accepting the principle of hierarchy as a natural outcome of classifying and cataloging our experience.

Hierarchical order persists while ethos and identification illuminate and support common understanding between rhetors and their audiences. In Burke's view, common understanding is tantamount to a consensus about our place in the social order, an acceptance of the principle

> whereby all classes of beings are hierarchically arranged, [each one] striving towards the perfection of its kind, and so towards the next kind above it, while the strivings of the entire series [strive towards] the end of all desire(*RM* 333).

As participants in social forms, such as organizations, we re-enact the principles of order on which social structures rest. Institutions often represent those structures as organizational charts, demographic targets, idealistic marketplaces, competitor profiles, and in other ways. In organizations, such formal representations share space with immediate but no less defined social structures such as cliques (often bounded by functional areas, such as assembly line versus design workers), classes (workers or supervisors, for example) communities (managerial or executive ranks, for example), and lifeworlds (work and home, for example). In each of these manifestations, the principle of hierarchy supports the social forms within which we act our lives, or at least parts of our lives.

Although we readily recognize hierarchy as an arrangement of social positions, the idea that it arises from rhetorical motives is less easily observed. For example, Thomas Diefenbach's comprehensive theory of hierarchy as the "direct and unequal relationship between individual actors" does not account for rhetorical motives or, for that matter, any kind of discursive force as a contributor to social forms (7). In his theory, hierarchy does not rely on rhetorical motives, repeatable behaviors, recursive agency, or other explanations that are often conceptualized as the discursive mechanics that organize social form. Diefenbach's conceptual model places some actors in dominant social positions and others in subordinate social positions. Dominant-subordinate relationships form the heart of social groups, including organizations, he argues. We accept the dominant-subordinate relationship as normal, and we even prefer it over other kinds of relationships because of the benefits associated with the hierarchy that the relationship produces. For example, while hierarchy limits the power of subordinates in organizations, it also protects subordinates from the whims of their superiors (2-5).

Diefenbach's aligns his realist position with sociology's interactionist school (social groups are best understood as the aggregate of individual interactions, which should be the focus of sociological investigation). However, notwithstanding his focus on the binary dominant-subordinate relationship, Diefenbach's theory begs the question of just how that relationship forms in the first place. Instead of working out that problem, Diefenbach originates the

relationship in pre-formed conceptual schema, which he calls *mindsets*: the interests, identities, emotions, and moral character of actors in a given hierarchy. He argues that social actors participate and perpetuate the divided nature of hierarchy—it is ingrained in their social perception of the world around them and shapes how they make sense of that world (6).

Diefenbach does not say, however, how mindsets manifest as practice or come to be ingrained. What happens to the discursive interactions between dominant and subordinate social positions? What happens because of those interactions? Can we really simplify the dynamics of hierarchy to notions of discipline and power without a careful examination of the mechanics that energize that power? If we follow Diefenbach's model, we soon trip its deconstructive trigger: his approach to understanding organizational sustainability—the persistence of organizations as social forms—relies on systems and institutions more than it relies on symbolic interactions. It is, in the end, nothing more than a restatement of sociology's group-dynamic methodology.

When Diefenbach places power and discipline outside of interpersonal interactions to illuminate the hierarchy's persistence, his theory demonstrates its incapacity to open itself to dialectical analysis. Although his focus on two social positions invites a dialectical stance, his theory's uncritical acceptance of hierarchy as the relationship between dominant and subordinate actors limits the ways in which it can explain the motives that people have for identifying with social forms such as organizations. As close as he comes is to describe a process

he calls "boundary crossing." In that process, the subordinate class exercises some level of freedom from the hierarchy when it acts within its own boundaries to mediate the actions of dominant organizational actors. Subordinate actions include language acts, and they carve space out of the hierarchy for their performance. As those actions repeat, Diefenbach writes, they become seen as routine behavior. Boundary crossing actions (creating and repeating acts to constitute space for agency) institutionalize the dominant-subordinate relationship as "abstract organizational order" (7).

Clearly, any action taken by either class in Diefenbach's model confines itself to the hierarchy established by the dominant-subordinate binary. That makes Diefenbach's boundary crossing different from Burke's idea of hierarchy. Burke's formulation holds that, in a hierarchy, social mobility and defenses against it are not necessarily governed by the dominant class exercising discipline against non-normative acts. Rather, the ultimate rhetorical motive is embedded "in the persuasiveness of the hierarchic order itself" (*RM* 276). To successfully act on our motives to change or maintain our hierarchical position, we must abandon the division of dominant and subordinate for the unity of the hierarchical principle.

Burke informs our understanding of organizations by focusing our attention on psychological and sociological assumptions about behavior, performance, and action embedded in discourse. Those assumptions (terministic screens) are different from the assumptions at work in a realist (Deifenbach) or a

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constructionist (Weick) approach. The dialectical energy of Burke's rhetorical theory permits a situated, adaptive approach to the rhetoric of form. The discursive process in play between dominant and subordinate positions (identification) produces a hierarchy common to both positions—it is a process that operates associatively on the level of principles to create and sustain the social form of organizations.

"The hierarchic principle itself is inevitable in systematic thought," Burke writes (*RM* 141). The constitution of hierarchies make social order seem natural, which helps to explain why Diefenbach takes them as a preconceived binary of dominant and subordinate power. Order implies a series of increases or decreases, according to Burke, which he describes as sharpening into classifications (*RM* 141). Burke's conceptual frame and his close examination of motive, deep hierarchical structure, and socially-embedded symbolic action are important counterparts to constructionist and realist approaches to the organizing of social form, such as sensemaking and the dominant-subservient binary. Sharing our experiences with others dramatizes the function of identification as a mutually interpretive act—the heart of persuasion and the rhetorical constitution of social form.

Dramatism and Social Form

Organizational scholars often use the terminology of drama—roles, actors, scripts, and so on. Usually, they use those terms to describe standing relationships rather than to analyze dynamic social processes, such as rhetoric

(Kärreman 89-90). Burke's *dramatism* refers to much more than labels for actors and roles and social transcripts. Burke uses his *pentad*—his five-part model of dramatism—to answer, "What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it" (*GM* xv)? He argues that a worthwhile answer requires language that does not "avoid ambiguity, but . . . that clearly reveals the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (xviii). The pentad—act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose—marks those strategic points and, for Burke, it is well-suited to explain human behavior. The pentad forms the nucleus of Burke's *grammar of motives.* We can apply the grammar to the social relationships that generate ambiguity (or division, using the language of *A Rhetoric of Motives*) to reveal why people do the things they do and why others describe those people and what they do in certain ways.

In terms of the pentad, acts are significant in their difference from motions. While an object can be put into motion, an act requires us to define, mediate, and motivate. We are free to act, and we have a will to act—unlike an object, which can respond with motion only when acted upon (*SS* 9). Scene is the situation in which an act takes place—the container for the act. The agent is the person who acts, and agency describes the mechanisms by which a person carries out an act. Purpose is the reason for the act.

Burke acknowledges that we can and often do disagree with one another about the use of the pentad's terms. We might disagree about who took action, for example, or for what purpose, or, as we have seen with Bitzer's concept of the

rhetorical situation, we can disagree about the scene in which the action occurs (*GM* xv). However, Burke's pentad does not simply restate classical rhetoric's concept of stasis (an agreement between interlocutors about the central issue under debate). We can use the pentad to understand the rhetorical motives behind how people act in particular circumstances and how their actions are described. In short, the pentad maps social relationships. Additionally, the pentad is an analytical tool for establishing how the different elements of social life relate to one another and in what proportion. In any given situation or for any given act, motive determines the proportion of scene, act, agency, purpose, and act and so affects the presentation and the reception of what is being done in those moments and how we are to talk about it. Within the scope of a social form, such as an organization, we can use Burke's pentad to show how the interpretation and mediation that occurs among social classes (e.g., supervisors and workers, executives and managers) as they come to grips with one another is a dramatic performance (39).

Barbara Gray and Jennifer J. Kish-Gephart, building from the work of Goffman and Bourdieu, call those dramatic performances in organizations "class work," which they define as "interpretive processes and interaction rituals that organizational members individually and collectively take to manage cross-class encounters" (671). The authors define class work as both representative and constitutive: "Through class work individuals are both conforming to class rules and also reinforcing the class distinctions that give rise to them" (671).

Gray and Kish-Gephart emphasize that social interactions are not free from hierarchical influence. Social class (a group identified with specific properties, such as gender or economic status) is different from organizational status (levels of deference related to position). It is usual that the formal hierarchy in organizations grants status based on position. A person higher in the company enjoys more influence that one in a lower position because the higher position establishes relationships that are different from those established in the lower positions. Class divisions work differently from how a hierarchy of positions works, write Gray and Kish-Gephart. Class differences affect status in organizations because they affect expectations about performance. For example, they write, women can be judged less competent than men on the basis of gender. Class work sets people's perceptions about one another and so creates and maintains the hierarchy in which some classes become influential while other classes remain less so (672-3).

In terms of social form, the salient part of Gray and Kish-Gephart's class-work model explains the transformation of single encounters into institutionalized ones. The class-work model incorporates Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which he describes as a "system of structured, structuring dispositions, . . . an acquired system of generative schemes" that manifest in daily practices (*LP* 55). Habitus enters the organization as class differences, Gray and Kish-Gephart write, specifically as differences in social and economic capital. The practices that enact habitus are reflexively embedded in the roles that people

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perform at work and they shape the legitimizing forces in organizations to "enact normative control" and "reinforce the subjectification of individuals" to justify "the extant hierarchy . . . within organizations" (677).

For example, consider an organization in which male members of the executive team (the highest class in terms of social and economic capital as measured outside of the organization) dress formally in suits and ties. Other organizational members dress less formally—well enough to meet the company standards but comfortable enough to suit their tastes and budgets. The organization's norms about dress mark classes, distinguishing those people with social and economic power from those without it. If a low-level employee adds a tie and jacket to his wardrobe, that action marks identification with his superiors. To put oneself on the path toward the executive class in our fictional organization, one first dresses the part—that is the norm, and by abiding by it our staff member adds to its institutionalization.

Not all organizations share the same norms, of course. A startup tech company may have no norms about dress, for example. Other organizations display a tremendous degree of egalitarianism, in which workers at all levels engage one another as equals. However, even in these examples, class work occurs between individual organizational members. Barbara Ehrenreich's book, *Nickel and Dimed*, provides us with an example. To conduct the research for her book, Ehrenreich conceals her identity to get hired into low-wage jobs for the purpose of reporting on the workers, the jobs, and the personal lives at that level

of the American economy. One of her conclusions is that the managerial authority foisted on low-wage employers enforces the class structure. Employers must distrust the social class from which they hire, she writes, because otherwise there would not be the "perceived need for repressive management and intrusive" requirements such as drug testing (212).

According to Bourdieu, habitus is "embodied history, internalized in second nature" (*LP* 56) an "open system of dispositions" subject to experiences which modify or reinforce its structure (133). Burke approaches the same perspective on social forms: "The idea, or underlying principle, must be approached through the sensory images of the cultural scene" (*RM* 137). But whereas Bourdieu questions the authenticity of interpersonal relations, describing them as "only apparently person-to-person relations and the truth of the interaction never lies entirely in the interaction" (291, n6), Burke's focus on the pentad—with its agent and other components—does not question the authenticity of social interactions.

Although Burke recognizes the power of ideology to discipline and control, he focuses on the individual motives for associating different classes through ideological means. In Burke's framework, we do not need an ideology to limit choice and attention and attitude. All we need (and what we cannot separate ourselves from) is language and the symbolic activity it supports. Hierarchies are embedded at least partly in our terministic screens, which establish (among the other results I discussed previously), how different social classes view their

common situation. Terministic screens operate selectively, and through them we determine which of our experiences are most meaningful to our positions in the hierarchy (*SS* 115-19). Out of language—and in the grasp of terministic screens—we fashion hierarchical order that "creates frames of acceptance and rejection of authority" (33). Terministic screens are unavoidably discursive; they influence and are the consequences of the symbolic tools we use to share experiences, while simultaneously restricting our experience to that which is in our field of attention.

Given how terministic screens operate, we can use Burke's pentad to see more than motive and circumstance. The pentad makes the relationships in rhetorical situations explicit. We can use it to show how we think about our actions and the actions of others and what kinds of questions we might ask about those actions. One might argue whether the acceptance of hierarchy is an outcome of a power struggle (Diefenbach) or an outcome of performance (Gray and Kish-Gephart). One might also ask if either of those concepts manifests as a willingness to set aside self-interest for institutional interest (as in Barnard's definition of organization). Can either concept describe the confluence of interests evident in organizational life as anything other than the organization's cooptation of individual power? Burke's dialectic recognizes the paradox at the heart of those questions: Organizations wield power and discipline over their members, and organizational members identify with organizations as a means of extending their own power. The principle of hierarchy, as Burke puts it, works

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transcendentally, making an ultimate order of individual attitudes and organizational discipline. It is that order that we take as the social form of organization. Our relationships within social fields are the sources of dialectical encounters. During those encounters we create and use symbols to share with others the meaning we make of our experiences. Burke argues that social groups form around this collective use of symbols (*SS* 32). Further, Burke emphasizes that order is not synonymous with norms but is better regarded as a means of disseminating authority: "Such mutuality of rule and service, with its uncertain dividing-line between loyalty and servitude, takes roughly a pyramidal or hierarchical form" (*PC* 276). Figure 4 illustrates the form that class division takes as each side of the division strives toward ultimate order.

Burke's dramatism removes us from realist assumptions about psychology and constructionist assumptions about representation and interpretation, giving us another way to examine the rhetorical interactions that support social forms. In the move toward ultimate order, interlocutors transcend class divisions and other differences to unify in the organizational hierarchy with which they identify. Many contemporary organizations refer to their structures as "flat," "matrixed," or as other alternatives to hierarchies, but whatever the label, hierarchy persists. Burke's dramatist methodology shows action in context. Entering a situation, Burke writes, we move from terministic screen (orientation) to motivation (constituting a unified view). We discern situations using the language we have developed in everyday life. Situations entail a web of

interpretative elements—signs, meanings, and so on—that do not necessarily

match with each other but which we must bring into our understanding so that

we can act in the way that benefits us most and harms us least. That motiveforms

the context for symbolic action (*SS* 126). When we join our interests with the

interests of others, and when we match our symbolic actions with the actions of

others, we establish commonality and constitute a persistent social form—a scene
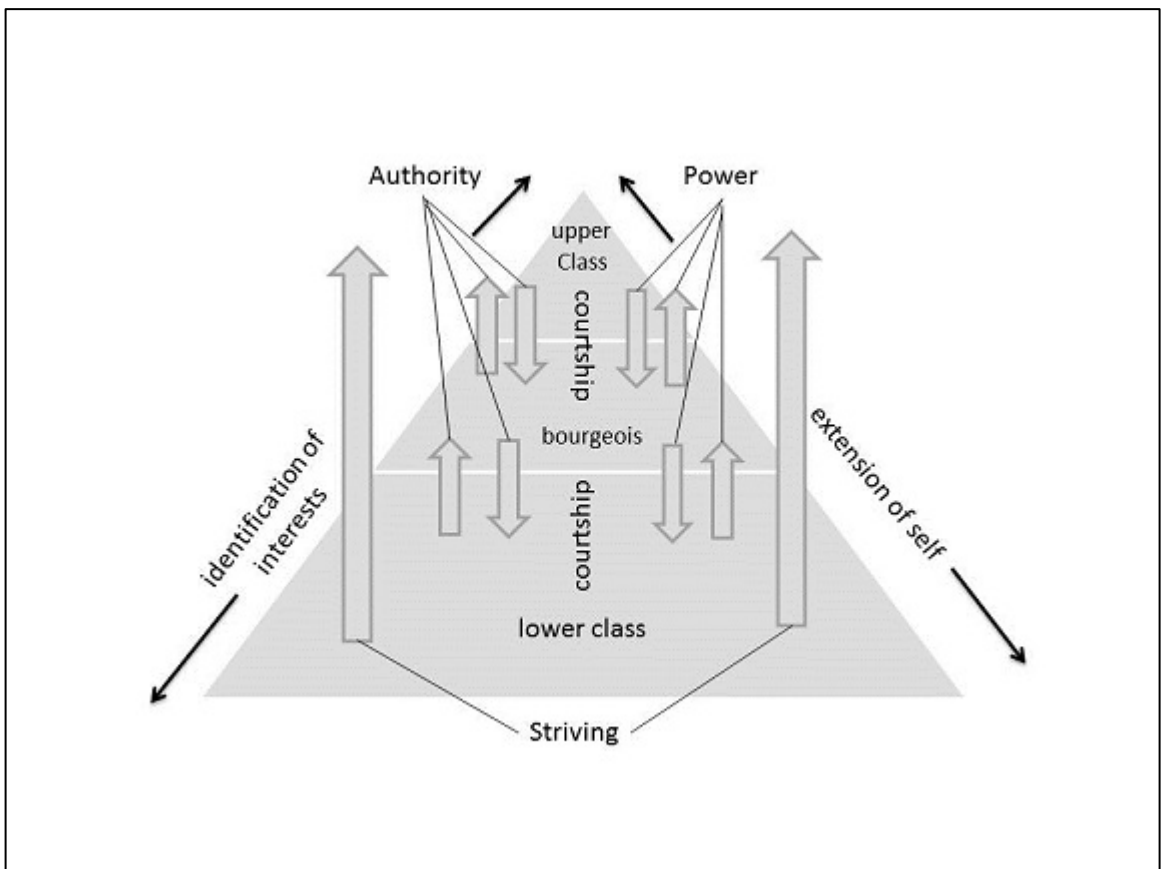
for action, agency, and purpose.

Figure 4. Dialectics of Social Form. Adapted from Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: U of Calif. P, 1950; print; 187).

Bakhtin's Dialogics of Social Form

In chapter 2, I discussed the conceptual challenge posed by our naming organizations as speakers. It is difficult to assign a single voice to an organization, given the problem of identifying just who is doing the speaking and who is sanctioned to speak. Whether we are listening to an executive, a public relations staff member, or a line worker, we must ask: How is that speech an organization's speech? Organizations identify themselves as single entities and as collectives of like-minded people, and they often use "we" interchangeably with their corporate names when speaking from those positions. Burke's dramatist method examines the relationships that, through dialectical exchanges (which he labels rhetorical), form consensus and support hierarchical social forms.

However, alternatives to dialectic emphasize different dynamics to account for the multiple voices at work in organizations. Bakhtin's dialogical approach examines the constitutive dynamics of multiple voices. Whereas dialectic puts one side against another to seek synthesis, a dialogical perspective does not require that divisions become unified but considers all positions to operate simultaneously. In dialogical terms, the rhetorical organization is a hybrid of voices, all of which influence and are influenced by language enacted over and over in specific circumstances.

All speech is run through with the speech of others (*heteroglossia*), explains Bakhtin. In a plurality of voices, which Bakhtin calls *polyphony*, unitary language does not arise dialectically; rather, unity occurs when one voice imposes

limits on the others. Order is not a transcendent unity but a polyphonic

unification at the ideological level. In this polyphonic mix, the norms of a

discourse are generated (*DI* 270).

Dialogism emphasizes a view that the forces that create social form cannot

be separated into language and relationships. As Simon Dentith observes, "There

is no stopping place . . . for dialogic interactions, other than the social

relationships within which dialogue is constituted" (324). Assessing the agonistic

relationship between Bakhtin's theories and some rhetorical criticism, Dentith

summarizes the core of the dialogical method thus:

> What governs the to and fro of linguistic interaction are the social
> dispositions of the speakers, while these social dispositions are themselves
> realized, in part, through language (315).

Along those lines we might recognize a connection to Burke's principle of

hierarchy, which is also dependent on our recognizing not only the principle itself

but our place relative to the places of others in the hierarchy.

Heteroglossia and polyphony appear at odds with rhetorical practice

because they depart from rhetoric's relationship to dialectic. And in fact, Bakhtin

argues that heteroglossia does not apply to rhetoric, referring to the latter as

double-voiced (speaker and audience), not multivocal or polyphonic. In

comparing rhetoric to the literary language of a novel, for example, Bakhtin

argues that rhetorical texts are not "fertilized with the forces of historical

becoming that serve to stratify language" and are only echoes "narrowed down to

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an individual polemic" (*DI* 325). Therefore, although a speaker can make use of others' voices, that speech is not heteroglossic because it remains fixed by the speaker's words and by the response of the audience.

Nevertheless, Bakhtin himself gives us a way around what he calls rhetoric's fixed, monological voice. His conception of *speech genres* offers a model of how linguistic practices lend themselves to the discursive structure of social context. Speech genres comprise the language of individual utterance (the basic unit of language, in Bakhtin's theory), and they are composed of thematic content (conditions and goals), style (selection of linguistic resources), and compositional structure (ordering). [One cannot help but think of rhetoric's five canons when reading Bakhtin's list.] Speech genres come in two types: primary speech genres are those of everyday speech; secondary speech genres are more or less complex representations of primary speech genres, such as one might find in a novel (*SG* 60-7).

For example, many of the staff members at CCL are either researchers or trainers (there is crossover, but in general, staff member roles are defined by these two broad categories). Speech genres support the work of the respective groups. Most of the researchers have advanced degrees in sociology and psychology, talk of "theory" and "the literature" and "journals" and otherwise mark their roles with academic phrases. Post-doc students who take temporary research positions at CCL quickly understand how to contribute to the group's

conversations because they share in the speech genre and bring it with them from their own academic training.

Many CCL trainers also have advanced degrees and certifications in education, counseling, and business. They use phrases like "client work" and "solutions" to signal their roles as "client-facing" faculty. Trainers are often in contact with the sales group, which is responsible for proposing services in a bid for business. Because the groups share speech genres, their back and forth communication proceeds with little trouble—they are "on the same page."

Across CCL in general, scores of acronyms serve as a shorthand list of organizational activities: OE for open enrollment, CCL's public programs; LOI for one of CCL's business simulations; LDP for the flagship leader development program, and so on. (The number of acronyms is so great that new employees are often given a list of them so that they can understand what their colleagues are saying.) Knowledge of those acronyms marks one as a CCL insider who is more or less capable of talking about CCL's work with other organizational members. Through the speech genre of CCL acronyms, organizational members can discuss complicated issues about the business, no matter their role.

In terms of supporting social forms, Bahktin writes, speech genres mark social classes—they accumulate ways of being (scholarly or business-oriented, for example), perspectives (theoretical or practical), and interpretive approaches toward the world (academic research or client interactions). Speech genres identify group members and distinguish groups from one another,

acknowledging and sustaining organizational structure. Speech genres may be close cousins to terministic screens, but where the latter press the limits imposed by specific uses of language, speech genres extend talk and texts through a polyphonic process. In Bakhtin's formulation, genre isn't a template or a means of categorizing the use of language, nor is it defined by purpose and audience. Rather, genre is an assemblage of cultural practices. Among its cumulative results are embedded semantic forms associated with those cultural practices (*SG* 5).

By locating cultural practices in speech genres, Bakhtin maintains openness to social context, writing that culture can't be enclosed or objectified: "The unity of a particular culture is an open unity" (*SG* 6). Openness suggests a permeable boundary in constant contact with what lies outside of any particular social form; therefore, it implies the ever-present potential for change (social forms are subject to change by the same rhetorical actions that constitute them). Further, he writes, language is not a carefully tuned system we bring to bear on disordered experience. Language is "ideologically saturated" as a cultural practice, and it operates as a perspective out of which we might create the best chance of mutual understanding (*DI* 271). Bakhtin's ideological approach to discourse differs markedly from Burke's identification process and his claim to symbolic action. In Bakhtin's theory, a speaker is always using the voices of others as his or her own. The audience recognizes speech genres as class markers and responds accordingly—recognition determines position and attitude as supports of social form. In Burke, each speaker and audience is an agent acting in

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a specific situation with purpose, and social form stabilizes as their interests align.

Bakhtin's speech genres operate similarly to other social practices that, through repetition, bind up time and space as recurring situations so that they become familiar to us—routine. At any historical moment, Bakhtin says, each generation at each level of society possesses a language that crosses space and time (*DI 276*). That is, the language of each social class is at once situated in time and space and also moving in time and space. He writes:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogical threads. . . . The utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it (276-77).

Evidence for Bakhtin's claim lies in the fact that languages of different epochs coexist simultaneously in specific contexts: for example, the volume of Emerson's essays on my night table. Each language, in or out of its time, speaks from a particular viewpoint. The dialogic interplay between speech genres across space and time reflexively weaves the situations we find ourselves in while also refilling the reservoir of speech that is available for our use (*DI* 289-91). Writes Bakhtin:

> A common unitary language is a system of linguistic norms. But these norms do not constitute an abstract imperative; they are rather the generative forces of linguistic life (270).

In addition to speech genres, Bakhtin locates two other generative forces at play in the open field of linguistic action he describes. A *centripetal* force exercises normative power that produces a homogenizing, hierarchical influence on language, Bahktin explains. As a counter to that normative power, a *centrifugal* force exercises a dispersing power that travels through and energizes everyday speech (*DI* 425). Figure 5 depicts the dialogical binding of social form.
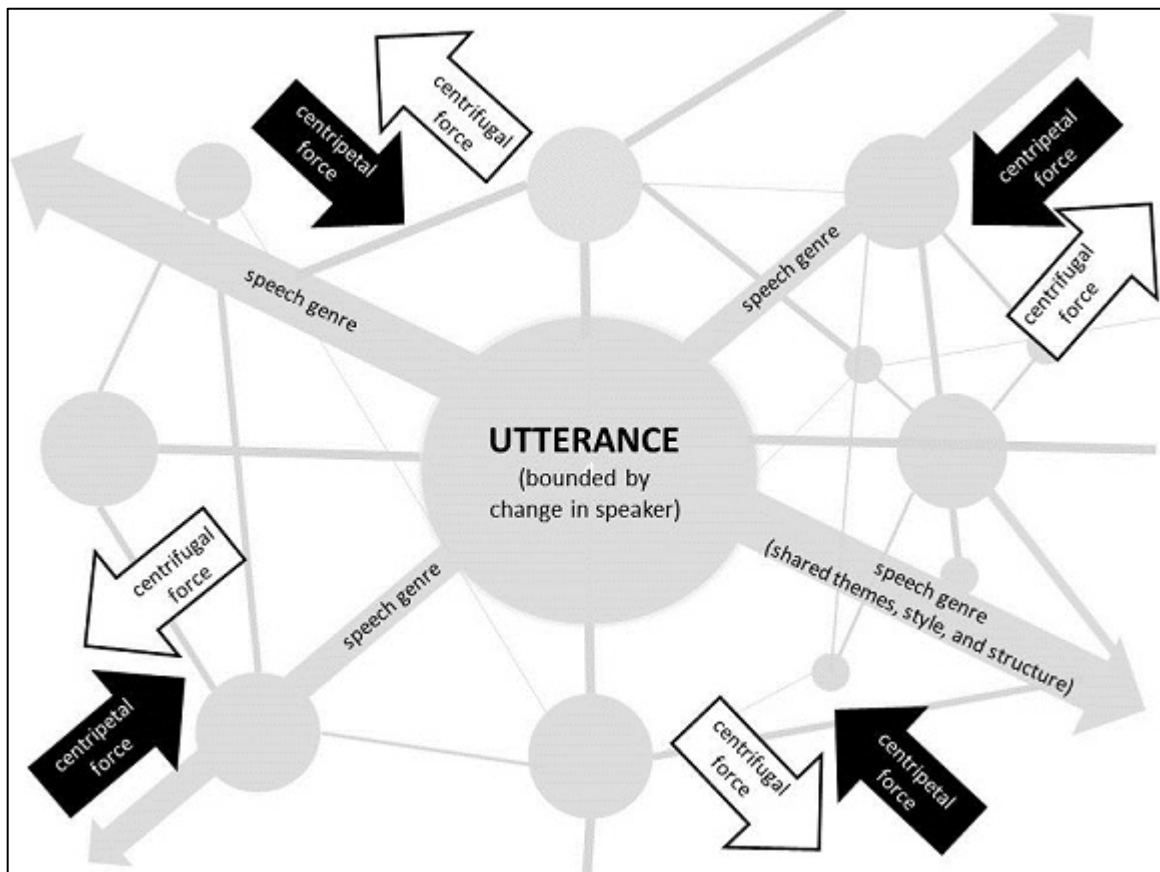
Figure 5. Dialogics of Social Form. Adapted from Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986; print, 60-102; and *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981; print; 425).

The dynamic constituted by those two forces provides the necessary, continuous

supports social forms by making available the language we use to recognize them.

Giddens' Structurational Social Form

The third theoretical perspective I want to apply to the problem of rhetoric as constituting and sustaining organizations as durable social forms is Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. Unlike the theories from Burke and Bakhtin, structuration theory is not overtly focused on discourse. However, the theory aligns with discourse theory and rhetorical theory in interesting ways. Because structuration theory originates in sociological studies rather than in rhetorical or communication studies, this section of the chapter will map some of the common terrain that Giddens's specific theory of sociology shares with rhetorical theory. That common ground will give us another vantage point from which to make inquiries into the role rhetoric plays in reproducing persistent social forms such as organizations.

Giddens offers structuration theory as a third way of social theorizing that works beyond the discipline's traditional theoretical binary of interactionism and systems theory. Structuration theory adopts a different stance from systems theory that privileges the analysis of groups over individuals. Structuration theory also parts company with interactionist theory's social-psychological emphasis on individual activities that join in action under specific conditions of time and place. In his view, neither of those theoretical approaches fully accounts

for the organized social context that simultaneously constrains and enables

activities that constitute the persistent process of organizing those activities (see

fig. 6). Structuration theory views human activity as recursive and dialogical—not

just the result of individual experiences or the product of totalizing social

mechanisms. Like other social activities that Giddens discusses, rhetoric does not

arise from single actors, but is "continually recreated by them via the very means

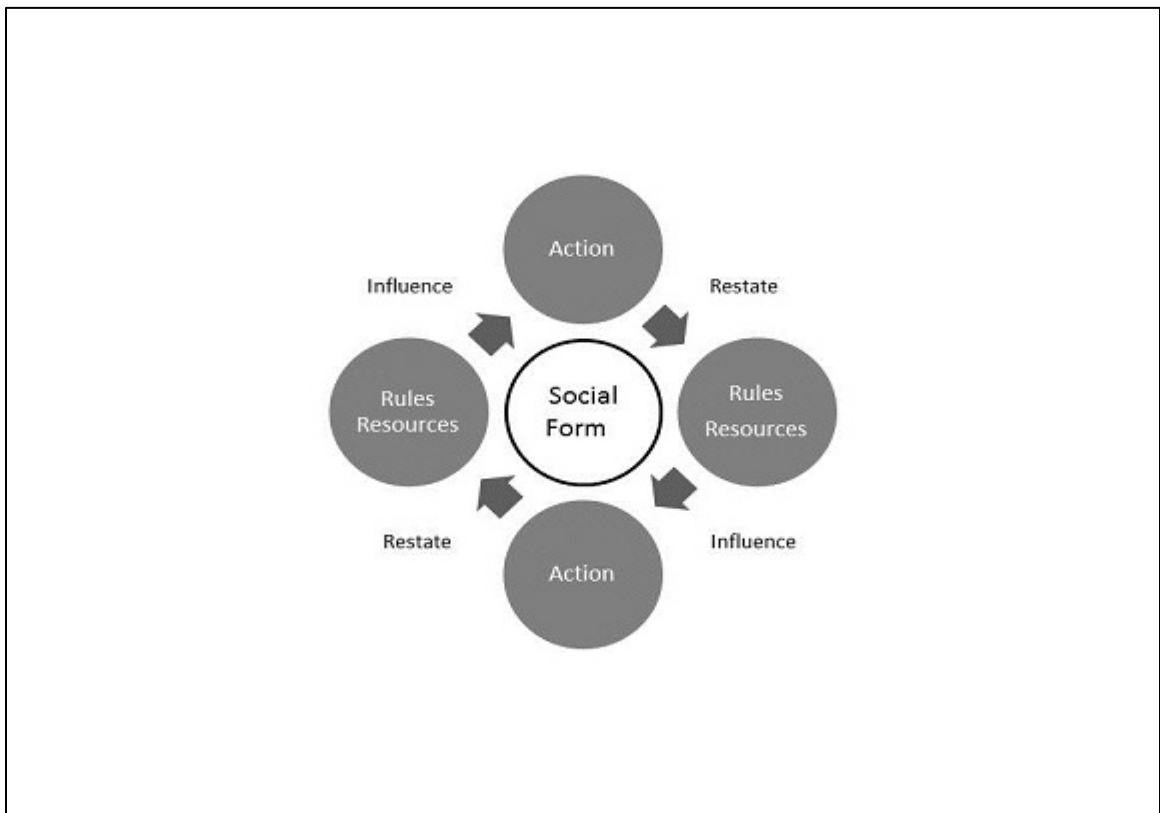whereby they express themselves as actors" (2).

Figure 6. Structuration Process. Adapted from Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: U of Calif. P, 1984; print; 16-28). The actions, rules, and resources practiced by agents in a recursive process structure social form.

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Structuration theory has not been widely adopted into rhetorical studies, perhaps because Giddens denies language a unique significance among social practices. However, Stephen Collins and James Hoopes read Giddens in a way that counters that resistance. Giddens is not hostile or indifferent to rhetoric, they write. It is important to understand that, in his work, social structure and language are not constitutive of one another and they are not separate things; they are aspects of the single practice of situated human action. The meaning of language cannot be separated from objects in space or from objects in time; therefore, we ought not to focus on the use of words but on using words (637-41).

If we look for structuration theory's relevance to discourse, we find its first hint in Giddens's naming signification as one of three structural dimensions to social systems (domination and legitimation are the other two). Each dimension relies on a specific theoretical domain for explaining social phenomenon and is expressed through symbolic action. When people engage in social interaction within a dimension—when they communicate—they draw from interpretive schemes that comprise their tacit knowledge about the situations they find themselves in and which they reflexively apply (*Constitution* 30-1).

Giddens speculates that the most basic question of social theory is the question of how order comes to be: What is the means by which social relations transcend individual experience? Both conditions are durable, and each operates in a separate but connected time frame. Institutions operate on a long-duration timescale, whereas the individual experience of day-to-day activities evaporates

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along the irreversible path of a person's lifespan (34-5). What connects the two, Giddens explains, is a duality of structure.

> The reversible time of institutions is both the condition and the outcome of the practices organized in the continuity of daily life, the main substantive form of the duality of structure (36).

With Giddens's position in sight, we can sharpen our focus on rhetoric's role in constituting that duality of structure. Giddens does not privilege language over other human activities. However, he does account for the discursive component of social context and, in particular, communication as it coordinates social interactions. Discourse plays a role in almost any encounter, whether it is a verbal explanation or a choice in clothing style. Think of all the regulating activity surrounding conversations: there are standard openings and closings, there is an expectation that conversations occur between or among more than one person, and so on. From an interactionist perspective, talk exemplifies the agreement by which individual people come together and "sustain matters having a ratified, joint, current, and running claim upon attention" (83). This is exactly the kind of regulating activity we see in organizations: Organizational members talk to recognize one another as such, to reach consensus about what action to take in a certain situation, and to position one another in the organizational hierarchy based on class identifiers (such as clothing and speech genres). During these moments, people exhibit *discursive consciousness*, which Giddens defines as the

capacity of people to talk about social conditions and in particular about the conditions under which they act (374).

Giddens's structuration theory (Burke's and Bakhtin's theories as well) takes discourse beyond information exchange and moves us closer to understanding its capacity to form alliances and community, extending them to constitute the institutions that so often define contemporary life. In addressing not only social form, but also duration, Giddens connects our daily acts—including discourse—to the continuation of social form (structure). Under Giddens's formulation, actions are performed by knowledgeable human beings who understand a great deal about the conditions under which they live and the consequences of their daily practices (as much and more than any social theorist studying their habits understands them). If asked, people can usually explain the reasons for their actions (they possess a discursive consciousness). Their daily practices are routine in nature, and as they go about their lives they contribute to the sustainability of social life across time and space. This matrix of deeply embedded routines amounts to a persistent organization of joint activity that Giddens defines as structure (16-21).

According to Giddens, the two most consequential structural properties are rules and resources, which he defines as "techniques or generalizable procedures applied to the enactment/reproduction of social practices" (21). Rules and resources form, sustain, terminate, and reform routine actions, "hierarchically organized in terms of the time-space extension of the practices

they recursively organize" (17). In other words, the persistent social forms that we constitute in our routine, daily practices also normalize those practices and accommodate new ones, thereby sustaining those forms (281-84). Formalized, persistent social forms such as organizations remain durable and extensive in the routines of their members and affiliates (see fig. 7). We might note the proximity of Giddens' view to Burke's rhetoric of form, in which expectations are set and either met or denied in the course of an audience's participation with the rhetor.
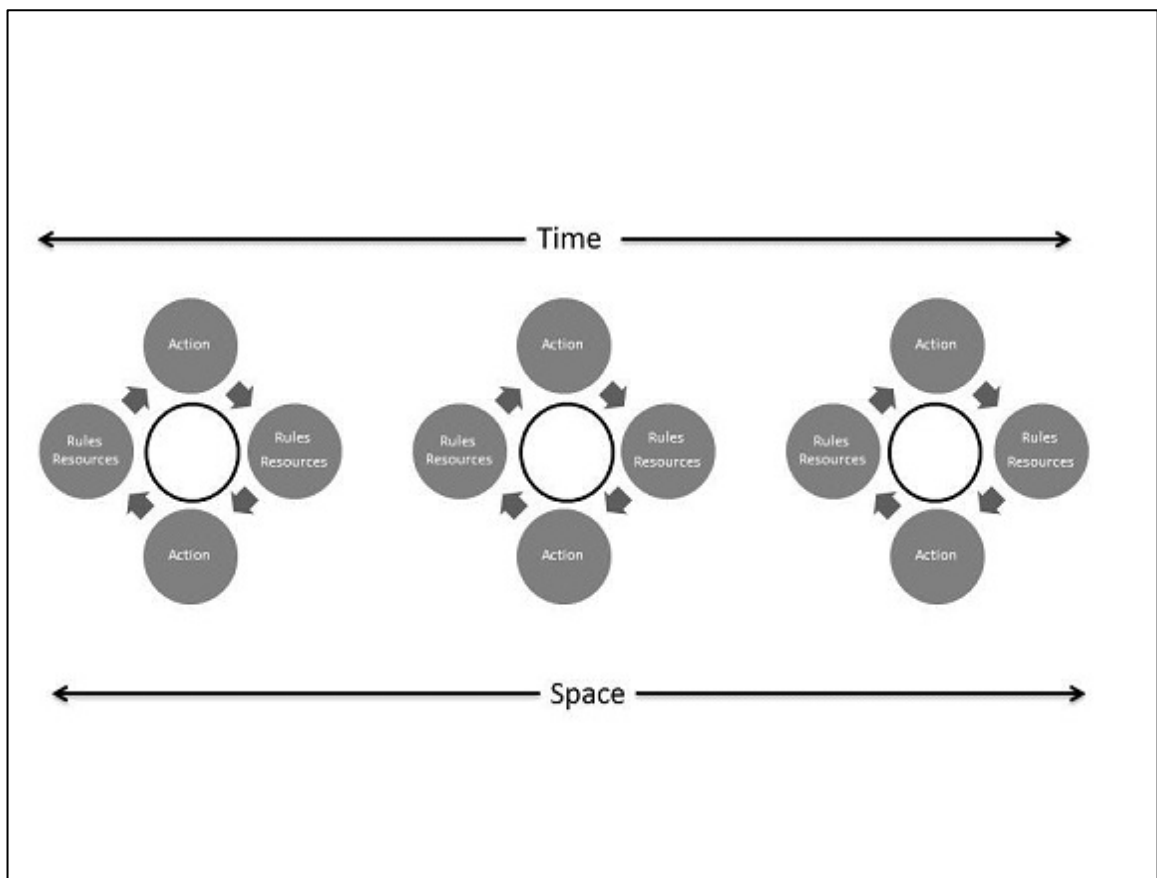

Figure 7. Structuration of Social Form. Adapted from Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: U of Calif. P, 1984; print; 1-40).

Giddens's model avoids positioning structures and agents as a dichotomy. Instead, structuration positions the agent-structure relationship as mutually constituting, with each component holding the other in common (16-17). Mutually informative and responsive agents and structure comprise the duality of a persistent field of relationships, or social form.

We might ask whether rhetoric, because it is addressed and purposeful, matches the description of a routine structurating activity. Certainly, rhetoric is no less routine than the unconscious acceptance of the hierarchical principle (Burke) or the development and dissemination of speech genres (Bakhtin). Burke's model of dramatism applies: Rhetoric's intentionality—its motive—can be evaluated as an act in a scene performed by actors, whose agency constitutes and continues social form. Like other actions we take, rhetorical action determines our position in a field of relationships (among other outcomes) as we engage with others. We can describe those engagements as the dialectic of identification, as the connecting fiber of speech genres, or as the routine habits of discourse. We can use rhetoric with awareness, or our rhetorical actions can emerge from what Burke calls "principles of autonomous activity" (*RM* 27). In either case, we find rhetoric's role not only possible but necessary to organizing the structural components (hierarchies, classes, and social order, for example) and the durable form of organizations.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Organizations, whether commercial, private, corporate, governmental or nonprofit, are social forms for coordinating and directing activity toward selected purposes. Barnard's definition of organizations as "systems of consciously coordinated activity" (qtd. in Cheney 3) implies a central role for discourse in building and maintaining organizations because organizational members cannot easily coordinate their activities without communicating. Further, organizations cannot align the activity of their members or garner support from its other affiliates without their willing cooperation, which requires persuasion. And finally, as with other social forms, organizations cannot be sustained unless coordination and cooperation are maintained over time. Insofar as coordination, cooperation, and duration imply discourse, they imply specific kinds of discourse—one of those is rhetoric. Over the course of this project, I have traced the trajectory of a rhetorical process by which organizations take and sustain form. That constitutive process bridges the divide between individual organizational members and the collective with which they affiliate themselves. As a starting point, we grant that coordination, cooperation, and duration operate interdependently. Barnard confines these attributes to a closed system that governs what enters, exits, and is processed within an organization (including discourse). A closed system theory handily explains the structure evident in

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organizations, but it also isolates that structure from the same forces with which it interacts. However, alternative views of structure can also account for the organizational attributes of coordination, cooperation, and duration.

In this project I have used a framework of rhetorical theory to describe an ongoing, recursive process of social action. To differentiate that approach from a closed systems approach, I appeal to the idea of an open system that sustains itself through contingent and negotiated actions of interrelated actors. Whereas a closed system isolates itself from its environment, an open system can account for the changes and the adaptability that sustainable organizations exercise in response to ever-changing circumstances. Philip Anderson has described an open system as "interconnected components that work together" and that "exchange resources with the environment" (217). Rhetorical theory is one way to explain not only how coordination and cooperation are maintained over time, but how discursive interconnections work as an exchange of attitudes, positions, and beliefs. Central to my position and to this project is the relationship between situation, ethos, and identification and the social consequences of that relationship.

In general, the study of discourse provides more than adequate theoretical space for us to consider the social applications and implications of language; for example, the constitution of organizations as social forms. However, I believe rhetorical theory offers a more targeted consideration of how discourse constitutes the close affiliations and general attitudes that we recognize as

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organizations. Recognition is, of course, a social phenomenon. We cannot recognize our environment without first establishing a relationship to it—in fact, I would say that recognition *is* relationship. Within the parameters of my study, social recognition manifests as ethos. According to Aristotle, ethos is created during rhetorical encounters. Rhetors make use of ethos as the most effective rhetorical proof, given its capacity to promote credibility, trust, and authority as cornerstones to persuasion. This project relies on the premise (and on others) that rhetor and audience create ethos between them, rather than the rhetor presenting an ethos and the audience predisposing itself to the rhetor's representation. From that premise I join with other theorists in contending that ethos emerges from how the rhetor and audience recognize in one another characteristics that each attributes to credibility and authority, thus engendering trust and easing the way toward persuasion. It is easier for us to take the side of someone we know than of someone we do not.

To press my argument further, we can consider the process and the outcome of social recognition (ethos) in light of Burke's theory of identification. Our taking the side of another, our adopting or empathizing with another person's perspective—these are important components to the willing cooperation and coordination defined by Barnard and others as crucial to organizations. According to Burke, we can think of identification *as* persuasion. In my view, we can think of identification as persuasion because identification extends the capacity of ethos as a rhetorical proof. As we can describe ethos as social

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recognition among rhetors and audiences, we can describe identification as Burke intends: a process of aligning interests. That alignment begins with a shift in perspective, with the recognition that one's interests are the same as or largely similar to someone else's. In terms of organizational rhetoric, alignment reinforces willing cooperation and coordination and supports the durability of the organization as a social form.

We remind ourselves here that an open system capable of hosting ethos and identification is not a freewheeling, undefined phenomenon. Social recognition and the extension of that recognition to the alignment of interests are specifically situated responses. From my perspective, we can use the located nature of ethos and identification as coordinates in our examinations of organizational discourse. A collection of such points, each defined in time and space, suggests the structure we observe in an open system. The identification process promotes ethical changes that allow agents to move from one point to another in the system and to respond sensibly to changing relationships. In this way, the ethos-identification relationship, in the context of the situation, generates a continuing pattern of expectation and response that links specific situations in a chain agency and symbolic interactions—what we might call a "logic of experience."

In organizations, constancy of experience is under continual pressure because, unless the organization's ethos and the ethos of its members and other interested affiliates support one another, and unless the path from social

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recognition and identification remains clear, cooperation and collaboration cannot unify nor remain so. Assertive, common organizational proclamations such as vision statements and "branding" lack ethical proof. Such communication asserts organizational identity, but it does not foster mutual recognition. Nor do these examples of what Gary Olson calls a "rhetoric of assertion" open a way toward overcoming the natural division between the organization, its members, and its other affiliates (9). As a result, when an organization collectively or its members individually confront a situation for which answers don't come easily, the tools for change are absent. Under those circumstances, organizations and their members fall back on traditions of discourse, planning strategies for the future that match the paradigms of the present.

Rhetorical situations are not limited to objective exigencies that demand resolution, however. As constituted in discourse, rhetorical situations can be and are invented and manipulated. Organizational rhetoric is an especially adept means of framing situations as part of a persuasive strategy. An organization's rhetorical motive may be to express its identity or to suggest itself as the answer to a dilemma or to a more dramatic conflict, for example. However, an organization may also desire to control how ethos emerges between it, its members, and the public. In that case, the process of identification may fall under the spell of ideology or culture rather than promote an alignment of interests. The consequences of such an arrangement threaten organizational sustainability.

Purchases and Gains

Organizations can function as and often perform as exceedingly skilled rhetors. Whether governmental, educational, private, or commercial, organizations seek to persuade many different audiences, including organizational members, regulators, the press, and legislatures. All organizations are sites of social activity and discourse, within which their affiliated members assimilate diverse experiences. In the ideal circumstance, willing cooperation subsumes individual differences to promote coordination.

From an open-system perspective, the linkages between situation, ethos, and identification interact as active, constituting components of discourse. From that point of view, what gains come from applying rhetorical theory to organizations? For one, we gain a means to emphasize the pragmatics of organizational discourse. As Boje, Oswick, and Ford put it, our concerns as rhetoricians are "the actual or potential effects of messages, especially those that are not abstracted from their social contexts" (81). To analyze organizational discourse is not to embark on a new critical endeavor, of course. Scholars continually investigate the rhetoric of propaganda, of commercial purpose, of image and identity among organizations of all kinds. Still, as I have in this project, we might ask specific questions about the effects of messages in the context of organizational discourse; for example, how does organizational rhetoric produce the effect of sustainable social form?

Obviously, organizational sustainability must be maintained—it is not a passive outcome of organizational activities, discursive or otherwise. To appreciate the mechanism of organizational permanence we can and should look not only at the functional attributes of organizations or only at how statute and marketplaces attribute judicial and economic power to organizations. In addition to those examinations, we should also look at the rhetoric produced in and by organizations and observe how it works to sustain them.

Given that my project views sustainability as an effect of rhetoric, I would emphasize that this effect is complementary with other institutionalized practices, such as strategic planning and execution (which, I would argue, are also rhetorical). Organizational sustainability manifests in part in rhetoric. Consequently, it (1) influences perceptions and attitudes toward situations; (2) creates recognition, cooperation, and common sense across time and space; and (3) enable willing cooperation between and among organizational members, the organization's interested affiliates, the public, the state, and other audiences.

Considerations of Our Present Stance

Rhetorical theory goes beyond theories of information exchange and moves us closer to understanding how the human capacity to form alliances and community extends to constitute the institutions and affiliations that are predominant markers of contemporary life. In this project, rhetorical criticism interrogates assumptions about ethos at the site of organizations to claim its relationship to identification. Whether worn as a public mask or propelling a

deeply structured discourse, an organization's rhetoric shapes the experience of the rhetors and audience affiliated with it. Rhetorical criticism that disavows simple communication models, functionalist assumptions, and social constructionist ideologies helps to describe the social forms and discursive actions of organizations, embedded and practiced in daily practice and in strategic (or autonomous) motives.

Such grand claims demand theoretical support that explains the relationships and the processes inherent in them. However, in the end, it is not the theory that we find necessary but the insight into the motives and attitudes of organizations, given their powerful and influential roles as rhetors. In terms of sustainability, organizations do not thrive, or even survive, only because of or in spite of their goals and results. Organizations thrive in part because rhetorical motives and actions intertwine individual members and the collective body in a mutually beneficial relationship that perpetuates itself for the time that those benefits endure. More than any other purpose, organizational rhetoric seeks to persuade organizational members and other audiences of the durability of that benefit. The institutionalized social form we know as an organization (with the practices, norms, beliefs, and interpretations it embodies) depends on how successfully an organization persuades. Armed with that understanding, one might better operate coordinate, cooperate, and communicate in and among organizations to seek the best response to the complex dilemmas of our contemporary circumstances.

[1] One might also include *kairos*, the opportune time for a rhetorical act, because it accounts for another aspect of context to consider when composing a text or delivering a speech. As Kinneavy and Eskin demonstrate, despite Aristotle's neglecting to specifically define the term as he defined other technical aspects of rhetoric, we should consider how the concept buttresses Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as a "specific act in a concrete case" (133). Rhetors and audiences are situated. For example, we use very different rhetoric, and we use rhetoric differently, when we object to a zoning law at a city council meeting as compared with trying to avoid a confrontation when we accidentally tap the bumper of the car in front of us during rush hour. That said, a critical treatment of *kairos* and its operation in organizational rhetoric would divert this project from its focus on ethos and identification, and such a study would likely demand a book of its own to sort out conflicting views on the very idea and how each interrelates with the others and does or does not illustrate the function of time and opportunity in organizational rhetoric.

[2] Zulick's postmodern terminology envelops rhetor and audience in the subjectivities inherent in poststructuralist discourse. However, her text does not discuss issues of power—a central issue in the postmodernist perspective. Given that absence, I choose to read her use of "subject" as referring to that cluster of attributes we more commonly refer to as "character."

[3] Anthony Giddens theorizes the consequences of instantaneous global communication as "time-space distanciation," which he argues produces profound social effects by binding time and space as objects that are subject to cultural exchange (17-21). The implication of Giddens' theory on audiences suggests a fruitful area of study, outside the scope of this project.

[4] There are many reasons besides ethos that influence people to join and stay with organizations, of course. Gainful employment is necessary for thriving in capitalist states, for example, and some people are subject to mandatory military service. These brief samples will suffice to dispel a suspicion of naiveté.

[5] Organizational credibility is not the only path to sustainability. During the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, for example, British Petroleum's credibility suffered deeply, and the organization's 2012 annual report described a $118b profit.

[6] Contemporary views of identity for the most part take a psychological approach, although there are many different explanations for its form and function (as a narrative or as a heuristic, for example). The social sense of identity I refer to here is based on social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. The reader is directed to the Works Cited for a full reference.

[7] We note in Crusius the irony of Burke's intellectual positions. Burke famously wrote from a critical perspective outside of the borders imposed by academic disciplines. He "moved with apparent ease in and out of all sorts of intellectual communities, but he claimed none in particular" and distanced himself from disciplines that would take him as their own (450). It seems the proponent of identification sought not to be identified with any one critical movement nor any one discipline.

[8] We find a more dramatic iteration of ideological association in Michel Foucault's tracing of the principle of discipline discursively manifest in schools, prisons, and factories.

[9] Note the biological imperative: In this case what Susanne Langer speculates as twin processes of individuation and involvement. The former process enables individual members of a species to react to their environment in specific ways, and the latter contributes to the species' sustainability (118-9). Similarly, identification is an individuating process in terms of hierarchy, and a process of involvement that sustains the principle of hierarchy. As Burke writes, "In being identified with B, A is 'substantially one' with a person other than himself. [H]e is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (*RM* 21).

[10] Weick's sensemaking equation, in which present experience is interpreted with past experience, shares a view with what Pierre Bourdieu calls habitus: "the durable and transportable systems of schemata of perception, appreciation, and action that result from the institution of the social in the body" (*LP* 126-7). Weick's theory posits that sensemaking is neither formalized nor constantly forming but is in flux between present and past. Similarly, Bourdieu insists that while habitus develops out of our history of encounters (we read current experiences against prior experiences), it is an "open system of dispositions" that are subject to those experiences, which modify or reinforce its structure (133). For both theorists, the open nature of an interpretive field implies a web of relations, not a contained set of balanced forces. However, neither theorist invests in the idea that we determine our position in the field with rhetoric, filling the space among those relational connections and constructing the context in which we engage with others.

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