

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	7
The Gay Rights Movement	7
The Religious Counter Movement.....	13
Mel White and "Soulforce".....	24
CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS.....	29
Language and Power	29
Ideology: Basic Concepts and Critical Perspectives	30
Ideographs: The Building Blocks of Ideology.....	41
Applications to Social Movements.....	48
Literature Review	49
CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE.....	54
The Ideograph <Suffering>	57
The Ideograph <Voluntary Suffering>.....	64
The Ideograph <Truth>.....	69
CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	90
Review	90
Discussion	91
Conclusion	95
REFERENCES.....	98

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Gay rights has been a contentious issue in American civil and political discourse for over fifty years, a trend that shows no signs of abating in the foreseeable future. As recently as November 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives "passed its first ban on discrimination against homosexuals in the workplace, approving a bill that extends protections to those based on race, sex, religion and disability" (Lengell, 2007). This is a bill that President Bush promised to veto if it reached his desk. Gay rights issues have been leading concerns in the past three presidential elections, and the 2008 presidential election promises to be no different. On August 10, 2007, the Human Rights Campaign (the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization, www.hrc.org) and Logo (a premium gay and lesbian television network, www.logoonline.com) cosponsored a live Democratic presidential candidate's forum, the first of its kind, to address issues relevant to the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community. That same month, Polk County Iowa Judge Robert Hanson ruled that "the state's decade-old ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional" (Kuhnhenh and Davenport, 2007). That decision, however, was short lived. Kuhnhenh and Davenport (2007) reported that Judge Hanson issued a stay on his ruling the following day. This judicial action led many of the 2008 presidential candidates to weigh in publicly on the same-sex marriage issue. Former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney had this to say:

The ruling in Iowa... is another example of an activist court and unelected judges trying to redefine marriage and disregard the will of the people as expressed through Iowa's Defense of Marriage Act.... This once again highlights the need for a Federal Marriage Amendment to protect the traditional definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. (Kuhnhenh and Davenport, 2007)

One of the primary adversaries to same-sex marriage in the United States and LGBT rights in general is a robust and powerful conservative religious lobby; what the National Gay and

Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) labels the “anti-gay industry” (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2007). This “anti-gay industry,” according to the NGLTF, “comprises a large coalition of evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders, Christian right advocacy groups and right-wing politicians that works on many fronts to restrict the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.” This “anti-gay industry,” the NGLTF (2007) proposed, realizes their goal through organized efforts to promote anti-LGBT legislation and by fostering myths and lies about LGBT people for the purpose of political and financial gain.

Even inside many major Christian denominations, the dispute continues over what role, if any, LGBT individuals have in religious service. A small number of denominations, including the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist churches, have adopted fully welcoming and affirming guidelines toward LGBT congregants. According to Cooperman and Whoriskey (2006) many denominations are mounting a backlash against congregations that have publicized a “welcoming and affirming stance” to gay congregants. The mainline Protestant denominations almost simultaneously reaffirmed their position that homosexual acts were sinful in the fall of 2006 (Cooperman and Whoriskey, 2006). On Tuesday, November 14, 2006, a meeting of Roman Catholic Bishops declared that “Catholics who minister to gays must firmly adhere to the church’s teaching that same-sex attractions are ‘disordered,’” (Cooperman and Whoriskey, 2006). That same day the North Carolina Baptist State Convention agreed to expel any church congregation that condoned homosexuality and adopted a policy that would allow the Convention to investigate member churches accused of being too ‘gay-friendly.’” The following day, the Presbyterian Church (USA) put a minister on trial for conducting a marriage ceremony for two women (Cooperman and Whoriskey, 2006).

The Episcopal Church, in particular, has been suffering tremendous clashes since the 2003 election of openly homosexual bishop Gene Robinson. Mandak (2007), wrote in an Associated Press article that, “Representatives from the Episcopal diocese of Pittsburgh voted overwhelmingly Friday [November 2, 2007] to approve constitutional amendments that are the

first step in leaving the national church in a widening rift over homosexuality and interpretation of Scripture.” According to staff writer Rebecca Trounson (2007) in her *Los Angeles Times* article, “Church divide over gays has a global audience,” many mainline Protestant churches are facing the same or related issues. And many church leaders and scholars predict,” Trounson (2007) wrote, “that the way these questions play out in the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion will hold lessons for them all.”

One of the primary religious opponents to gay rights is James Dobson and his organization, Focus on the Family. With the recent deaths of both Jerry Falwell and D. James Kennedy, Dobson has assumed the preeminent position of authority within the religious counter movement.

Focus on the Family is not a new organization, however. According to their website, James Dobson gave his first Focus on the Family radio broadcast in March of 1977. The organization was incorporated later that same year (Focus on the Family Historical Timeline). By the early 80s, Dobson has risen to a position of national prominence and in 1982 President Ronald Reagan appointed him to the National Advisory Commission for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The organization’s website states six principles that guide their work: the preeminence of evangelism, the permanence of marriage, the value of children, the sanctity of human life, the importance of social responsibility, and the value of male and female.

According to the Focus on the Family website, the organization produces internationally syndicated radio programs, “heard on over 3,000 radio facilities in North America and in twenty seven languages in approximately 4,130 additional facilities in over 160 other countries” (Focus on the Family website, About Us Page). Dobson has also written 36 books, one of which (*Dare to Discipline*) has sold more over 4.5 million copies and was “selected as one of the 50 books to

be rebound and placed in the White House Library (Focus on the Family, About Us Page). With a radio audience of over 220 million daily, it is apparent that Dobson and his organization are a commanding voice within the religious community. It is this reason that Dobson's comments against gay rights are so potentially powerful.

Dobson states that he does not support discrimination against LGBT individuals. However, his rhetoric would suggest otherwise. Jeff Lutes, Soulforce Executive Director has compiled dozens of direct quotations from Dobson's writings and radio addresses that reveal his views on the theology and validity of gay rights. Many of these quotes are compiled in Lutes' document "A False Focus On My Family." Some of those quotations include:

Saying there's a constitutional guarantee for two homosexuals to marry is just a few steps away from saying there's a constitutional guarantee to marry more than one person, or for relatives to marry, or even for people to marry their pets.

Schools will change instantly... It's the end of morality... Can you imagine a teacher standing or sitting in the middle of these little wide-eyed kids all around and instead of teaching them about fairy stories, or the ABCs, or numbers, she's talking to them about adult perverse behavior?

Focus on the Family is promoting the truth that homosexuality is preventable and treatable – a message routinely silenced today. We want people to know that individuals don't have to be gay.

Communities do not let prostitutes, pedophiles, voyeurs, adulterers, and those who sexually prefer animals to publicly celebrate their lifestyles, so why should homosexuals get such privileges?

Is it in the midst of this tumultuous battleground of politics, religion and sexuality that the gay rights organization Soulforce found its purpose. According to the Reverend Dr. Mel White, the founder of Soulforce, the organization's mission is "to cut off homophobia at its source – religious bigotry" (Soulforce mission statement, 2007). Soulforce is worthy of examination precisely due to the unique persuasive nature and ideological stance of its goals. As stated by Stewart, Smith and Denton (2001), "Social movements rely on persuasion as the

primary agency through which they attempt to perform critical persuasive functions that enable them to come into existence, satisfy requirements, grow in size and influence, meet opposition from within and without, and effectively bring about or resist change.” Social movements and the organizations supporting them seek to use persuasive elements in various functions: for transforming perceptions of history and society, for prescribing a course of action and mobilizing for it, and for sustaining the movement itself (Stewart, et al, 2001). The primary goal of Soulforce is to bring about social change through prescribing specific courses of action, including the embracing of a new ideology. As Stewart, et al (2001) suggest, “Prescribing courses of action constitutes selling the social movement’s ideology.”

For this reason, it is my intention to conduct an ideological analysis of the gay rights organization Soulforce. By critically evaluating the ideological underpinnings of Soulforce’s rhetoric, and exposing the specific ideographs used to establish that ideology, further insight will be gained into the use of ideologies as rhetorical tools and, more specifically, into the specific ideological appeals Soulforce uses in response to its acknowledged rhetorical circumstances.

Many organizations within the gay rights movement seek to promote legal protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens and to diminish discrimination against those same individuals. Virtually all state and national gay rights organizations focus on passing legislation to achieve this end. Soulforce, however, has positioned itself in a unique playing field, speaking directly to religious leaders and organizations in attempt to alter their ideological underpinnings and subsequently garner their support for LGBT individuals. This level of persuasion is particularly difficult due to the fact that religious ideology is so strongly held and protected in American society.

It is my belief that due to this distinctive rhetorical position, an ideological analysis of Soulforce will be particularly informative. In the remainder of this thesis, I will provide some relevant historical background of the gay rights movement, describe the unique origins of Soulforce, provide an overview of ideology and ideological criticism, and present a justification for evaluating the rhetorical functions of Soulforce through the lens of ideological criticism.

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I will provide a brief history of the Gay Rights Movement and the religious counter movement that has stood as the primary opposition. This information is relevant to my thesis because White personally experienced both sides of the cultural divide and it was this specific combination of experiences that inspired White to become a gay rights activist and found Soulforce. First, I will provide an overview of the Gay Rights Movement in America and follow it with a review of the religious counter movement's response.

The Gay Rights Movement

The Gay Rights Movement has had a long and tumultuous history in the United States. As early as 1951, gay men began founding official organizations such as the Mattachine Society (Adam, 1987). The Daughters of Bilitis, the Mattachine Society's lesbian counterpart, began shortly thereafter in 1955 (Adam, 1987). Initially at least, the goal of these organizations was simply solidifying the right of members to exist as openly gay and lesbian. According to Adam (1987), the primary functions used to achieve this goal were mutual support of members and education of both the gay community and the establishment. In order to increase the likelihood of being heard, Adam (1987) relates that both groups stressed conservative dress and behavior in an attempt to increase credibility with the majority. Adam describes the primary ideology of these early gay rights groups:

All of these organizations, in varying degrees, subscribed to an approach to social change which came to be termed 'homophile.' Central to this ideology was the belief that the American public could be educated out of its prejudice and learn that its preconceptions and data about homosexuals were inaccurate. (1987)

It wasn't until a decade later, during the cultural revolution of the 1960s, that the Gay Rights Movement realized the possibility of political action. Virtually all gay rights historians and most

surviving veterans note the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion as the watershed moment that led the gay rights movement out of the passive techniques purported by the early organizations and into the militant activism that came to define the movement for the following decades. (The Stonewall Veterans' Association has compiled numerous narratives of Stonewall participants and witnesses as well as accounts by historians regarding the historical impact of the rebellion [Stonewall Veterans Association, 2008].)

The Stonewall Inn is a gay bar on Christopher Street in New York's Greenwich Village. Late on the night of June, 27, 1969, the police raided the bar with a warrant stating that alcohol was being sold without a license. According to David Bianco (1999) of PlanetOut.com, it was the second time that week the bar had been targeted and other bars had also been recently raided. Most patrons and the staff were familiar with the routine: everyone in the building was lined up and asked to show identification. Usually, most patrons were then free to leave, but this time the staff as well as a group of drag queens and transsexuals were detained. It was around this point that the actors left the previously understood script and dramatically changed how the events would emerge.

There is still disagreement among historians and veterans regarding the specific order in which the events transpired. The *New York Times* offered only three short reports on the events as they transpired, but it is undoubtedly clear that the crowd outside the bar, including evicted patrons and passersby, erupted. According to Lionel Wright (1999), the crowd began to throw coins at the officers, who were notoriously known for accepting pay-offs, but soon, the coins were followed by bottles, rocks and other items. The police retreated into the bar as the violence escalated. One person used a parking meter to beat open the door that had been barricaded by the officers while another attempted to burn the building down with the officers inside. "People in the crowd started shouting 'Gay Power!'" Wright (1999) explained, "And as

word spread through Greenwich Village and across the city, hundreds of gay men and lesbians... converged on the Christopher Street area around the Stonewall Inn to join the fray." Demonstrators returned the following evening, numbering in the thousands and various protests and disturbances continued for five days.

Even more significant than the initial protests were the events that followed in the following weeks. By the end of July, Bianco (1999) reported, activists were circulating a flyer calling for a "homosexual liberation meeting." The headline of the flyer read, "Do you think homosexuals are revolting? You bet your sweet ass we are!" (Bianco, 1999). The group that formed as a result of that initial meeting adopted the name Gay Liberation Front (GLF). The GLF made multiple demands including an end to police harassment, the repeal of sodomy laws, national anti-discrimination laws, and job protection for gay employees (Bianco, 1999). The following year, on June 29, 1970, the Stonewall Riot was commemorated by a parade in New York City, creating a tradition that has been repeated every year. Since that time, June has been Gay Pride Month and is commemorated with events and parades around the world.

Following the Stonewall Rebellion, political action and legal change became the primary focus of the Movement. By the mid 1970s, as a result of constant effort, various cities and counties throughout the country had added sexual orientation to their lists of non-discrimination statutes and the U.S. Civil Service commission had "repealed its ban on homosexual employment in the Federal Civil Service" (Fetner, 2001). According to Bernstein (1997), during that same decade a number of states repealed or reformed sodomy laws effectively decriminalizing gay and lesbian sex. In addition to the legislative changes which began to grant limited civil rights to lesbians and gays, cultural perceptions also began to gradually transform as exemplified by the American Psychiatric Association's 1973 decision to remove homosexuality from a list of

pathologies and (re)define it as a healthy alternative identity (American Psychiatric Association, 1998).

None of these achievements came with ease. Gay and lesbian individuals were met with ambivalence at best and more often harassment. Fetner (2001) noted that during this era, “politicians, for the most part, ignored lesbian and gay constituents. Newspapers, rather than publicizing protests and writing editorials in support of the gay community, made a habit of printing the names and addresses of those arrested in routine police raids of gay bars.” Even with legislative victories, public opinion remained hostile to homosexuality. This antagonism, however, did not impede the gay rights movement from expanding. Fetner (2001) described this growth:

Despite this opposition, lesbian and gay subcultural communities were forming across the country, and the cultural change captured by the slogan ‘Gay is Good’ was evidenced by annual gay pride parades, lesbian and gay newspapers, magazines and commerce, and lesbian and gay community organizations and events.

By the early 1980s, gay rights organizations dramatically stepped up their rhetoric and activism in response to the emergence of a deadly new disease that was afflicting and killing scores of gay men throughout the country. Originally identified as Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID), it was later renamed Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). In 1984, approximately 100,000 gay and lesbian activists marched on the Democratic Convention. They carried with them a list of demands that provided a relatively complete view of what the Gay Rights Movement was fighting for at the time, and what it still continues to demand. Adam (1987) reprinted that list which included:

- Immediate, increased funding for AIDS research
- provision of social services to lesbian and gay youth, aged, disabled, prisoners and poor
- an end to violent acts against lesbians and gay men
- an executive order prohibiting discrimination in federal employment

- a national lesbian and gay rights law
- child custody, adoption and visitation rights
- enforcement of civil rights legislation, including within the lesbian/gay community
- passage of the Equal Rights Amendment for women
- an end to discrimination in immigration and naturalization laws
- the right of women to choose if and when to bear children including the right to choose abortion
- legal recognition of lesbian and gay relationships, and
- repeal of sodomy and solicitation laws.

Even though the demands presented were varied in scope and purpose, it was the specific gay rights issue of same-sex marriage that came to the forefront of American political discourse. According to Adam (1987) the first same-sex marriage case in the United States was brought in Minnesota in 1971. The state ruled against the plaintiffs. In 1975, marriage licenses were issued to numerous same-sex couples in Boulder, Colorado and Phoenix, Arizona. All licenses were subsequently revoked (Adam, 1987).

The battle to define marriage rekindled after a 1993 landmark case in Hawaii ruled that the state's refusal to issue marriage licenses to three same sex couples presumptively violated Hawaii's Equal Rights Amendment that barred discrimination on the basis of sex. The victory was short-lived, however. In 1996, the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was introduced in both the House and Senate. The bill passed later that year and then President, Bill Clinton signed the bill into law. As Bierbauer (1996) reported, DOMA specifically stated that marriage was an institution limited to relationships containing one man and one woman. In response to DOMA, the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that the original 1993 case was a moot point due to the constitutional amendment. In 1998, Hawaii further codified DOMA by adding an amendment to the state constitution restricting marriage to heterosexual couples.

However, DOMA did not end the debate regarding legal recognition for same-sex relationships. In 2000, the Vermont Supreme Court issued a decision that paved the way for civil unions for gay and lesbian couples, a legal recognition that provided many (though not all)

of the benefits and protections afforded to marriage under Vermont law. On May 21, 2003, Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R – Colorado) introduced a resolution to amend the United States Constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman. In 2005, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a bill to adopt civil unions in that state, making Connecticut the first state in the U.S. to voluntarily pass a same-sex civil unions bill through the legislature without any court intervention. In 2006, after a ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court, the New Jersey legislature passed a bill establishing civil unions in that state. In April of 2007, as reported by Sklar (2007), the New Hampshire state legislature passed a civil union bill making it the second state to enact civil union law without being mandated by a court. The New Hampshire civil union law took effect on January 1, 2008.

These legal changes, in addition to strong public opinion on both sides of the debate, elevated same-sex marriage into mainstream political discourse. In fact, the issue became a fundamental concern during the 2004 Presidential election. On April 13 of that year, President George H. W. Bush pushed Congress to approve the marriage amendment for state ratification.

Today, I call upon Congress to promptly pass and to send to the states for ratification an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and woman as husband and wife. The amendment should fully protect marriage, while leaving the state legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage. (White House Press Release, 2004)

In spite of various marriage protection measures being passed at state and national levels, a national constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman has yet to be passed. The same-sex marriage controversy and gay rights in general, continue to be major political topics that show no apparent signs of dissipation. The multi-faceted gay rights issue is further complicated due to a powerful and vocal religious counter-movement.

The Religious Counter Movement

Without doubt, religion has been central to American history. However, according to Gallagher and Bull (1996), religious conservatives did not formally establish themselves as a movement with a unified agenda until the 1920s, when traditionally separate Christian denominations united to rebel against growing support for the theory of evolution. This early religious social movement held many of the traits seen in today's Religious Right including what Hofstadter coined "paranoid style."

The ideological forerunners of what has come to be known as the religious right are a long line of religious crusaders who share what historian Richard Hofstadter termed 'paranoid style.' Though the politics and techniques of the preachers vary widely, they share a vision of America dominated by the forces of good and evil, both from inside and outside its borders, leaving little room for political accommodation. (Gallagher and Bull, 1996)

Religious conservatives have traditionally found no limit of enemies. According to Gallagher and Bull (1997), Christian Right groups have embraced anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and racial segregation all the while decrying the downfall of the nuclear family and the softening of traditional male/female roles. Christian evangelicals continued to preach their doctrine and call for a return to morality throughout the five decades following the battle against evolution, but did not again attain significant political power until their uniting against the gay movement (Gallagher and Bull, 1997).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Religious Right largely responded to the gay liberation movement with evasion, pretending that it did not exist or was not worthy of response (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 2001). Conservative Christians did not see the movement as having any credibility, particularly since they had virtually two millennia of religious teachings that classified homosexuality as immoral and an abomination to God. It also

seemed clear during that era that the federal government would never acknowledge, let alone protect, such degenerate behavior.

However, the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969 energized the gay and lesbian community, dramatically increasing political and militant activism. The radical activism that began at Stonewall led to multiple state and local accomplishments, and that success drew new focus from Conservative Christians. Gallagher and Bull (1996) relate that "by the 1970s, when open espousals of anti-Semitism and racism were no longer socially acceptable, blacks and Jews were largely replaced by gays and feminists" as the focus of Christian political attention. The change in the political and cultural environment following the Stonewall Rebellion provided a particularly salient threat to fundamentalist views of home and family and served as a catalyst to help unite the Religious Right and change their reaction from that of evasion to explicit counterpersuasion. As Stewart, et al (2001) described, "When an institution can no longer ignore a social movement, it may use counterpersuasion to challenge the movement's version of reality and discredit its leaders, members or demands."

A poster child for this new anti-gay conservative Christian movement appeared in the form of Anita Bryant. "In Dade County, Florida in 1977, celebrity spokesperson Anita Bryant formed the first anti-gay counter movement organization in the United States in an attempt to reverse the local discrimination protections lesbian and gay activists had won" (Fetner, 2001). Bryant stepped up as a leader of the Religious Right's opposition to the Gay Rights Movement after the city of Miami, in her home county of Dade, passed a gay-rights ordinance making it the 40th city in the United States to adopt such a law. Bryant's persona and accomplishments made her a credible leader and gave her the ability to appeal to middle-America. Gallagher and Bull (1996) explained that as "a mother, celebrity singer, former Miss America, and spokeswoman for the Florida Citrus Growers, the chirpy Bryant was the ideal model for this

antigay crusade.” This allowed Bryant to expose the alleged danger that the Gay Rights movement posed to traditional American families without appearing “mean-spirited” (Gallagher and Bull, 1996). Bryant immediately began a campaign entreating Dade County to repeal the ordinance and within six weeks, Miller (1996) reported, she had gathered sufficient signatures to put the issue to Dade County voters. Bryant then formed the *Save our Children* organization and developed a powerful counterpersuasive rhetoric. Her primary argument, Fetner (2001) related, was focused on the idea that gays and lesbians must recruit children since they could not reproduce. Bryant verified this in her 1977 biography by saying, “Homosexuals cannot reproduce—so they must recruit. And to freshen their ranks, they must recruit the youth of America.” She was particularly interested in the dangers homosexual teachers would pose to children in school. “First, public approval of admitted homosexual teachers could encourage more homosexuality by inducing pupils into looking upon it as an acceptable life-style. And second, a particularly deviant-minded teacher could sexually molest children” (Bryant, 1977). Bryant clarified the religious beliefs that backed her motivation in a letter she wrote to the Dade County Board of Commissioners. Bryant wrote in part:

...if this ordinance is allowed to become law, you will, in fact, be infringing upon my rights and discriminating against me as a citizen and a mother to teach my children and set examples and to point to others as examples of God’s moral code as stated in the Holy Scriptures. Also, you would be discriminating against my children’s right to grow up in a healthy, decent community that we’re proud to be a part of. If Almighty God is not the authority on morality, then who is? You may or may not believe in the authority of the Holy Scriptures, but this county was born because of that belief and the freedom to express that faith in Almighty God. What kind of community and nation would we have without God’s Morality? (Bryant, 1977)

Bryant did not limit her crusade to Dade County, however. She expanded throughout Florida and eventually the entire nation. In April of 1977, Bryant acknowledged the extension of her campaign to save children from the evils of homosexuality while speaking in Orlando, Florida. She challenged the audience by saying, “It is imperative that the ordinance be

repealed June 7. The entire nation – the normal majority – will be watching the results of this campaign and election. The battle of parents to protect their children from homosexuality has just begun” (Baker, 1977). Bryant was seeking to polarize the currently sympathetic nation against the gay community and make them look illegitimate. At the same time, she was appealing to a fundamental fear, the safety of innocent children.

The primary premise of Bryant’s argument was that gays and lesbians were not simply seeking “equal rights,” but instead secretly desired to “convert” children. It suddenly became a parental obligation to oppose gay rights in order to protect the children of America, because homosexuals, without the ability to procreate, would actively recruit. As further explained by Gallagher and Bull (1996), Bryant attempted to alter the definition of homosexual to that of a sexual predator, questioning the motives of the Gay Rights Movement and its desire for legal protection of gays and lesbians.

Bryant also endeavored to appeal to the fundamental Christian ideological dichotomies of sin and morality. “Homosexuality is immoral and against God’s wishes,” she told the audience in her 1977 speech (Baker, 1977). “Miami’s law”, Baker continued, “infringed upon my rights or rather discriminates against me as a citizen and a mother to teach my children and set examples of God’s moral code as stated in the Holy Scriptures” (Baker, 1977). While Fundamentalism was hardly the solitary version of Christian theology in America, even more liberal varieties would have been hesitant to embrace gay rights at the expense of disagreeing with Bryant’s “right” to teach her children Christian values. Gallagher and Bull (1996) explained that “many liberal denominations, still uncomfortable with homosexuality... largely shied away from direct challenges to the Religious Right’s increasingly strident and self-confident claims to representing the Christian position on crucial issues and candidacies.”

Bryant also portrayed the Gay Rights Movement as anti-Christian in a fundraising letter she distributed in 1977. "Dear Friend: I don't hate the homosexuals! But as a mother, I must protect my children from their evil influence. When the homosexuals burn the Holy Bible in public, how can I stand by silently?" (Gallagher & Bull, 1996). Bryant did not specify which homosexuals burned a Bible or why. Instead, she attempted to emphasize the immorality of gays and lesbians through their supposed disregard of the Holy Bible and Christianity itself.

Bryant's religious appeals were further buttressed by her notoriety. By the time she chose to become politically active, she had a well-developed reputation to strengthen her argument: she was a literal "Miss America." Baker (1977) explained that by the time she took on the gay rights movement, her image was well established:

She was the all-American girl. She stood for motherhood, liked apple pie, taught Sunday school, claimed hamburgers and soft drinks were her favorite foods, didn't smoke or drink, and was 'proud to be an American – a country where there was freedom and peoples' rights were respected.' (Baker, 1977)

It was almost effortless for the mainstream public to accept Bryant's "all-American" arguments, particularly when contrasted against a minority group still largely considered degenerate and mentally ill, despite the fact that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973 (COPP position statement, American Psychiatric Association).

To further strengthen her position, Bryant even admitted that she would willingly sacrifice her career and do whatever was necessary to save the country's children from this menacing evil. She said:

I am willing to sacrifice my career and do whatever is necessary to save our children from homosexuality... Homosexual acts are not only illegal they are immoral. Through the power of the ballot box, I believe the parents and the straight-thinking normal majority will soundly reject the attempt to legitimize homosexuals and their recruitment plans for our children. Miami's blundering 'gay' ordinance is no more a civil rights issue than is the arrest of a drunk for disturbing the peace. (Baker, 1977)

In her use of words like 'blundering,' Bryant attempted to discredit the ordinance itself. Then she compared the Gay Rights Movement to that of a drunk on the street, an image instantly recognized as a danger and menace to society at large.

According to Fetner (2001), Bryant's counter persuasive techniques were quite effective. "Using Florida's initiative process the 'Save our Children' group gathered enough signatures to put a repeal measure on the ballot at the next election" (Fetner, 2001). Miller (1995) reported that in June of 1977, Dade County voters repealed the gay rights ordinance by a vote of more than two to one. Inspired by the repeal in Miami, Bryant took her show on the road and, according to Fetner (2001) she, "provided start-up funds and information to other people who were interested in repealing the discrimination protections that had been put in place for lesbians and gay men in a number of cities and towns across the country." Bryant's national campaign led to a wave of repeals and defeats in other states. Gallagher and Bull (1996) explained that, "from 1977 to 1980, voters overturned gay rights bills in St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; and Eugene, Oregon..." The Crusade Bryant began was not limited to local jurisdictions, however. She also inspired John Briggs, a Republican Senator from California to join in her anti-gay activism. Fetner (2001) explained:

[Briggs'] 1978 California ballot initiative, Proposition 6, would have made homosexuals ineligible for employment in the state's public school system. The Briggs Initiative, as it came to be called, was rejected by voters, at least in part due to the lesbian and gay activists who mobilized quickly to form a "No on 6" campaign to defeat the measure.

The Briggs Initiative failed in California, but according to Miller (1995), Bryant's campaign was victorious in Oklahoma where voters successfully passed a law that banned gay men and lesbians from teaching in public schools. Similar laws were subsequently proposed in other states and defeated.

Bryant and the Religious Right's counterpersuasive efforts led to a coercive reaction by the governmental half of the church/state establishment dichotomy as multiple states subsequently repealed protective laws and implemented new ones restricting the rights of the gay and lesbian citizenry. Not only were homosexuals no longer legally protected, but in some localities they were at risk of losing their jobs simply for being gay or lesbian. Homosexual acts had been illegal in many states for many years, but now suddenly in Oklahoma just identifying as gay or lesbian was enough to be in violation of the law. As described by Stewart et al (2001), "the easiest method of coercion is the passage and implementation of restrictive legislation and policies."

The backlash against Bryant was almost immediate and long-lasting. In February of 1977, Bryant lost a potentially lucrative contract to host a daytime television show sponsored by the Singer Sewing Company (Dunlop, 1977). In March of that year, *The Washington Post* published an article about the cancellation and published part of the telegram that the television show's production firm sent to Baker informing her of the news. It stated in part: "...we sincerely regret that the extensive national publicity arising from the controversial political activities you have been engaged in Dade County prohibits us from utilizing your services" (*Washington Post* Editorial, 1977).

Three months later, the Texas State Bar Association revoked an invitation for Bryant to appear at their state convention (Steele and Fuller, 1977) after approximately 3,000 gay-rights activists and supporters demonstrated (*New York Times*, 1977a). Also in June, Composer Paul Williams and his wife placed a full-page ad in *The Daily Variety*, a Hollywood publication, stating that due to Bryant's anti-homosexual campaign, they had stopped drinking screwdrivers because they contain orange juice (Krebs, 1977). The following month, Dick Shack, Bryant's agent and vice president of the Performing Arts Agency, dropped her, stating that it was

because she wrote a book "exploiting the anti-homosexual campaign" (*New York Times*, 1977b).

In September of the same year, a 3,500 seat tent in which Bryant was scheduled to perform as part of a religious rally in Missouri was sabotaged when the support ropes were cut, causing the entire tent to collapse (*Washington Post*, 1977). Drake and Brubaker (1977) reported in *Newsweek* that gay-rights activists and supporters throughout the country instituted a boycott of Florida orange juice and the National Gay Task Force (now the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) developed an educational campaign entitled "We Are Your Children" in response to Bryant's "Save our Children" campaign.

In October of 1977 many well-known celebrities, including Bette Midler and Lily Tomlin, participated in the "Celebration for Human Rights" rally at the Hollywood Bowl in response to Bryant and the Briggs Initiative that had been introduced in the California legislature (Drake and Brubaker, 1977). That same month, things escalated when Thom Higgins, an "avowed homosexual" shoved a banana-cream pie in Bryant's face at a news conference in Des Moines (Roeder, 1977). Police refused to press charges against Higgins. The footage of the "pie-ing" was shown throughout the country and quickly became infamous. Even today, an internet search will provide thousands of hits for the search terms "Anita-Bryant-Pie." (The video clip can be seen on the *YouTube* website at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dS91gT3XT_A.)

In November of the same year, Bryant cancelled a news conference because of a bomb threat and planned demonstrations by "militant homosexuals" (Mansfield, 1977). That same month Helen Hillsborough filed a \$5 million dollar civil lawsuit against Bryant, and "Save Our Children, Inc." in which she charged that "her son, Robert, was fatally assaulted as a result of Bryant's campaign against expanded rights for homosexuals" (*New York Times*, 1977). The lawsuit was thrown out due to jurisdictional limitations. Kemper (1977) reported in a December

issue of the *New York Times* that Bryant was unable to find a producer to market her new album. The 35-word news brief stated that Bryant's Husband, Bob Greene, blamed his wife's career difficulties on the influence of the homosexual community that she had alienated (Kemper, 1977).

The year 1978 was no better for Bryant. The Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* reported that response to Bryant was similar in Canada. In January 1978 approximately 500 homosexuals demonstrated against her at a religious rally in Willowdale, Canada and pied a local minister.

After most of the crowd had left, Rev. Paul Smith, pastor of the People's Church, was struck in the face by a pie thrown by a woman. The woman was questioned by police, but was not arrested. A caller to *The Globe and Mail*, who said he represented gay liberation, said Mr. Smith was pied because he had helped bring Miss Bryant to Canada. (Palango, 1978)

In June of that year, Bryant lost a bid for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention after many attendees considered her a shoe-in (Hyer, 1978). In September of 1978, while Bryant was participating in an evangelical rally in London, Ontario, demonstrators paraded outside of the arena "holding up signs such as 'Mom Made Me Drink Orange Juice In The Closet' – a reference to Miss Bryant's Florida orange juice commercials" (*The Globe and Mail*, 1978). That same night, a bomb threat called in to the arena manager, caused hundreds of people to be evacuated (*The Globe and Mail*, 1978). The following month, Bryant's husband told the *New York Times* that she had suffered financially as a result of her anti-gay campaign and that she had been barred from television talk shows leaving her unable to promote her books or records (Merzer, 1978).

Bryant continued to face protests over the next two years and eventually lost her job as spokesperson for the Florida Citrus Growers as well as her marriage, which ended in divorce. She ultimately fell from public view, but the ideals she represented did not. The Religious Right

took Bryant's legacy of counterpersuasion and continued to use it with much financial and political success.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the Religious Right had elevated its antigay campaign as one of its primary issues. In 1981, the late Reverend Dr. Jerry Falwell, (former pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, VA, and founder of the Moral Majority) echoed Bryant's language in a fundraising letter that reminded his followers, "Please remember, homosexuals don't reproduce! They recruit! And they are out after my children and your children" (Miller, 1995). Falwell's invective against gays and lesbians continued and grew in intensity over the next decade. In 1991, Falwell sent out a fund-raising letter that read in part:

Last Wednesday, I was threatened by a mob of homosexuals. This convinced me that our nation has become a modern day Sodom and Gomorra... It is truly a miracle that I am alive today and able to write you this letter. Unless we act now, America – like Sodom and Gomorra – may face the wrath of God's judgment. These two Old Testament cities were so filled with homosexuality and perversion that they were utterly destroyed. God wiped them clean from the face of the earth! Will our nation – founded on Christian principles – face a similar fate because God-fearing moral people failed to stop homosexuality from becoming an accepted lifestyle in our churches, schools and public places? (White, 1994)

According to Soulforce (White, Soulforce Vision Statement), many other conservative Christian leaders and organizations jumped on the anti-homosexual bandwagon, including Pat Buchanan, James Dobson, the late D. James Kennedy and others, with reasonable success. As Miller explained:

The efforts of conservatives slowed the advance of gay rights and established an organized anti-gay opposition. That opposition is still a force in US politics today. Gay rights and anti-gay conservatives have squared off in a number of recent battles, including the fight over gays in the military and efforts to legislate against civil rights protections for lesbian and gay men. (Miller, 1995)

One of those leaders is James Dobson, whose organization "Focus on the Family" has risen to prominence in evangelical Christianity throughout the past few decades. Because

Dobson has been so prominent within the evangelical Christian community, he was in an excellent position to fill the void left by Falwell and his Moral Majority. When compared to Falwell, however, Dobson's persuasive rhetoric is much more subtle. Focus on the Family's mission statement reveals the nuance of their rhetoric. One of the organization's guiding principles, "The Value of Male and Female," exemplifies this indication:

We believe that God created humans in His image, intentionally male and female, each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a glorious gift from God to be offered back to Him either in marriage for procreation, union and mutual delight or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ. Christians are called to proclaim the truth and beauty of God's design and the redemption of sexual brokenness in our lives through Jesus Christ. (Focus on the Family, About Us)

Nowhere in this principle does Focus on the Family specifically denigrate homosexuality. However, the absolute nature of the statements clearly expresses that anything outside of this parameter is deviant, unacceptable, and in violation of God's plan.

This is not to assume that Dobson and his organization do not explicitly condemn homosexuality. A search within the Focus on the Family website reveals the organization's attitudes regarding homosexuality and what Dobson labels the "homosexual agenda."

Why are we so concerned about the bias toward the homosexual agenda in the United States? Because it has profound implications for the well-being of our society. Any change in the traditional understanding of the family will undermine its legal foundation and render it meaningless. If, for example, marriage can occur between two men or two women, why not three men or four women? What about between siblings, or between parents and children? How about one man and six women, which reopens the polygamy debate of 116 years ago? To change the definition of marriage from the exclusive union between one man and one woman is to destroy the family as it has been known for 5,000 years. (Dobson, 1998)

Dobson continues his discussion by describing what Christians can (and must) do if the homosexual agenda is to be squelched.

These are sobering examples, but is the situation hopeless? No. The tide can be turned if Christians will commit to taking a stand on these issues which are so critical to the preservation of the traditional family. I understand that each of you is extremely busy with commitments to your church, your job and your own family. Still, I implore you to consider the importance of making your voice heard. It is not enough to be a regular churchgoer. It is not enough to read the Bible or to nod in agreement with this letter and this ministry. While we need and appreciate your support, that alone will not turn the advancing tide of the homosexual movement, especially with regard to the issue of same-sex marriage. Your concern and convictions must be translated into action. (Dobson, 1998)

It was in this unique religious/political convergence surrounding the gay rights movement that the Reverend Dr. Mel White “came out” as a public figure advocating for gay rights by attempting to counter religious ideology with religious ideology and relentless nonviolent resistance.

Mel White and "Soulforce"

For almost two decades, White has been an outspoken advocate for gay rights; promoting a concept of relentless nonviolent resistance he labeled “Soulforce” (White, Soulforce vision statement). White named the organization in relation to the “soul force” principles developed by Mahatmas Gandhi during the civil rights movement he led in India. White described the purpose of Soulforce (and his activism) in the Soulforce Vision Statement:

The mission of Soulforce is to cut off homophobia at its source – religious bigotry. Soulforce uses a dynamic “take it to the streets” style of activism to connect the dots between anti-gay religious dogma and the resulting attacks on the lives and civil liberties of LGBT Americans. We apply the creative direct action principles taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. to peacefully resist injustice and demand full equality for LGBT citizens and same-gender families.

However, White did not begin his life as an activist. In fact, he spent the greater part of his adult life working for the very religious leaders he would come to adamantly oppose. White was born into a conservative Christian home, educated in conservative Christian schools, and actively participated in conservative Christian churches.

While completing his B.A. degree at Warner Pacific College and his M.A. degree in communication at the University of Portland, [White] produced and hosted a weekly NBC television series, "The World of Youth" (1959-1966). While working on his Ph.D. in Communications and film at U.S.C., [White] won a Rockefeller grant to begin a doctorate in religious studies as well. [White] completed his doctorate at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he also served for more than a decade as a professor of communications and preaching. In 1973, [White] was appointed Senior Pastor of Pasadena's First Covenant Church. (White, resume)

White married a woman and raised a family. He worked as a religious filmmaker and writer; eventually ghostwriting books, autobiographies, and speeches for such noted religious figures as Billy Graham and the Religious Right leaders Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. But all the while, White struggled with a secret: he was gay (White, 1994). White fought his sexuality for decades, undergoing twenty-five years of Christian counseling and "ex-gay therapy including electric shock" in an attempt to overcome his "sexual and affectional orientation" (White, 1994). None of his attempts to change were successful. White reports in his autobiography that after feeling "abandoned by God, the church and by society," he eventually attempted suicide (White, 1994).

In March of 1985, White separated from his wife and began to accept his sexuality; however, he continued his personal secrecy and his work for the major leaders of the Religious Right. All the while, White was collecting evidence of the Religious Right's rhetoric with the growing knowledge that his days of silence were numbered. It wasn't until 1991 that White decided to publicly come out to his religious employers and friends, risking the destruction of his career (White, 1994).

On December 24, 1991, White sent his first "coming out" letter to Jerry Falwell, explaining that he was gay, "warning him that his fund-raising campaign against gay and lesbian people was leading to the suffering and death" of his gay brothers and sisters, and begging Falwell to meet with him to "discuss this urgent, life-and-death matter in Christian

love" (White, 1994). White's activism had begun. Over the next two years, White wrote letters to Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, D. James Kennedy, and Pope John Paul II, beseeching them to drop their anti-gay rhetoric and meet with him to discuss their positions. White also sent letters to 5,000 pastors in Oregon on the eve of the Ballot Measure 9 vote in that state, asking them to speak out against the measure. Ballot Measure 9 was a "sweeping anti-gay ballot measure that would prohibit any positive or neutral mention of homosexuality in the public schools, including community colleges," which ultimately failed (NGLTF Press Release, 2000).

On June 27, 1993, White was installed Dean of the Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Dallas, Texas, the nation's largest gay and lesbian congregation. Just after his installation, White attended a gay rights demonstration in Washington, D.C. to protest President Clinton's announcement of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (White, 1994). The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy allows lesbians and gay men to serve U.S. armed forces if they keep quiet about their sex lives. Commanders are barred from asking subordinates about their sexual orientation (Stone, 2007). This was White's first public protest and his first arrest. In the following months, White was featured in *The Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post* and in various other media outlets across the nation. "He was interviewed on hundreds of radio and TV broadcasts including *Larry King Live*, *National Public Radio* and the *BBC*" (White, Partners in Soulforce).

In 1994, White published his autobiography, *Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America*, which told the story of his transition from influential religious author to outspoken gay rights activist. Then in January 1995, White was appointed Minister of Justice (an unsalaried position) for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, "the only Christian denomination with a primary outreach to gays and lesbians" (White, resume). Later that same year, White was arrested for trespassing at Pat Robertson's CBN Broadcast

Center and held in jail for twenty-two days, during which time he fasted, refusing to eat until Pat Robertson visited him in jail.

On September 1, 1996, White began another fast with his partner Gary Nixon on the steps of the United States Senate. Calling it a "Fast for Justice," they invited "people of faith across America to join in this prayer vigil that God would change the minds and hearts of Senators about to pass the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act" (White, resume). When the Senate passed DOMA, White moved his fast to the White House steps where "he, his partner, Gary, and seven others were arrested while praying on the White House sidewalk" (White, resume)

In 1997, the American Civil Liberties Union awarded White a National Civil Liberties Award for his work in applying the principles of Gandhi and King to his struggle for justice for the LGBT community (White, Partners in Soulforce). In 1998, White formed the Soulforce organization subsequently and launched a website (www.soulforce.org). During this time, he developed a "17 Step Journey into Soulforce," an eight week course, based on the non-violent movements lead by Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King Jr. in America, to help his fellow gay rights advocates prepare for an historic meeting with Jerry Falwell in Lynchburg, Virginia during October, 1999 (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*).

Since that time, White and Soulforce have continued to actively protest civil and religious discrimination against gays and lesbians. The organization has also produced numerous films, pamphlets, and booklets that forward their unique goals:

1. to help end the suffering of God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children,
2. to help change the minds and hearts of religious leaders whose anti-homosexual campaigns lead (directly and indirectly) to that suffering,
3. to be guided in... every action by SOULFORCE – the principles of relentless nonviolent resistance as lived and taught by M. K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and

4. in the process of bringing hope and healing to our society, find redirection for our minds and spirits. (White, Soulforce background)

White has placed Soulforce in a unique position within the greater gay rights movement. As evident in its goals the organization seeks to convert counter-movement actors into movement supporters through a change in ideology by using historic techniques proven effective in previous social movements. It is this strong ideological focus that makes White and Soulforce of particular rhetorical interest.

CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Language and Power

While this thesis focuses on ideological criticism, any discussion of ideology must first begin with a discussion of language. "At its root," Ronald Lee contended, "ideology concerns the relationship among discourse, power, and truth" (Kuypers, 2004). Building on that proposition, Dan Pierce (2003) provided a detailed primer on the (inter)relationship between language and power, and how this relationship provides the breeding-ground for ideology. Pierce began by first explaining that, "word-based language as learned in... native culture is first and foremost a filter for perception and experience." The very nature of labeling something ascribes cultural value to it. This shared meaning then directs how we think of, and talk about, the thing we have labeled, ruling out other meanings. It is these filters of thought that begin to create the foundations of ideology.

Language, however, does not limit itself solely to directing our thoughts; it also instructs the way we act in response to our perceptions and experiences. Words are more than simple definitions, designations, labels, and names. Pierce (2003) explained that they are also "a highly compressed set of instructions" that prescribe how we "are *supposed to act* toward the object, person, place or process we are naming." Language, therefore encourages certain types of behavior, and also discourages others.

Because language promotes certain actions and denies others it is inextricably linked to the distribution of power. Pierce (2003) explained that a person's understanding of life (and his/her place in it) is "positioned within designations given by language." As the idea of the power of language is expanded, we can begin to understand the concept of ideology. "The notion of ideology takes the same idea to the level of large groups of people working together with the power of language to define and guide entire cultures" (Pierce, 2003). While the

presence of ideology is not expressly limited to the use of language, all language has the capability of being ideological. Halboro (2007) explained:

Language and ideology overlap in so many ways that it is difficult to say where one begins and the other ends. Both represent reality, both are symbolic, both interpret the world. Although some language is patently more ideological, all language has the potential to be ideological.

Ideology: Basic Concepts and Critical Perspectives

Foss (1997) defined ideology as “a pattern or set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs, clues, or interpretations of the world by which a culture or group operates.” Gerring (1997) further clarified this working definition by adding that the concept of ideology “refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together, that belong to one another in a non-random fashion.” An ideology infuses everything within a social group or culture “so its rhetorical artifacts – its works of art, religious practices, and institutions, for example – embody, enact, and express that ideology” (Foss, 1997). While there are multiple definitions for the concept of “ideology” and each begins with different approaches and points of emphasis as Pierce (2003) noted, “All hold that language is crucial in the process of creating the personal, social, economic, and governmental structures that guide, promote, and constrain life.”

A fundamental tenet of ideology is the concept of group or social consciousness: the understanding that Michael McGee (1980) noted when he wrote, “human beings in collectivity behave and think differently than human beings in isolation.” Examples of ideology could include the socially held concepts that men are superior to women, or that homosexuality is an act of choice that is immoral and against nature, or that all life is sacred. While individuals may not subscribe to any of these concepts in personal belief, the concepts nevertheless saturate the group consciousness. The intrinsic permeation of ideology into culture and society makes it ripe for criticism. Hart and Daughton (2005) said it this way:

Forms of ideological criticism serve as lenses through which critics focus not only on the rhetorical strategies of a particular artifact, but on its social and political goals. Thus they focus on the ends as well as the means of rhetoric, and subject those ends to judgment. In this sense, ideological critics merely make explicit what other rhetorical critics do more implicitly, often without being aware they are doing it.

Foss (1997) noted that discussions of ideology and ideological criticism have been influenced by several different perspectives and philosophies. Hart and Daughton (2005) posited that while each method of ideological criticism blossoms from unique inspirations, they share common features. "Each grew out of disillusionment with the established order" and "has become a powerful source of influence upon scholars in the United States, despite the long-standing American preference for liberal and pluralistic philosophies and pragmatic, functional methodologies."

One of those perspectives is structuralism which Foss (1997) called "a series of projects in which linguistics is used as a model for attempts to develop the 'grammars' of systems such as myths, novels, or genres; these grammars are systematic inventories of elements and their relationships." Structuralism provides for the reading of both texts and cultures. As Lye (1999) explained, "through semiotics, structuralism leads us to see everything as 'textual', that is, composed of signs, governed by conventions of meaning, ordered according to a pattern of relationships." Structuralism enables the rhetorical critic to approach texts historically or trans-culturally in a disciplined way.

This sort of study opens up for serious cultural analysis texts which had hitherto been closed to such study because they did not conform to the rules of literature, hence were not literature but 'popular writing' or 'private writing' or 'history' and so forth. When the rules of literary meaning are seen as just another set of rules for a signifying arena of a culture, then literature loses some aspects of its privileged status, but gains in the strength and cogency of its relationship to other areas of signification. Hence literary study has expanded to the study of textuality, popular writing has been opened up to serious study, and the grounds for the relationship between the meaning-conventions of literature and the way in which a culture imagines reality have been set, and we can speak

more clearly of the relation of literary to cultural (or, 'human', or 'every-day') meanings. (Lye, 1999)

Since everything that can be known, can be known by virtue of its belonging to a signifying system, then everything can be spoken of as being textual. "Consequently," Lye (1999) explained, "much greater attention is paid to the nature of language-use in culture."

The philosophy of deconstruction(ism), or poststructuralism, has also influenced ideological criticism. As Foss (1997) explained, "the purpose of deconstructionism is to deconstruct the self-evidence of central concepts – to subject to critical analyses the basic structures and assumptions governing texts and how knowledge develops." Deconstructionists look at the linguistic integrity of a text: "How well its arguments hang together, how internally consistent its images are, how well it resists vacuums of meanings" (Hart and Daughton, 2005). As Foss (1997) described, deconstruction focuses on taking texts apart to expose their "underlying meanings, biases, and preconceptions – and then transforming or reconceptualizing the conceptual fields of those texts." According to Hart and Daughton (2005), deconstructionists have been accused of being anarchists and "radical debunkers." The goals, however are to challenge the critics' assumptions, explore textual features, and subvert rhetorical artistry.

Deconstructionists resist the charge that they are political saboteurs costumed as critics, arguing that the nature of textuality demands their approach, because of three crucial assumptions outlined by Hart and Daughton (2005):

1. *Meaning is problematic.* The mystery of language is the central issue here. Language is polysemous: the 'same' word means different things to different people and to the same person on different occasions.
2. *All messages are intertwined.* Every text bears the marking of its persuasive field, the messages to which it responds and which respond to it. The ideal critic...views the text as an "intertext" woven from the

threads of other texts. The critic looks for the traces of these other messages within the text so that its "pluralistic" effects can be gauged.

3. *Rhetoric is problematic.* While traditional critics have assumed that the author knew what he or she was doing when composing a text, deconstructionists have made no assumption... As a result, deconstructionists often call authors to task for the "texts" they wittingly or unwittingly reproduce anew.

Another influence on ideological criticism is postmodernism, which Hart and Daughton (2005) described as "a theory of cultural, intellectual, and societal discontinuity."

Postmodernism is based on the idea that the dominance of media and technology has drastically transformed our culture (Foss, 1997). Because of this evolution Foss (1997) explained that, "postmodern society requires new concepts and theories to address the features that characterize the new era: fragmentation of individuals and communities, a consumer lifestyle, a sense of alienation, and destabilization of unifying discourses and principles."

Postmodern criticism is also important because of what Aronwitz and Grioux (1991) described as the promise of "deterritorializing modernism and redrawing its political, social, and cultural boundaries, while simultaneously affirming a politics of racial, gender, and ethnic difference." Postmodern criticism does not simply challenge dominant Western cultural models and their idea of universal knowledge; but as Aronwitz and Grioux (1991) states, "it also situates us within a world that bears little resemblance to the one that inspired the great narratives of Marx and Freud." Aronwitz and Grioux (1991) explained that at its essence postmodern criticism seeks to expose the societal changes inherent in the overwhelming reliance on mass media and technology, the shifting character of social and class distinctions in capitalistic post-industrial societies, and the increasing blurring of boundaries between life and art, high culture and pop culture, and between image and reality.

Yet another influence on ideological criticism is cultural studies which Foss (1997) described as, an interdisciplinary project focused on exposing oppression and uncovering what forces are available to be used for gaining freedom from that oppression. According to Foss (1997), cultural scholars believe culture “consists of everyday discursive practices, with these discursive practices both embodying and constructing culture’s ideology.” Farmer (2005) added that cultural studies blends ideas and methods from both social sciences and humanities in order to examine the diverse relationships through which cultural value and meaning is produced and received. Essential to the cultural studies approach is the belief that language, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, class, and ideology are the factors we use to organize identities and complex social relations.

Within this context, Farmer (2005) explained cultural studies focuses on the crossroads between subjectivity and power, or more specifically, “how identities are formed and transformed through the operations of social discourse,” particularly those relating to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Central to this line of thought is the need to evaluate cultural forms within their real world contexts of production and use (Farmer 2005). This is particularly relevant because any act or text is created and consumed within actual social and historical contexts and will be influenced by those contexts. Therefore the aim of analysis, Farmer (2005) described, is to “identify how a text circulates in material conditions and how it serves to reproduce shared cultural meanings and beliefs.” This critical approach views all culture as essentially political and something that is both articulated through and reproductive of social ideologies (Farmer, 2005). As an example, the media’s incessant (re)production of images of idealized heterosexual love and family life constantly reasserts it as the social norm and expectation. In comparison, mainstream media generally represents LGBT individuals as the

“other” in relation to this heterosexual norm, therefore continually reaffirming LGBT individuals as atypical and abnormal.

However proliferated these images may be individuals are not defenseless against their effects. Stuart Hall (1981) asserted that people are not “cultural dopes” but are in fact active participants in the process of meaning production and negotiation. This concept has lead many cultural critics to explore the ways in which “marginal” social groups can actively use and transform culture. A term that is often used to identify this process of subcultural consumption, Farmer (2005) explained, is “bricolage” defined as “the adaptation of existing forms and commodities to produce new significances unintended by their original producers.” This method is frequently manifested in LGBT subcultures as alternative readings of mainstream songs, films, fashion, and celebrities are created. The film “The Wizard of Oz” is a quintessential example. While the movie was never intended for a LGBT audience, generations of gay men have engaged in “queer” readings of the film to the extent that references to “Dorothy” and “Oz” have become permanently embedded in LGBT culture. In fact, throughout the 1950s and 60s gay men commonly referred to themselves as “friends of Dorothy” as a way to identify their orientation without blatantly stating their sexuality.

Cultural studies evaluates ordinary popular culture for the purpose of understanding, and subsequently changing, the power relations that affect the most personal and mundane aspects of our lives. Most importantly, Farmer (2005) elucidated, cultural studies does not simply seek to “dismantle oppressive hierarchies of power” or reveal the histories of marginal social groups, but the ultimate goal is to bring about what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) coined a “radical democracy:” a society where no remnants of discrimination remain and all people, regardless of sex, gender, race, economic status, religion, or sexual orientation will have equal opportunity, access, and participation within society.

Sharing similar goals with cultural studies, Marxism has inspired many ideological critics. According to Foss, (1997) the goal of the Marxist is to undermine the economic systems that exploit their participants. Fundamental to the intellectual system of Marxism, Foss (1997) explained, is the belief that the symbols citizens use to make sense of the world are colored by the material conditions surrounding them. Marxists believe that the ruling classes employ rhetorical methods to validate their positions of power and to justify the meager subsistence of the subjugated while subsequently averting their potential rebellion (Hart and Daughton, 2005). The ruling classes achieve this through the institutions of education, religion, politics, banking, nationalism, bureaucracy and manufacturing. For the Marxist, Foss (1997) added, ideologies are not simply thoughts or ideas but possess a "material existence and are embodied in cultural institutions such as schools, churches, and political parties and in artifacts such as paintings, novels, and speeches."

Based upon this explanation, Marxists perform criticism based on four premises presented in Hart and Daughton, (2005): economic factors determine rhetoric; messages are produced, not created; ideologies leave textual evidence; and established institutions need rhetoric.

Hart and Daughton (2005) posited that the most fundamental presupposition of Marxist criticism is the idea that economic factors *determine* rhetoric (emphasis added). "Not only does Matter matter, but the possibilities for communication are set by society's structural and economic mechanisms." As a result of these mechanisms, only certain thoughts are thinkable and therefore, only certain messages are able to be said. The second premise of Marxist criticism is that "messages are produced, not created" (Hart and Daughton, 2005). This proposition logically follows the first and has disconcerting implications. It carries the assumption that individuals' most unique thoughts are not a product of their own devise, but

instead are simply the thoughts the social system allows them to think. The third proposition of Marxist criticism is that all ideologies leave textual evidence and therefore, all texts are pieces of the larger cultural experience. The most fundamental function of a Marxist critic Hart and Daughton (2005) suggest is "rewriting a text so that its ideological imprints can be observed." The fourth and final presupposition of Marxist criticism is that established institutions need rhetoric. While the subjugated may use rhetoric as a way of challenging the status quo, the establishment also relies on rhetorical technique. These persuasive skills, Hart and Daughton (2005) suggested, creates a "cultural capital which, when combined with having an education, gaining access to the media, and learning bureaucratic routines, makes some people very powerful indeed."

While critics inspired by Marxism are a diverse group, they do tend to agree on two fundamental goals: to reveal the history that created the original rhetorical act and, as Hart and Daughton (2005) explained, to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, often amplifying voices that have been previously muted." Marxists strive to remind us that all rhetoric is produced by a particular people for a particular people; it cannot be separated from its ancestry. Additionally, Marxists seek to give voice to the oppressed in society by exposing the self-serving motives of the establishment's rhetoric.

Marxist critics originate from multiple perspectives, but according to Hart and Daughton (2005), they all accept three basic premises:

1. *All criticism is politically self-interested.* Whenever we look at something, we do so with all of our habitual ways of looking, including our biases, hunches, and deep-seated uncertainties. In other words, ideological critics believe that feigning objectivity when doing criticism denies who we are as people.
2. *Criticism should be expansionistic.* Ideological critics often study previously ignored texts. Such critics practice what Ricoeur calls a 'hermeneutics of suspicion,' which helps prevent them from being tripped

up by the forces of power and insure that they listen to the voices that had been muted or ignored.

3. *Criticism should be oppositional.* Ideological critics believe that their U.S. counterparts have been too willing to honor the text the author had in mind. They often become 'resistant readers' who accept no utterance at face value and who instead examine a text for what they find interesting, whether or not it coincides with the author's intended interpretation.

Fundamental to virtually all ideological criticism is the concept of hegemony, what Hart and Daughton (2005) term a "Master Text" so ubiquitous that both the rhetor and the audience are typically unaware of its presence or effects. Foss (1997) provided a detailed explanation of hegemony and how it is born:

Primary is the notion that multiple ideologies – multiple patterns of belief – exist in any culture and have the potential to be manifest in rhetorical artifacts. Some ideologies, however, get privileged over others in a culture, and ideologies that present oppositional or alternative perspectives get repressed. The result is a dominant way of seeing the world, of the development of a dominant ideology – in other words, one ideology comes to constitute a hegemony within the culture. *Hegemony* is the privileging of the ideology of one group over that of other groups; it thus constitutes a kind of social control, a means of symbolic coercion, or a form of domination of the more powerful groups over the ideologies of those with less power.

An ideology does not become hegemonic through a master conspiracy of the power elite or through blatant coercion of the suppressed group(s), however. To the contrary, an ideology becomes hegemonic when a group or society implicitly consents to the dominance of that particular ideology over others. Hegemony occurs subtly over time, until it is accepted as "Truth" in the collective consciousness (Foss, 1997).

Multiple factors assist to privilege the ideologies of certain groups over others; primarily the ability of the dominant group to garner support of their ideology from other groups within that culture or society. This support can be actively granted or passively volunteered. Other factors assisting the development and maintenance of hegemony include access to resources and support from powerful groups, particularly institutions. Once an ideology becomes

dominant, Foss (1997) explained, it becomes normalized. After this occurs, normal discourse functions to uphold the dominant ideology and any challenges to its supremacy are seen as deviant. "A hegemonic ideology," Foss (1997) clarified, "provides a sense that things are the way they have to be as it asserts that its meanings are the real, natural ones." Heterosexism (the belief that heterosexuality is the only natural form of sexual attraction), for example is a hegemonic ideology in America, as in many other cultures. Heterosexuality is the norm, the expectation, and any variation is considered abnormal. Foss (1997) used the evident example of racism to exemplify hegemony. "In a culture where the ideology of racism is hegemonic, for example, the privilege accorded to whites seems normal, as does the lack of opportunity accorded to individuals of other races; if practices in the culture concerning people of color are questioned, the questions are seen as abnormal."

Once an ideology becomes hegemonic, those who embrace it make use of a number of sophisticated strategies to mute or contain any resistance. "Often, in fact, these rhetorical strategies incorporate the resistance into the dominant discourse in such a way that the challenge will not contradict and even may support the dominant ideology" (Foss, 1997). In a heterosexist culture, questions regarding why sexual minorities are not guaranteed civil rights are often subdued by classifying sexuality as a behavior, not a state of being. Legal protection of civil rights have historically only been issued to defend classifications that were seen as innate such as sex, race, national origin, etc. If sexual activity is a (behavior) choice, then the issue of civil rights for sexual minorities becomes irrelevant. This type of reaction to resistance can be witnessed in specific groups and movements as well.

As with all ideologies, hegemony is not stagnant. Ideologies can change over time and must be constantly reinforced by society in order for their power to be maintained. "To maintain a position of dominance," Foss (1997) posited, "A hegemonic ideology must be

constructed, renewed, reinforced, and defended continually through the use of rhetorical strategies and practices.” One of the most ubiquitous instruments for creating and maintaining ideologies is the institution of formal education. It is in school that we learn how to respect authority, follow the rules, and behave appropriately. The indoctrination of ideologies is not limited to school, however. The family, the legal system, religion, and the media all perpetuate and reinforce the dominant ideologies within a given culture or society. While individuals may possess dissident ideologies, it is impossible to fully avoid the hegemony within a culture. Foss (1997) related it thusly:

Although, as individuals, we may adhere to ideologies different from the one that is hegemonic, we cannot help but participate in the hegemonic ideology as we participate in our culture through activities such as watching television, browsing through popular magazines, and attending school.

The goal of ideological criticism is to ask if we are aware of the choices we make and actions we take and, if we are aware, how do we really know. Hart and Daughton (2005) explained that ideological criticism “requires us to examine where we go for our premises and why we go there and not elsewhere.” Foss (1997) added to that purpose by explaining that the primary goal of the ideological critic is to realize and expose the hegemonic ideologies embedded in an artifact as well as the subversive ideologies that are being restrained in it. Hart and Daughton (2005) stated the critical goal:

There are powerful people in the world. There always have been. They use rhetoric to maintain their power. They always will. Somebody, therefore, must call attention to how they do what they do and ask if it is right that they do so. This challenge is challenge enough for legions of rhetorical critics since the odds so heavily favor the producers of rhetoric and, hence, the producers of power.

Simply stated, “The ultimate aim of the ideological critic,” Foss (1997) explained, “is the emancipation of human potential that is being thwarted by an existing ideology or ideologies.”

Each of these perspectives on ideological criticism is useful for evaluation and provides illumination on the multiplicity of angles from which to approach ideology. However, I have chosen to conduct an ideological analysis based primarily on the concept of “ideograph” as outlined by Michael Calvin McGee, while incorporating relevant concepts from other critical perspectives. When compared to other perspectives of ideological criticism, McGee’s perspective, for me, is the most concrete and widely applicable. Most of the other critical approaches to ideology embrace the elusive nature of ideology. For example, the semiotic concentration of structuralism encourages a narrow lens for evaluation by focusing on language use, perhaps missing non-linguistic rhetorical forms. Postmodern criticism begins with the primary assumption that modern culture and society is substandard. Approaching criticism with such a pre-determined outcome automatically rules out the possibility that innovation can have positive consequences. Both Marxism and cultural studies concentrate on material money, resources, power. However, rhetoric isn’t only employed by the powerful. Minority groups and social movements utilize rhetoric and persuasion primarily because power is absent. McGee’s method of ideological analysis isn’t launched with presuppositions. It is more generalizable and concrete. By deconstructing any ideology into its parts (ideographs), McGee provides a method of evaluation that can be applied to any ideology and from any perspective. It is this reason that I have chosen to base this criticism on McGee’s concepts.

Ideographs: The Building Blocks of Ideology

In 1980, Michael Calvin McGee published a seminal article in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* entitled, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology.” In the article, McGee provided an alternative to traditional rhetorical methods and added a new twist to the concept of ideology and the practice of ideological criticism. “McGee,” Ronald Lee (2004) suggested, “was reacting against a regime of rhetorical theory built on the authority of revered figures and

texts.” Until that time, rhetorical scholars primarily thought about rhetoric through the quintessential perspective of the “rhetorical Fathers”: Aristotle, Quintilian, Francis Bacon, Kenneth Burke and others. McGee suggested that traditional rhetorical theory wasn’t theory at all but instead a complex set of tools used by the antediluvian rhetorician, tools that weren’t always useful in modern discourse. Lee (2004) described this antiquated form of rhetorical evaluation:

Under this old regime, accounts of rhetoric come down as commandments from on high. They were frequently divorced from any actual discussion of how people do; in fact, engage in the practice of public persuasion. A speech was determined as eloquent and effective based on the application of classical theories. So, if the speaker was found to follow the advice of Aristotle, then the speech must have been both worthy and successful. Not surprisingly, the discourse surrounding contemporary social upheavals, especially the antiwar, civil rights, and women’s movements did not resemble the speeches given by the ancients.

In contrast to “traditional” rhetorical critics, McGee defined himself as a “rhetorical materialist” focused on investigating actual (modern) rhetorical encounters. This is evident in the definition he offered of rhetoric. “Rhetoric,” McGee (1982) wrote, “is a natural social phenomenon in the context of which symbolic claims are made on the behavior and/or belief of one or more persons, allegedly in the interest of such individuals, and with the strong presumption that such claims will cause meaningful change.”

For McGee, all rhetoric seeks to be persuasive. For any speaker/leader to successfully persuade any audience/follower there must first be a shared understanding or common ground. It is in this search for common ground that rhetoric is inextricably linked with ideology. “[T]he rhetorical creation of a sense of collectivity among audience members” Lee (2004) explained, “requires the invention of messages that appear to harmonize the interest of the leader and the people.” Because of this need to find common ground in order for a rhetorical act to be successful, McGee recognized that “competing sides in a public debate, leaders seeking a

following, or politicians seeking to justify an action, would all use a very limited set of value terms" (Pierce, 2003).

In seeking an analytical link between rhetoric and ideology, McGee developed the concept of the "ideograph." Ideologies, McGee hypothesized, could be broken down into a specific set of "ideographs" that serve as a language for perpetuating a broad ideology. McGee (1980) presented a definition of ideology that solidified the interconnectedness of language, rhetoric, and power:

Ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior. Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of "ideographs" easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy. An analysis of ideographic usages, in political rhetoric... reveals interpenetrating systems of "structures" of public motives. Such structures appear to be 'diachronic' and "synchronic" patterns of political consciousness which have the capacity both to control "power" and to influence (if not determine) the shape and texture of each individuals "reality."

Lucaites (1983) built upon McGee's work and offered a more simplified description of the ideograph. "Conceived as the 'building blocks' of an ideology," Lucaites (1983) stated, "ideographs function in public social and political discourse either to justify otherwise unwarrantable beliefs and/or behaviors – including usages of power, or as prescriptive guides for future beliefs and/or behaviors." To help create a more formal definition of "ideograph," McGee (1980) offered a list of characteristics:

An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or anti-social, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable.

Given the ubiquitous use of "ideographs" in rhetoric, the definition appears complex on the surface. However, considering American ideographs such as <equality>, <right to bear

arms>, <rule of law>, <free speech>, and <separation of church and state>, one can begin to exemplify the concept and garner understanding. Lee offered a detailed discussion of McGee's definition of "ideograph" that provides a clarity worthy of reviewing at length.

"An ideograph," McGee (1980) stated, "is an ordinary language term found in political discourse." Lee (2004) clarified this statement by elucidating that ideographs are not technical jargon or words limited to expert usage. Instead, they are everyday words used by ordinary people in ordinary situations. They are words commonly heard in school, on the television and radio and in everyday conversations. The ideograph <war on terror> is a quintessential example of this common usage. Since the events of September 11, 2001, it has been difficult (if not impossible) to watch a national news broadcast or listen to a political speech without hearing the term. An ideograph, McGee (1980) continued, "Is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal." Lee (2004) further explained that ideographs are ambiguous in their denotation and have little meaning outside of the specific situation in which they are used. They are however emotionally charged and value laden when invoked. Additionally, ideographs are "normative" because they are used to make judgments and symbolize a particular path that should be followed or something that should be supported and aspired to. In continuing with the illustration, <war on terror> is a term that when separated from its context lacks any meaningful definition. Define the phrase within the context of post 9/11 America, and the term evokes visions of planes being hijacked and driven into buildings. It stirs up emotions of fear and uncertainty and violation. However, the term doesn't stop there. It also lays down judgment and infers a clear course of action for all United States citizens. Inflicting terror on Americans is unacceptable and any individual, group, or country that can possibly be connected to an act of terror will face immediate retribution.

According to McGee (1980) an ideograph also “warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized as acceptable and laudable.” The essential function of the ideograph, Lee (2004) stressed, is not only to justify the use of power, but also to make that use praiseworthy when in other circumstances it would not be. The ideograph <war on terror> is a prime example of this. In 2002 the United States Congress supported the American invasion of Iraq. In other political contexts this action would not have been justified, but because of the <war on terror> it was not only deemed acceptable, but a necessary sacrifice in order to defend our country from imminent attack with nuclear weapons.

McGee (1980) continued by amplifying four other characteristics of the ideograph in addition to the primary definition. An important point of clarification is that many ideographs also have a non-ideographic usage. The ideograph <grace>, for example, is commonly evoked in religious discussions. However, in non-ideological contexts, it does not function as an ideograph as in the phrase, “she exhibits grace on the dance floor.”

Secondly, while the concept of ideograph is universally applicable in all societies and cultures, specific ideographs have meaning limited to the cultural significance placed upon them. Lee (2004) clarified that ideographs exist in all societies, but that specific ideographs are culture bound. The ideograph <jihad> for example, would have a very different meaning in an Islamic culture than it has in America.

A third characteristic of ideographs is that their acceptance is required as part of societal participation. “Each member of a community,” Lee (2004) contended, “is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for ‘belonging’ to the society.” In other words, understanding a society’s ideographs is a prerequisite to obtaining full membership in a particular culture. Many Christian denominations, for example, require new participants for

prove their understanding and acceptance of the ideographs <salvation> and <communion> in order to gain full membership into the church congregation.

Finally, ideographs have a societally imposed range of acceptable uses. Citizens who use ideographs incorrectly or do not respond to them as expected are subject to social punishment. "A degree of tolerance is usual," McGee (1980) explained, "but people are expected to understand ideographs within a range of usage thought to be acceptable." In fact society will often inflict penalties on those who respond to ideographs with unacceptable behaviors or who use them in heretical ways. According to Lee (2004), these punishments can range in severity, from political marginalization, to being labeled a "traitor" or "demagogue," or even suffering legal or economic sanctions.

In addition to providing a detailed definition of ideographs, their uses, and their limitations, McGee (1980) also posited that ideographs exist simultaneously in two planes of understanding: diachronically and synchronically. Ideographs are diachronic precisely because of their intangible nature. In order to define a particular ideograph, McGee (1980) explained, "We are forced to make reference to its history by detailing the situations for which the word has been an appropriate description." The acceptable use of an ideograph, like the previous example of <war on terror>, is determined by the historical use of the term. Previous to 9/11, the concept would have had little meaning to the American people. However, within the context of a terrorist attack on American soil; <war on terror> has become a very powerful symbol. According to McGee (1980), earlier uses of an ideograph become "touchstones for judging the propriety of the ideograph in a current circumstance." Ideographs are abstract terms that, as Lee (2004) described, take on a specific meaning only when they are placed in a particular context. Ideographic usage, therefore, is not static but can change over time, as

each acceptable new use colors future understandings of the term. McGee (1980) amplified it this way:

The meaning of "equality" does not rigidify because situations seeming to require its usage are never perfectly similar: As the situations vary, so the meaning of "equality" expands and contracts. The variations in meaning of "equality" are much less important, however, than the fundamental, categorical meaning, the "common denominator" of all situations for which "equality" has been the best and most descriptive term. The dynamism of "equality" is thus paramorphic, for even when the term changes its signification in particular circumstances, it retains a formal, categorical meaning, a constant reference to its history as an ideograph.

In addition to being diachronic, or tied to historical context, ideographs are also synchronic as they are often in tension with one another. "An ideograph," McGee (1980) stated, "is always understood in its relation to another; it is defined tautologically by using other terms in its cluster." Thus, <freedom>, Lee (2004) illuminated, is always understood in relationship to <order>, <responsibility>, and the <rule of law>. Because of their synchronic nature, ideologies are often the focus of political disagreement, particularly regarding the relationships between ideographs. "In any given circumstance, advocates may argue that one ideological commitment is more important than another," Lee (2004) wrote. He exemplified this proposition by reviewing the ideological underpinnings of the American civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s when integrationists and segregationists argued over the "preeminence of particular sets of ideographs." Segregationists alleged that the ideographs of <private> ownership and <property> permitted business owners to decide who they were going to serve. Integrationists, by contrast, proposed that the ideograph <equality> demanded that <public> businesses had an obligation to treat each customer in the same way, regardless of race. "The resulting public accommodation and open housing legislation put into law regulations that elevated, in this context, <equality> over <property>," Lee (2004) wrote. This example illustrates the synchronic and diachronic facets of ideographic analysis. The synchronic

dimension of the civil rights illustration reveals the potential conflict between multiple ideographs at any given time. The diachronic dimension shows how a society's ideological underpinnings can evolve over time.

McGee (1980) completed his description of ideographs by explaining that a proper ideological criticism should accomplish three goals: the isolation of the invoked ideographs, the exposure and analysis of the diachronic structure of each ideograph used, and a characterization of the synchronic relationships between the ideographs in that particular context.

The nature of ideology and of ideographs in particular is fundamental to this thesis. Social movements form based upon ideologies and a desire to alter the hegemonic aspects of mainstream culture that are produced and reinforced by the establishment. However, ideologies are esoteric concepts that often defy concrete definition. The concept of ideographs, therefore, is extremely useful in ideological criticism because it seeks to reveal the language of ideology allowing not only the critic but society at large the tools with which to understand ideological invocation and the opportunity to expose hegemony and illicit cultural change.

Applications to Social Movements

While McGee's concept of ideograph can be applied to any ideology, I am specifically evaluating the ideology of a social movement organization. Therefore, a theoretical discussion is not complete without a cursory overview of the specific role of ideology within a social movement.

Stewart, Smith and Denton (2001) outlined six persuasive functions a social movement or social movement organization must seek to achieve: 1. transforming perceptions of reality (past, present and/or future), 2. altering self-perceptions of participants, 3. creating legitimacy for the movement (organization), 4. prescribing courses of action, 5. mobilizing for the

prescribed action, and 6. sustaining the social movement. While these functions are executed to varying degrees by all groups and organizations, social movement organizations differ from establishment organizations because of the particular constraints placed upon them. It is also important to note that these functions will not have equal importance in any particular place and time. Their prominence will be determined, in part, by the specific goal(s) of the organization, the particular environment the organization finds itself in, and the stage of the organization in its lifecycle (Stewart, et al, 2001).

Because, as Foss (1996) explained, virtually everything a culture or group produces is permeated by its ideology, it is no large jump to presuppose that an organization's ideology would constitute a fundamental component of the rhetorical appeals it would use in attempt to fulfill these six persuasive functions. By advancing my ideological criticism of Soulforce from this perspective, I intend to take an organic approach by first identifying the ideographs employed in the organization's documents, and then evaluating how these ideographs combine to form an overall ideology, and finally questioning how this ideology is invoked to fulfill the persuasive functions outlined by Stewart et al (2001).

Literature Review

In the past two decades, many critics have evaluated the rhetorical functions of ideology from perspectives like those previously discussed. Michael Pfau (2005) began with conspiracy theory to criticize one of President Lincoln's speeches in the article "Evaluating Conspiracy: Narrative, Argument, and Ideology in Lincoln's "House Divided" Speech." He specifically evaluated the "slave power" conspiracy theory of the speech, and while doing so, exemplified the "importance of an ideological lens capable of adjudicating ambiguous cases, and interrogating the political agenda underlying any evaluative method." Pfau determined that even when conducting other genres of rhetorical criticism, it was "important to examine not

only the ideological precepts of particular... theories but also the ideological basis of evaluative criteria.”

Martha Solomon offered a particularly informative critique of Emma Goldman’s anarchist ideology and its rhetorical consequences in her 1988 article, “Ideology as Rhetorical Constraint: The Anarchist Agitation of “Red Emma” Goldman.” Solomon verified that “one’s ideology constrains the arguments one uses and colors the presentation of those arguments,” and that certain ideologies “present fewer rhetorical problems for their advocates” due to the fact that they are “inherently more attractive to particular audiences.”

In her 1998 article entitled “The Ideology, Rhetoric, and Organizational Structure of a Countermovement Publication: The Remonstrance, 1890 – 1920,” Elizabeth Burt evaluated the ideology of the anti-suffrage movement publication, *The Remonstrance*, at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Burt established that “...unless a countermovement and its publications are able to develop an ideology and rhetoric that keep step with those of the movement they are opposing and the social context in which they are operating, they are doomed to failure.”

Donna Kowal also reflected on women’s suffrage, but from the perspective of comparing the differing strategies used in the British and American women’s suffrage movements in her 2000 article, “Once Cause, Two Paths: Militant vs. Adjustive Strategies in the British and American Women’s Suffrage Movements.” Kowal built on the proposition that ideology is linked to culture by showing that the ideological and material conditions present in the two countries “led to the strategic use of militancy by the British suffrage movement and non-violence by its American counterpart.”

In 2001, Vanessa Beasley evaluated presidential inaugural speeches in an article entitled “The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus in the United States: American Principles and American Prose in Presidential Inaugurals.” She established that in an attempt to unite the diverse

American population under a comprehensive American ideology, U.S. Presidents inevitably assisted in the creation of an American Civil religion. Beasley concluded that:

...in order for them to remain a people, the American people may need to believe in their abiding, secret similarities, whether or not they really have any. In fact, the less the citizenry actually shares, the more we might expect its leaders to argue that their subjects' similarities are present indeed, but that they merely manifest themselves in ways that are intangible or invisible, such as shared beliefs and shared feelings.

This ideology of <unity> and <consensus> is not without its problems, however. Beasley revealed that this type of rhetoric requires "a strong moral component," an "opposition in order to survive," and, most interestingly, may actually "inhibit the possibility of good-faith discussions of diversity among the American people."

In a 2004 article, "Fixing Feminism: Women's Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary," Bonnie Dow evaluated a television documentary on modern feminism as a rhetorical artifact to reveal that while documentary as "news" seeks to present itself as objective, it is inherently subjective and presents ideology in "the choices of what is included and what is omitted and in how the former is framed." According to Dow, the producer and reporter attempted to present the controversial subject of feminism as congruent to American ideographs such as <equality> and <choice>.

Similarly, Greg Dickinson and Karrin Vasby Anderson critiqued the rhetorical functions of two *Time Magazine* cover images, in their 2004 article, "Fallen: O. J. Simpson, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and the Re-Centering of White Patriarchy." They argued that the cover photos of the two issues they evaluated reinforced the ideology of white male superiority and "naturalize[d] deep, cultural myths which assert[ed] that black men and women of all colors [were] evil."

In her 2007 article, "Language, Ideology and Neoliberalism," Marnie Holborow critiqued the impact of the "ideology of neoliberalism" on the "global market." She found that "much of the opposition to neoliberalism that has come to the fore in recent times has sprung from the

recognition that the neoliberal order does not do what it promises and does not represent the world as it is.”

Robert Holland sought to describe the interaction between culture and ideology in his 2006 article, “(De-)Rationalizing the Irrational.” Specifically, he compared the “quasi-religious, ‘cultural’ characteristics in the dominant discourse of Western liberal democracy and the ‘ideological’ characteristics in the discourse of Islamism.” Holland argued that “culture and ideology may be viewed as discursive macro-strategies which are related to the degree of power enjoyed by a given social system at particular historical moments in time: the former being associated with the consolidation of established power and the latter with a bid to acquire power.”

In his 1997 article, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” Mark Moore considered the cigarette as a representational ideograph for both sides of the environmental tobacco smoke controversy. He posited that the social construction of the cigarette into a representational ideograph “is based on carrying degrees of narrative and scientific knowledge that are provided by each [pro- and anti-smoking interest] group in such a way as to sustain social controversy while it transforms the meaning of both the cigarette and the idea that it represents.” Inherent in the debate Moore presented is the struggle between the ideographs <life> and <liberty>.

Brian Michael Goss conducted an ideological analysis of George F. Will’s editorial writing in his 2005 article, “‘Jeffersonian Poetry’: An Ideological Analysis of George F. Will’s Editorials (2002 – 2004).” He found that Will’s writing relied heavily on the ideographs of <populism>, <us vs. them>, and <national self-glorification>, and in doing so “re-circulate[d] and re-affirm[ed] the right-wing meta-ideology and endow[ed] it with prestige and the patina of ‘common sense’ – even as it move[ed] athwart of the facts on the ground.”

The varied subjects of the noted articles reveal the prominence of ideology in rhetorical acts. In fact one could argue that invoking ideological appeals is necessary for the successful persuasion of any audience by a rhetorical act. This suggestion is uncovered through the scope of topics provided here. Pfau (2005) illustrated the importance of using an "ideological lens" to expose the political agenda of all methods of rhetorical criticism. Solomon (1988) provided evidence to suggest that an individual's ideology limits the particular arguments she may use and "colors" the way those arguments are presented in a rhetorical act. Burt (1998) demonstrated that a countermovement must promote an ideology that is equal to those of its opposition and the social context in order to avoid failure. Kowol (2000) added to this concept by demonstrating that ideology is culture specific. Dow (2004) and Dickinson and Anderson (2004) suggested that even objective "news" is affected by ideology. Moore (1997) revealed how a single ideograph can be used by opposite sides of a debate simultaneously. This list of articles dealing with ideology is certainly far from comprehensive but begins to paint the picture of how ideology is intertwined with culture and how fundamental it is in rhetorical appeals.

CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE

Soulforce is worthy of examination precisely due to the unique persuasive nature and ideological stance of its stated goals: to end suffering, to change minds, to engage in passive nonviolent resistance, and bring hope (these goals were previously presented in their entirety). Any organization within a social movement must engage in persuasive actions in order to forward the goals of the organization, and the movement at large. Persuasion is the organization's primary method of birth, sustenance and change. Stewart et al. (2001) note:

Social movements rely on persuasion as the primary agency through which they attempt to perform critical persuasive functions that enable them to come into existence, satisfy requirements, grow in size and influence, meet opposition from within and without, and effectively bring about or resist change.

Ideological appeals are one of the principal methods by which this persuasion can be achieved. The primary goal of Soulforce is to bring about change through prescribing specific courses of action, including the mandatory embracing of a new ideology. As Stewart, et al (2001) suggests:

Ideology "is the generic name given to those beliefs which mobilize people into action in social movements;" an ideology is "a set of beliefs about the social world and how it operates, containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action should be taken in the light of these statements." This set of beliefs addresses what must be done, who must do it, and how it must be done.

For this reason, it is my intention to conduct an ideological analysis of Soulforce. While many organizations within the gay rights movement seek to promote civil rights for LGBT citizens and to diminish discrimination against those same individuals, most of those organizations focus primarily on legislation as the means to achieve this end. Soulforce,

however, has positioned itself in a unique playing field by responding directly to religious leaders and establishment institutions in an attempt to alter their ideological underpinnings and therefore change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. This is apparent in Soulforce's "Beliefs

About My Adversary:"

My adversary is also a child of the Creator; we are both members of the same human family; we are sisters and brothers in need of reconciliation.

My adversary is not my enemy, but a victim of misinformation as I have been.

My only task is to bring my adversary truth in love (nonviolence) relentlessly.

My adversary's motives are as pure as mine and of no relevance to our discussion.

My worst adversary has an amazing potential for positive change.

My adversary may have an insight into truth that I do not have.

My adversary and I will understand each other and come to a new position that will satisfy us both, if we conduct our search for truth guided by the principles of love.

Due to its explicit rhetorical circumstances, an ideological analysis of Soulforce will be particularly informative. As this juncture, I am posing the following research questions inspired by McGee's (1980) concept of ideograph and incorporating Stewart et al's (2001) functions of a social movement:

RQ1: What are the specific ideographs conjured by Soulforce in its published documents?

RQ2: What is the diachronic nature of each of the ideographs invoked?

RQ3: What is the synchronic nature of each of the ideographs invoked?

RQ4: What is the ideology these ideographs coalesce to create?

RQ5: How do these ideographs reflect the persuasive functions of the organization?

RQ6: Is the ideology of Soulforce coherent with the persuasive functions it seeks to achieve. How so? If not, what are the limitations?

In order to answer these questions effectively, I will conduct an "organic" criticism of four primary documents located in the Resources section of the Soulforce website. I have chosen these four specifically because they present the primary ideology of Soulforce and the ideals the organization implores others to accept. Each of these documents strive to fulfill one

or more of the persuasive functions of social movements as outlined by Stuart et al (2001) and make frequent use of ideographs, as described by McGee (1980), in their attempts to do so.

The first document I will evaluate is the Original 17 Step Journey Into Soulforce, a document written by White and used as a training guide for the organization's primary direct action, a 1999 meeting with the late Reverend Jerry Falwell in Lynchburg, VA. This document is particularly important because it serves as the core manifesto for the organization. According to Stewart, et al, (2001) a manifesto is a document that presents a social movement's (or organization's) ideology. The 17 Step Journey fulfills the four essential functions of a manifesto in that it: (1) expresses the exigence, (2) identifies the flawed or incorrect reasoning that created and sustains the exigence, (3) states the organizations beliefs and principles, and (4) prescribes a solution and identifies the principles and actions that will bring the solution to fruition (Stewart et al, 2001). The three additional documents serve as addendums to the "17-step journey" manifesto by further clarifying the exigence and its origins as well as the actions and principles Soulforce prescribes to resolve it.

The second document, entitled What The Bible Says – And Doesn't Say – About Homosexuality is a 24-page booklet written by Soulforce founder, the Reverend Dr. Mel White. In the document White proposes to answer the question, "How can you consider yourself a Christian when you are also gay?" The third document is entitled A False Focus On My Family: Why Every Person Of Faith Should Be Deeply Troubled By Dr. James Dobson's Dangerous And Misleading Words About The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, And Transgender Community. This 32-page booklet was written by Soulforce executive director Jeff Lutes and proposes to "expose the harsh and misleading anti-gay rhetoric" distributed by Focus on the Family and offers a response using the "latest in scientific, psychological, psychiatric, and medical research." The fourth document I will evaluate is entitled Christian Youth: An Important Voice In The Present

Struggle For Gay Rights In America. The 48-page booklet was produced by the Soulforce Southern Baptist team especially for the Soulforce direct action at the Southern Baptist Convention and contains two Bible studies, an article on ex-gay ministries, and open letters from supportive Christian youth leaders.

The Soulforce website contains countless other documents; press releases, videos, news bulletins, general information pages, articles, and archives. Any of these sections would warrant further examination. However, an evaluation of the complete website is beyond the scope of this thesis. Additionally, I believe that the four documents selected provide an accurate overview of the ideology of Soulforce and offer sufficient data for criticism.

The Soulforce documents reveal three primary ideographs <suffering>, <voluntary suffering>, and <truth> each of which is expanded through its diachronic and synchronic nature. These coalesce to create a coherent ideology used to support and perpetuate the specific persuasive functions of the discourse.

The Ideograph <Suffering>

The ideograph <suffering> is a major theme throughout Soulforce's rhetoric. In fact, the first two steps of *The Original 17 Step Journey* focus entirely on the suffering endured by LGBT individuals. White elaborates this point by sharing numerous stories of victims of gay bashing, including several which have ended in death. One such narrative is the story of Nicholas West, a gay man who was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in Texas.

On November 30, 1993, Nicholas West, a young gay man in Tyler, Texas, was kidnapped by gay bashers, tortured and terrorized in a gravel pit. His abductors shot Nicholas so many times (and at such close range) that the coroner couldn't distinguish entry and exit wounds. As the Newly arrived Dean of the Cathedral of Home MCC in Dallas, I was asked to speak at Nick's memorial service in the park from which he was kidnapped. Because Texas judges were tempted to let gay bashers off with a slap of the wrist, I attended the killer's two week trial in distant Kerrville [Texas].

As other terrorized gay men who had escaped these same captors told their stories, I sat in an almost empty courtroom and wept. One young man, a Wal-Mart clerk, had been kidnapped, held at gunpoint, and terrorized with repeated games of Russian roulette. Before they could kill him, the naked boy managed to dive into a nearby, nearly frozen lake where he stayed for five hours with his tormentors shooting bullets into the darkness hoping to kill their prey.

In 1994 alone, we buried 12 gay Texans who were murdered by gay bashers who felt they were doing God's business to eliminate our innocent brothers. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

This narrative begins to reveal how extreme and often brutal the <suffering> of LGBT individuals can be. But the story of Nicholas West does not stand in isolation. It is one of countless tales of violence, abuse and discrimination experienced by LGBT individuals. White also exemplifies <suffering> by retelling the story of Benny Hogan, another gay Texan who committed suicide after being arrested and subsequently outed in a newspaper advertisement paid for by the Christian Coalition.

In July, 1994, Benny Hogan was picked up in a San Antonio Park during a "sting" by police and charged with "loitering." He was talking to other gay men on a park bench at the time of his arrest. The Christian Coalition in San Antonio took out an ad in the paper publishing the names of men picked up in that "sting" including Benny Hogan. On Pride Sunday, Feeling "ruined and shamed" by his public "outing," Benny hanged himself in his Grandmother's garage. Benny's brother asked me to conduct a memorial service for Benny on the steps of the newspaper that published his name.

Nicholas and Benny are just two of the uncounted millions of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders who face suffering every day of their lives. Today, we begin this Journey Into Soulforce with a simple acknowledgement of that terrible suffering. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

In addition to the physical pain and abuse many LGBT individuals experience, White also points out what he considers to be an even more pervasive and destructive form of <suffering>; a condition he labels "soul-suffering."

We recoil with rage and grief when we hear that Matthew Shepard was beaten, tied to a fence and left to die in a frozen field in Wyoming. We are outraged when we learn that young Adam Colton was pinned to the ground while bashers carved "fag" into his bruised and bleeding chest. But there is another kind of suffering that should make us just as angry and just as sad, the kind of Soul-

suffering that causes our best and brightest to kill themselves. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

White defines soul-suffering as the emotional, spiritual, and mental suffering that all LGBT individuals experience as a result of institutionalized oppression; suffering that often leads to self-destructive behavior and/or suicide.

According to a 2007 report published by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, between 20 and 40 percent of the estimated 1.6 million homeless youth in America identify as LGBT. Some studies suggest that as many as 26 percent of gay teens are told they must leave home after coming out to their parents or guardians. Once on the streets, homeless LGBT youth are more likely to use drugs, participate in sex work, and attempt suicide. Also, LGBT youth report they are often threatened, belittled and abused at shelters by staff as well as other residents. Additionally, most studies suggest that as many as 30 percent of all youth suicides are completed by LGBT individuals, a staggering statistic considering that LGBT individuals are only believed to comprise approximately 10 percent of the total U.S. population. Gay Youth Statistics reports that 45 percent of gay males and 20 percent of lesbians report having experienced verbal harassment and/or physical violence during high school as a result of their sexual orientation. More than 50 percent of gay and lesbian adolescents admit to using alcohol and/or other drugs.

White believes that all LGBT <suffering> is a direct result of the synchronic ideograph <untruth> that is perpetuated primarily by Christian religion. "The anti-homosexual rhetoric that flows out of misinformed religious leaders like Jerry Falwell leads to all kinds of crimes against God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children," White (*The Original 17 Step Journey*) writes. "But even worse, the anti-homosexual rhetoric takes root inside each of us like a cancer that eats away at our human spirit and eventually cripples our soul."

Throughout the numerous examples provided, White reveals the diachronic nature of the ideograph <suffering> by comparing the suffering of LGBT individuals to the “untouchable” Caste that Gandhi sought to liberate in India and to the Black victims of segregation that King fought to free in America.

After centuries of being dehumanized and demeaned by the upper castes, Gandhi reminded the “Untouchables” that they were God’s children, too, created and loved by their Creator, who was with them in their struggle for justice. They weren’t sub-human, inferior, or punished by God for their sinfulness in this life or another. Because of his commitment to these core “soul force” beliefs, Gandhi renamed the outcasts “Harijan” (Children of God). His protests and demands helped India end its injustice against the “Untouchables”.... But Gandhi’s “soul force” belief that the “Untouchables” were eternal souls, loved by their Creator, helped free the hearts and minds of the “Untouchables” themselves long before the laws and customs changed.

In sermon after sermon, Dr. [Martin Luther] King reminded the outcasts of his time, the black victims of slavery and segregation, that they too were God’s children, created and loved by God exactly as they were created, and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights among them “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Today, racial minorities in American schools join Jesse Jackson in his Rainbow Coalition and cheer, “I am somebody!” Jesse was there when Martin [Luther King Jr.] died. That cheer comes directly out of the “soul force” belief that people of color, too, are created and loved by their Creator.

Gandhi applied “soul force” to Indian outcasts. King applied “soul force” to African-American outcasts. Now we can apply these “soul force” beliefs to our own sexual outcasts. Why shouldn’t we? Even though Gandhi and King (like Jesus and the Jewish Prophets) were silent about sexual orientation, Gandhi’s grandson, Arun Gandhi, and Martin’s wife, Coretta Scott, have clearly extended the Soulforce heritage to God’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children.

Therefore, in the spirit of “soul force”, in the spirit of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus, in the spirit of Gandhi and King, we lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people claim our equal right to be called the children of God. Now, if we can really believe it ourselves – and help our sisters and brothers to believe it – we will have taken a major step in ending the soul-suffering that comes from NOT believing it. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

White encourages participants in the journey to read the writings of Gandhi and King and to watch movies and documentaries about their lives in order to better understand their journeys and the parallels to White’s perspective of the Gay Rights Movement. While most

Americans have at least a cursory knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., few people are familiar with the movement Gandhi led in India. Gandhi's quest to free the "untouchable" people of India from oppression inspired both King and subsequently White.

Soulforce Executive Director Jeff Lutes also articulates the suffering of the LGBT community in *A False Focus on My Family*. In the Section "A Call To Justice," he appraises the myriad ways that LGBT individuals and their families are victimized because of misinformation and misplaced trust.

At this very moment, a young gay man in a Christian home is deciding whether or not to live another day. Tonight, a young lesbian will cry herself to sleep, her soul crushed by unfathomable psychological torment. Why? Her parents, following the advice of Dr. [James] Dobson [founder of Focus on the Family], will tell her to read the Bible once more, force her to go to yet another "reparative therapist" or join an "ex-gay" ministry, and admonish her to "just get right with God."

Parents of gays and lesbians are also victimized – falsely blaming themselves for their child's sexual orientation. How many more mothers will waste years in unnecessary remorse, wondering if they were too "controlling and overbearing"? How many more fathers will join the walking wounded by wrongly shaming themselves for having a gay son...?

A beautiful child of God will die tonight because of that misinformation. A young lesbian will take her own life, a gay son will be murdered. Countless others will kill their precious souls by locking themselves deeper into dark closets of shame and despair. (Lutes, *A False Focus on My Family*)

In each of these illustrations, the ideograph <suffering> is synchronically linked to the ideograph <discrimination>. As McGee (1980) explains, "An ideograph... is always understood in its relation to another; it is defined tautologically by using other terms in its cluster." This synchronic nature is further illustrated in the *Christian Youth* document. The Bible study guide is scattered with open letters from Christian youth. In one such letter, 19 year old United Church of Christ Council Member James Darnell clarifies the point:

Homosexuals and people perceived to be homosexual are among some of the most discriminated against people in the world. Much of this discrimination comes from the fact that some people believe that because their faith teaches

against homosexuality, they can treat people of different sexual orientation as second class citizens. This is not the truth... acts of hatred only build up more walls of division. Conversely, when we act in love we help take down those walls that divide us and exhibit a truly Christian way of life. (*Christian Youth*)

The synchronic link between <suffering> and <discrimination> is further exemplified in the *Christian Youth* document in a section entitled; "Absent Voices: Victims of Anti-Gay Teachings." The authors attribute LGBT suffering to discrimination based on religious teaching and strive to reveal that suffering through specific examples of individuals who were murdered or took their own lives.

Soulforce regards anti-homosexual religious teaching as the primary source of suffering for God's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender children. Some members of society have used these teachings as a license to kill gays. Sometimes these teachings are used as a motive for gay people to kill themselves. The following are seven young people who have been murdered or who were shamed to the point that they felt they could not live another day in a world hostile to non-heterosexuals. Take a moment to read their stories and hear the deep feeling of loss from the people who loved them. (*Christian Youth*)

One such illustration, as retold by his mother Leslie Sadasivan, is the story of Robbie Kirkland, a gay teen who chose to take his own life rather than continue to endure suffering and discrimination.

On January 2, 1997, my darling fourteen-year-old son, Robbie Kirkland, committed suicide after a four year struggle to accept and find peace with his homosexuality. Our family loved, supported, and accepted him but could not protect him from the rejection and harassment he experienced at his Catholic schools or his overall perception of how society and religion view homosexuality. Robbie, my only son, was a very special and loving person. He was kind and sensitive with a witty sense of humor. He loved writing and had dreams of being a writer – *Leslie Sadasivan, mother of Robbie Kirkland. (Christian Youth)*

The narratives of shared LGBT suffering throughout the Soulforce documents begin the necessary persuasive function of altering the self-perceptions of the movement's participants. Virtually any member of the LGBT community can provide personal stories of suffering and oppression. But sharing these stories serves to create a common experience and a sense of

solidarity among participants. Society has taught the LGBT community through social and legal repression that they are second-class citizens and inferior to heterosexuals. In most of the U.S., LGBT couples do not have the legal right to marry or adopt children. They even have difficulty obtaining protection of their personal choices such as who may visit them in the hospital. White reminds the reader of this blatant <discrimination> in Step 1 of *The Original 17 Step Journey*.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Americans are still second-class citizens in their own country.

- Denied the right to live and love openly by sodomy laws,
- Denied the estimated 1,047 rights and protections that go with marriage,
- Denied the right to serve openly in the military,
- Denied the right (in most states) to nondiscrimination in employment and housing,
- Denied the right (the current crisis) to adopt or provide foster care,
- Denied the right (a coming crisis) to retain custody of our own birth children,
- Denied the right to full membership, ordination, or marriage in our home churches,
- Denied the right to be a member or a leader in the Boy Scouts of America,
- Denied the right to be included in national hate crime legislation, even though we are among the primary victims of a still-growing siege of violence across the nation.

This second-class status is further reinforced through the physical and emotional abuse LGBT individuals regularly face. In the most extreme cases, this abuse ends with torture and death essentially dehumanizing them and reducing them to non-human things. In addition to creating a sense of solidarity, the sharing of these narratives also serves to reinforce that the suffering and oppression they experience is unwarranted. Once members of the group are unified in the belief that they are innocent victims of powers beyond their control, they can begin to develop the strength necessary to publicly demand an end to the circumstances that lead to their subjugation (Stewart et al, 2001).

The Ideograph <Voluntary Suffering>

In direct opposition to the <involuntary suffering> imposed upon the LGBT community by society, White calls upon the oppressed to engage in <voluntary suffering> as a method of liberation. In step 10 of *The Original 17 Step Journey*, he invokes Christ's command in the New Testament to "love your enemies" as the foundation of voluntary suffering.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-45)

However necessary, White does not promote <voluntary suffering> naively. He acknowledges that it will involve sacrifice and is potentially dangerous. "The call to do justice guided by the Soulforce rules is not a call to 'laying back.' It is a call to make choices that may lead to redemptive suffering on your part and mine..." White (*The Original 17 Step Journey*) writes. "I'm convinced that your own soul will grow more powerful in the process, but I don't want you to continue under false pretenses. From this moment, the journey becomes dangerous." In spite of this acknowledgement, White stresses that suffering (even when voluntary) is not the end goal. It is instead a potential and likely necessary consequence of doing justice. White makes his point by once again recalling the voluntary suffering that was necessary in order to advance the Civil Rights Movement.

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson didn't have the courage to introduce Civil Rights legislation until they saw people suffer and die. The Congress didn't have the courage to pass Civil Rights legislation until they saw people suffer and die. The people of this nation didn't have the courage to support Civil Rights legislation until they saw people suffer and die. I'm convinced that we will not win this struggle for justice until we, too, are willing to suffer and even to die.

I don't seek suffering for myself. That would be pathological. I seek Justice. But the more I read of Gandhi and King (of Bonhoeffer, Romero, and Chavez, of the church women and priests slaughtered in El Salvador, of the Jewish prophets and Jesus) the more I am convinced that being willing to suffer and even to die

for justice is a Soulforce requisite. Gandhi said, "Take one step towards your adversary and the rest of your steps will follow." In my heart, I am convinced ("obsessed"?) with the idea that taking a stand against the untruth of Jerry and the others will be that first step. How Jerry and the others respond will determine the steps that follow. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

Throughout the Soulforce documents, the ideograph <voluntary suffering> doesn't stand in isolation. It is synchronically tied to the ideographs <love> and <redemption>. "Soulforce" suffering, White explains, must be voluntary (in that it is taken on by choice) and redemptive (it is an active attempt to achieve a greater good). White exemplifies this by returning to the focus of *The Original 17 Step Journey*, Jerry Falwell. "It isn't enough to not hate Jerry," White writes, "If we really love Jerry, we can't just 'love him' and walk away... Gandhi and King say it over and over again. Love (nonviolence) is the criterion by which our actions must be judged." White continues to clarify the necessity of love in action through nonviolence by elaborating on how Gandhi and King conducted their movements.

It is "natural" to hate, but hating Jerry will NOT help our cause or end his campaign of misinformation against us. Hating is, however, a place to start. One who hates Jerry and the others is at least awake.... Gandhi read Jesus words "Love your enemies" and determined to turn the principle into practice. Soulforce is a call to those who are awake enough to hate our enemies, to love them instead. Why? Because love is the only way to turn our enemies into friends.

Often Dr. King had to explain that loving your enemies didn't mean sleeping with them (eros or romantic love) or becoming their best friend (philia or the love of old friends). For King, loving your enemies was agape love, "...understanding, creative, redemptive, good will to all... it is the love of God," he said, "operating in the human heart... We love our enemies because God loves them."

Gandhi believed that nonviolent Indians (practicing truth and love) could conquer the violent forces of the British Empire. And history proved him right. King believed that nonviolent "Negroes" (practicing truth and love) could conquer the violent forces of lynch mobs, southern sheriffs, and the Ku Klux Klan. And history proved him right. Do you believe that LGBT people and our allies (armed only with truth and love) can conquer the violent forces that flow out of this campaign of misinformation against us? I'm hoping that history won't prove that we didn't try. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

In addition to being synchronically linked to the ideographs <love> and <redemption>, the ideograph <suffering> is also synchronically linked to the ideograph <justice>. For White, justice is not merely an esoteric noun but is instead a verb, something that is done through action. He believes that God's will is the realization of freedom and justice for all people. Voluntary redemptive suffering is often the consequence of doing justice on behalf of the oppressed. After studying the examples of Gandhi and King, White believes that in the process of seeking freedom and justice for others, participants experiences liberation themselves.

We are called to join our Creator in the frontlines of the struggle to win liberty and justice for all. It is not enough to quote the Declaration of Independence or to cheer the noble insights of Martin Sheen, Gandhi or King. "Soul force" calls us to move beyond noble belief to courageous action. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

White builds upon the call to do justice by explaining that the only way to successfully accomplish <justice> is by engaging in nonviolent action and experiencing voluntary suffering. Voluntary suffering is the focal point of Soulforce and hailed by White as the most potent way to illicit change in the hearts and minds of the movement's oppressors. Those in opposition to LGBT equality, White contends will not be swayed by arguments, however logical or eloquent they may be. "But when your adversary sees that you are willing to risk 'voluntary redemptive suffering' he is stunned, confused and impressed by your sincerity" (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*). White shares the examples of the Reverends Jimmy Creech and Gregory Bell, both United Methodist ministers who chose to perform Holy Union ceremonies for same-sex couples in violation of their denomination's orders. Both men voluntarily took the risk and each suffered great personal and professional loss as a result.

The Reverends Jimmy Creech and Gregory Dell are two courageous United Methodist ministers who had a choice. Each man was asked by a same-sex couple in his congregation to perform their Holy Union service. Each man knew that if he performed that Holy Union he could be brought up on charges, tried, and found guilty by a church court. Jimmy and Gregory both decided to take

that risk on behalf of TRUTH and both men suffered great personal and professional loss from the trials that followed. (White, *The Original 12 Step Journey*)

White further clarifies the specific type of nonviolent action that is needed by recollecting on the journeys of Gandhi and King. "Think about Gandhi's 245 mile march to the sea or King's 383 day bus boycott in Montgomery," White (*The Original 17 Step Journey*) writes. "Friends and enemies alike were deeply moved by their voluntary suffering." Gandhi, White explains was the pioneer of using nonviolence as a method for transforming society and renewing individual spirits. In order to differentiate between "passive resistance" and his specific vision of nonviolence, Gandhi named it "Satyagraha," which is literally translated "truth force." Once he realized the power Satyagraha had in his life and the lives of his followers, Gandhi began to call Satyagraha "soul force." Soulforce, White explains, is not a call to be nice to our enemies or cowardice to shy from confrontation. Instead, "Soulforce shows us a way to confront them more effectively" (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*).

It is with this explanation that White moves away from the persuasive function of altering the self-perceptions of the protesters and toward prescribing a course of action. "Prescribing courses of action constitutes selling the social movement's ideology" (Stewart et al, 2001). Before White offers an explanation of what must be done to stop the oppression of LGBT individuals, he reveals how it must be accomplished; through a vow to voluntary redemptive suffering. "I believe that I am called by my Creator to take on myself without complaint any suffering that might result from my confrontation with untruth and to do all in my power to help my adversary avoid all suffering," White (*The Original 17 Step Journey*) writes, "especially that suffering that may result from our confrontation."

Once White elaborates the notion of voluntary redemptive suffering he declares what specifically must be done and gives participants a list of thirteen rules for engaging in

nonviolent direct action based upon the examples provided by Gandhi and King. "In explaining what must be done, a social movement presents demands and solutions that will alleviate a grave condition..." Stewart et al (2001) write. "It is a course of action designed to produce positive evolutionary results." What makes the action that White prescribes unique is that it is designed not as a means of gaining victory against an enemy, but as a way of reconciling with the adversary. In *The Original 17 Step Journey*, White presents the principles of nonviolent direct action thusly:

1. The primary goal of any direct action is reconciliation, not victory.
2. Any direct action must be planned and conducted to win the heart and mind of our opponent, not to terrorize, overwhelm, embarrass, shame, or force him into submission.
3. A direct action is taken when we know no other way to end the impasse and to revive the discussion that will lead us to a third position we both can accept.
4. Although one individual alone may enter into a direct action against an opponent's untruth, a greater good comes by making our case clear to the public.
5. Often just the act of recruiting/training allies, the opponent is moved to reconciliation.
6. The primary principles of 'soul force' (truth, love, voluntary redemptive suffering) must guide our relationships with our allies as it guides our confrontation with our adversary.
7. Any direct action(s) we take must be as pure and as loving as the end we seek.
8. We refuse to participate in any direct action that involves physical violence.
9. We refuse to participate in any psychological or spiritual violence as well.
10. We will accept/absorb any suffering to ourselves that results from our direct action without anger or retaliation.
11. We will do our best to prevent any suffering to our adversary from our direct action.
12. We will complete every direct action that we begin. And we will NOT begin a direct action that we can't or aren't willing to carry through to its conclusion.
13. We will not fear (or seek) our own death but if death comes to us out of our quest for justice, we will accept it as a gift from God and know "that death is not the end, but the beginning of life."

It is these principles that set Soulforce apart from other social movements, and in particular other organizations within the Gay Rights Movement. While other organizations may accept, or even embrace, violence or coercion as methods of persuasion, Soulforce has built its

entire existence on nonviolence and reconciliation. Its goal is not to intimidate opponents or make ultimatums. To the contrary, Soulforce desires to cultivate a healthy space for dialogue with its opponents. Soulforce's desire is not to force a change in the behavior of the resistance but to alter their hearts and minds through truth and love, thus leading those in opposition of LGBT equality to change their behavior willingly. White believes the principal step in encouraging this change occurs through illuminating <truth.>

The Ideograph <Truth>

A primary ideograph represented throughout the Soulforce documents and fundamental to the organization's mission is <truth>. For White, untruth is the only true enemy not only of the LGBT community, but of all oppressed groups through the course of history. In fact, in the 7th step of *The Original 17 Step Journey*, White explicitly explains that there are no human enemies; the rightful enemy is untruth. "Gandhi would remind us that the 'Religious Right' is not our enemy," White writes. He goes on to specifically state that Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, James Kennedy, and the other anti-gay religious leaders are not the source of LGBT suffering. According to White, these opposition leaders are fellow victims of misinformation and ignorance. "Those who believe (and even those who teach) the untruths about sexual orientation are victims too," White (*The Original 17 Step Journey*) writes. "To understand the cause of our suffering is to understand the untruths, half-truths, and misunderstandings that have victimized us all." Intuitively, the only way to battle <untruth> is by accepting and declaring <truth> at every opportunity.

White's suggestion that major religious leaders are victims of ignorance and misinformation is a substantial claim given the fact that for many people religion is the primary, if not the only, source of <truth> in their lives. Alternatively, there are also many individuals (particularly within the LGBT community) who do not accept Christianity as a source of any

meaningful truth. White acknowledges these dissenters in step 3 of *17 The Original Step Journey Into Soulforce*. He recognizes the right of individuals to not believe in religion-based <truth> but ascertains that "soul force" can only be maintained by a "person of faith." White then suggests that many LGBT individuals have rejected Christianity not due to genuine disbelief, but as a means of self-preservation.

Bad religion has become the enemy of God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children. Many in our community have chosen to reject bad religion before it wounds them any deeper. And though there are thoughtful, life-long atheists among us, some who call themselves "atheists" are really people of faith stuck between rejecting an old inadequate god and embracing the new Spirit of Truth. Too many of these "rejecters" throw the baby (of faith) out with the bath (of bad religion). They confuse religion and faith and in the process, give up both. When we abandon our spirit-journeys (because we've been abandoned by our churches, synagogues, or temples), we only hurt ourselves. (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*)

Later in step 3, White builds upon this premise of the necessity of faith by making a potentially polarizing claim. He suggests that once the <truth> is made known and opponents of the LGBT community fully embrace it, they will come to realize that LGBT individuals were not "born to destroy religion, but to save it" (White, *The Original 17 Step Journey*). It is apparent throughout *The Original 17 Step Journey* that the intended audience is the LGBT community and those who are supportive of it. White believes that it is impossible to convince opponents to accept the <truth> until members of the LGBT community accept it about themselves.

A fundamental aspect of *The Original 17 Step Journey* therefore is enhancing the self-concepts of the movement's participants. Stewart, et al (2001) explains that this is an essential persuasive function of a social movement because "protesters must have strong, healthy egos when they take on powerful institutions and entrenched cultural norms and values." White makes this apparent when he states in the preamble to *The Original 17 Step Journey* that one of the goals is to see participant's spirits "revived and renewed."

Providing <truth> is also the primary focus of another Soulforce document: *What the Bible Says*. In this document, White attempts to reveal <truth> by exposing and correcting what he suggests are the most common misinterpretations of biblical Scripture that serve to perpetuate ignorance and misinformation regarding LGBT individuals. This incorrect knowledge, or <untruth>, is held by both the opposition and members of the LGBT community itself. Because of this, White attempts to speak to both audiences simultaneously. He acknowledges the potentially disparate audiences within the first paragraphs but contends that both groups can realize <truth> by being open-minded to new insight. "I'm convinced the Bible has a powerful message for gay and lesbian Christians – as well as straight Christians," White (*What the Bible Says*) writes, "but it's not the message of condemnation we so often hear."

Throughout the document, White attempts to transform perceptions of reality, a necessary persuasive function of social movements according to Stewart, et al (2001). Because the focus of *What the Bible Says* is to reveal the misinterpretations of Scripture, White seeks to transform perceptions of reality by concentrating on the past. He builds this persuasive argument by presenting eight premises.

White's first premise of the <truth> ideograph is that "most people have not carefully and prayerfully researched the biblical texts often used to condemn God's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children" (White, *What the Bible Says*). He supports this premise by referencing several statistics that reinforce the idea that most Americans are biblically ignorant. According to a recent study, White explains, 38 percent of Americans polled believed that the Old Testament was written after Jesus' death and ten percent believed that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. More specifically, many people who use the Bible to defend their beliefs about homosexuality aren't even familiar with the specific biblical verses that actually deal with the topic or where to find them.

This same kind of biblical ignorance is all too present around the topic of homosexuality. Often people who love and trust God's Word have never given careful and prayerful attention to what the Bible does or doesn't say about homosexuality. For example, many Christians don't know that: Jesus says nothing about same-sex behavior, the Jewish prophets are silent about homosexuality, only six or seven of the Bible's one million verses refer to same-sex behavior in any way – and none of these verses refer to homosexual orientation as it's understood today.

Most people who are certain they know what the Bible says about homosexuality don't know where the verses that reference same-sex behavior can be found. They haven't read them, let alone studied them carefully... (White, *What the Bible Says*)

The second premise White provides of the ideograph <truth> is that society has a history of using biblical misinterpretation to support prejudice and oppression and left a trail of blood, suffering, and death. He provides historical examples of Biblically defended violence and repression, including the crusades and slavery.

Over the centuries people who misunderstood or misrepresented the Bible have done terrible things. The Bible has been misused to defend bloody crusades and tragic inquisitions; to support slavery, apartheid, and segregation; to persecute Jews and other non-Christian people of faith; to support Hitler's Third Reich and the Holocaust; to oppose medical science; to condemn interracial marriage; to execute women as witches; and to support the Ku Klux Klan. Shakespeare said it this way: "Even the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." (White, *What The Bible Says*)

More specifically, White retells the all too recent stories of LGBT hate crimes whose perpetrators defended their actions with religion; synchronically linking the ideograph <suffering> with the ideograph <truth>. He conveys the murders of Danny Overstreet, Gary Matson and Winfield Mowder, and Matthew Shepard as examples of this justification. Danny Overstreet was murdered in September, 2000, when Ronald Gay entered the Backstreet Café in Roanoke, Virginia, a known gathering place for LGBT individuals, and began shooting.

Confident that God's Word supported his tragic plan of action, Mr. Gay shouted, "I am a Christian soldier, working for my Lord." Claiming that "Jesus does not want these people in his heaven," he shot seven innocent gay and lesbian people. One man, Danny Overstreet, died instantly. Others still suffer from their physical and psychological wounds. (White, *What the Bible Says*)

Similarly, Matthew Williams, one of the men convicted of killing gay couple Gary Matson and Winfield Mowder in California, defended his actions by stating that he had to obey God's law. While waiting in Jail, Williams reported to his mother that he intended to base his defense on the Scriptures. Similarly, Matthew Shepard's death was defended by a North Carolina minister as justified by Scripture.

After Matthew Shepard was killed in 1998, a pastor in North Carolina published an open letter regarding the trial of Aaron McKinney that read: "Gays are under the death penalty. His blood is guilty before God (Lev. 20:13). If a person kills a gay, the gay's blood is upon the gay and not upon the hands of the person doing the killing. The acts of gays are so abominable to God. His Word is there and we can't change it." (White, *What the Bible Says*)

White explains that it is vital that these stories be heard because the violence continues, violence that is all too often justified through <untruth> by churches and ministers as a direct result of misinterpretation.

...it's important to hear these stories, because I'm not writing this little pamphlet as a scholarly exercise. It's a matter of life and death. I'm pleading for the lives of my lesbian sisters and gay brothers who are rejected by their friends and families, fired by their employers, denied their civil rights, refused full membership in their churches, and kill themselves or are killed by others – all on the basis of these six or seven verses. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White's third premise regarding the <truth> ideograph is that Christians must be open to continued revelations of new <truth> from Biblical Scripture. He espouses this claim by offering several examples of biblical heroes and well-known religious leaders who have changed their opinions due to revelations of new truth from Scripture. White is careful, however not to suggest that the Bible is inaccurate. Instead, the problem is misunderstanding and misinterpretation. According to White, Jerry Falwell originally taught that the Bible supported segregation and defended it from the pulpit for years before being convicted of his error. For White, these examples stress the need to be open to new understanding and to always be aware of the danger inherent in complete certainty, particularly regarding Biblical interpretation.

Even though we believe the Scriptures are “infallible” or “without error,” is it terribly dangerous to think that our understanding of every biblical text is also without error. We are human. We are fallible. And we can misunderstand and misinterpret these ancient words – with tragic results. (White, *What the Bible Says*)

The fourth premise White presents in relation to the ideograph <truth> is that the purpose of biblical Scripture is to reveal truth about God, not to be a guide to modern human sexuality. “In fact,” White (*What The Bible Says*) writes, “the Bible accepts sexual practices that we condemn and condemns sexual practices that we accept. Lots of them!” He provides Old Testament examples that commanded the death by stoning of adulterers, the prohibition of divorce and the requirement that all brides be virgins.

I’m sure you don’t agree with these teachings from the Bible and you shouldn’t.... Over the centuries the Holy Spirit has taught us that certain Bible verses should not be understood as God’s law for all time periods. Some verses are specific to the culture and time they were written, and are no longer viewed as appropriate, wise, or just. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White then transfers this logic to the subject of homosexuality, particularly in relation to modern scientific knowledge reveals that homosexual orientation is as natural as heterosexual orientation, and both are determined by a complex set of variables not yet fully understood by science. This understanding, coupled with numerous contemporary examples of happy well-adjusted gays and lesbians in committed long-term relationships, suggests to White that the anachronistic belief that Biblical Scripture prohibits homosexuality should be reconsidered.

While there are some people now living in heterosexual marriages who once perceived themselves to be gay, there are millions of gay and lesbian persons who have accepted their sexual orientation as a gift from God and live productive and deeply spiritual lives. The evidence from science and from the personal experience of gay and lesbian Christians demands that we at least consider whether the passages cited to condemn homosexual behavior should be reconsidered, just as other Bible verses that speak of certain sexual practices are no longer understood as God’s law for us today. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White's fifth premise of the <truth> ideograph builds upon the fourth by positing that when individuals focus on debating what these Biblical Scriptures proscribe about sexual behavior, those individuals miss what the scriptures reveal about the nature of God.

If the Bible is a story about God's love for the world and not a handbook about sex, then that should shape how we read the Scriptures. So as we take a look at the six biblical texts that are used by some people to condemn homosexuality, let's ask two questions about each of them: First, what does the text say about God that we need to hear but might be missing? Second, what might the text be saying about homosexuality? (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White uses these two questions to specifically evaluate the six primary Scriptures used against LGBT equality, including the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah and the holiness codes of Leviticus. He presents a detailed study of each Scripture in attempt to focus on what each reveals about the nature of God, God's relation to man, and what, if anything, the Scripture divulges about homosexuality.

The first Scripture passage White evaluates in his quest for <truth> is the Creation story from Genesis chapter 2. Many people argue that homosexuality could not be a part of God's plan precisely because He created one man and one woman. The statement, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" is commonly used by gay rights opponents as a primary argument for the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality. However, according to White, this approach entirely misses the point of the story.

This creation story is primarily about God, a story written to show the power of God who created the world and everything in it. It teaches us that ultimately God is our Creator, that God shapes us, and that God said, "It's good." Isn't this the heart of the text? Now what does the creation story say about homosexuality? Because the text says it is "natural" that a man and a woman come together to create new life, some people think this means gay or lesbian couples are "unnatural." They read this interpretation into the text, even though the text is silent about all kinds of relationships that don't lead to having children:

- Couples who are unable to have children
- Couples who are too old to have children
- Couples who choose not to have children
- People who are single

Are these relationships (or lack of relationships) “unnatural”? There’s nothing said here that condemns or approves the love that people of the same sex have for each other, including the love I have for my partner, Gary. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The second passage White assesses is the Genesis 19 story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Once again, White pronounces that the real message of the story has been lost to misinterpretation. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is not about homosexuality at all, but is in fact a warning against selfishness, injustice, and arrogance.

Listen to what Ezekiel 16: 48-49 tells us: “This is the sin of Sodom; she and her suburbs had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not help or encourage the poor and needy. They were arrogant and this was abominable in God’s eyes.”

Today, heterosexuals and homosexuals alike do well to remember that we break God’s heart when we spend all we earn on ourselves, when we forget the poor and hungry, when we refuse to do justice or show mercy, when we leave strangers at the gate.... Whatever teaching about sexuality you might get out of this passage, be sure to hear this central, primary truth about God as well. God has called us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our Creator. Sodom was destroyed because its people didn’t take God seriously about caring for the poor, the hungry, the homeless, or the outcast.

But what does the story of Sodom say about homosexual orientation as we understand it today? Nothing. It was common for soldiers, thieves, and bullies to rape a fallen enemy, asserting their victory by dehumanizing and demeaning the vanquished. This act of raping an enemy is about power and revenge, not about homosexuality or homosexual orientation. And it’s still happening.... The sexual act that occurs in the story of Sodom is a gang rape – and homosexuals oppose gang rape as much as anyone. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The third Scripture passage White evaluates in his quest for <truth> is the Holiness Code of Leviticus. Leviticus 18:6 reads: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female. It is an abomination.” A similar admonition appears in Leviticus 20:13: “A man who sleeps with another man is an abomination and should be executed.” However, White suggests that the Scriptures are not as clear as they appear to be from a cursory reading.

On the surface, these words could leave you feeling rather uneasy, especially if you are gay. But just below the surface is the deeper truth about God – and it has nothing to do with sex. Leviticus is a holiness code written 3,000 years ago.

This code includes many of the outdated sexual laws mentioned earlier, and a lot more. It also includes prohibitions against round haircuts, tattoos, working on the Sabbath, wearing garments of mixed fabrics, eating pork or shellfish, getting your fortune told, and even playing with the skin of a pig. (There goes football!)

So what's a holiness code? It's a list of behaviors that people of faith find offensive in a certain place and time. In this case, the code was written for priests only, and its primary intent was to set the priests of Israel over and against the priests of other cultures.

What about this word *abomination* that comes up in both passages? In Hebrew, "abominations" (TO'EBAH) are behaviors that people in a certain time and place consider tasteless or offensive. To the Jews an abomination was not a law, not something evil like rape or murder forbidden by the Ten Commandments. It was a common behavior by non-Jews that Jews thought was displeasing to God.

Jesus and Paul both said the holiness code in Leviticus does not pertain to Christian believers. Nevertheless, there are still people who pull the two verses about men sleeping together from the ancient holiness code to say that the Bible seems to condemn homosexuality. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The fourth passage White evaluates is the Romans chapter 1 passage. Once again, White pronounces that the real message of the story has been lost to misinterpretation. In Romans 1: 26-27, Paul describes non-Jewish women who exchange "natural use for unnatural" and also non-Jewish men who "leave the natural use of the women, working shame with each other." When evaluating these verses in isolation, Paul seems to be clear in his condemnation of same-sex behavior. However, White asserts that the context of the verses is mandatory in order to understand what Paul's intent was.

Paul was writing this letter to Rome after his missionary tour of the Mediterranean. On his journey Paul had seen great temples build to honor Aphrodite, Diana, and other fertility gods and goddesses of sex and passion instead of the one true God the apostle honors. Apparently, these priests and priestesses engaged in some odd sexual behaviors – including, castrating themselves, carrying on drunken orgies, and even having sex with young temple prostitutes (male and female) – all to honor the gods of sex and pleasure.... Did these priests and priestesses get into these behaviors because they were lesbian or gay? I don't think so. Did God abandon them because they were practicing homosexuals? No. Read the text again.

Getting to know a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person of faith will help you realize that it is unreasonable (and unjust) to compare our love for each

other to the rituals of the priests and priestesses who pranced around the statues of Aphrodite and Diana. Once again, I feel certain this passage says a lot about God, but nothing about homosexuality as we understand it. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The final two Scriptures that White evaluates in his quest for <truth> are found in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. White deals with them concurrently because of their similarities. These Scripture passages are a bit more complex to decipher because Paul uses two unfamiliar words in his review of Jewish Law. The particular Greek words in question, "*malokois*" and "*arsenokoitai*" defy direct translation.

The Jewish law was created by God to help regulate human behavior. To remind the churches in Corinth and Ephesus how God wants them to treat one another, Paul recites examples from the Jewish law first. Don't kill one another. Don't sleep with a person who is married to someone else. Don't lie or cheat or steal. The list goes on to include admonitions against fornication, idolatry, whoremongering, perjury, drunkenness, revelry, and extortion. He also includes "*malokois*" and "*arsenokoitai*."

Here's where the confusion begins. What's a *malokois*? What's an *arsenokota*? Actually, those two Greek words have confused scholars to this very day.... Greek scholars say that in the first century the Greek word *malokois* probably meant "effeminate call boys." The New Revised Standard Version says "male prostitutes." As for *arsenokoitai*, Greek scholars don't know exactly what it means – and the fact that we don't know is a big part of this tragic debate. Some scholars believe Paul was coining a name to refer to the customers of "the effeminate call boys." We might call them "dirty old men." Others translate the word as "sodomites," but never explain what that means.

In 1958, for the first time in history, a person translating that mysterious Greek word into English decided it meant *homosexuals*, even though there is, in fact, no such word in Greek or Hebrew. But that translator made the decision for all of us that placed the word *homosexual* in the English-language Bible for the very first time. We all need to look more closely at that mysterious Greek word *arsenokoitai* in its original context. I find most convincing the argument from history that Paul is condemning the married men who hired hairless young boys (*malokois*) for sexual pleasure just as they hired smooth-skinned young girls for that purpose. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The sixth premise regarding the <truth> ideograph that White presents in *What The Bible Says* is that homosexual orientation was neither approved nor condemned in the Scripture because biblical authors had no frame of reference for homosexual orientation as we

understand it today. "The Bible is completely silent on the issue of homosexual orientation", White (*What The Bible Says*) explains, "because the concept that some humans were created or shaped with same-gender attractions wasn't known until the 19th century." Up until that point in history, it was believed that all people were created heterosexual in the same way that human beings originally believed that the sun rose and fell around a flat earth. Because the Biblical authors had no understanding of modern homosexuality, White contends, they neither approved nor condemned it but were instead completely silent on the subject.

The authors of the Bible are authorities on matters of faith. They can be trusted when they talk about God. But they should not be considered the final authorities on sexual orientation any more than they are the final authorities on space travel, gravity, or the Internet. Since the writers of Scripture are not the final authorities on human sexuality, since they didn't even know about sexual orientation as we understand it today, since Jesus and the Jewish prophets were silent about any kind of same-sex behavior, I am persuaded that the Bible has nothing in it to approve or condemn homosexual orientation as we understand it. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White's seventh premise relating to the <truth> ideograph builds upon the sixth by explaining that while the Bible is silent regarding homosexual orientation, biblical authors are clear that the search for truth must be guided by love for one another. "We may not be able to use the Bible as our final authority on sexual orientation," White (*What The Bible Says*) states, "But as we search for truth, we can and should use the Bible as our final authority on how we should treat one another along the way." Here, White returns to Christ's constant New Testament pleading that love for one another should be the foundation for all human interaction, including the quest for <truth>.

Imagine the suffering that could be avoided if the church could say this to their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children: "We don't understand your views about sexual orientation, but we love and trust you. As long as you love God and seek God's will in your life, you are welcome." Instead, well-intentioned Christians are driving their own children away from the church, using Scripture passages that may not even pertain to sexual orientation as we understand it. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

The eighth premise White provides synchronically links the <truth> ideograph to the ideograph <discrimination>. His argument is that regardless of what individuals may believe regarding the Biblical prohibition of homosexuality, that belief can not be used to deny civil rights because any discrimination is "unjust and un-American." He continues by reminding his readers that the United States is not a theocracy but is instead governed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Please consider one last thing. I love the Bible. I read God's word in it and hear God's Word through it. But the United States is not a nation governed by the Bible. Our nation is governed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Our laws were created to protect an individual's right to disagree. If the Bible (or someone's view of the Bible) replaces the Constitution as the law of the land, we undermine the foundation upon which this country was built.... I hope we can agree that all of us must stand together against those who would replace the Constitution with biblical law.... I'm asking you who disagree with my stand on homosexuality to support my stand on full civil rights for all people, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Americans. (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White ends this premise and the document as a whole with an appeal to his audience to remember our common <humanity>, an ideograph synchronic to the ideograph <discrimination>. Even if you disagree personally with homosexuality, he contends, that personal belief should not be used to forward institutional <discrimination> and to limit the rights of others. White provides a frightening personal example:

When I was a guest on a talk show in Seattle, I was what might happen to me and to millions like me if a genuine literalist gained political power over this country. The other guest on the show was an independent Presbyterian pastor. When I told him that I was gay, he said without hesitation, "Then you should be killed." A Christian brother sentenced me to death, guided only by his literal understanding of Leviticus 20:13. I asked him, "Who should do the killing, you church folk?" He answered, "No, that's the civil authorities' job. That's why we need to elect more good men of God into government." I sat there in stunned silence, until he added, "I know it must be hard for you to hear it, Dr. White – but God said it first and it's our job to obey." (White, *What The Bible Says*)

White's purpose in *What the Bible Says* is to reveal <truth> by correcting the misinformation connected to the misinterpretation of Biblical Scripture. This approach helps

expose the diachronic nature of the ideograph <truth> by evaluating how <untruth> has historically developed into what many now consider to be accurate knowledge. Throughout much of Christian history, followers have been encouraged to accept the word of the clergy as the most accurate interpretation of Scripture. Over the centuries this division of knowledge between clergy as the imparters of understanding and laity as the receivers of that understanding has become hegemonic. Many modern-day congregants, however faithful, do not actively engage in personal biblical scholarship. Instead they are content to attend weekly services where they receive guidance from ministers and pastors. In fact, in many modern Christian denominations, congregants are discouraged from personal study because of the belief that only the minister (or priest) is close enough to God to be able to interpret the true meaning of Scripture. White, however, admonishes all people to study the Bible themselves. He believes that each individual has the ability (through critical and thoughtful study) to understand the <truth> presented in the Scripture and to expose the <untruth> that has been taught from the pulpits for centuries.

While White seeks to reveal <truth> by transforming perceptions of the past in *What the Bible Says*, Lutes uses *A False Focus on My Family* in an endeavor to transform perceptions of the present and to bring to light <truth> through the latest scientific, psychological, psychiatric and medical research regarding LGBT individuals and families. He attempts to directly counter five “violent claims” of <untruth> specifically put forth by James Dobson and his organization “Focus on the Family” by offering published research from respected scientific institutions including the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association and others. However, before White endeavors to dispel the untruth promoted by Dobson and his organization, he clarifies a Fundamental Soulforce premise articulated by White:

Dobson and those who speak against the LGBT community are not enemies. They are fellow victims of <untruth>.

Let me make one thing absolutely clear: I do not consider Dr. Dobson my enemy. Misunderstanding is the enemy. We are both children of the same loving Creator, and I genuinely appreciate the many ways he has helped heterosexual families around the globe. I enjoy listening to his radio program, and I believe he has a sincere heart with an unmatched passion for nurturing and protecting families. But gays and lesbians form loving families too, and his spiritual violence against us must stop. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

The first claim that Lutes attempts to dispel through scientific <truth> is that homosexuality is a mental disorder caused by poor parenting and family dysfunction. He provides numerous direct quotations by Dobson which reveal his belief that homosexuality is a direct result of dysfunctional family life, including an overbearing mother, an absent or distant father, and/or physical and mental abuse. Lutes counters that “forty years of research concludes that gay men and lesbian women are as healthy, stable, and functional as their heterosexual friends” (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*). He provides lengthy quotations from respected mental health organizations that attest that there is no mental disorder inherent in homosexuality, nor is there any conclusive evidence that homosexuality correlates to an inability to maintain healthy relationships.

The research on homosexuality is very clear. Homosexuality is neither mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of our population expresses human love and sexuality. Study after study documents the mental health of gay men and lesbians. Studies of judgment, stability, reliability, and social and vocational adaptiveness all show that gay men and lesbians function every bit as well as heterosexuals. (Guidelines for Psychotherapy, APA)

The second false assertion of <untruth> that Dobson perpetuates is that LGBT individuals desire to destroy marriage and the family. Dobson’s accusations infer that the LGBT community has a master plan, or “homosexual agenda,” to annihilate the traditional nuclear family. Lutes responds to this statement by providing data that reveal that same sex couples share the same hopes and dreams as any other type of family unit. He specifically quotes Dr.

John Gottman who, along with his wife Julie Schwartz-Gottman, has studied same-gender couples for over a decade in addition to their research on heterosexual couples. Dr. Gottman goes as far as to suggest that same-gender couples are actually superior to heterosexual in certain ways; particularly in their ability to practice relationship equality and openness in communication.

Gay and lesbian relationships are the vanguard of how heterosexual relationships could be. Heterosexual couples have a lot to learn from gay couples. Same-sex couples tend to be more positive than straight couples during conflict and tend to use more affection and humor when discussing difficult subjects. They tend to use fewer controlling and hostile emotional tactics during a fight, and fairness and power-sharing between partners appears to be more common in gay and lesbian relationships than in straight ones. (*Lutes, A False Focus On My Family*)

A third statement made by Dobson is that LGBT individuals are not fit to be parents and in fact desire to harm children. However, according to Lutes(*A False Focus On My Family*), “numerous studies show that children raised by same-gender parents grow up to be just as healthy as children raised by heterosexual parents.” Again, Lutes presents statements from several mental health organizations that disavow Dobson’s assertions of <untruth> and offer evidence to show that children nurtured in same-sex relationships show no developmental differences, either mentally or emotionally, from children raised by heterosexual couples.

Studies comparing groups of children raised by homosexual and by heterosexual parents find no developmental differences between the two groups of children in their intelligence, psychological adjustment, social adjustment, popularity with friends, development of social sex role identity or development of sexual orientation... Another stereotype about homosexuality is the mistaken belief that gay men have more of a tendency than heterosexual men to sexually molest children. There is no evidence indicating that homosexuals are more likely than heterosexuals to molest children. (*Answers To Your Questions, American Psychological Association*)

The fourth claim of <untruth> that Lutes attempts to dispel is that parents can prevent their children from becoming homosexual and that homosexuality can be cured through reparative therapy; psychological treatments for the purpose of altering sexual orientation, also

called conversion therapy (American Psychological Association Resolution, 1997). He counters by providing research that reveals that reparative therapy is not only ineffective but can also be psychologically damaging to the participants. Virtually every mental health organization, Lutes reveals, recommends against the practice of reparative therapy for the purpose of altering an individual's sexual orientation. He specifically quotes Dr. Robert Spitzer, a researcher whose study is often misused by Dobson. Spitzer clarifies that for the vast majority of human beings, it is not possible for them to change their sexual orientation.

"For the vast majority it is not possible for them to change their sexual orientation", Spitzer said. Spitzer also acknowledged that "a lot of people will misuse" his findings, which could cause pain for many individuals. "It may help 5,000 people but harm 500,000," he said. He is concerned, he added, that "the Christian Right" with its intolerance of and opposition to homosexuality, will use his findings in its campaign to prevent gays and lesbians from gaining civil protections. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

The fifth statement of <untruth> made by Dobson is that LGBT individuals are ungodly people who desire "special rights" not civil rights. Lutes responds to this final claim by quoting several civil rights champions and biblical scholars who posit that homophobia is equivalent to racism and other forms of bigotry. Among others, Lutes quotes Coretta Scott King who has spoken out in support of LGBT rights and stressed the necessity of working toward LGBT equality as a facet of the greater civil rights movement in America.

I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice... But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"... I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brotherhood and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people.

We have a lot of work to do in our common struggle against bigotry and discrimination. I say "common struggle," because I believe very strongly that all forms of bigotry and discrimination are equally wrong and should be opposed by right-thinking Americans everywhere. Freedom from discrimination based on sexual orientation is surely a fundamental human right in any great democracy, as much as freedom from racial, religious, gender, or ethnic discrimination. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

Again, the synchronic ideograph <discrimination> is brought into play with the ideograph <truth>, just as it was in White's document, *What The Bible Says*.

Lutes further indicates that Dobson and "Focus on the Family" engage in four deceptive tactics that serve to perpetuate <untruth> and forward their antigay propaganda. "After carefully monitoring and analyzing their radio, television, and print materials for nearly three years," Lutes (*A False Focus On My Family*) writes, "I am concerned by four disturbingly deceptive trends in Focus on the Family's efforts to promote an antigay agenda..." First, Dobson insinuates that scientists and mental health organizations deliberately skew research findings because they are controlled by the "homosexual agenda." This, Lutes says, is a complete distortion of the facts.

Each of these [mental health] organizations has thousands of highly educated members from varying social, ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds. Yet Dr. Dobson wants you to believe that somehow they have collaborated, orchestrated a national conspiracy to cover up the research, and lied to the public. Then he infers that only the antigay "research" that he reports is empirically valid and reliable. He wants millions of faithful followers to trust that only he and a handful of his friends have the accurate scientific information about homosexuality. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

Secondly, Lutes claims that Dobson has created and supported fundamentalist antigay organizations with scientific names (such as the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality [NARTH] and the Family Research Council). Dobson refers to these organizations as legitimate independent research institutions and regularly references their "scientific" findings in order to support his antigay rhetoric, when in fact they are managed by Dobson supporters.

Dr. Dobson regularly quotes his friends, like Dr. Joseph Nicolosi of NARTH. Dobson and Nicolosi both claim that NARTH is a secular organization. However, anyone who looks closely at NARTH can see just how rooted their positions are in fundamentalist doctrine and ideology. Dr. Nicolosi is one of the keynote speakers for Dobson's "Love Won Out" conferences that teach that gays can be

made straight through a combination of "therapy" and the acceptance of Christ. It is incredibly dishonest to suggest that Nicolosi and NARTH are unbiased and objective researchers. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

A third assertion of <truth> Lutes makes is that Dobson misleads by quoting reputable research studies out of context so they appear to support his antigay position. One of Dobson's most common misuses of research is the statement that thousands of studies have deduced that children function and develop best when they are raised in a two-parent home consisting of a committed mother and a father. Lutes admits that Dobson's statistics are correct; however, the studies did not comparatively evaluate children in homosexual relationships as Dobson infers.

Guess what? [Dobson] is absolutely right. There is just one major catch. Those studies compared children raised in heterosexual single-parent homes (either a mother or a father) to children raised in heterosexual two-parent homes (both a mother and a father). Those studies did not examine same-gender parents at all! Not surprisingly, research shows that kids do best with two parents instead of one, regardless of the parents' sexual orientation. Yet, Dr. Dobson manipulates the facts in a section of his book entitled, "Children will suffer most," and uses this distortion repeatedly in other print materials and speeches. The fact is, research comparing heterosexual and homosexual parents finds that children develop equally well in both family structures. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

Finally, Lutes claims that Dobson promotes <untruth> by intentionally showcasing only negative stories about the LGBT community in order to reinforce stereotypes and instill fear. According to Lutes, Dobson particularly enjoys relating stories which buttress the stereotype that homosexuals are incapable of being monogamous in addition to stories which infer that all gay people secretly desire to be pedophiles.

Between 40 percent and 60 percent of gay men and between 45 percent and 80 percent of lesbians are in committed relationships; between 18 percent and 28 percent of gay couples and 8 percent and 21 percent of lesbian couples have lived together for ten years or more. But Focus on the Family finds one gay couple whose relationship didn't make it and wants the reader to accept this as evidence that "homosexual relationships are notoriously unstable and short lived." No one has ever suggested that if gay Americans gain the right to

marriage none of them will divorce. Award-winning playwright and actor Harvey Fierstein once quipped that when gays can marry he is confident we will mess it up just as well as the heterosexual community. (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

In addition to Dobson's promotion of <untruth> through the false authority of altered science, Lutes also accuses him of deception by omission because he fails to provide any examples of healthy well-adjusted LGBT individuals and their families.

Every day on my way to the office, I pass two huge billboards advertising bars where women dance topless for men. These places are not filled just with single men, but also with married men who are choosing to be in those establishments rather than at home with their wives and children. Television talk shows and sitcoms display heterosexuals in all kinds of unhealthy and illicit behaviors. Yet I have never heard anyone point a finger and say, "Look at the destructive heterosexual lifestyle." Such a statement would, of course, be absurd. We automatically understand that these behaviors represent the choices made by some, not all heterosexual people. Meanwhile, gay people as a group are automatically labeled and portrayed as promiscuous, deviant, and immoral by Focus on the Family. Dr. Dobson routinely showcases the negative stereotypes of the gay community and falsely suggests that we all share the same religious, political, and moral values.

It is really sad then HGTV (House and Garden Television) treats same-gender couples with more respect and kindness during a kitchen remodeling than Dr. Dobson can muster from his radio microphone. How is it that HGTV can see same-gender couples as having many of the same hopes, dreams, and aspirations as any straight couple, while a man dedicated to spreading the Gospel won't even go into their homes and share a meal with them? (Lutes, *A False Focus On My Family*)

This same point is reiterated in the *Christian Youth* document. In the last section, entitled "God Bless Our Family: Gay Community and Family Values", the authors attempt to directly counter the <untruth> promoted by anti-gay leaders – that LGBT individuals are a threat to family values and long to fully destroy the values of the traditional nuclear family. The section is comprised entirely of narratives that illuminate the lives of happy, well-adjusted LGBT families (complete with photographs).

The following are profiles of twenty-seven families. Some are same-gender couples who have been in committed, faithful, loving relationships for many

years. Others are families with gay members. Though gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people are a minority group, we are in every city, town, and neighborhood. We are thy neighbor. And you are our neighbor. In the present struggle for civil rights, anti-gay leaders often try to paint GLBT people as a threat to family values. This is a falsehood that must be confronted. The truth is that despite harsh discrimination and prejudice, gays and their families continue to endure and rely on love. (*Christian Youth*)

One particular couple profiled in "God Bless Our Family" is Karen Weldin and Susanne Bain. Their narrative, written by Weldin, serves to present them as an "average American family" while subsequently countering many of the false stereotypes promoted regarding LGBT couples and the minority at large.

Susanne and I have been together for fourteen years. We met in Oklahoma City while we both were in the closet. We spent the first six years of our relationship juggling fear and anxiety until we discovered Mel White's book, *Stranger at the Gate*, which was the catalyst for us coming out. I went to Lynchburg with Soulforce in 1999 and we both have been active in Soulforce ever since.

We live in rural Oklahoma on a lake. I am a retired Marriage and Family Therapist and Susanne is a retired business owner. We love to be on the lake, golf, go to church together, and entertain guests in our home.

Susanne has two grown sons who live in Dallas. We have a dog named Lucky.

We are both out to our friends and family. Susanne's 90-year-old mother, brother, and two sons are accepting of us. My family is not. Susanne grew up Presbyterian and I grew up Southern Baptist.

Our "homosexual lifestyle" includes taking care of our home, our dog, caring for Susanne's mother, paying our bills, sharing what we have with others, going to church, seeing an occasional movie, being responsible citizens, reaching for goals to better ourselves, and taking an occasional trip.

Our "homosexual agenda" entails being the best persons we can be as we do the best we can loving each other and loving others.

On Valentine's Day 2003 Susanne gave me a red plastic heart with a fortune cookie in it. When I broke open the fortune cookie and read the fortune it said, "Will you marry me?" We were married in San Francisco March 1, 2004. (*Christian Youth*)

Throughout the Soulforce documents, the authors evoke the ideograph <truth> and reveal its diachronic nature by providing novel interpretations of Biblical Scripture, offering scientific research to support their claims and presenting narratives and examples of committed LGBT families. These examples serve to directly counter the <untruth> propagated by the opposition. The ideograph <truth> is a counterpart to the ideograph <suffering> presented in the first half of this section. Soulforce uses these ideographs to support their rhetoric in an attempt to fulfill the necessary persuasive functions of any social movement organization.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Review

In order to explore and evaluate the ideological underpinnings of Soulforce's rhetoric, I have conducted an organic analysis of four pieces of discourse available on the Soulforce website. While each of these documents has individual purposes and audiences, they share a common set of beliefs and assumptions. Because the selling of a social movement's ideology is a fundamental aspect of its persuasive ability and potential success for eliciting change, I layered an evaluation of the persuasive functions of a social movement as outlined in Stewart et al (2001) over the description of ideograph as developed by McGee in order to determine not only which ideographs were invoked throughout the discourse, but also to appraise the effectiveness of their use in fulfilling the organization's persuasive goals.

The ideographs presented throughout the discourse coalesce to form the overarching ideology of Soulforce evidenced in the discourse. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals experience unwarranted <suffering>, <injustice> and <discrimination> as a direct result of the <untruth> promoted by the religious institutions of America. This <untruth> is the consequence of Biblical misinterpretation coupled with the misunderstanding of modern scientific research resulting in fear and hate that subsequently cultivate <violence> and <suffering>. Only by directly confronting <untruth> with <truth> and exchanging <suffering> with <voluntary suffering> can the LGBT community educate the misinformed thereby delivering their own <justice>, <equality> and full acceptance within society.

This ideology is framed as parallel to the ideologies of Gandhi and King, both social movement leaders who inspired White to adopt his particular belief and course of action. In addition to this parallelism, the ideology of Soulforce stands in direct counterpoint to the

ideology of the religious opposition exemplified by Dobson and Focus on the Family. While the beliefs of White and Dobson appear to be contradictory and mutually exclusive, they make use of the same ideographs. Both organizations believe that they possess ultimate <truth> and that the opposing organization is misguided and misled. Both organizations believe that <suffering> is the direct product of noncompliance with <truth>.

Discussion

It is my opinion that this method of analysis was effective for evaluating the ideology and persuasive functions of Soulforce. It may also prove to be a valuable method for exploring the discourse of other social movement organizations because it reveals several points of interest for the rhetorical critic. First, it serves to verify the importance of ideology in relation to persuasion. Regardless of whether an argument appears logical, an audience will only have the potential to be persuaded if the underlying ideology of the argument is congruent to their own belief system. Second, this study exemplifies McGee's concept of ideographs as a valid method of exposing and deconstructing the ideology within a particular discourse. Third, this study specifically exposes the diachronic and synchronic nature of the specific ideographs invoked throughout the Soulforce documents. Finally, this study offers the opportunity to apply these concepts specifically to a social movement organization, which in turn provides further opportunity for research and criticism.

While this analysis appears to reveal a coherent ideology of Soulforce, it would be careless to assume the persuasive techniques are universally compatible and effective. Further critical analysis reveals several potential disparities within the ideology and rhetoric presented throughout Soulforce's written discourse that are worthy of mention.

The first limitation of Soulforce's rhetoric is that White's primary platform for persuasion, Christianity, may in fact be his biggest hindrance. By attempting to persuade gay rights

opponents to embrace equality through religious argument, he has obliged himself to using the rhetoric of the very institution he disagrees with. White hints to this limitation himself in the eighth premise of *What The Bible Says*. "Whatever some people believe the Bible says about homosexuality," White writes, "they must not use that belief to deny homosexuals their basic civil rights. To discriminate against sexual or gender minorities is unjust and un-American." It would seem that this singular appeal serves to dissolve the entire crux of his argument against LGBT discrimination.

On the surface, this implication appears counter-intuitive. Religious dogma is the principal source of LGBT discrimination. However, a more critical lens reveals White's own awareness of the apparent irony. The United States is not a nation governed by the Bible, he states. So if the goal of Soulforce is to foster the realization of <justice> and <equality> for LGBT citizens within a democratic society, then personal religious belief becomes a moot point in relation to the goal. To the contrary, if the primary aspiration of Soulforce is complete acceptance of LGBT individuals within the Christian religious community, then legal equality is at best a secondary priority and perhaps even a diversion.

Additionally, the mainline Christian doctrine that relegates LGBT persons to the category of immoral and unworthy of eternal salvation is hegemonic. Attempting to battle religious dogma with religious dogma maintains the location of linguistic power with the very institution White is endeavoring to persuade. The ideographs of <unworthiness> and <obedience> are primary to Christian doctrine and therefore take precedence over the ideographs <justice> and <equality> that are inherent in American democracy. Conversely, the ideographs of <equality> and <justice> are only primary within the sphere of secular democracy. This is precisely why throughout history Christian doctrine has been frequently used to support <discrimination> and <oppression>.

There is another restriction related to using the religious institution's rhetoric as the organization's primary persuasive platform one that was previously evaluated in Barry Brummett's 1979 article, "A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies In Two Gay Rights Controversies." Brummett compared the pro-gay rights and anti-gay rights sides of the debates and determined that while they invoked similar ideographs, their synchronic approaches were vastly different resulting in two diametrically opposed ideologies. Through incorporation of Burke's Pentad, Brummett found that the disparity was anchored in each side's view of the relationship between Act (what people do) and Agent (who people are). Supporters of gay rights feature Agent over Act. LGBT individuals are who they are by their very nature regardless of which actions they may/may not engage in. Brummett (1979) explained the primacy of Agent by stating that, "people are what they are and must be dealt with on their own grounds." Opponents of gay rights see the relationship as reversed. Homosexuality is not a state of being, but is an Act that is engaged in. "A person is what he or she is through his/her actions or the actions of others" (Brummett, 1979). While the basis of Brummett's evaluation is different than the criteria I used for this thesis, the ideological differences he revealed are relevant.

Thirty years later, the dichotomy that Brummett exposed it still relevant to any discussion of the differences between the competing ideologies on either side of the Gay Rights Movement. Gay rights activists, and the social movement organizations they belong to, still base their arguments in favor of equality on the primacy of agency over act. Gayness is an inherent state of being. Regardless of its true origins, it cannot be altered and must therefore be treated with parity to any other inherent state of being. Gay rights opponents by contrast continue to base their arguments on the primacy of act over agency. People are only gay if they engage in homosexual acts. Acts are chosen and can consequently be either moral or

immoral. They believe that bestowing LGBT individuals with legal protection simply because they choose to act in a particular way is a question of <special rights> not of <equality>.

A third limitation to the persuasive ability of Soulforce's ideology is that the comparison of the LGBT community to other minority groups may in fact be a fallacy. Even those who believe that homosexuality is an inherent state of being may be unwilling to accept the association between LGBT individuals and African-Americans. The "Negro" of the early 20th century for instance, did not have the option of avoiding prejudice and discrimination in daily life. She wore her difference on her person. A black man did not have the option of having lunch in a "whites only" restaurant without willingly making the choice to take on <voluntary suffering>. Integration was not an option for African-Americans until it was legally mandated. Certainly there were a small group of African-Americans whose skin was pale enough that they were able to "blend in", but they were certainly a minority of the minority. The same is true of the "Untouchable" caste that Gandhi fought to liberate in India.

LGBT individuals however have the option of (at least partial) assimilation. There is no universal identifier, no single physical characteristic that distinguishes a homosexual man from a heterosexual man, especially in a modern American society where gender roles are more fluid than ever before. The stereotypes certainly still prevail, but there is always a kernel a doubt sufficient enough to cause most people to refrain from blatant prejudice. Because of this distinction, the LGBT community struggles with the ability to unify behind a common goal. This is further complicated by the tremendous diversity within the community itself.

Assimilation is often accompanied by increased power political, social or monetary. This power, however, is limited because it is granted by the very institutions that minority groups seek to oppose. In order to collect the power available, assimilated individuals must consequently embrace the hegemony that holds it. The resulting integration frequently leads to

comfort which can evolve into apathy. I believe this to be the single greatest hindrance to Soulforce's mission and the Gay Rights Movement in general. Many gays and lesbians have embraced the language of the very institution that oppresses them. The very nature of saying "we are just like you," precludes the need for special legal protections.

This is not to say that the rhetoric of Soulforce is completely ineffective. While the multiple audiences may not universally accept every premise the discourse offers, it is entirely likely certain arguments, or portions thereof, will be received and embraced. While on a personal level I accept the ideology Soulforce creates and accept most of the persuasive arguments it makes, as a rhetorical critic I must contend that the organization could be more effective and potentially successful if it were to focus its attention on only one side of the secular/spiritual dichotomy it currently promotes.

Conclusion

My desire to evaluate Soulforce was instigated by a desire to answer my own personal questions about the intersection of religion and sexuality. However, I quickly became aware of the opportunities for learning that an academic evaluation of the organization and its discourse could present. While I do acknowledge the limitations present in Soulforce's rhetorical choices, I still embrace its mission to work for justice and equality for all human beings.

Building upon the work of Brummett and incorporating Burke's method of pentadic analysis may have proven useful to this study as would the incorporation of Bitzer's rhetorical situation. Either of these concepts would be worthy of future application.

In addition, there are many other aspects of Soulforce that were beyond the scope of this thesis but would prove valuable for further research. One particular option would be to apply this same organic method to an evaluation of the visual rhetoric of Soulforce. The organization's videos, photographs, symbols and logos could provide additional insight into the

ideology of Soulforce. Alternatively, because the organization focuses much of its resources on engaging in “direct actions,” an evaluation of those actions could be particularly informative.

Soulforce is a unique organization within the larger Gay Rights Movement. The organization, created and led by White, strives to fulfill a distinctive persuasive purpose by bridging the gap between LGBT individuals and their most vocal opposition, the evangelical Christian counter movement. Soulforce’s rhetoric desires to achieve many of the persuasive functions of social movements consecutively including prescribing courses of action, transforming perceptions of reality, and sustaining the movement itself. Ultimately this end is advanced through a strong focus on ideology. By using McGee’s (1980) method of ideological criticism, I isolated three primary ideographs within the Soulforce rhetoric <suffering>, <voluntary suffering>, and <truth>. These ideographs are synchronically linked to, and supported by, multiple secondary ideographs including <equality>, <discrimination>, <love>, <redemption>, and <justice>. As outlined by Brummett (1979), both sides of the argument make use of overlapping ideographs, but define them differently leaving the primary difference a distinction between two factors of Burke’s Pentad: Act (what people do) and Agent (who people are). Supporters of gay rights feature Agent over Act. LGBT individuals are who they are by their very nature regardless of which actions they may/may not engage in. Opponents of gay rights see the relationship as reversed. Homosexuality is not a state of being, but is an Act that is engaged in.

While I suggest within this study that Soulforce’s rhetoric contains certain limitations it is far from ineffective. In fact, ten years of continued membership growth and numerous testimonials throughout the Soulforce documents that I evaluated would suggest that in spite of these limitations, the organization has successfully used it’s ideology to persuade. The integration of legal equality along with religious acceptance may be disconcerting to certain

audiences as I suggest, but may not be an issue to the organization's primary audience, evangelical Christian leaders and supporters. Even in spite of my criticism the arguments speak to me.

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