**Instructions:**

Write 4–6 pages on one of the following questions. You are not expected to conduct outside research. Consider this essay as a take-home exam where you can consult your notes as much and as often as you like.

Direct quotations from the readings are recommended for making theoretical arguments. Be sure to cite the author, year, and page numbers when you do make direct quotations. I do not expect you to use a particular citation system, but be consistent with what you do use.

These questions are designed to prompt you to speak with confidence using, engaging with, and challenging the authors we have studied in the first part of this class.

I will be looking for you to make an argument, and support that argument with references to the texts and statements of your own that follow in a convincing and reasonable manner.

Develop a thesis statement of some sort. What will you be arguing?

Briefly preview your argument in your introduction. How will you be arguing?

Do what you promise to do in the body of the paper.

Conclude with the insight that you have developed throughout the journey of your argument.

**Prompt:**

Question 2: On Social Movement Rhetoric

How useful are the theories of Leland Griffin and Herbert Simons for analyzing the rhetoric of contemporary social movements?

Suggested points for consideration:

What is a social movement?

Are contemporary social movements different from historical movements?

How might innovations in social media influence our analysis of contemporary social movement rhetoric?

How ought we consider rhetoric in our contemporary moment?

Are there specific elements from the author's’ theories that are applicable to the present?

What ought be the goal of the rhetorical analysis of social movements?

Kelly Galloway

COMM 2360

Midterm Essay

Social Movement Rhetoric

**INTRO**

The American culture allows for free speech and a diverse range of ideas to be shared throughout. Thanks to this, differing opinions and arguments are frequently formed. All of this leads to the creation of alliances, which work together in order to make social change. Eventually, this can lead to the production of a social movement. According to Herbert W. Simons, a social movement can be defined as, “an institutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of social norms or values” (3). Today, America is the perfect breeding ground for social movements, thanks to its society that promotes free thoughts and speech. Another huge contribution is new media. Nowadays, people with similar goals, that live thousands of miles apart from each other, can instantly connect with one another and pursue efforts for change. Because of this, there are endless amounts of social movements out there, ranging from the pro-life movement, to veganism.

Rhetoric is the driving force behind social movements. Theories, that were created by Leland Griffin and Herbert Simons, help to analyze the rhetoric that has been used in historical movements. Yet, their work was done decades ago. Although similar, historical movements are different than contemporary social movements. Particularly, the way information and rhetoric is created and shared has created huge differences between the two. With the massive changes that have occurred in culture, especially with media and technology, are the theories created by Griffin and Simon's still useful in examining the rhetoric of contemporary movements? To answer that question, I examined each theory and applied them to a current, contemporary movement, Black Lives Matter. When analyzing the rhetoric of contemporary social movements, the theories of Leland Griffin and Herbert Simons are useful for analyzing the structure of rhetoric, but they are not useful for analyzing the rhetoric itself.

**PARAGRAPHS ON GRIFFIN’S THEORY**

“The Rhetoric of Historical Movements”, was written by Leland M. Griffin. In his work, he created a theory that describes how one should go about studying social movements. To start, Leland stated that there must be a shift in the way we study movements. We must shift from paying attention to just a single speaker, and should instead pay more attention to a range of speakers. We should “turn our attention from the ‘great orator’ and undertake research into such selected acts and atmospheres of public address as would permit the study of a multiplicity of speakers, speeches, audiences, and occasions” (184). In contemporary social movements, it appears as if this shift has been happening. With the rise of social media, websites, videos, and blogs, there are now thousands, upon thousands of speeches, speakers, audiences, and occasions that can be studied. When researching the words “Black Lives Matter”, over 30 million results appear- all tied to some sort of information or idea regarding the movement.

Griffin then goes on to suggest ways in which people should analyze the rhetoric of a movement. His theory suggests that students should take not the biggest, but should take “the briefest historical movement he can find, as long as it’s a movement with adequate rhetorical remains that he can encompass with scholarly accuracy and completeness (185)”. In contemporary movements, it is easy to find brief movements, since everything is documented and easily accessible. The problem with new media is, that although there is a lot of information to analyze, it is very hard to find information that is scholarly accurate. Anyone can put anything online, which then spreads false information and miscommunication. Like a snowball effect, one false accusation is seen as true, is spread throughout, and grows into new, false beliefs which are then used to create more false content. There is no chance that all 30 million people on Google who published content on Black Lives Matter completed their work by doing accurate research. Griffin also states that when analyzing rhetoric in a movement, the student “will be concerned with the discourse of both writers and speakers; those who invented and echoes; with lectures, pulpits, political, legislative, academic, orators, editors, poets, journalists. He will also note the development and employment of media discourse” (187). Yet, this does not work as well in contemporary social movements. When researching, people tend to find information that already fits their preconceived notions.

There are two broad classes of rhetorical movements, according to Griffin. There are pro-movements, where “the rhetorical attempt is to arouse public opinion to the creation or acceptance of an institution or idea” and anti-movements, where “the rhetorical attempt is to arouse public opinion to the destruction or rejection of an existing institution or idea” (185). These two classes of movements are still seen in contemporary movements, but many contemporary movements seem to be both a pro and an anti-movement. Since there are so many voices and ideas published on contemporary movements, the message of the movement becomes a bit more blurred. Black Lives Matter can be seen as a pro-movement because it works to establish social equality for black citizens in the United States. It can also fit into the category of an anti-movement, because it’s attempt is to reject the racial unjustice and discrimination that exist in our society.

There are two classes of rhetoricians: the aggressor, who work to establish in pro and destroy in anti, and the defendant, who works to resists in pro and defend in anti (186).  In each movement, there are 3 phases:

1. Period of inception: the roots of a pre-existing sentiment, nourished by interested rhetoricians, begin to flower into public notice, or when some striking event occurs which immediately creates the initiation.

2. A period of rhetorical crisis: when one opposing group of rhetoricians succeeds in irrevocably disturbing that balance between groups which had existed in the mind of the collective audience.

3. A period of consummation: when a great amount of aggressor rhetoricians abandon their efforts either because they’re satisfied with their efforts or because they give up, or get new interests.

All of this is true in the Black Lives Matter movement.  Then came #alllivesmatter. The inception was… crisis was… consummation...

I NEED HELP SUMMARIZING THIS PART OF GRIFFIN’S THEORY AND RELATING IT TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MOVEMENT.

**Transition:**

Compared to Griffin's strategy, Herbert H. Simons created another theory that focused less on the act of studying a movement, and more on the structure of a movement itself. In his work, “The Quarterly Journal of Speech” Simons theory shows the requirements, problems, and strategies that are embedded in social movements.

**NOTES /SUMMARY ON SIMONS THEORY:**

* Simons aimed his theory at a “leader-centered conception of persuasion in social movements. “Rooted in sociological theory, it assumes that the rhetoric of a movement must follow” (2).  All movements must fulfill rhetorical requirements.

**Rhetorical Requirements**

* “A social movement isn’t a formal structure, but its obligated to fulfill parallel functions. Leaders of social movements must meet rhetorical requirements.

1. **They must attract, maintain, and mold workers into an efficiently organized unit.**

a.  Survival and effectiveness of movement depend on loyalty of followers to its leader, collective willingness to work, energy mobilization, and member satisfaction. A hierarchy of authority and division of labor must be established. (3)

2. **They must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure**.

a. The product of any movement is its ideology, particularly its program for change. (3).

* reformist rhetoric: urging change or repair of particular laws, customs, or practices
* Revolutionary rhetoric: insisting that a new order and a vast regeneration of values are necessary to smite the agents of the old and provide happiness, harmony, and stability.

3. **They must react to resistance generated by the larger structure.**

a.  The establishment may be too kind or too restrictive. It may steal the movements thunder by anticipating its demands and acting on some of them, by appointing a commission to “study the problem”, etc. It may also threaten, harass, or socially ostracize the membership, refuse to recognize or negotiate with the movement, or deny it access to the mass media. Leadership must constantly adjust to backlash. (4).

B. Leaders of social movements can expect minimal internal control and maximal external resistance. Social movements must rely on ideological and social commitment from their members. At best, the movement's leadership controls an organized core of the movement but exerts little influence over the larger number of sympathizers.

C. Existing outside the larger society’s conceptions of justice and reality, moreover, “Movements threaten and are threatened by the society’s sanctions and taboos; its laws, maximus, customs governing manner, taste, insignia of authority, etc.”

D. “The leader of a social movement must constantly balance inherently conflicting demands on his position and on the movement he represents.” (4)

**Rhetorical Problems**

“Unless it is understood that the leader is subjected to incompatible demands, a

great many of his rhetorical acts must seem counterproductive.” (4)

“On the other hand, the disintegration of a movement may be traced to its failure to meet one or more of the demands incumbent upon it. To deal with pressures from the external system, a movement may lose sight of its ideological values and become preoccupied with power for its own sake.  Careful, by contrast, to remain consistent with its values, the movement may forsake those strategies and tactics that are necessary to implement its program. To attract membership support from persons with dissimilar views, the movement may dilute its ideology, become bogged down with peripheral issues or abandon all substantive concerns and exist solely to

provide membership satisfactions. Short of causing disintegration, the existence of cross pressures enormously complicates the role of the leader, frequently posing difficult choices between ethical and experiential considerations.”  (5)

**1.**  Countering these pressures may require that the leader mask the movement's objectives, deny the use of tactics that are socially taboo, promise what he cannot deliver, exaggerate the strength of the movement, etc. A vicious cycle develops in which militant tactics invite further suppression, which spurs the movement on to more extreme methods. Lest the moderate leader object to extremist tactics, he may become a leader without a following. (5)

**2**. The leader may also need to distort, conceal, exaggerate, etc., in addressing his own supporters. To gain intellectual respectability within and/or outside the movement, ideological statements should be built on a logical framework and appear consistent with verifiable evidence. Yet mass support is more apt to be secured when ideological statements are presented as "generalized beliefs/' oversimplified conceptions of social problems, and magical, "if-only" beliefs about solutions. Statements of ideology must provide definition of that which is ambiguous in the social situation, give structure to anxiety and a tangible target for hostility, foster in-group feelings, and articulate wish-fulfillment beliefs about

the movement's power to succeed.” (5)

* “What is largely expressive for the isolated individual is rhetorical for the movement's leadership. Particularly in militant movements, the leader wins and maintains adherents by saying to them what they cannot say to others or even to themselves. A major rhetorical process, then, consists of legitimizing privately-held feelings by providing social support and rationalizations for those feelings.” (6)
* Apart from placing a strain on the ideological values of the movement and its leaders, the deliberate use of myths, deceptions, etc. creates practical problems. When outsiders discover that the size of the membership has been exaggerated or when followers learn that they are far from united, the leader must invent rationalizations for his deceptions through a new rhetoric of justification or apology. Worst of all, the leadership may come to believe its own falsehoods. (6)

“**3.** Pressures for organizational efficiency are incompatible with membership needs. An energized membership is the strength of ant movement and its esprit de corps is essential to goal implementation. Yet morale cannot be seeded abdications of leadership. Members may feel the need to participate in decision-making, to undertake pet projects on their own initiatives, to "put

down" leaders or other followers, to obstruct meetings by socializing, or to disobey directives. The leadership cannot ignore these needs: yet it cannot accede to all of them either.” (6)

“**4.** The leaders of social movements face discrepancies between role expectations and role definitions. The leader must appear to be what he cannot be. Expected to be consistent, for example, he must nevertheless be prepared to renounce previously championed positions. Expected to be sincere and spontaneous, he must handle dilemmas with consummate manipulative skills.” (6)

“**5.** The leader must adapt to several audiences simultaneously. In an age of mass media, rhetorical utterances addressed to one audience are likely to reach others. Outsiders include those who are sympathetic, indifferent, and opposed. As shall later be argued, another

key variable is the extent to which those in the larger structure are susceptible to threats of force. Within the movement interactional conflicts invariably develop over questions of value, strategy, tactics, or implementation. Purists and pragmatists clash over the merits of compromise. Academics and activists debate the necessity of long-range planning. Others enter the movement with personal grievances or vested interests. Pre-existing groups, known to have divergent ideological positions, are nevertheless invited to join or affiliate with the movement because of the power they can wield” (7)

“**6.** Movements require a diversity of leadership types with whom any one leader must both compete and cooperate. Theoreticians, agitators, and propagandists must launch the movement; political and bureaucratic types must carry it forward” (7)

* “There may well be cleavages among those vested with positions "of legitimate authority, those charismatic figures who have personal followings, those who have special competencies, and those who have private sources of funds or influence outside the movement. Much of the leader's persuasive skill is exhibited in private interactions with other leaders. “

**RHETORICAL STRATEGIES**

“From the foregoing discussion, it should be quite clear that the leader of a social movement must thread his way through an intricate web of conflicting demands. How he adapts strategies to demands constitutes a primary basis for evaluating his rhetorical output. Along a continuum from the sweet and reasonable to the violently revolutionary, one may identify moderate, intermediate-' and militant types of strategies.” (7)

**Moderate**:

His is the pattern of peaceful persuasion

The moderate gets angry but does not shout, issues pamphlets but never manifestos, inveighs against social mores but always in the value language of the social order.

He adapts to the listener's needs, wants, and values; speaks his language, adjusts his frame of reference; reduces the psychological distance between his movement and the larger structure. (7-8)

If moderates employ rhetoric as an alternative to force, militants use rhetoric as an expression, an instrument, and an act of force. (8)

The core characteristic of militant strategists is that they seek to change the actions of their primary targets as a precondition for changes in attitudes. By means of direct action techniques and verbal polemics, militants threaten, harass, cajole, disrupt, provoke, intimidate, coerce. (8)

Although the aim of pressure tactics may be to punish directly (e.g., strikes, boycotts), more frequently they are forms of "body rhetoric," designed to dramatize

issues, enlist additional sympathizers, and delegitimize the established order

Militant and moderate strategies are antithetical, yet each has highly desirable characteristics. Decisions to employ 'intermediate" strategies may be viewed as efforts to obtain the following advantages of each while still avoiding their respective disadvantages. (8)

**1.** Militant tactics confer visibility on a movement; moderate tactics gain entry

into decision centers. Because of their ethos of respectability moderates are invited to participate in public deliberations (hearings, conferences, negotiating sessions, etc.) (8)

* “the militant has readier access, to the masses (9)”

**2.** For different reasons, militants and moderates must both be ambivalent about "successes" and "failures." Militants thrive on injustice and ineptitude by the larger structure. Should the enemy fail to implement the movement's demands, the militant is vindicated ideologically, yet frustrated programmatically. Should some of the demands be met, he is in the paradoxical position of having

to condemn them as palliatives. The moderate, by contrast, requires tangible evidence that the larger structure is tractable in order to hold followers in line; yet "too much" success belies the movement's reason for being. (9)

**3**. Militant supporters are easily energized; moderate supporters are more easily controlled. Having aroused their following the leaders of a militant movement frequently become victims of their own creation, Robespierre's and Danton’s who can no longer contain energies within prescribed limits or

guarantee their own tenure. On the other hand, moderate leaders frequently claim that their supporters are apathetic.  (9)

**4**. Militants are effective with "power vulnerables"; moderates are effective with "power-invulnerables"; neither is effective with both.  As the writer has argued in an earlier article, a distinction needs to be made

between two objects of influence. Persons most vulnerable to pressure tactics are the leaders of public and quasi-public institutions: elected and appointed government officials who may be removed from office or given an unfavorable press; church and university leaders who are obliged to apply "high minded" standards in dealing with protests; executives of large corporations whose businesses are susceptible to loss of income and who are publicly committed to an ethic of social responsibility. “Power-invulnerables" are those who have little or nothing to lose by publicly voicing their prejudices and acting on their self-concerns. (pg.9)

-By reducing the psychological distance between the movement and the external structure, the moderate is likely to win sympathizers, (9)

“Where the movement and the larger structure are already polarized, the di.

lemma is magnified. However, much he may wish to plead reasonably, wresting changes from those in public positions requires that the leader build a sizable

power base. And to secure massive internal support, the leader must at least seem militant.

So, the leader of a social movement may attempt to avoid or resolve the aforementioned dilemmas by employing "intermediate" strategies,” (10)

“Immediacy can be a dangerous game. Calculated to energize supporters, win over neutrals, pressure power. vulnerable, and mollify the opposition, it may end up antagonizing everyone. The well-turned phrase may easily appear as a devilish trick, the rationale as a rationalization, the tactful comment as an artless dodge. To the extent that strategies of intermediacy require studied ambiguity, insincerity, and even distortion, perhaps the leader's greatest danger is that others may find out what he really thinks.” (10)

The key, it would appear, is the leader's capacity to embody a higher wisdom, a more profound sense of justice; to stand above inconsistencies by articulating overarching principles. (10)

"What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental] and anemic. Power at its best is 3ve implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands out against love” (10)

"Viewed broadly, the great contemporary movements all seem to require combinations of militant and moderate strategies. (11)

**TIE HIS THEORY TO COTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS**

**CONCLUSION OF PAPER:**

When analyzing the rhetoric of contemporary social movements, the theories of Leland Griffin and Herbert Simons are useful for analyzing the structure of rhetoric, but they are not useful for analyzing the rhetoric itself.  That is, contemporary social movements are formed in similar ways that historical movements. There is a leader that initiates and there are blah blah blah. But when looking at the rhetoric itself, the types of persuasion are a lot different nowadays. Most of the persuasion is done through media, which can be warped. It is harder to get one message across with all the voices online.