The Quarterly Journal of Speech
Volume LVI FEBRUARY 1970 Number 1

Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements

Herbert W. Simons

Given the usual problems of estimating the effects of a single speech, of assessing the factors that may have produced those effects, and of evaluating the speech in light of the speaker's intent, it is not surprising that few rhetoricians have undertaken the much more difficult task of analyzing the role of persuasion in social movements. When one advances to the movement as a unit of study, these problems are magnified and others are introduced. As any number of currently unemployed college presidents can attest, it is frequently impossible to separate detractors from supporters of a social movement, let alone to discern rhetorical intentions, to distinguish between rhetorical acts and coercive acts, or to estimate the effects of messages on the many audiences to which they must inevitably be addressed. Actions that may succeed with one audience (e.g., solidification of the membership) may alienate others (e.g., provocation of a backlash). For similar reasons, actions that may seem productive over the short run may fail over the long run (the reverse is also true).

---


6 In the problems of estimating long-range effects are nicely illustrated in Howard H. Martin's appraisal of the effects of the antiwar "teach-ins." See "Rhetoric of Academic Protest," *Central States Speech Journal*, XVII (Spring 1966), 244-250.

---

Mr. Simons is Associate Professor of Speech at Temple University.

1 See, for example, Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, *Speech Criticism* (New York, 1948), ch. 17.

2 For the decade prior to the writing of his text, Professor Edwin Black found only three such studies reported in *QJS* or *Speech Monographs*. See his *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York, 1965), pp. 22-23.

3 For a discussion of the problem of discerning intent, see Rudolf Heberle, *Social Movements* (New York, 1951), pp. 94-95. According to Lang and Lang, "the ideology presented to the mass of followers is a 'mask' for the real beliefs of the inner core. Its 'real' ideology is hidden from all but the initiated." See Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, *Collective Dynamics* (New York, 1961), p. 539.
Add to these problems of analysis the sheer magnitude of the unit of study: a time span that may extend through several stages for a decade or longer; a host of varied and often unconventional symbols and media; not one leader and one following but several of each (themselves frequently divided into competing factions). Designed for microscopic analysis of particular speeches, the standard tools of rhetorical criticism are ill-suited for unravelling the complexity of discourse in social movements or for capturing its grand flow. Hence it is with good cause that the major contributor to the development of an appropriate methodology has himself cautioned the uninitiated against study of any but the most minute social movements, and then only in the light cast by historical perspective.

Professor Griffin has prescribed a relativistic and essentially clinical process for identifying and evaluating "the pattern of public discussion, the configuration of discourse, the physiognomy of persuasion, peculiar to a movement." Yet the analyst could probably fulfill and even go beyond Griffin's definition of his task if only he could draw more heavily on theory. No theory of persuasion in social movements can as yet be applied predictively to particular cases or tested rigorously through an analysis of such cases. But theory can nevertheless be illuminative. In addition to suggesting categories for descriptive analysis (a skeletal typology of stages, leaders, media, audiences, etc. has already been provided by Griffin), it can indicate—admittedly in general terms—the requirements that rhetoric must fulfill in social movements, the means available to accomplish these requirements, and the kinds of problems that impede accomplishment. By enumerating rhetorical requirements, theory identifies the ends in light of which rhetorical strategies and tactics may be evaluated. By suggesting parameters and directions to the rhetorical critic, theory places him in a better position to bring his own sensitivity and imagination to bear on analyses of particular movements.

This paper is aimed, in preliminary fashion, at providing a leader-centered conception of persuasion in social movements. Rooted in sociological theory, it assumes that the rhetoric of a movement must follow, in a general way, from the very nature of social movements. Any movement, it is argued, must fulfill the same functional requirements as more formal collectivities. These imperatives constitute rhetorical requirements for the leadership of a movement. Conflicts among requirements create rhetorical problems which in turn affect decisions on rhetorical strategy. The primary rhetorical test of the leader—and, indirectly, of the strategies he employs—is his capacity to fulfill the requirements of his

---

8 For an intriguing analysis of nonobvious symbols, see Hugh D. Duncan, Communication and Social Order (New York, 1962).
9 For example, during its hey-day, the civil rights movement encompassed SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP, each of which was torn by internal fragmentation.
11 Ibid., 185.
12 Griffin has suggested that the development of theory must await further research. Yet there is reason to believe, here as elsewhere, that theory and research must develop apace of each other. As Black has argued (p. 22), the researcher can do little without a framework for analysis.
13 Griffin, 185-187.
14 Consistent with Scott and Smith's view of rhetoric as managed public discourse (p. 8), the paper focuses on the intentional symbolic acts of those who lead social movements. Emphasis on more spontaneous acts of communication (rumor, milling, social contagion, etc. by non-leaders) has been provided by those who have stressed the primitive features of social movements. The "classic" is Gustave Le Bon, The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (London, 1897).
A THEORY OF PERSUASION FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

movement by resolving or reducing rhetorical problems.

A social movement may be defined, combining concepts offered by Smelser and by Turner and Killian, as an uninstitutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of social norms or values.\(^\text{15}\) Movements should be distinguished, as such, from panics, crazes, booms, fads, and hostile outbursts, as well as from the actions of recognized labor unions, government agencies, business organizations, and other institutionalized decision-making bodies.

The focus of this paper is on reformist and revolutionary movements. Blumer distinguished these "specific" social movements from "general social movements (amorphous social trends) and from "expressive" social movements, of which religious cults are a prototype.\(^\text{16}\) Although geared to specific social movements (and especially to contemporary cases), the theory is applicable with somewhat less consistency to general and expressive movements, perhaps neglected by Blumer's classification scheme, as secessionist movements and movements aimed at the restoration or protection of laws, rules, and/or agencies.\(^\text{17}\)

In the pages that follow, examination is made of the necessary functions of reformist and revolutionary rhetoric and of the types of problems that arise from inherently conflicting demands. Presentation of the theory next proceeds to a consideration of alternative strategies of adaptation: the tactics and styles appro-


\(^\text{17}\) Any classification of social movements must have arbitrary features. For other categorizations, see Lang and Lang, pp. 497-505.

priate to each and their respective advantages and disadvantages.

Rhetorical Requirements

Sociological theorists have inferred the functional imperatives of formal organizations from an analysis of their structural characteristics.\(^\text{18}\) A social movement is not a formal social structure, but it nevertheless is obligated to fulfill parallel functions.\(^\text{19}\) Like the heads of private corporations or government agencies, the leaders of social movements must meet a number of rhetorical requirements, arranged below under three broad headings.

1. They must attract, maintain, and mold workers (i.e., followers) into an efficiently organized unit. The survival and effectiveness of any movement are dependent on adherence to its program, loyalty to its leadership, a collective willingness and capacity to work, energy mobilization, and member satisfaction. A hierarchy of authority and division of labor must be established in which members are persuaded to take orders, to perform menial tasks, and to forego social pleasures. Funds must be raised, literature printed and distributed, local chapters organized, etc.\(^\text{20}\)

2. They must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure (i.e., the

\(^\text{18}\) See, for example, Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass., 1938) and Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Ill., 1949).

\(^\text{19}\) According to Lang and Lang (p. 493), it is the quasi-structural character of social movements that distinguishes them from formal organizations on the one hand and spontaneous mass behavior on the other. Although claiming to stress the nonstructural aspects of social movements, Lang and Lang have provided the most adequate account of their structural imperatives. See pp. 495-496 and 531-537. See also C. Wendell King, Social Movements in the United States (New York, 1956).

external system, the established order. The product of any movement is its ideology, particularly its program for change. Reformist and revolutionary rhetorics both seize on conditions of real deprivation or on sharp discrepancies between conditions and expectations—the reformist urging change or repair of particular laws, customs, or practices, the revolutionary insisting that a new order and a vast regeneration of values are necessary to smite the agents of the old and to provide happiness, harmony, and stability.

3. They must react to resistance generated by the larger structure. The established order may be “too kind” to the movement or it may be too restrictive. It may steal the movement’s thunder by anticipating its demands and acting on some of them, by appointing a commission to “study the problem,” or by bribing or coopting personnel. On the other hand, it may threaten, harass, or socially ostracize the membership, refuse to recognize or negotiate with the movement, or deny it access to the mass media. The leadership of a social movement must constantly adjust to backlash reactions and pseudosupportive reactions as well as to overreactions by officials on which it may capitalize.

Social movements are severely restricted from fulfilling these requirements by dint of their informal compositions and their positions in relation to the larger society. By comparison to the heads of most formal organizations, the leaders of social movements can expect minimal internal control and maximal external resistance. Whereas business corporations may induce productivity through tangible rewards and punishments, social movements, as voluntary collectivities, must rely on ideological and social commitments from their members. At best, the movement’s leadership controls an organized core of the movement (frequently mistaken for the movement itself) but exerts relatively little influence over a relatively larger number of sympathizers on its periphery. 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, its maxims, its customs governing manners, decorum, and taste, its insignia of authority, etc.

Although organizational efficiency and adaptation to pressures from the external system are clearly prerequisite to promotion of a movement’s ideology, in other respects the various internal and external requirements of a movement are incompatible. Shorn of the controls that characterize formal organizations, yet required to perform the same internal functions, harassed from without, yet obligated to adapt to the external system, the leader of a social movement must constantly balance inherently conflicting demands on his position and on the movement he represents.

Rhetorical Problems

Unless it is understood that the leader is subjected to incompatible demands, a great many of his rhetorical acts must seem counterproductive. An agitator exhorts his following to revolutionary fervor and then propounds conservative solutions to the evils he has depicted. Another leader deliberately disavows the very program he seeks to achieve. A

21 Blumer, pp. 210-211.
23 Ibid., pp. 282-286.
24 Lang and Lang, p. 495.
26 According to Turner and Killian (p. 337) this is the usual case for revolutionary movements. They are forced to retain several identities. The same should also be true of retrogressive movements. See, for example, Henry
third leader encourages his supporters to carry Viet Cong flags or to "raze the Pentagon" or to heckle another spokesman for the movement, despite advance knowledge that these acts will fragment the movement and invite bitter reactions from outsiders.27

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.28 Careful, by contrast, to remain consistent with its values, the movement may forsake those strategies and tactics that are necessary to implement its program.29 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.30

Short of causing disintegration, the existence of crosspressures enormously complicates the role of the leader, frequently posing difficult choices between ethical and expediential considerations. The following are illustrative of these dilemmas and of other rhetorical problems created by conflicting demands.

1. When George Wallace vowed, after losing a local election, that he would never again be "out-niggered," he was referring to a phenomenon that has its counterpart on the left as well. Turner and Killian have suggested that strong identification by members with the goals of a movement—however necessary to achieve esprit de corps—may foster the conviction that any means are justified and breed impatience with time-consuming tactics. The use of violence and other questionable means may be prompted further by restrictions on legitimate avenues of expression, imposed by the larger structure. 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.31

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.32 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.33 Statements of ideology must provide definition of that which is ambiguous in the 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.34

Kraus, The Many and the Few (Los Angeles, 1947).

27 See Norman Mailer, "The Steps of the Pentagon," Harper's Magazine, CCXXXVI (March 1968), 47-142. Mailer described the disruptive effects of Yippie leaders on "straights." 28 The "iron law of oligarchy" may be overstated, but it is not without merit. See Turner and Killian, p. 372.

29 Norman Mailer and others have ascribed just this failure to Eugene McCarthy. See "Miami Beach and the Siege of Chicago," Harper's Magazine, CCXXXVII (November 1968), 41-130. Cf. pp. 77 and 93.


31 Turner and Killian, p. 373.
33 Smelser, p. 82.
34 The writer has inferred these rhetorical functions from Smelser's thorough analysis of
Hence the use of "god words" and "devil words" as well as "stereotypes, smooth and graphic phrases and folk arguments." Among isolated individuals, those anxiety, hostility, and wish-fulfillment beliefs that are socially taboo are likely to be repressed or inhibited. They are expressed unconsciously or if consciously, only to one's self, or if expressed to others, said more to expunge feelings than to share them. 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.

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. As Kenneth Keniston has noted, "Movement groups... tend to develop strong barriers on their outside boundaries, which impede communication and movement outside the group; they frequently exhibit an 'anti-empirical' inability to use facts in order to counter emotion-based distortions and impressions; interaction within the group often has a quality of 'surreality.'"

3. Pressures for organizational efficiency are incompatible with membership needs. An energized membership is the strength of any movement and its esprit de corps is essential to goal implementation. Yet morale cannot be secured through 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. The problem is especially acute in movements that distrust authority and value participatory democracy. During the hectic days of Vietnam Summer, according to Keniston, the secretarial staff of the central office demanded and received equal status and responsibilities with a seasoned political staff. As a result, experienced organizers were forced to perform menial chores while the former clerical workers advised local projects.

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 skill. When,
in one year, Malcolm X broke with Elijah Muhammad, shifted positions on integration and participation in civil rights demonstrations, and confessed his uncertainties on other issues, he inevitably alienated some followers and invited charges of weakness and inconsistency from his enemies.\(^40\) When Allard Lowenstein politicked with student groups in behalf of Sen. Eugene McCarthy, he had to seem as unlike a "pol" as possible.\(^41\)

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 interfunctional 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.\(^42\)

6. Movements require a diversity of leadership types with whom any one leader must both compete and cooperate.\(^43\) Theoreticians, agitators, and propagandists must launch the movement; political and bureaucratic types must carry it forward. Ideological differences among the leadership must also be expected insofar as the leadership reflects internal divisions among the following. Finally, 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, each with its own appropriate tactics and styles.

Little needs to be said about the strategy of the moderate. His is the pattern of peaceful persuasion rhetoricians know best and characteristically prescribe, the embodiment of reason, civility, and decorum in human interaction. Dressed in the garb of respectability and exhibiting Ivy League earnestness and midwestern charm, 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. His "devil" is a condition or a set of behaviors or an outcast group; never the persons he is seeking to influence. They, rather, are part of his "we" group, united if only by lip-service adherence to his symbols. In textbook terms, the moder-


\(^{42}\) For a discussion of other intramovement divisions, see Smelser, pp. 302-306 and 361-364.

\(^{43}\) Like Margaret Sanger or Martin Luther King, Jr., the same leader may encompass all or almost all of the necessary roles. This is rare, however. See Turner and Killian, pp. 472-476.
ate adapts to the listener’s needs, wants, and values; speaks his language, adjusts to his frame of reference; reduces the psychological distance between his movement and the larger structure. Roy Wilkins exemplified the approach when he argued that the “prime, continuing racial policy looking toward eradication of inequities must be one of winning friends and influencing people among the white majority.”

If moderates assume or pretend to assume an ultimate identity of interests between the movement and the larger structure, militants act on the assumption of a fundamental clash of interests. If moderates employ rhetoric as an alternative to force, militants use rhetoric as an expression, an instrument, and an act of force. So contradictory are the rhetorical conceptions of moderate and militant strategists that it strains the imagination to believe that both may work. Yet the decisive changes wrought by militant rhetorics in recent years gives credence to the view that the traditionally prescribed pattern is not the only viable alternative.

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. Hostility is also expressed in dress, manners, dialect, gestures, in-group slogans, and ceremonies. Al-

though 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. The targets of sit-ins, sleep-ins, and other confrontational activities are invited to participate in a drama of self-exposure. Should they reject militant demands, they may be forced to unmask themselves through punitive countermeasures, thus helping to complete the rhetorical act. Confrontation, according to Scott and Smith, “dissolves the line between marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, acts of physical violence, and aggressive discourse. In this way it informs us of the essential nature of discourse itself as human action.”

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. Once again, the following dilemmas derive from conflicting rhetorical requirements.

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.), even after militants have fist salutes, the “honkie” epithet, “soul” and “brother” identifications, the ritual handshake, etc. For an excellent analysis of nonverbal symbolism among black militants, see Ulf Hannerz, “The Rhetoric of Soul: Identification in Negro Society,” Race, IX (April 1968), 453–465.


48 See Scott and Smith, 8.

49 Ibid., 7.
occasioned those deliberations by prolonged and self-debilitating acts of protest. On the other hand, the militant has readier access to the masses. Robert C. Weaver has lamented that "today, a publicized spokesman may be the individual who can devise the most militant cry and the leader one who can articulate the most far-out position." 50

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.

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, Robespierres and Dantons who can no longer contain energies within prescribed limits or guarantee their own tenure. 51 On the other hand, moderate leaders frequently claim that their supporters are apathetic. As Turner and Killian have pointed out: "To the degree to which a movement incorporates only major sacred values its power will be diffused by a large body of conspicuous lip-service adherents who cannot be depended upon for the work of the movement." 52

4. Militants are effective with "power-vulnerables"; moderates are effective with "power-invulnerable"; 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. 53 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-invulnerable" are those who have little or nothing to lose by publicly voicing their prejudices and acting on their self-concerns. With respect to the movement for black equality:

They are the mass of white Americans who are largely unaffected by rent strikes and boycotts and who have so far defended their neighborhood sanctuaries or have physically and psychologically withdrawn to the suburbs. The average American may fear riots but he can escape from them. He may or may not approve of boycotts and demonstrations but in either case he is largely unaffected by them. He is subject to legislation but in most cases until now he has been able to circumvent it. Only through communications aimed at a change in his attitudes or through carefully formulated and tightly enforced government policies can his actions be appreciably modified. 54

By reducing the psychological distance between the movement and the external structure, the moderate is likely to win sympathizers, even among "power-vulnerables." But as those in positions of power allocate priorities (they, too,

51 See also Paul L. Fisher and Ralph L. Lowenstein, Race and the News Media (New York, 1967).
52 Walker, pp. 49-51.
54 Ibid., 26.
are subjected to conflicting demands), they are unlikely to translate sympathy into action unless pressured to do so. Should the leader of a movement strike militant postures, he is likely to actuate "power-vulnerables" but at the same time prompt backlash groups to apply their own pressure tactics.

Where the movement and the larger structure are already polarized, the dilemma 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, admittedly a catchall term for those efforts that combine militant and moderate patterns of influence. The leader may alternate between carrot and stick or speak softly in private and stridently at mass gatherings. He may form broadly based coalitions that submerge ideological differences or utilize spokesmen with similar values but contrasting styles. Truly the exemplar of oxymoronic postures, he may stand as a "conservative radical" or a "radical conservative," espousing militant demands in the value language of the established order or militant slogans in behalf of moderate proposals. In defense of militancy, he may portray himself as a brakeman, a finger in the dike holding back an angry tide. In defense of more moderate tactics, he may hold back an angry tide without loss of reputation, as Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman did in urging nonviolence on their "yippie" following during the Democratic Convention in Chicago: "We are a revolutionary new community and we must protect our community. . . . We, not they, will decide when the battle begins. . . . We are not going into their jails and we aren't going to shed our blood. We're too important for that. We've got too much work to do."55

Intermediacy can be a dangerous game. Calculated to energize supporters, win over neutrals, pressure power-vulnerables, 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.

Still, some strategists manage to reconcile differences between militant and moderate approaches and not simply to maneuver around them. They seem able to convince the established order that bad tasting medicine is good for it and seem capable, too, of mobilizing a diverse collectivity within the movement.

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. Few will contest the claim that Martin Luther King, Jr. epitomized the approach. Attracting both militants and moderates to his movement, King could win respect, even from his enemies, by reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable. The heart of the case for intermediacy was succinctly stated by King himself in a speech which Professor Robert Scott has analyzed: "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 love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power cor-

recting everything that stands against love."\footnote{Quoted in Robert L. Scott, "Black Power Bends Martin Luther King," \textit{Speaker and Gavel}, \textbf{V} (March 1968), 84.}

Viewed broadly, the great contemporary movements all seem to require combinations of militant and moderate strategies. Tom Hayden can be counted upon to dramatize the Vietnam issue; Arthur Schlesinger, to plead forcefully within inner circles. Threats of confrontation may prompt school boards to finance the building of new facilities in ghetto areas, but it may take reasonableness and civility to get experienced teachers to volunteer for work in those facilities. Demands by revolutionary student groups for total transformations of university structures may impel administrators to heed quasi-militant demands for a redistribution of university power. Support for the cause by moderate groups may confer respectability on the movement. Thus, however much they may war amongst themselves, militants and moderates each perform essential functions.

**Summary**

This paper has attempted to provide a broad framework within which persuasion in social movements, particularly reformist and revolutionary movements, may be analyzed. Derived in large measure from sociological theory and from an examination of contemporary cases, it has examined rhetorical processes from the perspective of the leader of a movement: the requirements he must fulfill, the problems he faces, the strategies he may adopt to meet those requirements.

What emerges most sharply from the foregoing discussion are the extraordinary rhetorical dilemmas confronting those who would lead social movements. Movements are as susceptible to fragmentation from within as they are to suppression from without. Impelled to fulfill the same internal and external requirements as the heads of most formal organizations, their leaders can expect greater resistance to their efforts from both insiders and outsiders. The needs of individual members are frequently incompatible with organizational imperatives; appeals addressed to the intelligentsia of a movement incompatible with appeals addressed to the masses; the values for which the movement stands incompatible with tactical necessities. In the face of these and other problems, the leader may adopt the traditionally prescribed tactics and style of the moderate or those of his more militant counterpart. Yet the choice between moderate and militant strategies introduces still other dilemmas. The great leaders (and the great movements) seem capable of combining these seemingly antithetical strategies without inconsistency by justifying their use with appeals to higher principles.