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The Liberty Counsel's : An Ideographic Analysis

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THE LIBERTY COUNSEL'S <MINISTRY>: AN IDEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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THE LIBERTY COUNSEL'S MINISTRY: AN IDEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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To Lance, who somehow managed to put up with my dedication to this thesis.
To Angie, because we somehow survived postmodern rhetoric.
To Doug, my dear brother, *I beat.*

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THE LIBERTY COUNSEL'S <MINISTRY>: AN IDEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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Ideology is a powerful means of persuasion in contemporary audience appeals. Through the means of ideographic and fragmentary analyses provided by Michael Calvin McGee (1980, 1990) and Saindon (2008), I examine the rhetorical appeals made by the Liberty Counsel, an evangelical Christian organization, which provides legal counsel for cases regarding "religious liberty." Through an ideographic and fragmentary analysis, I conclude that the Counsel utilizes the ideograph <ministry> as a superseding means of denoting its ideology. Further, I argue that <ministry> is the ideograph that represents the ontological nature of the organization's philosophy and serves as the guiding principle for many of the other ideographs that the organization employs. Further, the <ministry> ideograph displays relative influence for the Liberty Counsel with and from other organizations, as illustrated when <ministry> is compared to competing ideologies, such as that from the Southern Poverty Law Center. The importance of the ideograph is incumbent upon its utility in understanding a "snapshot" of the rhetorical situation. Rather than attempting to draft ideological archetypes, as the initial ideographic form attempted, this new ideographic form accepts the relativistic cultural influences and accounts for them synchronically.

Keywords: *ideographic fragments, ideology, ontology, ministry*

Introduction

Ideology is a powerful means of persuasion in contemporary audience appeals. Persons, organizations, and governments utilize ideologies to persuade audiences large and small to adopt new positions, abandon unsavory ideas, or group masses together into easily describable categories. Some organizations are precipitated entirely on ideological means (i.e. political parties, ministries). Others employ ideology as a rhetorical tool, meant to advance organizational goals in a number of different environments (i.e. legal decisions, recruitment, finances). Such is the case for the Liberty Counsel, which blends an ideological approach to organization building with a stringent usage of ideology as a means of advancement.

Modern, postmodern, and contemporary rhetorical scholarship engages these instances of persuasion through a number of different tools, methods, and paradigms. Michael Calvin McGee (1975; 1978; 1980; 1990; McGee & Martin, 1983) popularized this paradigm, by attempting to distinguish the means through which ideology influences one's desire, need, or compulsion to persuade others. McGee standardized the approach to ideological criticism through the use of ideographs (1980) and the discourse fragment (1990), which seek to understand cultural influence relative to history and other ideological representations.

McGee (1990) distinguishes these terms by noting that texts are fragments because they are only "apparently finished;" in actuality, "discourse is in fact a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made" (p. 279). As an example, McGee uses the "I Have a Dream Speech" from Martin Luther King, Jr. McGee (1990) argues, it is only an apparently finished discourse because "the speech is only a

featured part of an arrangement that includes all facts, events, texts, and stylized expressions deemed useful in explaining its influence and exposing its meaning" (p. 279). Therefore he argues that prior to his 1990 thesis, scholars separated text from context; in so doing, scholarship "no longer deals with discourse as it appears in the world" (p. 283). A better method of analyzing a text, according to McGee, is to consider its sources, its culture, and its influence. Building off of the work of McGee, Saindon (2008) introduces the ideographic fragment. He defines this as, "an appeal generated by the desire to reconstitute a single vision of society in the face of growing fragmentation (Bhabha, 1994; Biesecker, 2002)" (p. 90-91). Further, Saindon (2008) contends that "ideographic fragments are the products of a dispersed, multiplicitous public sphere containing a cacophony of vernacular voices" (p 110).

The utility of ideographic analysis in contemporary rhetoric is unparalleled as it seeks to uncover the rich historical and cultural contexts that precipitate ideology. Indeed, many in the contemporary academy have engaged with the ideograph as a means of determining ideological movements throughout Western society (Bennett-Carpenter, McCallion, & Maines, 2013; Hayden, 2009; Kelly, 2014; Platt, 2007; Stassen & Bates, 2010). These works introduce new ideographs into the overall rhetorical framework. Similarly, this thesis illustrates a new ideograph, <ministry> and the influence it holds over contemporary rhetorical appeals in a given situation.

Using frameworks provided by McGee and Saindon (2008), this thesis explores the use of ideographs in contemporary persuasion. In so doing, I explore rhetoric used by the Liberty Counsel, a ministerial organization that uses American and other national legal systems to further its mission of conservatively-minded ministry to the masses.

Ultimately, this thesis explicates the ideographs employed by the Liberty Counsel, their relative cultural influence, and the *modus operandi* of the organization.

About The Liberty Counsel

The Liberty Counsel is a multinational organization that provides free legal counsel for court cases with perceived religious underpinnings. Since its foundation in 1989, the organization enjoys nonprofit status as a 501(c)(3) organization and publicly operates as a "Christian ministry" (Liberty Counsel, n.d.a, para. 2). The Liberty Counsel's mission is, in essence, dogmatic rather than juridical. The organization proclaims in its mission statement:

> The purpose of this ministry is to preserve religious liberty and help create and maintain a society in which everyone will have the opportunity to discover the truth that will give true freedom (Liberty Counsel, n.d.a, para. 3).

The Liberty Counsel is clear about its organizational purpose: to minister to those who do not understand its prescription of "true freedom." Its service to its fellow man is comprised of various legal challenges that seek to privilege its interpretation of Biblical precepts, and interject them in United States law. Further, the Counsel dedicates resources to activism, riling potential allies to its cause. To that end, the organization pushes forth missives pleading for outside support from those who hold similar traditional Christian beliefs (e.g, Staver, 2015b). The Liberty Counsel loads ideological freight and weight behind its use of <ministry> as an ideograph; it explicitly makes ideologically-charged connections in its mission statement, as to be clear to its ideological purpose.

At times, the Liberty Counsel uses sensationalism to further its mission. In fact, the Liberty Counsel's national prominence arose through its penchant for sensationalism. For example, in 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States decided to legalize same sex marriage nationwide. In response, former Kentucky Governor, Steve Beshear, required all county clerks to comply with the ruling (Wolfson, 2015a). Soon after the proclamation Kim Davis, Rowan County, Kentucky clerk, infamously proclaimed that she would defy the ruling and refused to issue any marriage licenses to any petitioning couple. The Liberty Counsel offered her its services as a means of protecting Davis from what the organization perceived as a breach of her religious liberty (Wolfson, 2015b). Its attempts at persuasion, however, do not end at simply disseminating missives and public displays. Liberty Counsel leader Mat Staver held group events in support of Davis, proclaiming verifiably false information in an attempt at persuading the crowd to support Davis and by proximity, the Liberty Counsel. Staver proclaimed that prayer meetings were gathering around the world, most specifically in Peru, that supported Davis' mission (Galofaro, 2015). This case, among others, illustrates The Liberty Counsel's ability to take cases and use them to further the organizational mission.

The Counsel's sensational, dogmatic approach has many drawbacks. For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) considers the Counsel's actions worthy of Hate Group status (Galofaro, 2015). The SPLC defines a hate group as an organized group of individuals conducting "criminal acts, marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafleting, or publishing" (SPLC, 2015, para. 4) or holding "beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for its immutable characteristics" such as race, sex, gender, or sexual identity (para. 2). Other organizations that have received this moniker

from the SPLC are the Family Research Council and the National Organization for Marriage (Schlatter, n.d.). Hate group status further sanctifies the perception that the Liberty Counsel is an organization focused more on ideological, rather than legal, principle.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the Liberty Counsel utilizes ideographs in its rhetorical appeals, specifically the <ministry> ideograph. As McGee (1980) argued,

> The ideology of a community is established by the usage of such terms in specifically rhetorical discourse, for such usages constitute excuses for specific beliefs and behaviors made by those who executed the history of which they were a part (p. 16).

More specifically, this thesis looks at <ministry> using ideographic fragmentary analysis (McGee, 1990) because such analysis provides a significant capacity for rich description of critical cultural components (Saindon, 2008). Using the framework provided by McGee and Saindon, I illustrate the significance of <ministry> as an ideograph. I argue that through its display of a community's ontological purpose, this ideograph illustrates the intent that seemingly guides the rest of the Counsel's ideological appeals.

<center>**Review of Literature**</center>

This literature review encompasses discussions on ideology as a basis for rhetorical criticism, as well as an explanation of how modern ideological criticism evolved into contemporary postmodern ideological discourse analysis. First, I illustrate the history of the "ideological turn" to rhetoric. Next, I overview the postmodern shift in ideological rhetoric through McGee's (1990) conceptualization of the discourse fragment, which accounts for a greater depth of information than his previous construct. Finally, this literature review explicates the connection between the seemingly different concepts that McGee produced.

Ideology as a Basis for Rhetorical Criticism

McGee founded the ideological turn to rhetorical criticism through the examination of the ideological principle. The ideological principle, in essence, is a derivation of cultural or political maxims that reach critical mass in terms of reach and persuasive ability (McGee, 1978). These maxims help to define various challenges or goals for a society, insofar as the challenges attain a societal critical mass. The principles and maxims therein, once at sufficient mass, "may be twisted to purposes seemingly at odds with its original intent" (p. 144). McGee exemplifies the twisting of ideologies through his exposition of the argumentation of Lord Chatham, "the Great Commoner" (p. 144).

McGee (1978) argued that Chatham utilized a newly created ideological principle, "Not men, but measures" (p. 144) to undermine Sir Robert Walpole's public standing. The maxim, created in response to a public crisis of unpopularity by his contemporary, Walpole, helped define the ideological principle of "objective detachment from

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personalities and ties of kinship" (p. 147). Through his "cult of personality" (p. 144), Chatham took the principle and, once it reached critical mass in terms of reach and acceptance, used it against Walpole by changing the ideological connotations behind it. Even though he, himself, was not a commoner at all—he was elevated to his social prominence through marriage to a wealthy family—Chatham used the maxim, "not men but measures," against Walpole to "justify 'popular,' "commoner" opposition to [government] ministers who made a constitutional claim to the loyalty of 'the people'" (pp. 146-147). Chatham argued, according to McGee, that it was one's ethical obligation to oppose those who made requests that were contradictory to one's judgment of "measures." As McGee argued, once a maxim reaches critical societal mass, those who create the principle no longer control it. Such is the case for Walpole: Chatham utilized the rhetorical tool Walpole created and used it against him. Thanks in part to the inquiry into Walpole and Chatham's rhetorical jousts, McGee ultimately provided grounds for his future works, including the ideograph.

Before examining ideographs as a means of persuasion, one must first understand the conceptual foundation of ideology. Makus (1990) made explicit the connection between Hall's theory of ideology and rhetorical criticism. Ideology, at its essence, becomes discursively produced at a social level, rather than personal. Therefore, no single actor (personal or organizational), through intention or intentional action, can determine an ideology (Hall, 1982, as cited in Makus, 1990). Instead, ideology is a social construct, created, maintained, and heaved up by the unconscious drives of the people. They become what may seem like social "common sense" in order to "maintain their speakers largely as their subjects to create an overlying ideological unity" (p. 502).

Ideology, according to Makus, is a tool of the populace, unburdened by temporal, spatial, or organizational affiliation. The social "common sense" can be adapted outside of these means. The nature of social constructionism is key to McGee's notion of the rhetorical display of ideology. In a sense, social constructionism allows for a democratization of ideals, creating as McGee posited, the shifting ideological standard.

Therefore, in the democratic political sphere, rhetors utilize ideology as a means of persuading others into accepting a particular worldview. Ideology as a subgenre of rhetoric has, according to Weiler (1993), many facets of a typical piece of persuasion ("inventional and figural resources;" a "generic" yet "unique" appeal to society as a means of persuading others (p. 15)). However, ideology "primarily presents itself as political philosophy" (Weiler, 1993, p. 15):

> Ideology, like all rhetoric, is addressed to all audiences, but by its nature obscures the differences among the multiple audiences to which it is addressed. Ideology … is [also] designed to persuade, but does so by distorting reality in distinctive ways. (p. 15)

In this view, Weiler argued that an ideology usually attempts to coerce large numbers of people to accept control and ultimately to create rigid hegemonic structures. These particular structures become relatively powerful due to an ideology's capacity to define "rational, philosophical arguments" by "presenting theses and giving reasons" that may be freely challenged and adopted or refuted by a given populace (p. 25). Thus, ideology creates a uniquely powerful means of persuasion to a society based on Weiler's appraisal. Not only is ideology a powerful means of persuasion; however, wholly indebted to its

socially constructed idealization, ideology is inescapably a necessary means of

persuasion through which we attempt to change the ideologies of others.

The criticism of ideological symbolic expression is, in turn, subject to the

appropriate political climate. Wander (1984) argued that history invariably affects the

rhetorical situation. A critique of the ideological situation may only manifest itself within

a democratic political climate—one in which "people can deliberate and act to bring

about change" (p. 206). This political climate creates a civic space in which criticism has

the capacity to influence a critic's perceived necessary change. Wander further asserted

that without this appropriate climate, ideological criticism and debate would merely

collapse into an entropic, expiry state. Democratic political ideology, Wander argued, is

the only political ideology conducive to reasonable discourse. In the context provided by

McGee and Martin (1983), the democratic system is the only one in which one may have

the capacity to desire a comprehensive understanding of their surrounding environment.

The democratic system, in a sense, is incumbent upon its participants to be able to

categorize experiences into symbolic expressions.

Poulakos (1987) noted that ideological critique uncovers two fundamental

characteristics of a text: the ideological (what is) and the utopian (what can—or should—

be). Further, he asserted that critique encompasses three stages of analysis: the political,

the social, and the cultural. Political analysis is concerned with the symbolic nature of a

work and how it works to solve real conflicts; the social stage of analysis encompasses

social groups and classes; cultural analysis is taken from a critical perspective, wherein

analysis focuses on cultural revolution. The dichotomy between the ideological and the

utopian—what is, versus what should be—stands, therefore, as an important

consideration for ideological critics.

The importance of ideology as a necessary means of persuasion manifests through

McGee's notion of the ideograph, becoming the focal point for ideology as a rhetorical

paradigm. McGee (1980) stated, "Ideology in practice is a political language, preserved

in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief

and behavior" (p. 5). The ideograph, as one of McGee's most important rhetorical tools,

frames the rhetorical appeals made by rhetors that signify a particular ideological stance.

Specifically, an ideograph encompasses "ultimate" or "God" terms that signify a

particular argument, understanding, or ideology (McGee, 1980, p. 7), which defines and

explains a communal understanding. For example, McGee appealed to the "rule of law"

as a term denotative of social conditioning. The "rule of law," as a social construct, is

"set apart" from the typical social lexicon through the rising popularity of the term. It is a

form of "intrinsic" social control (p. 6). This particularized phrase, "rule of law," exists as

a small part of a larger societal scheme—one intertwined with an ideological context.

Alongside the importance of discerning ideographic movements, McGee (1980)

further posits that a particular term becomes an ideograph when, at a cultural level, group

members are habituated into believing its significance has not just logical or empirical

bases, but also socially constructed values, such as morality, religiosity, and ethics. For

example, McGee posited that the 'rule of law' might be used as an ideograph to justify

the continuance of a particular form of government (i.e. the Whig/Liberal order) due to

inherent complexity found in such terminology. McGee (1980) further stated, "each

member of a community will see [the ideograph] as a gestalt [of] every complex nuance"

found in a given proposition (p. 7).

McGee (1980) also posited that in order to analyze ideographs, an ideographical

critic must complete an analysis through two dimensions: diachronic (or, a vertical

appraisal of historical circumstances surrounding an ideograph) and synchronic (or, a

horizontal appraisal of current circumstances surrounding the ideograph such as other

meanings of an ideograph in conjunction with other, similar ideographs). According to

McGee, diachronic movement involves the different meanings of a particular ideograph

available to rhetors across time; these movements are, in essence, temporal in nature.

Diachronic movement also pertains to the various ways these meanings change

throughout the use of the ideograph. McGee (1980) used the ideograph <equality> to

explain this vertical movement: despite the meaning of equality in any given practical

conversation, there always will be a functional and essential meaning behind <equality>

that binds our collective understandings together. Examining ideographs as terms that

organize and galvanize a group, it becomes evident that, according to McGee, the

diachronic history is similar to a "simple chronology of the situations as a device to

structure" our conceptual understandings (p. 12).

Synchronic movement concerns the use of other ideographs in society at the given

moment. These movements, therefore, may be considered spatial movements, as

synchronic analysis tracks the interconnectivity and similarity of the various usages of an

ideograph. Here, McGee (1980) uses the ideograph "rule of law" and its conflicts with

other ideographs, such as "confidentiality"[1] or "national security" (p. 12). McGee returns

to the "rule of law" ideograph by explaining its different synchronic uses from infamous political leaders (e.g. Richard Nixon and Adolf Hitler).

Nixon, for example, contrasted the importance of "confidentiality" with that of "rule of law;" his actions and conversations were, as Nixon argued, unilaterally covered by a constitutionally predicated confidentiality—thus subverting any claim that "rule of law" may have. Similarly, Hitler contrasted the "rule of law" with his assault on "decadent democracies," claiming that these "rules of law" were inferior to his paradigm. McGee also makes note of the harmonious nature of ideographs, through which they work with other ideographs. "Rule of Law," as McGee posits, works naturally with "public trust," "freedom of speech," and "trial by jury." Essentially, McGee (2008) supposed that the discursive production of ideographs, such as rule of law, arose from "clusters of words radiating from the slogans originally used to rationalize" them (p. 13). Each term in the slogan would necessarily function in an identical fashion to logic, creating a semi-formal structure upon which meaning is built.

McGee and Martin (1983) summarized the pursuit of a rhetorical means of understanding ideology through a presupposition of public values and discrimination between simple political attitudes and underlying philosophical concerns by contending:

> …Public values are historically material and more or less self evident by virtue of each citizen's acculturation to the political conventions of his or her community. Freedom, for example, is not to be understood as representing a philosophical problem, but rather as comprehending a series of rhetorical propositions painfully adduced in past and present confrontations with material life conditions. (p. 56)

McGee and Martin deduced that ideology and, therefore, ideological persuasion is simply a means through which rhetors—and audiences—understand the series of events one experiences throughout their existence. The creation and maintenance of ideology fundamentally relies on one's desire to understand, characterize, and categorize the experiences into meaningful, symbolic expressions comprehensively.

Contemporary scholarship has developed McGee's theory of the ideograph as a means of understanding the meaningful, symbolic expressions inherent in rhetoric. Bennett-Carpenter, McCallion, and Maines (2013) explained the movements of a more contemporary ideograph, <personal relationship with Jesus> (<PRWJ>). This ideograph has been popularized amongst evangelical Christians—specifically, as Bennett-Carpenter, et al. contend, Catholics—and is used throughout the religion's system of beliefs. <PRWJ> is used vertically in Catholic tradition through various homilies, addresses, or discussions. To address the horizontal nature of <PRWJ>, Bennett-Carpenter, McCallion, and Maines (2013) examine the rhetoric of Protestants. Their rhetoric differs synchronically due to their similar phraseology, yet differing interpretations. For example, while Protestants do utilize the same ideograph--<PRWJ>--it holds different connotations. As Bennett-Carpenter et al. argue, Protestants contended that due to the nature of Catholicism, which conducts a form of worship to canonical saints, Catholics cannot truly have the <PRWJ> that Protestants enjoy. The ideograph, in that regard, illustrates its synchronic movements as two groups differ on their interpretation of a single phrase.

Others rhetorical critics have continued to engage with ideographs over the past decade (Hayden, 2009; Kelly, 2014; Platt, 2007; Stassen & Bates, 2010). These analyses

explicitly utilize McGee's (1980) ideographic typology, examining the diachronic and synchronic movements of various popularized, politically-charged terms such as family, life, and marriage.

Platt (2007) uncovered the social complexities behind the <family> ideograph. By analyzing rhetoric from a conservative evangelical organization, Focus on the Family, Platt traced the organization's use of "family" as a basis for rationalizing any number of societal ills: "sexual promiscuity, abortion, cloning, euthanasia, gambling addiction, and an epidemic of pornography" ("Focus on Social Issues," n.d., as cited in Platt, 2007, p. 601). Diachronically, Platt (2007) made note of the reliance Focus on the Family places on conservative political ideology. In so doing she traced the roots of the term and the "traditional" usage of it. Making note of Focus on the Family's attempt at creating a "monopoly" on <family>, Platt also illustrated the effect of detracting organizations (such as the Family Research Counsel) to describe the contention inherent to synchronic movements within <family> as an ideograph.

In like fashion, Hayden (2009) examined <life> as an ideograph in direct competition with <choice>. Hayden first pointed out the deontological ethic inherent to antiabortion rhetoric. Essentially, deontology asserts that there is intrinsic right and wrong to an action and that moral law exists in an absolute state. This definitional exposition thus highlights the diachronic nature of <life> ideographic appeals, or, their historical significance. By outlining the philosophical connections to the argument, Hayden (2009) was able to make note of the historical connections to the ideology. Rather than explicitly pointing to the synchronic nature of <life>, Hayden took a novel approach in pointing out competing synchronicities by introducing the <choice>

ideograph: while both, in essence, argue separate sides of the same conflict, rather than employing similar ideographic terms, the two compete by each reframing the debate in perceivably positive terminology.

Stassen and Bates (2010) employed a more procedural approach when determining respective ideographic movements. Two essential thematic descriptors arose from their analysis, which determined historical interpretations of the term <marriage>: contractual and based on love (diachronic movements). Synchronically, Stassen and Bates consider the term's importance given Same-Sex Marriage advocacy; over half of their respondents believed that marriage should not include same-sex couples. This discrepancy between the two sets of respondents denotes a synchronicity of the term "marriage:" some of the respondents believed that same-sex marriage included all relationships in marriage, while others believed that marriage was a bond only between a man and woman.

Kelly (2014) examined the ideograph <freedom> and its derivative, <free>. Through weaving diachronic and synchronic movement into a comprehensive argument, Kelly made note of a rhetor's appeal to freedom "disassociated from its conventional meaning in the capitalist lexicon of termination" (p. 646). Here, Kelly argued the diachronic association to freedom intertwined with the capitalist history of the United States, in which freedom relied on the ending of a program or interference from the government. In that regard, <freedom> and <free> are both contrasted through a lens not skewed by Western preconceptions; historically, Native American <freedom> is viewed as "a richness of personal and collective agency, not material wealth" (p. 464).

Ideographs as a Basis for Postmodern Ideological Criticism

Ideographic movements are the historical and potential future justification of pieces of discourse, in conjunction with other master terms used in contrast or concert.. Nevertheless, despite these utilities of the ideograph, it becomes limited in scope given methods and theoretical approaches to contemporary discourse analysis. As McGee (1990) argued, the ideograph does not account for the relative influence of a particular ideograph in a given culture. To that end, McGee (1990) posited that a discourse fragment's influence is a discernment of the intersectionality of ideologies, experiences, and affiliations that influence what will be "structured into our experience" (p. 282). This is the quality that most divorces the fragment from its earlier iteration in the ideograph. The intellectual divorce is characterized through its ambivalence toward intellectual, conceptual totality: insofar as the ideograph attempted to discern an ideological appeal on a grand scale, the fragment's fundamental goal is the discernment of discourse at mere regional, communal, or organizational scales. These fragments are a consequence, and fount, of discourse, simultaneously.

Saindon (2008) utilized the strengths of the fragmentary perspective in an attempt to undo cultural limitations of the ideograph, due to its inherent lack of a "stable meta-narrative and value system in a postmodern society" (p. 107). This becomes problematic for the ideograph, because "it is impossible to understand why certain appeals occur" under postmodern circumstances (p. 107). The discourse fragment, upon which Saindon relies, has the "clear advantage" of "tracing the processes of transformation through the clashes and convergences between fragments, which help to produce a text" (p. 107).

Saindon demonstrated the ideograph's conceptual strengths with McGee's postmodern twist: the discourse fragment. Saindon (2008), by analyzing the equality

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principle, connected McGee's two seemingly disparate takes on ideological criticism. In

so doing, Saindon discussed a new rhetorical tool for discerning pertinent indications of

ideology: the ideographic fragment. This new conceptual framework for rhetorical critics

assists in "mapping the sources, cultural responsiveness, and the reception of a particular

discourse fragment," in addition to "enabling an account of motive for rhetorical appeal"

(2008, p. 111). The fragment influences our discourse through three interdependent

characteristics: its sources, the culture from which it was derived, and its influence

relative to its individual society (McGee, 1990). Saindon (2008) argued that a fragment's

sources (related historical meanings through which the fragment becomes relevant) and

culture (related factors from the given social environment in which a fragment is created)

are similar characteristics to the ideograph's diachronic and synchronic movements. The

fragment, however, offers a more complex understanding of discourse due to its

examination of relative influence. A fragment gains popularity through its "cultural

prominence," or, circulation and repetition (Saindon, 2008, p. 95). Therein, Saindon

(2008) provided a method through which one can examine the ideographic significance,

as well as the fragmentary influence, simultaneously.

Using Peter Singer's equality principle as a means of connecting the two

seemingly disparate theses (the ideograph and the discourse fragment) from McGee,

Saindon (2008) explicated the need for the consideration of cultural influence when

analyzing ideographs. Singer's *Animal Liberation* was an innovative argument in favor of

fair and equitable treatment of animals. Singer traced other usages of liberty and equality

in his work to create the argument that animals, namely non-human animals, should

receive rights akin to those of humans.

First, Saindon accomplished this through an examination of diachronic and synchronic movements of the equality ideograph. In so doing, Saindon asserted,

McGee (1990) would see Singer's definition of equality as a fragment of discourse appropriated from previous sources, but capable of being continually ventriloquized by future audiences for their own ends (p. 94).

Saindon first posited that synchronic movements are found in Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* through a synchronic analysis, or, analyzing similar ideologies. Saindon examined Cold War-era ideologies surrounding equality, such as democracy, communism, and collectivism. Equality, as an ideology, implicitly connects to each of these political systems/ideographs. Thus, Singer synchronically argued for a different meaning of equality through the use of these comparisons. Saindon further argued that Singer extended the previous uses of "equality," such as suffrage or children's rights. In so doing, Singer employs a discussion of diachronic movement. He explicitly stated that Singer's (2002, as cited in Saindon, 2008) "use of equality is indebted to previous historical usage of the term … in the Western philosophical and political tradition" (p. 98).

Next, Saindon proposed the relative influence of the equality principle in philosophical contexts. He examined the source of Singer's philosophical connections; Saindon ultimately concludes that Singer "negotiates several distinct forms of utilitarianism" (p. 101). At its philosophical core, Singer believed utilitarianism fundamentally relies on the principle of equality. After tracing the philosophical roots of equality, Saindon then examined cultural implications relevant to equality as fragment. Saindon made particular note of Singer's criticism of some Civil Rights appeals in his

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attempt to "Frame equality as a moral principle" while "not risking biological essentialism of both humans and non-humans or the inequitable treatment of others" (Saindon, 2008, p. 101). Finally, Saindon examined the relative influence that Singer's equality principle has in society through its use in justice systems and political ideologies. For example, Saindon examined the use of the equality principle in Canadian law, wherein many have debated the pragmatism of anti-cruelty legislation. Through the process of connection, Saindon made particular note of the incongruence within McGee's critical turn away from a comprehensive understanding of ideology to McGee's more recent fragmented, postmodern conceptualization of rhetoric and discourse.

Throughout the course of this review of literature, I have connected the broad conceptualizations of ideology provided by a number of communication academicians. Given the rhetorical utility of ideographic fragmentary analysis, one may clearly explain the ideological utility of these guiding, interpretive terms. For this thesis to accomplish this, in the proceeding section, I outline the methods I use to examine Liberty Counsel artifacts, which culminates in an argument crafted similarly to that of Saindon (2008).

Method

This thesis employed an ideographic fragmentary analysis in the spirit of

Saindon's (2008) article. First, following the procedures laid out by McGee (1990) I

conducted a fragmented ideographic analysis of rhetoric from the Liberty Counsel, and

made explicit the diachronic and synchronic movement of its most frequently employed

ideographic fragments. In doing this I employed a fragmentary analysis, which entails a

deep examination of Liberty Counsel fragments including webpages and press releases.

Also, the fragmentary analysis includes an examination of competing sources of

influence, such as that from the Southern Poverty Law Center and news articles. These

fragments allowed me to uncover the sources, culture, and influence of the Counsel's

employed ideographs.

To address the fragmented ideographic nature of the Liberty Counsel's rhetoric, I

followed McGee's (1990) prescription, and Saindon's (2008) operationalization, of

fragmentary analysis. To examine a fragment, one must discern the historical and cultural

influences that a particular ideograph may hold. Both McGee and Saindon's works are

exemplars for crafting fragmented analyses. First, McGee and Saindon examine the

works of those who they have studied, including pertinent fragments (e.g. books,

missives). From there, they postulate the ideological background, including philosophical

underpinnings and previous usages of the particular fragmented ideograph. Second,

McGee and Saindon examine relevant cultural influences that surround the use of an

ideograph. For example, Saindon examined communist interpretations of equality to

those of contemporary Western interpretations.

To accomplish this analysis, I examined key pages of two of the Liberty Counsel's webpages (libertycounsel.com and lc.org) to find artifactual words, phrases, and statements (i.e. ministry, liberty, family). Roughly 19 Liberty Counsel fragments were examined for this analysis, including "about us" sections, press releases, and blogs. To uncover synchronic connections, I examined roughly 24 outside documents, including those from Southern Poverty Law Center (splc.org) webpage and press releases, as well as news articles.

Next, I examined the greater context of these words, phrases, and statements to discover the broader elements therein; these elements become inherent to understanding why the Liberty Counsel employs its particular ideographs. For example, I engaged with the Counsel's pertinent use of the term "ministry" to understand why that was the term it chose. Next, I bookmarked all discovered pages and printed out important documents for this analysis. I scoured through the information therein and I underlined or otherwise demarcated relevant information for later retrieval. I utilized these methods for both diachronic and synchronic influences, including fragments from the Southern Poverty Law Center and outside news releases. Upon thorough textual analysis of the rhetorical forms used by the Liberty Counsel and its contemporaries, I determined that all the forms used by the Counsel functioned to privilege its idea of ministry.

\<Ministry> as Ideograph

In the environment created by its polarizing actions, it becomes clear that the Liberty Counsel's evangelical roots are both a significant boon and hindrance to its own ideological and rhetorical appeals. The historical and philosophical significance behind the Counsel's use of the \<ministry> ideograph is threefold: first, the historical significance behind ministry denotes an explicit connection to contemporary and historical evangelicalism. Second, the synchronicity of \<ministry> functions in terms of its ontological state, as well as its connection to other popular ideographs such as freedom, life, family, and liberty. Finally, the synchronic connections illustrate a divergence from other pertinent ideologies, such as that from contemporary organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The structure of this analysis is predicated upon a supposition made by Saindon (2008), in which he states the ideograph and the discourse fragment are, in virtually every essence save the relative influence, identical. Specifically, Saindon argues,

> Sources (relevant previous meanings from which the rhetor forms the fragment) and culture (relevant social circumstances in which a fragment emerges) seem to collectively express the same critical concerns as tracing diachronic and synchronic movement, respectively. (p. 95)

To closely align with this supposition, I have combined the two respective categories of analysis (diachronic and sources, synchronic and culture, respectively), while allowing for a discussion of an ideograph's historical and cultural influence **in concert with**, rather than **in ignorance of**, relative influence.

As McGee (1990) and Saindon (2008) understood, influence was a distinct realm of analysis, through which rhetoricians would attempt to understand a fragment's impact outside of the specific context it was originally intended. I, instead, argue that history and culture work interdependently. The postmodern condition dictates that texts and contexts comprise simple pieces of the human interpretation of reality. Therefore, a postmodern ideographic analysis must be able to account for the impact of an ideograph's usage on the history and culture surrounding it.

Diachronic History (Discourses and Sources)

As McGee (1980) posits, diachronic movements are contingent upon "earlier uses which become precedent, touchstones for judging the propriety of the ideograph in a current circumstance" (p. 10). Upon analysis, it is clear that the Liberty Counsel's use of <ministry> as an ideographic appeal hearkens to the American conservative evangelical Christian tradition, given the strong associations the Liberty Counsel and its members have to well known evangelicals and the application of the four main priorities of evangelicalism inherent to the Counsel's rhetoric. Insofar as the Liberty Counsel bases its rhetorical appeals on the American evangelical Christian tradition, one may find the diachronic significance within the <ministry> ideograph, especially when considering the Counsel's positions on marriage and abortion. The Counsel's meaning of ministry, aside from its basic conceptualization, relies on its interpretations of these key policy positions. There are many other opportunities within its rhetorical appeals to discern diachronic significance; this analysis is simply a brief examination of such historical and philosophical significance and in no way represents a comprehensive description of its appeals.

The Liberty Counsel has an explicit legal history of defending clients with

evangelical biases, and connects and ingratiates itself to modern evangelicals and

evangelical organizations such as Jerry Falwell, Sr. and Liberty University. The Counsel

has taken many legal cases that have explicit evangelical bents, such as its defense of

evangelical pastor Scott Lively, who was accused of aiding the Ugandan government

with creating a law criminalizing homosexuality (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). The

Counsel also ties itself to Jerry Falwell, Sr., a noted evangelical and author of *The Moral*

Majority (Liberty Counsel Action, n.d.). The Counsel's associations to evangelicalism are

clear; its public missives and releases also readily justify its connection to evangelicalism

as well.

Evangelicals, historically, have sought to fulfill four main priorities in their

rhetorical pursuit of the correct life. Sweeney (2005) explains that these four priorities

are,

> …Conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the
>
> expression of the gospel in effort; Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and
>
> what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
>
> Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism
>
> (p. 18).

Together, these four tenets offer a clear prescription of priorities for evangelicals. These

prescriptions borrow heavily from evangelical philosophy as a whole, which as Chick

(2016) posits, espouses that the Bible is literally the word of God. From the creation of

the Earth and the Stars in Genesis, to the dire apocalyptic prescription for humanity in

Revelation, evangelicals believe God himself divinely inspires each chapter and verse. In

this regard, evangelicalism utilizes the belief of Biblical inerrancy (Kell & Camp, 1999). Rhetorical strategies that emphasize Biblical inerrancy, attempt to establish the argument from genus wherein the divine nature of any concept transcends our earthly, human understanding and belong to God.

Such is the case for the Liberty Counsel's <ministry>, as outlined in its mission statement: as a product of divine inspiration, it requires that our human laws be disregarded, ignored, or changed if they conflict with "natural laws" established by God. The appeal to "natural law" as above human law essentially argues that God, as the absolute ruler of all creation within this universe, wields immense power over lowly humans. In that view, as Chick (2016) contends, evangelicalism reverence of Biblical law as a product of absolute divine authority is, again, contingent upon the rhetoric of holy bondage—or the belief that true freedom is found only through conscription into evangelical belief systems. Because evangelicalism relies on intimately trusting in Biblical inerrancy and Divinity, Biblical law is seen as the channel through which God's will is displayed. This literal translation of events therein creates an incumbency of God into every aspect of personal and social life. Concurrently, any person, law, or government is sinful insofar as it stands in opposition to the prescribed notion of divinity to which the Liberty Counsel ascribes. Sinfulness allows for the laws and policies writted to ultimately be overridden.

Liberty Counsel rhetoric is consistently based in a sense of transcendence from mere mortal concern. Specifically, the Counsel makes its appeals contingent upon an understanding of "natural law:"

Natural laws are laws that transcend time, cultures, and political institutions. The

Declaration of Independence recognizes those laws as appeals contingent upon

nature's God. The first rights recognized by the First Amendment of the United

States Constitution are the freedom of religion and speech. Liberty Counsel

advances these liberties on behalf of students, teachers, parents, pastors, churches,

and individuals in their homes, at work, and in public spaces (Liberty Counsel,

n.d.a, para. 6-7).

Liberty Counsel's arguments rely on a particularly religious interpretation of "natural

laws," defined not in scientific terms, but through culturally normative sentiments:

marriage as a bond between one man and one woman, or, the "right to life" for all

persons (including fetuses; Liberty Counsel, n.d.a).

In arguing for its precise interpretation of the "correct" nature of being as the

Liberty Counsel (n.d.a) had , the key term upon which its entire argument is contingent is

the appeal to transcendence. The Liberty Counsel argues that in order to experience true

freedom, one must drop aberrant behavior or beliefs and join with its cause—whether

through volunteerism or litigation—and bond oneself with the evangelical interpretation

of society. This "holy bondage" rhetorical strategy is common in evangelical appeals,

such as with the Southern Baptist Convention, that argue the only way to experience a

truly worthwhile existence is through its strict interpretations (Chick, 2016, p. 13). To the

extent that the Liberty Counsel employs this rhetorical strategy, it seems evident that the

Counsel heavily relies on the quixotic and paradoxical assertion that true freedom only

comes from subservience to a hardline ideology, which employs distinctly axiological

ideographs to determine a "correct" outcome for potential events.

The actions taken by the Liberty Counsel in the name of its ideological pursuits illustrate a profound sense of evangelicalism. The Counsel repeatedly presents its interest in fulfilling these priorities through its consistent negative appraisals of actions with which it disagrees. For example:

> Just as the Creator God set into motion the laws of physics, He established moral laws that reflect His love and justice and lead to true freedom. Liberty Counsel promotes measures to strengthen natural marriage and the family. We speak the truth in love, and promote positive family values, so that future generations will reject the lie that harmful behavior is normal or healthy (Liberty Counsel, n.d.a, para. 12-13).

Additionally, the Counsel in its public appeals to supporters refers to the "cold brutality" of abortion (Staver, 2016b, para. 6) that exists in a reality where Planned Parenthood condones the "killing innocent children" (para. 2) in "death camps" (Staver, 2016c, headline), or when impugning its adversarial organizations. Within these different appeals, the Liberty Counsel bases its negative appraisal of certain behaviors on Biblical prescription. In the Counsel's opinion, the Bible clearly condemns certain behaviors, such as homosexuality (Slick, n.d.) and abortion (Turner, n.d.). Simultaneously its commitment to Biblicism bolsters its prescription of religious liberty (Bigalke, n.d.).

The Counsel also notes the importance of "Change Therapy," which has the ultimate goal of changing a person's sexuality from homosexual to heterosexual. In the defense of change therapy, The Liberty Counsel notes potential irreparable harm to families and patients if no access to this therapy exists:

A requested ban on all so-called "Change Therapy" puts families, teens, and

counselors on the wrong side of the law. The proposal would prohibit counselors

from providing and clients from receiving any counsel seeking to change, reduce,

or eliminate unwanted same-sex sexual attractions, behavior, or identity.

This suggested regulatory action would mean that counselors could only affirm

unwanted same-sex attractions as normal, despite the fact that the client does not

want to act on such feelings. Depriving minors and families from beneficial

counsel will cause significant harm to them. (LC Staff, 2016, para. 3-4).

Throughout appraisals such as these, the Counsel repeatedly appeals to its audience to

follow the tenets of evangelicalism. Specifically, the Counsel tells followers to act

according to their faith (Liberty Counsel, 2016a), thus predicating political activism on

the name of evangelicalism. The Counsel also makes specific note of the importance of

Jesus' death on the cross (Staver, 2015a), elaborating its conviction to crucicentrism.

Further, it appeals to the Biblical foundation of "natural laws" (Liberty Counsel, n.d.a).

Coincidentally, these "natural laws" are created by God, and illustrate clear reasons for

conversionism, since the prescriptive evangelical interpretation of the Bible makes clear

that the only way to experience true freedom is through following these natural laws.

The Counsel repeatedly supplements its appeals to <ministry> diachronically by

returning to three of the essential pillars of evangelical ministry: conversionism, activism,

and Biblicism. Conversionism manifests as the repeated chastisement of "unjust" actions

in contrast to those laws supplied by God (i.e. "Natural and Revealed Laws"; Staver,

2016a, para. 6). The Counsel argues that those who are on the wrong side of God's law

must repent immediately. In regards to its activism, the Counsel proudly admits that it

"has no choice but to resist an unjust law" (para. 6); therefore, it concurrently admits that it lives the organization's interpretation of Biblical scripture—in similar fashion as the principle. The censure further applies through its appeals to biblicism: actions that disagree with the Counsel's mission are in "direct conflict with the Natural and Revealed Law" (para. 6), are worthy of becoming embroiled in conflict themselves.

The Counsel further explicitly appeals to a superseding presence within its mission. In this instance, given its evangelical mission, the superseding presence to which the Counsel associates is the Almighty: "The Lord has restored [Davis] in ways she couldn't have imagined!", and "…we have no choice but to resist an unjust law, particularly one that will force us to participate in acts that directly conflict with the Natural and Revealed Law" (para. 6). The Liberty Counsel achieves diachronic association by appealing to the evangelical tenets of Biblicism and activism. It grounds the positivity it associates to Davis' resistance in quasi-archaic interpretations of Biblical commands (i.e. Romans 1:28, "God gave them over to a depraved mind"). Ultimately, and based on Biblical commands, the Counsel recommends activism by publicly rallying against rulings such as *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court decision through which marriage equality was made law at the federal level, and in favor of resistors such as Davis.

The Liberty Counsel aggressively makes these appeals in response to progression in American social customs. As evidenced here, the organization takes great effort to persuade its evangelical audience into supporting its positions (e.g. heteronormativity, anti-abortion, pro-discrimination workplace policies). The blatantly evangelical rhetoric used by the Liberty Counsel, regarding the true nature of the family, signifies the

"harmful" nature of supposed aberrant sexual behavior. The Counsel believes that, because the same-sex, polygamous, or unconventional forms of marriage stand in opposition to its weighty prescription of faith-based "natural law" as characterized by "the Creator," the United States and its populace have strayed from holiness. Ultimately, if the country were to follow this path, the United States would be slated for extermination due to God's wrath (Barber, 2012).

Interestingly, while some attempt to paint the organization as conservative (Joachim, 2014), I argue these appeals more closely align to an appeal toward regression. Rather than using its platform to disseminate the message of conservatism (i.e. "Progress stops here, no further!"), the Counsel actively encourages its audiences to petition for laws and policy to remove any semblance of progression and return to positions of years past (e.g. heteronormativity, overturning *Roe v. Wade*, pro-discrimination workplace policies).

For example, the Liberty Counsel's <ministry> called the organization to defend the Religious Liberty Accommodations Act passed by the Mississippi state government. The Counsel lavishly praised the state for its "protection" of

> …Marriage-related industries, adoptions, churches and pastors, businesses with private facilities like restrooms and lockers, employer grooming standards, expressive activity of state employees, and permits clerks and others to recuse themselves from performing marriages or issuing licenses. (Liberty Counsel, 2016b, para. 2)

Counsel chairman, Mat Staver, further praised the law, saying:

The Religious Liberty Accommodations Act is a positive step toward protecting the constitutional rights of pastors and religious organizations. I encourage Governor Bryant to sign the bill. We must protect the religious freedoms of all people. (Staver, 2016, as cited in Liberty Counsel, 2016b, para. 3)

Contemporaries to the Liberty Counsel, such as the Human Rights Campaign, have described the bill by making note of its harmful allowance of,

Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Mississippians in some of the most important aspects of their lives, including at work, at schools, in their family life, and more (Metzger, 2016).

The Counsel returns to its adherence to <ministry>, natural law, and the evangelical tenet of conversionism in the above remarks. Through its prioritization of heteronormative ministry, the Counsel is led to praise the specific policy measures that agree with their particular ideology.

Interestingly, the Counsel even argues for a comparison of Kim Davis, Rowan County, Kentucky Clerk to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for their proposed similarities in "principled resistance," asserting:

Dr. King was a highly principled man and firmly held to his convictions until his timely death. Today, Kentucky Clerk Kim Davis stands as an example to all of us as a person of conviction who was jailed for her principled resistance to an unjust law. Yet, the Lord has restored her in ways she couldn't have imagined! While no one wants conflict, we have no choice but to resist an unjust law, particularly one that will force us to participate in acts that directly conflict with the Natural and Revealed Law (Staver, 2016a, para. 6).

Here, the Counsel explicitly praises Mrs. Davis through a comparison to Dr. King's principled protests against racism in the Civil Rights era by making note of Davis' biblical conviction. She followed the Counsel's typified version of biblicism, thus earning praise. Furthermore, she conducted activism in the name of evangelicalism by opposing the law on principle and refusing to sign any marriage licenses under the new limits of federal marriage law.

Remarkably (and expectedly), the Counsel made no concurrently explicit proclamation denying any irony within comparing a progressive principled resistance (to include others in equal social privilege), to that of a regressive principled resistance (to preclude others from equal social privilege). On the (ironically) equal ground upon which the Liberty Counsel places both Davis and King, her social position becomes more dignified than before, thanks to a comparison to Dr. King's social near deification. If the Counsel can argue that the two actors' goals are similar, Davis, and her ideology, might have a better social standing.

Second, while simultaneously ingratiating those who stand with the organization, as found in the Counsel's positive comparison of Davis to King, Jr. (Staver, 2016a), the Liberty Counsel censures or shames those who disagree with its positions based in its biblical prescription. This is a broader contention than that of Saindon's (2008), as he argued that Singer reached toward diachronic movement in his attempts to differentiate equality from historical connotations by alienating many (potentially allied) progressive movements. In this instance, I argue that the Liberty Counsel achieves the diachronic movement of <ministry> by appealing to the historical, rhetorical priorities of

evangelicalism, in concert with harsh censures with those who *disagree* with its policy

position, coupled with its assertion of biblical supremacy:

> …Kim Davis stands as an example to all of us as a person of conviction who was
>
> jailed for her principled resistance to an unjust law…we have no choice but to
>
> resist in an unjust law. (Staver, 2016a, para. 6)

Specifically, the Counsel uses Davis' biblical conviction to bolster its diachronic

connection to evangelicalism. Its diachronic, evangelical history allows the Liberty

Counsel to assert that those who disagree with its position are unjust in their ideals as it

encroaches on a long begotten social privilege. When such privilege is threatened, the

encroachment becomes unjust, against God's wishes, or against the natural order of

things.

I have thus far illustrated the diachronic sources behind the <ministry> ideograph.

The Liberty Counsel repeatedly utilizes the historical connotations behind its particular

conceptualization of ministry. Its adherence to evangelical tenets is clear. Next, I uncover

how the <ministry> ideograph influences and is influenced by other contemporary

rhetors. As Saindon (2008) explains, discourse fragments will not only respond to its

given philosophical source but also to its cultural, spatial surroundings.

Its diachronic history places the Counsel in direct contention with contemporary

organizations that do not share its particular brand of ideology. One of these

organizations holds a public distaste for the Counsel's ideological rhetoric: the Southern

Poverty Law Center. The SPLC devotes a great deal of space in responding to the

Counsel's <ministry>, propagating a notion of progressivism in contrast to the Liberty

Counsel's regressivism.

Synchronicity (Discourses and Culture)

McGee (1980) posited that an ideograph's synchronic associations were comprised of other ideographs in use at the time. McGee (1990) moved this idea forward by explaining the relevance of a fragment's culture. In that light, I argue that to understand the relative influence of the Liberty Counsel's <ministry> ideograph, one must understand both the usage of other relevant ideographs and outside cultural influences, respectively. The Counsel explicitly uses other ideologically charged terms, such as freedom, life, and family. Simultaneously, it uses <ministry> to rhetorically combat its contemporary organizations that hold disparate ideologies, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center. The SPLC, as a socially progressive organization focused on litigation, provides the perfect philosophical foil for the Liberty Counsel, as it operates under a similar mission, but with a seemingly opposite ideological approach.

The Liberty Counsel defines the ideographs it employs through a distinctly conservative, evangelical Christian ontology. Its ontological prescription best arises through the use of its <ministry> ideograph; insofar as the organization ministers through its arbitration, it believes that this arbitration is the best way to secure a society that best suits its ideal prescriptions of humanity. The Counsel's extension from an ideograph state of being to ideologically influenced values provides ample opportunity to understand the <ministry> ideograph's spatial associations:

> Liberty Counsel is an international nonprofit litigation, education, and policy organization dedicated to advancing religious **freedom**, the sanctity of **life**, and the **family** … Recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization, this Christian *ministry* is funded by tax-deductible donations from concerned individuals,

churches, businesses, foundations and other organizations. The purpose of this

ministry is to preserve religious **liberty** and … to discover the truth that will give

true **freedom** (Liberty Counsel, 2016b, para. 1-3; emphasis added).

The purpose of this statement is, on its face, a simple gesture toward delineating the

organization's ministry of defending Christians against perceived injustices in the context

of obvious outlets: churches, foundations, businesses. At a greater depth, this mission

statement creates a foundation upon which the rest of its actions are based. As

emphasized, this statement includes similarly utilized ideographs, denotative of the

associations that add ideological freight and weight to the ministry ideograph. Explicitly,

it then becomes tied to "freedom," "liberty," "life," and "family," similar to the "rule of

law" ideograph. As described by McGee (1980), the "rule of law" was horizontally

associated with such ideographs as "public trust," "freedom of speech," and "trial by

jury." Through the explicit connections therein, the Liberty Counsel outlines its effort to

include not just the organization's ontological goal—to be evangelical in nature—but

also the perceived truthfulness and values through which the Counsel believes ministry

will be successful.

As with its synchronic connection to other ideographs, the <ministry> ideograph

also calls for an examination of the Liberty Counsel's antagonistic relationship with the

Southern Poverty Law Center to determine its cultural influence. In addition to labeling

the organization as a hate-group, the SPLC frequently reacts to the various missives that

the Liberty Counsel releases. For example, the SPLC acknowledges the support that

Liberty Counsel administration members have for less-than-savory causes:

[Mat Staver, Chair of the Liberty Counsel] has also supported the criminalization

of homosexuality both in the U.S. and in other countries, stating in one

instance that Malawi's anti-homosexuality laws were in its "own best interests"

after the U.S. reportedly withheld monetary aid to the country because of its

efforts to outlaw homosexuality ("Liberty Counsel," n.d., para. 13).

Herein, the SPLC aggressively attempts to counteract the evangelical appeals from the

Liberty Counsel with a more progressive appeal:

Like other anti-gay groups, Liberty Counsel argues that hate crime laws are

"actually 'thought crimes' laws that violate the right to freedom and of

conscience" — an opinion rejected by the Supreme Court. In fact, the laws raise

penalties for crimes already on the books — assault, murder and so on — that

were motivated by hatred of people based on their sexual orientation. They do

not, and could not under the Constitution, punish people for voicing opinions ("18

anti-gay hate groups…", n.d., para. 74).

The SPLC makes its distinctly progressive—in contrast to the Counsel's regressive—

appeal through its obvious logical progression. In essence, the SPLC argues that,

"Because the Constitution of the United States contends that the government cannot

regulate opinions, and because hate crimes only exacerbate penalties for otherwise listed

crimes, hate crimes cannot be thought crimes." The deductive conclusion inherent in the

SPLC's statement against the Counsel evidences the philosophical divide between the

two organizations.

Further, on behalf of its ministerial efforts, the Liberty Counsel has actively

utilized its legal resources before numerous federal jurisdictions in attempts to influence

its audience, or, the United States population. The Counsel boasts its activity in federal and state courts, scoring victories across the United States (Liberty Counsel, n.d.b). The Counsel also files numerous amicus curiae briefs in Supreme Court cases. For example, in a brief filed for *Greece v. Galloway and Stephens*, the Counsel petitioned the Court to abandon a case regarding the public acknowledgement of religion ("*Greece v. Galloway and Stephens* Amicus Curiae," 2013). As a consequence, the evangelicalism upon which the Counsel predicates its espoused beliefs is added to the fray in an attempt to create a persuasive appeal on a grand scale.

Whereas McGee's original supposition of synchronicity of an ideograph spoke to its similarity and dissimilarity in the context of other ideographs, I argue that understanding the fragmented culture behind <ministry> allows for a greater depth of synchronic meaning. For example, while the Liberty Counsel may, through its ministerial approach to legal counsel, argue within a court hearing that human law should follow biblically outlined precepts, a contemporary detractor, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, may argue that such a ministerial approach oppresses those who do not share the same—or even similarly structured—beliefs.

In fact, the SPLC outwardly antagonizes the Liberty Counsel for its social and political positions. For example, the SPLC chided,

> With the expansion of equal rights for LGBT people, especially, the Liberty Counsel has come into their own, working to attempt to ensure that Christians can continue to engage in anti-LGBT discrimination in places of business under the guise of "religious liberty" ("Liberty Counsel," n.d., para. 11).

Here, the SPLC directly confronts the rhetorical appeals employed by the Liberty Counsel, in a sense labeling these appeals as disingenuous at best. The SPLC argues here that the Liberty Counsel's ontological basis is not to minister, but to subjugate or oppress (or be subjugated against or oppressed). Essentially, the SPLC is publicly acknowledging the undesirability of discrimination for a marginalized group.

Naturally, an organization that is as ideologically and discursively charged as the Liberty Counsel answers these direct claims. They confront the cultural and ideological precedents upon which the Southern Poverty Law Center relies when contending:

Logically, a "hate group" should be defined as one whose members (1) actually say that they hate a particular group of people; and/or (2) engage in or condone violence or other illegal activity toward such a group. The SPLC, however, uses much broader criteria for defining "hate groups," and criteria which can vary depending on which of fourteen categories of "hate groups" you are looking at - ranging from "Neo-Nazi" to "Black Separatist" to "Radical Traditional Catholicism." These criteria are entirely subjective and largely ideological (Liberty Counsel, 2015, para. 5-6).

The Liberty Counsel, in defensive measure, subjectifies the criteria through which the Southern Poverty Law Center (perceivably) unfairly qualifies hate groups. It explicitly moralizes the issue and points out the incongruence (and possible hypocrisy) behind an inherently ideological organization illuminating the flaws of another ideologically-driven organization.

Thanks to the Counsel's pushback against the "hate group" moniker, it helps ideological supporters to understand the versatility of its particular variety of ministry.

The cultural significance of an ideograph helps to both elaborate upon its historical philosophical leanings in addition to its responsiveness to other discourses in contemporary culture (Saindon, 2008). In this case study, the <ministry> ideograph elaborates upon the evangelical history upon which it is founded, as well as its response to, and responses from, other rhetors. To accomplish this, the Liberty Counsel attempts to alter the image created by the SPLC by using its hate group status as a rallying cry. The Counsel makes its mea culpa contingent upon a pathetic appeal—in the Aristotelian rhetorical sense—by reminding the SPLC of a nebulous, potential threat of violence against them. Ultimately though, this rhetorical mea culpa speaks to the Counsel's acknowledgement of the influence its rhetoric holds with both contemporary organizations and individual stakeholders alike.

The prevalence of <ministry> in Liberty Counsel rhetoric is obvious: aside from plainly stating its ministerial purpose, the Counsel's preferential treatment towards "religious liberty" pet projects speaks volumes about its *raison d'etre*. The very nature of the Counsel's state of being is incumbent upon its ability to wrangle everyone—including dissenters—into submission through binding litigation. Ministry itself is a tenuous concept, but one aspect is clear: ministry relies on service to one's fellow humanity. What is the right way to conduct service for one another? How might one correctly minister to the faith? Is ministry conceptually intertwined with religion? Each of these questions ponders the nature of reality for ministry. The Liberty Counsel, through its adaptation of the <ministry> ideograph, attempts to answer these questions.

<Ministry> borrows from the nebulous mystique of conceptual ministry present in Western culture by answering the questions many may have about the concept itself. In

so doing, however, the Counsel, attempts to privilege its answers to the very real questions, consequently influencing significant swaths of audiences in its wake. The ministry concept asks the question, "What is the right way to conduct service for one another?" Thanks to the diachronic association inherent within all ideographs, proponents of the Counsel's form of ideographic <ministry> are able to point to historically significant philosophies stemming from evangelism—to conduct activism, and to stress conversion to evangelical Christianity (usually through whatever means may be necessary). These philosophies state that true ministry only occurs when one enacts "conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed", and "activism, the expression of the gospel in effort" (Sweeney, 2005, p. 18). Obviously the Liberty Counsel propagates the belief that society needs to change; the Counsel's activism stems from its legal pursuits that attempt to forcefully convert American society into an evangelical utopia.

Again, the ministry concept raises the question: "Is ministry conceptually intertwined with religion?" According to the Counsel's foundation of the <ministry> ideograph and the organization deploying it, yes. The synchronic connections made by the Liberty Counsel inherently bind <ministry> to a religious foundation. For example, in its mission statement, the Liberty Counsel explicitly ties <ministry> to <(religious) liberty>, <marriage>, <life>, and <family>, among other politically and socioreligiously charged topics. Through the use of each ideograph, the Counsel also explicitly creates a typology for appropriate ministry (i.e. "This is what appropriate ministry will look like"): an appropriate minister will focus on religious freedom, be against abortion in all circumstances, and propagate the idea that marriage is between one man and one woman

alone (Liberty Counsel, n.d.a). Not all ministry is based in religion, however. Secular celebrants also answer this question by providing services such as "perform weddings, memorials, and other "milestones of life" ceremonies" (Center for Inquiry, n.d., para. 1). Thus, while the Counsel argues that appropriate state of being is ministerial, the appropriate actions based upon its idealized reality are typified by evangelicalism.

Thus, the deployment of these typified rhetorical strategies must be addressed. In that light, the ministry concept further asks, "How might one correctly minister to the faithful?" Proponents of the Counsel's <ministry> ideograph may respond that, contingent upon the idealized conceptualization of ministry (as inherently connected to religion), the nature of service is to ensure that everyone experiences the idealized, utopian version of faith held by Liberty Counsel leadership. Again, thanks in part to the diachronic and historical associations <ministry> holds to evangelism, one may point to foundational evangelical concepts, such as "Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross" (Sweeney, 2005, p. 18). These two precepts particularly address the Liberty Counsel's ideological desires: it believes that, through an application of biblical ideals (such as crucicentrism), one correctly ministers another. Since the Counsel propagates the notion that ministry is inherently intertwined with religion, and because evangelism offers clear principles upon which correct services are rendered unto one another, the Liberty Counsel utilizes this evangelized typology as a means of founding, maintaining, and deploying its particular ideology.

Discussion and Implications

This study illuminates the value of McGee's (1990) and Saindon's (2008) iteration of the ideographic analysis. While the ideograph is still a useful tool for assessing the rhetorical, historical, and philosophical substructures of a given ideology (nearly 40 years after its initial introduction), it is important to consider not only the diachronic and synchronic movements of an ideograph, but also its relative influence. Specifically, the importance of the ideograph arises from its attempt to understand a "snapshot" of the rhetorical situation. Rather than attempting to draft ideological archetypes, as the initial ideographic form attempted, this new ideographic form accepts the relativistic cultural influences and accounts for them synchronically.

As illustrated, the utility of the ideograph is strong for rhetorical scholarship. As I argued in the introduction, utilizing the ideograph as a means of textual analysis provides scholars with a framework inclusive of rich historical tradition and broadly diverse cultural contexts. Most importantly, however, the ideograph allows for a delineation of the philosophical underpinnings of a rhetor.

Through an examination of the historical tradition of the Liberty Counsel's <ministry>, one sees that it is beholden to evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is a particularly conservative ideology that prescribes a clear set of ideals for its subscribers. Kell and Camp (1999) posit that evangelicals believe in a literal, Divine, inerrancy of the Bible. The historical tradition, thus, gives the Liberty Counsel a divine precedent upon which they base the entirety of their being. Typically when operationalizing this belief, an evangelical will strive to more outwardly represent and enforce their viewpoint on others.

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Similarly, when examining the cultural significance of the Liberty Counsel's ministry, McGee's (1990) cultural influence delineates an ideograph's interaction with the different philosophical (ontology, epistemology, axiology) underpinnings of the Counsel's organizational contemporaries. As I argued, the cultural synchronicity of the <ministry> ideograph communicated its similarity and dissimilarity in the context of other ideographs, and allowed for an understanding of the fragmented culture behind <ministry>. This form of analysis allows for a rich evaluation of contemporary rhetors that may either support or detract from the Liberty Counsel's intentions.

An important consideration for the synchronicity of an ideograph is its ambivalence—or the simultaneous holding of contradictory feelings about a position— toward the influence it holds. At first, the ideograph—and the rhetor that wields it— enjoys real influence in shaping the social understanding of conceptual ministry. As I argue, it answers the very real questions surrounding the concept: What is the right way to conduct service for one another? How might one correctly minister to the faithful? Is ministry conceptually intertwined with religion? The <ministry> ideograph answers these questions in explicit fashion. Simultaneously, however, the ideograph does not enjoy the relative pushback against its particular conceptualization. Other rhetors that discursively engage with the <ministry> ideograph also change the social conceptualization behind the idea, which negatively impacts the Liberty Counsel's, as the initial rhetor, appraisal.

McGee's (1980, 1990) ideograph is an important rhetorical framework for scholarship to understand the broad, diverse characteristics that permeate certain terms or phrases. Just as importantly, the ideograph becomes denotative of certain philosophical

underpinnings that drive the rhetor, including its nature of being, the fount of knowledge, and the source of values. Thus, from multiple perspectives, the utility of the ideograph as a means of rhetorical criticism is strong.

Another important consideration that should not go unnoticed about this analysis was the combination of the traditional "influence" section into the discussion of the synchronic and cultural affiliation of the <ministry> ideograph. While others (i.e. Saindon, 2008) have analyzed the influence of a fragment in isolation, or simply ignore relative influence altogether, I argue that influence is actually much closer to McGee's synchronicity and cultural relevance than originally credited. Not only does the ideograph's contradictory sentiments toward influence help shape the organization's *raison d'etre,* it also affords scholarship the opportunity to understand the rhetor's own cultural *and* historical influence in **explicit** terms, in contrast to and in concert with other rhetors (e.g. the Liberty Counsel with its contemporaries, the Southern Poverty Law Center, et. al).

In that light, it becomes incumbent upon future scholarship to engage ideographic criticism from this postmodernist perspective. For example, engaging the <ministry> ideograph by means of fragmentary analysis will not just explicate the evangelical philosophical foundation upon which the ideograph was built, but also explain the relative influence of the ideograph itself amongst audience members, stakeholders, or other concerned parties or individuals, just as McGee (1990) argued. The discourse fragment exists paradoxically as a more comprehensive rhetorical appraisal, while understanding the fundamentally fragmented—or, amalgamated, different—nature of our society in terms of influence, narrative construction, and reality.

Further, while the ideograph provides useful insight into ontological foundations, it becomes incumbent on future research to explore the axiological and epistemological uses of this rhetorical tool. While ontology is the study of the nature of reality—upon which ideograph may draw their temporal and spatial significance—it should be noted that axiology and epistemology have the capacity to influence the deployment of various ideographs as well. While <ministry> seems to be the main ontological ideograph upon which the Liberty Counsel bases its actions and rhetoric, hearkening to its other ideographs (<(religious) liberty>, <marriage>, <life>, and <family>) offers a study in its perception of knowledge and values. The frontier remains relatively unexamined in this regard.

At its core, however, I believe the ultimate utility of the ideograph raises ideological criticism to a position worthy of "great rhetorical system status." The ubiquity of ideology in our contemporary discourse, in concert with the intersectionality of discourse, lends itself to this appeal. For example, postmodern rhetorical scholarship has utilized ideology as a method of rhetorical criticism for decades as a useful tool for discerning symbolic or organizational affiliations. Alongside McGee (1980) and Chesebro's (1988) theses using ideology as a means of rhetoric, Makus (1990), and Poulakos (1987) (in concert with countless others) offer treatises on the academic application of ideology.

Potential for a Great System

Historically, rhetorical theory has relied upon four ontological foundations: rational, behavioral, symbolic, and organizational (Campbell, 1970; Cheney, 1983; Crable, 1990; Ehninger, 1992). These great systems define the ontological premises

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through which persuasion occurs. For example, the various theories respectively contend that rhetors derive motivation from their rational nature, basic psychology, symbol use, or organizational allegiances (Campbell, 1970; Crable, 1990). As understanding of rhetoric grew in depth, new and different "great systems" evolved to meet contemporary needs. Each of the current "great systems" of rhetoric have understood the foundation of, or the reasons why we use, persuasive communication. Essentially, once a rhetorical paradigm reaches critical mass (i.e. influences or guides a large amount of scholarship by providing a novel approach to inquiry), it can be considered for great system status (e.g. Crable's (1990) assertion for organizational rhetoric).

The Omnipresence and Transcendence of Ideology

Circumscribing ideology etymologically has been difficult for academe, as a singular definition of ideology has eluded contemporary scholarship. However, its place as a function of rhetoric is indisputable. Historically, ideology permeates through the foundation of each system that precedes it: organizationally, sociologically, behaviorally, and rationally. As illustrated, ideology is pervasive through each of the previous systems as both a fount of knowledge and a source for purpose of being.

The epistemological and ontological nature of ideology manifests naturally in human discourse. McGee (1980) posits that ideology is pervasive in "real discourse, functioning clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness" (p. 7). Ideology, in turn, is not simply created by discourse of those who abide by a particular belief system, but rather created and evidenced through the person's lived experience. Thus, McGee (1980) contends that ideology is not simply a system of dictums or articulations, but rather a set of experiences that are not simply defined through—and transcendental of—

socio-linguistic means. McGee's ideograph allows for the study of ideology that is not bound to simple words or phrases, but instead a rich conceptualization of historical and cultural underpinnings.

As contended by Gerring (1997), ideology manifests in, guides, and defines almost every aspect of our lives such as organizational affiliation and structuration, to which Mumby (1987) and Sedgwick (2012) agree. Sedgwick (2012) argues that an organization's ideology can appeal to potential members based on its view on the existing world, its aim for a better world through the organization's mission, and how the organization aims to change the world into that better place. Mumby (1987) contends that even the basic structuration of an organization is incumbent upon the ideology upon which it is built.

Examining ideology as transcendent of persons or things, McGee (1980) considered the impact ideology played on rhetorical and critical constructs such as freedom, consciousness, and belief. Chesebro (1988) also argued for a turn to ideology as a basis of criticism using the writings of Kenneth Burke. Chesebro (1988) focused on ontological factors as a basis of support for ideological criticism. However, given the rise of organizational advocacy and rhetoric the academy has relegated ideological criticism to intellectual relic status. It becomes perplexing, given the utility of the ideological perspective, that previous scholars have not argued for ideology to be considered among previous great systems. Herein, I argue for a resurgence of ideological criticism.

It seems evident that, given the pervasiveness of ideology, contemporary rhetors appeal to something more than the audience's rational nature, their reliance on symbology, or even their organizational alliances. Speakers appeal to ideology, which

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transcends and influences the key motivations behind the previous systems of rhetoric (e.g. meaning of rationality, use of symbols, organizational alliance-making). Mumby (1988) posited that ideological rhetoric focuses on a paradigmatic shift from truth and the fundamental components of language to "unpacking the ways in which social reality is constructed" (p. 47). Therefore, I call for future research to elevate ideology as a form of criticism due to its utility in addressing—with greater depth, complexity, and understanding—the changing contemporary rhetorical environment that inherently relies on social construction of reality (i.e. social construction of gender, religion, or politics).

Ideology, as a social construct, is pervasive throughout the history, application, and understanding of rhetorical criticism. Throughout each former rhetorical paradigm, ideology has maintained an important stature. Given the history of rhetoric—the pervasiveness of ideology in addition to the contemporary use of ideological criticism— and ideology's already established utility as a means through which we conduct rhetorical criticism, I propose that ideological criticism—with the ideograph as its flagship means of criticism—should be regarded as the next great system of rhetoric.

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Notes

While McGee (1980) utilized simple quotation marks when demarcating ideographs,

Bennett-Carpenter, McCallion, and Maines (2013), among other authors, utilize the "< >"

nomenclature to describe ideographs. Thus, I utilize the same nomenclature in an effort

toward discipline-wide consistency.