

"WE ARE O.K.": A STUDY OF GAY APOLOGIA

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Louis Diamant (1987, 12-13) writes that gay political and social expression in the United States began with the formation of the Homophile Mattachine Society in 1957. However, most Americans were not aware of the struggle for gay rights until a 1969 incident in which the patrons of a New York City gay bar rioted in response to a police "raid" upon their establishment. Since that incident, the gay liberation movement has slowly, but steadily, become a force in American politics and society.

As it has gained public exposure, the gay rights movement has shown itself to be distinct from other so-called "liberation movements" (such as those aimed at securing rights for women, racial/ethnic minorities, and the handicapped) in several respects. One important difference between the gay rights movement and these other initiatives stems from the fact that many gay men are not readily identifiable as such. Thus, unlike most other minority groups, gay men may easily conceal their status as a minority member from the public at large. Faced with hostility and rejection from society, many gay men choose to live uncomfortable double lives. These "hidden" homosexuals are substantially unavailable for political mobilization (Harry and DeValle 1978, 19-20) and represent a significant untapped resource for the gay rights movement as a whole.

Despite the relative success of the gay rights movement over the past two decades, Chesebro (1981, p. xiii) claims that "a communication perspective of homosexuality has been extremely slow to emerge." The Speech Communication Association did approve formation of a temporary unit to consider homosexuality as a communication phenomenon in 1972. However, few research studies have been generated as a result. The broad aim of this report is to promote the scholarly investigation of questions related to communication in and of the gay rights movement. Specifically, the report focuses on the question: "How have outspoken and prominent members of the gay rights movement attempted to convince hidden homosexuals to become active, public participants in the struggle for gay liberation?" The report will offer a descriptive classification of discursive strategies which together, I will call "gay apologia." By the use of this term, I mean to designate that body of discourse which seeks to convince the hidden homosexual to become comfortable with his identity in public. Such discourse aims to make larger numbers of politically inactive gay men available for mobilization and, hence, functions to strengthen the gay rights movement.

In order to accomplish its objective, the study will proceed in the following manner. The remainder of chapter one will describe the theoretical framework to be used in constituting the genre of gay apology. Chapter two will

describe the nature and characteristics of gay apologia. Chapter three will identify and discuss some specific examples of gay apology.

By definition, generic analyses involve the grouping of like phenomena in order to facilitate an understanding of their common features and functions (Fisher 1980, 291; Miller 1984, 152-153; Harrell and Linkugel 1978, 262-263). The decision to constitute a particular group of discourse into a genus rests upon recorded observations indicating that those discourses share some important characteristic(s) which differentiate them from others (Harrell and Linkugel 1978, 263). By constituting the genre of gay apology, this study hopes to yield a better understanding of the functions and features of an important body of discourse within the gay liberation movement.

Harrell and Linkugel (1978, 263-264) argue that "rhetorical genres stem from organizing principles found in recurring situations that generate discourse characterized by a family of common factors." Working from this perspective, they identify four "organizing principles" which may be used to constitute rhetorical genres. First, one may employ de facto characterization as a way of organizing discourse on the basis of "common sense" perceptions. Inaugural speeches and Fourth of July orations exemplify genres characterized on a de facto basis. Second, speeches may also be grouped on the basis of recurring

structural characteristics. For instance, speeches which share certain patterns of arrangement (e.g., "problem-solution," "criteria-satisfaction") may be grouped together for comparison and contrast. Third, a motivational genre, according to Harrell and Linkugel (1978, 264), "draws its organizing principle from the motive state of the rhetor." For example, genres might be constituted of speeches whose intent is to promote compromise, or to defend some individual or group of individuals from the verbal assaults of others. Last, archetypal classification involves the grouping of discourse on the basis of "persuasive images deeply imbedded in the audience's psyche" (264). One example of an archetypal genre provided by Harrell and Linkugel is that composed of speeches which make use of the "pioneer" image.

As an organizing principle for constituting rhetorical genres, motivation is particularly flexible. However, it is also very broad. In an effort to clarify the use of motivation as a tool for the generic classification of discourse, Harrell and Linkugel draw upon the work of Walter Fisher (1970, 131-139). Fisher identified four primary motives as characteristic of most rhetorical discourse. These four included the motive of affirmation ("concerned with giving birth to an image"); reaffirmation ("concerned with revitalizing an image"); purification ("concerned with

correcting an image"); and subversion ("concerned with undermining an image").

In addition to the presence of some organizing principle, Harrell and Linkugel argue that genres be distinguished from one another on the basis of "common factors" observed in the discourse from which they are composed. Common factors are "strategic variations which consistently appear in a given genre of discourse" (265). In other words, each genre will be characterized by the recurrent use of particular rhetorical strategies. For example, in the genre of apology, which Ware and Linkugel (1973, 273-283) identify as a motivation genre consisting of speeches of defense, four recurrent strategies are identified. These include the strategies of "denial," "bolstering," "differentiation," and "transcendence." More will be said of these particular strategies in chapter two.

Having defined the term genre as it pertains to rhetorical discourse in general, Harrell and Linkugel propose a framework for conducting generic investigations of motivational genres. The proposed framework involves three related operations: generic description, generic participation, and generic application. The succeeding chapters will explain and apply these operations in an effort to illuminate the motivational genre of gay apology.

CHAPTER II

GENERIC DESCRIPTION OF GAY APOLOGIA

Harrell and Linkugel (1978, 274) have described the two central operations involved in generic description as "identification of motivational precedents of the genre" and "mapping of the characteristic (i.e., normative) factors within the genre." In the former operation, the researcher must identify the problem or problems which the discourse is attempting to address. In the latter, she/he must locate the recurring features which characterize the discourse as a whole.

According to Diamant (1982, 12-13), "there are two basic precepts to the gay liberation approach to homosexuality: the first is that homosexuals are the equals of heterosexuals; the second that homosexuality is the equal of heterosexuality." The first precept, he argues, raises constitutional and civil rights concerns, while the second raises issues related to psychiatry and psychology. Gays consider that the American legal system discriminates unfairly against them, while objecting to the medical establishment's characterization of homosexuality as aberrant behavior. Therefore, the problem is that the Gay Liberation movement cannot effectively address either concern until sufficient numbers of individuals can be mobilized for political and social action.

It is of course difficult to estimate the number of gay men who remain "hidden" in the sense spoken of here. However, that number is surely significant. Harry and DeValle found that 51% of gay men responded affirmatively to the statement: "Before I came out, the idea that I might be gay troubled me a lot" (1978, 68-73). Nor is it difficult to understand why large numbers of gay men have traditionally remained "in the closet." In addition to their own feelings of guilt and isolation, Chesebro (1980, ix) reports that gays must contend with the fact that some "70% of Americans [believe] that homosexual acts are always wrong, even if the individuals involved are in love." As one gay writer explains, "It has to be easier for you to ask than for me to just come out and tell you (I am gay)" (Krysiak 1987, 47).

The reality of a large, "untapped" constituency within the homosexual community has encouraged a variety of responses from gay leaders. However varied, such responses do spring from a common motive: to encourage hidden homosexuals to assume public identities as Gay Persons. From a motive point of view, the rhetoric of gay apology functions as a rhetoric of purification. Walter Fisher (1970, 133) explains that the motive behind purification rhetoric is to "refine an image, or concept, "and that purification which implies as previously established image or ideology has somehow become tarnished through attack or

through some sort of reidentification." The motive which unites gay apologia in all their diversity is the desire to purge the audience of its negative self-associations; associations which prevent its members from proclaiming their identities in public.

In order to map the genre features, this study examined some 13 individual examples of gay apology, drawn primarily from the book Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation (Jay and Young, 1972). As its title suggests, Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation includes a collection of essays, letters and published speeches by and for the homosexual community. Along with works by several authors which appeared in other publications, the material in Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation provided the discourse reviewed in this study. The selection of any one work for inclusion in this study was based, at least initially, on intuitive criteria. However, analysis of the discourse itself revealed some fifteen recurring claims. These claims, I will argue, address the motive of purification by invoking strategies characteristic of the genre of "apology".

In their research into the generic description of discourse responding to the motive of purification, Ware and Linkugel (1973) identified a series of rhetorical strategies which together constitute, in their words, a genre of "apology". Apologetic discourse pursues purification

through the use of strategies which attempt to repair a group's character when it has been damaged by accusations against the character and/or behavior of its members (Kruse 1981, 279). Ware and Linkugel identify four strategies typical of apologetic discourse. These include the strategies of denial, bolstering, differentiation and transcendence. Each of these strategies is implicit in one or more of the sixteen claims typical of gay apology.

According to Ware and Linkugel, the strategy of denial involves a disavowal of wrongdoing on the part of the accused. In other words, denial involves a simple rejection of whatever accusations or negative associations have been made concerning the behavior of an individual or group. Because of the legal, moral and/or psychological implications of their lifestyle, gays are often accused of being less-than-equal members of society. Gay rhetors counter such accusations, in some instances, through simple denial. They may deny that homosexuality is abnormal, unnatural, and perverted. Denial may take the form of a generalized rejection of the "inferiority" of gay men with respect to their straight counterparts. It may also take the form of a denial that others have the right to judge the lifestyle of gay men. Finally, denial may take the form of a rejection of charges that the homosexual lifestyle invariably leads to loneliness and isolation. The appearance of such claims as these in the discourse examined

for this study suggests that a common rhetorical strategy invoked by gay rhetors is simple denial. Speakers urge hidden members of the gay community to reject out-of-hand charges that they are morally or psychologically inferior to heterosexuals, that "straights" have a right to judge their behavior, or that their lifestyle is inherently destructive.

Bolstering, according to Ware and Linkugel, "refers to any rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, object, or relationship" (1973, 277). Bolstering is often attempted through the identification of the "accused" with something viewed favorably by the audience. In the discourse examined for this study, four types of bolstering strategies were identified. One bolstering strategy involved the identification of "gayness" with the coming of a new, better world of human relations. Another strategy employed sought to remind gays that they, too, were God's children and had a positive role to play in his creation. A third bolstering strategy consisted of stressing the creativeness and productivity of gays with respect to the society to which they belong. A fourth bolstering strategy involved the assertion of the claim that gays are healthy, normal members of society. This fourth strategy specifically addressed the image of homosexuals as "sick," or "debilitated"---hence less-than equal members of society. Bolstering strategies in the rhetoric of gay apology seek to purify the audience through association of

its members and/or their lifestyle with positive social and psychological traits.

Differentiation strategies operate to set some concept or attribute apart from the larger context in which it is presently viewed by an audience (Ware and Linkugel 1973, 278). The effect of a successful differentiation argument is to convince the listener that a particular person's behavior is not quite as bad as had been thought. The accused asks for a suspension of judgement until her/his actions can be viewed from a different temporal perspective. For instance, Ware and Linkugel note that Ted Kennedy's "Chappaquiddick" speech employs the strategy of differentiation in asserting that Kennedy's act of leaving the scene of a fatal automobile accident must be considered in light of the fact that Kennedy had suffered a mild concussion and thus was confused and disoriented. The audience is asked to consider Kennedy's act as less "irresponsible" as a result. The differentiation argument purifies Kennedy's image by mitigating his implied guilt.

Rhetorical differentiation is also a strategy employed in gay apologia. Three types of differentiation strategies were observed in the analysis of discourse undertaken for this study. Each of these strategies attempted to set homosexuals or homosexual behavior apart from a larger context, viewed negatively by society. For example, some discourse argued that homosexuality was simply a result of

"sexual preference," a matter of personal taste rather than evidence of some broader moral or psychological "problem" among a particular group of men. Another differentiation strategy employed in gay apologia is that of asserting that homosexual behavior is not "aberrant" because it is characteristic of all mammals. In other words, homosexuality is within the range of normal behavior, because it is "natural". A third strategy of differentiation employed by gay apologists argues that gays should not be viewed as a stereotype "group" at all. Each gay person is an individual, with unique strengths and weaknesses.

Where differentiation strategies attempt to separate a person or idea from some larger category of association, transcendent strategies "psychologically move the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view" of the character of an individual or group. Transcendental strategies work to purify a person by justifying his/her behavior in terms of some larger, less transient context. In gay apologia, transcendental argument may take several forms. One strategy is to assert that gay behavior is not "new" (and hence "different"), but that it has always been present in civilized society. Homosexuality, in other words, is a historical inevitability rather than some temporary perversion of modern society. In addition to

arguing that homosexuality is a historical inevitability, some gay apologists maintain that it is an individual inevitability. That is, gay people are not gay by mere whim, but by necessity. One cannot help being gay any more than another can help being tall. Hence gay men should accept themselves for who they are rather than condemning (or allowing others to condemn) themselves for what they do.

A third transcendental strategy employed by gay apologists entails the appeal to basic human rights on behalf of homosexuals. Here, the appeal is to a "higher value" than those frequently used to condemn homosexuality. Regardless of how one feels about homosexuality, the argument goes, one ought to be among those supporting equal human rights for the gay community. Even though gays claim their human rights in the third transcendental strategy, the fourth strategy confirms that even at present gays are characteristically denied rights, ignored and exploited by the larger society. When any one group in society is denied such rights, all stand to suffer.

All of the fifteen strategies associated with the genre of gay apology work to promote gay pride and awareness by providing a rhetorical line of defense against the straight world's accusations that homosexuals are morally and/or psychologically inferior participants in American society. These arguments can, and do function at two levels of meaning. First, they serve as a direct response to the

straight world's negative characterizations of gays and their lifestyle. Second, and more importantly with respect to this study, arguments such as these speak to gays themselves, many of whom have internalized negative characterizations of themselves. By providing these individuals with a stock of arguments which affirm their self worth, gay apologists act to reduce the "hidden" homosexual population.

CHAPTER III

GENERIC PARTICIPATION AND APPLICATION

This chapter identifies thirteen examples of gay apologia and discusses the ways in which each illustrates one or more of the genre's basic strategic features. In so doing, it combines two of the operations proposed by Harrell and Linkugel for genre study. The first of these is the process of "generic participation." According to Harrell and Linkugel, generic participation "consists of determining what speeches participate in which genres." In turn, this process involves "testing an instance of discourse in question against the generic description" (275). Generic application entails the analysis of discourse identified as belonging to a particular genre using factors derived from the process of generic description. Bearing in mind that the object of this report is limited to establishing a framework for the study of apologia, the generic application process will be condensed and integrated into that of generic participation.

Richard Goldstein's essay "Coming Out: What Burt Told Me" was published in Esquire magazine in June, 1986. Goldstein's essay is a personal narrative about the author's own decision to "come out" after a gay friend had done so. Both men had suffered the effects of social condemnation and Goldstein writes about their responses to the experience. Goldstein's article employs two of the four rhetorical

strategies common to gay apologia. First, the author denies that others have the right to judge him for his lifestyle. He uses language of explicit rejection in the following statement: "We did not share the greaser's fascination with faggot prey, and thought it terribly noble for two men to love each other" (150). Second, Goldstein employs the strategy of transcendence, arguing that gays are ignored by a society which reduces their homosexuality to a character flaw. He writes that before coming out, he had "always been attracted to men. But I'd convinced myself that homosexuality was just a blemish on my otherwise flawless libido, something that could be shrunk away" (159). In effect, Goldstein asserts that gays need to elevate their sense of sexual identity to a more important status in their own thinking, before they can free themselves from the tyranny of straight society. This is somewhat analogous to the "Black is Beautiful" movement of the late 1960's. Both views hold that a particular quality of an individual (his race or sexual identity) should govern that person's view of himself and others.

The same basic type of transcendental strategy is apparent in Fran Winant's "Christopher Street Liberation Day, June 28, 1970." In observing that "our banners are sails pulling us through streets where we have always been as ghosts," (5) Winant poetically describes the quiet oppression of gays by the society in which they live.

Winant, in urging readers to take part in liberation day activities, also employs two types of bolstering strategies. First, Winant asserts that gays "are part of the new world" (5) and thus that acceptance of the gay community by society is just a matter of time. Winant also confirms that gays are healthy, productive members of society, even if they are often ignored: "We are Community, we are society, we are everyone, we are inside you" (5).

"The Closet Syndrome" by Stuart Byron, relies heavily upon the use of transcendental strategies of apologia. Byron contends that gays are ignored by, and excluded from participation in, the mass media. As a result, they are misunderstood by the American public and driven deeper underground: "mass media pretends that homosexuality does not exist...[t]o survive in a straight society, gays hide their gayness" (59). Byron also employs the transcendental argument of necessity--that is, gays cannot help being gay (58).

"An Open Letter to Tennessee Williams," (1971) by Mike Silverstein, employs denial, bolstering and transcendental strategies of apologia. Silverstein's basic aim is to urge gays to reject their "victimization" by society. In denying that he is abnormal compared to others ("I will not accept that I am doomed" 71), or inherently inferior ("we need not be victims, queers, in order to be human" 71), Silverstein makes use of two denial strategies characteristic of gay

apologia. When he asserts that gays "must refuse to be victims, losers and queers," Silverstein denies that "gay" and "queer" are equivalent terms. He also denies that the gay lifestyle need be characterized by loneliness and isolation: "Join us! We don't have to be alone" (72).

Silverstein also makes use of bolstering arguments, asserting that "Our love will be a humanity new under the sun, and a new world will be born from it" (72). Thus he equates the gay community with a new, better world. In writing that gays are corrupted by society, and "trapped into accepting self destruction" (70), Silverstein employs a transcendental strategy. Gays have been "trapped" by straight society into accepting self-defeating images of themselves. They must rise above such characterizations to a new, more positive self-identity.

The Chicago Gay Liberation Front's "A Leaflet for the American Medical Association" illustrates all four basic strategies of gay apologia. The pamphlet was written to influence the A.M.A. at a time when homosexuality was still clinically defined as an illness by that organization. The pamphlet informs the A.M.A. that gays categorically reject such a characterization: "We homosexuals of the gay liberation movement believe that the adjustment school of therapy is not a valid approach to society" (146).

In asserting that "the key to our mental health and to the mental health of all oppressed people in a racist,

sexist, capitalist society, is a radical change in the structure and accompanying attitudes of the entire social system," (146) the pamphlet urges readers to transcend the evils of the status quo in order to achieve a more just society. It argues that if homosexuality is viewed from a more "just" perspective, it will no longer be seen as a social evil. The pamphlet attempts to bolster the self-esteem of gay readers by declaring that "we are healthy in a sick society" (146). Finally, the pamphlet employs the strategy of differentiation by taking gayness out of an abstract moral category and insisting that it is simply a style of human relations--gays are just people, not stereotypes, representatives of some mysterious and exclusive club.

Christopher Z. Hobson's "Surviving Psychotherapy" (1971) was written in response to the same problem that prompted the Chicago Gay Liberation Front to compose its pamphlet to the A.M.A. Hobson, too, is concerned about the medical community's characterization of homosexual behavior as pathological. He, too, is aware that the public at large is greatly influenced by whatever label psychiatrists choose to apply to homosexuality. Hobson had undergone therapy and was frustrated by his doctor's insistence that he was "sick": "Psychotherapy could not help me to understand my situation," he writes, "because it did not...encourage me to think of my conflicts as resulting from social

conditions" (151). Hence, Hobson denies that the medical profession's characterization of gays is valid. In the same statement, he suggests that the basis of his "problem" was not his own gayness, but society's repressive attitude toward homosexuality. In other words, Hobson is claiming that gays are oppressed by American society and must transcend efforts to categorize them as "sick." Hobson also makes the point that "homosexuality, if 'incurable' should be accepted" (150). If the medical community is correct in claiming that gays are "sick," then they (gays) should not be held morally responsible for behavior over which they have no control. This last argument represents an example of a differentiation strategy, inasmuch as it removes homosexuality from the category of things for which one should be condemned.

The main thesis of "The Anthropological Perspective," (1970) which appeared in a collection of articles by gay writers, is that "homosexual acts represent natural, completely human forms of behavior" (157). The author argues that homosexuality should be differentiated from behavior that is morally wrong because it is condoned in a wide variety of civilized societies on earth. In a similar fashion, the author contends that homosexual behavior is characteristic of mammals generally, especially those most closely related to man (160). Finally, the author maintains that homosexual urges are far more common than is generally

supposed among straight males in our own society (159). In sum, "The Anthropological Perspective" attempts to purify the reader's self-concept through a strategy of differentiation. Homosexuality, its author argues, is not morally or psychologically aberrant, but natural and thus normal.

A second essay by Mike Silverstein identified as an example of gay apology was "Gay Bureaucrats: What Are They Doing to You?" (1971). Silverstein offers the reader two stories, his own and that of a colleague, which illustrate the problems gay people have in the workplace. Employing a strategy of transcendence, Silverstein attempts to show how gays in the workplace are ignored: "They pretend you don't exist as a gay person for their sake, to save themselves the embarrassment of dealing with you as who you are" (167). Gays are thus subtly forced to deny their own identities in order to get along on the job. But, asserts Silverstein, "It is time to stop. Time to declare our freedom, our self respect, our love for one another" (168).

"My Gay Soul" by Gary Alinder (1970), also relies most heavily upon the use of transcendental strategies of apology. Alinder explains that he is "tired to the bone of being told what I am" by a world that finds him "despicable" (282). Alinder writes: "I am not gay because of where I put my cock or who I sleep with. I am gay because everything about me is gay" (282). As in previous examples,

the argument offered by Alinder urges gays to rise above narrow, negative characterizations of themselves by society and to realize themselves as fully human. Furthermore, the author attempts to differentiate gays from the stereotype of effeminacy: "I was not exactly a faggot. I drove a tractor, plowed the fields, tossed bales of hay into the hay loft and joined the Future Farmers of America" (282-283).

"Joe's Letter" was republished in The Homosexual Network, in 1982. The purpose of "Joe's Letter" is to encourage gay people to become more active in the Church. The author employs bolstering in advising the reader that "God and your gayness are in the same breath. [t]hat body we embrace should be praying to God beside us (566). The author also urges readers to reject negative characterizations of homosexuality: "Don't accept a negative judgement about yourself from anybody" (566). He also makes use of the strategy of transcendence in declaring that his desires are natural and not "perverted" (566-567).

Charlie Murphy's "Gay Spirit" (1979), published in No Turning Back: Lesbian and Gay Liberation for the 80's, is a song lyric which urges gays to accept themselves and to free themselves from the repressive views of a society which misunderstands them. "We are born to be free," declares Murphy, and yet "When we were born, they tried to put us in a cage" (119). Murphy's "Gay Spirit" illustrates the use of transcendental argument in the form of an apologetic poem.

Because it is by definition a motivational genre, gay apology is not limited in form to essays, letters, or speeches.

As with many of the examples examined to this point, the theme of Ted Pankey's "Gay Lib" (1971), republished in The Homosexual Dialectic (1972), is the oppression of homosexuals by the larger society and the need for gays to claim their rightful place in that society. Arguing that gays are constantly forced to "internalize the labels: I am a pervert, a dyke, a fag" (173), Pankey urges gays to realize that such labels are harmful and oppressive. It is not a person's "Gayness" that causes him to be oppressed, but rather the labels applied to him by society, Pankey asserts.

Pankey also employs the strategy of differentiation. He contends that stereotypes of gay men as given to promiscuity and one-night stands are simply unfair. Speaking to straights, he writes "I will remind you only to look at yourselves and find among heterosexuals the same conditions...present among any people who are deprived of sexual happiness" (174). Thus the stereotypes many people hold of gay behavior are inaccurate, according to Pankey. When gays are promiscuous, he suggests, it is the fault of straight society, and not because homosexuals are inherently incapable of forming lasting human relationships. Finally, Pankey attempts to rally his readers by urging them to unite

"in a world where we are all free to love or further whatever the cause without fear or shame" (174).

In Franklin E. Kameny's "Gay Liberation and Psychiatry" (1971) which reappeared in The Homosexual Dialectic (1972), Kameny addresses the charge that homosexuality is a psychological disorder by denying it on several fronts: "I say that this entire 'sickness theory' of homosexuality is shabby, shoddy, slipshod, slovenly, sleazy, and just-plain-bad science" (187). It is not the homosexual who is "defective" Kameny argues, but the society which oppresses him. Kameny also argues from transcendence, as in the following passage which identifies gay liberation with the highest ideals of a democratic society:

In our pluralistic society the homosexual has a moral right to live his homosexuality fully, freely, and openly, free of arrogant and insolent pressures to convert to the prevailing heterosexuality, and free of penalties, disabilities or disadvantages of any kind, public or private, official or unofficial, for his nonconformity. (182)

Kameny thus makes use of both denial and transcendence in his essay.

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify some examples of gay apology and to show how each of these examples illustrates one or more of the generic strategies characteristic of the genre. Thirteen specific instances of gay apologia have been discussed and all have exhibited at least one of the apologetic strategies first identified by Ware and Linkugel. From the material examined, it would

appear that gay apology relies more frequently on the strategy of transcendence than on those of denial, bolstering and differentiation. One possible reason for this is that gay rhetors believe that it is American society itself that is defective, not the gay community. In order to realize their own worth, gays must rise above the social context in which they live.

CONCLUSION

This report has proposed a framework for the generic study of apology within the Gay Liberation Movement. It has argued that the tendency among gay men to conceal their homosexuality has created a rhetorical problem for leaders of the gay rights movement. Spokesmen for the movement have responded in various ways to this problem, aware that gay men who remain anonymous cannot contribute to the process of gay liberation.

Drawing upon the work of Harrell and Linkugel (1978), the study has proposed that all discourse which seeks to promote self-esteem among gays and to encourage them to "come out" has at least one common motive from which it arises. That motive has been identified as one of "purification," or correction of what gay leaders believe to be a false image of homosexuality. Drawing upon the work of Ware and Linkugel (1973), the study has suggested that the discourse in question pursues the objective of purification through the use of a rhetoric of apology. Ware and Linkugel's four basic strategies of apology have been identified and discussed as they apply to the specific demands of the gay rhetor. On this basis, a number of variations on Ware and Linkugel's strategies of denial, bolstering, differentiation and transcendence have been described in chapter two.

Chapter three has presented thirteen examples of the rhetoric of gay apology, in an effort to illustrate the range and recurrent features of the genre. All four of Ware and Linkugel's basic strategies of apologia are evidenced in the discourse presented in this report. The strategy of transcendence, however, seems to be employed more frequently by gay rhetors than the strategies of denial, bolstering, and differentiation. This may suggest that the society is defective, not the homosexual.

The writing of this report has brought to light three basic problems involved in the further study of gay apologia. First, so little scholarship exists in the general area of gay communication, it is difficult to know exactly how to proceed; that is, to know which questions need to be addressed in what order. Second, while Ware and Linkugel's apologetic strategies are, in theory, distinctive from one another, it is, in practice, often difficult to tell them apart. This is particularly true with respect to the strategies of bolstering and transcendence. Third, the boundaries of the genre of gay apologia remain indistinct because it is often difficult to determine the audience intended by a particular author or speaker. Many of the discourses in this study, for instance, are ostensibly aimed at "straight" audiences. Yet because of the publications in which they have appeared, it is entirely likely that these discourses are intended for gay readers as well. Motive

classification can make for a less clearly defined genre than can, say, classification on the basis of structure.

Future studies of gay apologia may provide a more in-depth analysis of specific instances of discourse within the genre. Such studies may permit a better understanding of which strategies are most effective at achieving the ends of gay apology. They may also explain how the success of those strategies is affected by variations in speaker, audience and occasion. This study has attempted to provide a basis for scholars to address such questions.

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"WE ARE O.K.": A STUDY OF GAY APOLOGIA

by

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This report proposes a framework for analysis of the rhetoric of apology within the Gay Liberation Movement. Drawing upon the work of Harrell and Linkugel (1978) and Ware and Linkugel (1973), it describes the motivational context of apologetic discourse within the gay rights movement, outlines four basic strategies of apology employed by gay rhetors, and identifies thirteen examples of discourse typical of the genre. The report concludes that the genre of gay apology plays a significant role in sustaining the strength and purpose of the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States.