THEMES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN THE CREATION OF ETHOS DURING THE WESTERN TOUR OF WARREN G. HARDING

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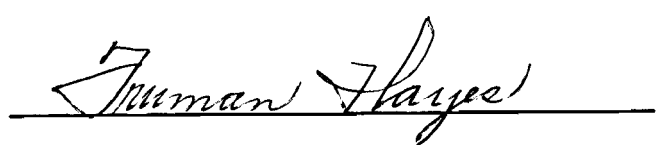

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At 6:23 on the afternoon of June 12, 1920, a calm man in the midst of a swirling Republican Convention emerged from his hotel room and remarked to a newspaper man, "We drew to a pair of deuces, and filled."[1] These were the first recorded words of this man as his party's candidate for the highest office in the land. Only a few moments before, the convention, weary with chaos and confusion, had, on the tenth ballot, chosen Warren Gamaliel Harding as its candidate for the office of President of the United States. He would win the Presidency easily in the fall election--a victory that would bring the small-town newspaper editor to national prominence and national humiliation.

Warren Gamaliel Harding was born November 2, 1865, near Bloomingrove, Ohio. His father was a farmer and a country doctor. In 1884, at the age of nineteen, Warren and some

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[1]Warren Gamaliel Harding, cited by Mark Sullivan, Our Times: The United States 1900-1925 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), VI, pp. 66-67.

friends purchased a bankrupt newspaper in Marion, Ohio, and soon turned it into a profitable business venture with Harding as its editor.

From newspaper editor, Harding moved into Republican politics and was elected to a term in the Ohio Legislature. From 1904-1906, he was the Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, and in 1910 he ran for Governor of Ohio and lost. In 1912, however, he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention and delivered the address nominating William Howard Taft for the Presidency, making such a favorable impression that he was chosen as chairman of its next convention. In 1914, as the result of a vacated seat, Harding had won election to the United States Senate. As a Senator, he was particularly undistinguished, largely because of his unwillingness to take a firm stand on any one issue--a senatorial deficiency which would later play an instrumental role in his nomination and eventual election to the Presidency.

Harding, extremely handsome and gregarious, well-liked by his friends and the audiences who heard him speak, faced certain difficulties upon entering the White House. The division which plagued the Republican Party troubled him, and he finally had to conform to the demands of a war-weary country which was tired and disillusioned with the internationalistic

tendencies of Thomas Woodrow Wilson.[2]

As President, Harding often sought the counsel of those surrounding him, and because of his almost naive trust in the good nature of man, he awarded a great deal of official license to men of questionable motives.[3] The actions of some of these men brought much criticism upon the President in Washington circles.

The year 1923 was a year of turmoil in the city of Washington, D. C. There were already overt indications of massive corruption in high office. Harding perceived a certain restlessness within the country. He began to feel as if he might be losing the support of the people. It was this fear which led Harding on a speaking tour across the nation.[4]

While Harding was modest about most things, he was very proud of his ability to speak.[5] He felt certain that if he could only see the people of the country and talk to them, he

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[2]Fred L. Israel, The Chief Executive: Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States from George Washington to Lyndon Johnson (New York: Crown, 1965), p. 230

[3]Samuel Hopkins Adams, Incredible Era (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 226.

[4]Burt Noggle, Teapot Dome (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), p. 56.

[5]Adams, op. cit., p. 334.

would be able to restore their confidence in him.[6] So early in 1923 Harding and several of his key advisors, including Herbert Hoover, laid the groundwork of an extensive public speaking tour which was to begin in Washington on June 20, 1923, and take Harding across the country and into Alaska and California before it would be suddenly and tragically ended by his death in San Francisco on August 2, 1923.

The tour is unique in that it is the first tour of such scope taken by a President, prior to an election year but not part of a campaign proper, in which the incumbent President embarked upon a mission of reinstating his credibility (ethos). The manner in which he approached this task should prove to be an interesting and valuable study in the field of public address.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how, through the use of certain recurrent themes and the development of them through the materials and forms of argument, Harding attempted to enhance his ethos in a unique test of speaker credibility.

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[6] Ibid.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to lay down some guidelines for the consideration of materials and forms of argument. This will be done by listing and defining first the materials and then the forms of argument.

Munro suggests that the materials of argument are subject materials for constructing units of development and proof. He says that there are three such subject materials. Definitions and explanation of these follow:

A. Example -- instances, facts and illustrations that clarify, support or lend interest to other statements.
   1. Examples may be of three kinds:
      a. Instances -- brief references to a specific case.
      b. Fact -- a specific instance given in propositional form.
      c. Illustration -- a more fully developed example.
B. Statistics -- any numerical material that is used in support of statements.
C. Quotations -- someone else's testimony to the validity of an example or a statistic, or a direct assertion of a general statement itself.[7]

These three, then, will serve as categories for the materials which will be examined in this study. The forms of argument to be considered are the four major kinds of induction or deduction--argument from sign, causal argument, argument by example, and argument from analogy.

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[7]Hugh P. Munro, The Tasks of the Speaker as an Agent of Change (Emporia, Kansas: Kansas State Teachers College, 1966), pp. 4.2-4.3.

Arguments from sign are those which give an indication that a proposition is true by inferring relationships or correlations between two variables.

Causal arguments are those which argue that one thing exists because of another.

Argument by example is one which infers a conclusion from particular cases in point.

Argument from analogy is one which infers a conclusion about one thing by comparing it with another.

These four forms and their definitions were arrived at through an examination of several textbooks in the field of public address. These were the four that seemed to be the most consistent in their appearance even though occasionally other forms would be mentioned. The definitions combined the ideas of several of these textbooks. When the materials and forms of Harding's arguments are examined in this study, the above materials and forms are those that will be used in that consideration.

Aristotle considered the constituents of ethos to be three-fold: good will, good sense, and good moral character.[8] Moreover, he considered vital to his establishment of these

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[8]Aristotle, Rhetoric, translated by W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, 1954), 137a, 5-15.

three, voluntary choice by the speaker. McBurney and Wrage explain this concept of choice:

> . . . all the possible choices available to the speaker . . . include . . . his bodily activity, his vocal inflections, the subjects he chooses to discuss, the topics he emphasizes, the stories he tells, the examples he uses, the evidence he presents, the claims he makes, the way he develops his arguments . . . , and so on.[9]

The emphasis in this study will be on Harding's choice of certain recurrent themes (the topics he emphasizes), his development of arguments from them, and how both relate to his ethos. Rosenthal suggests that ethos, in part, refers to communication based upon value response.[10] Since the recurrent themes, the topics that Harding emphasized, represented ideals and institutions which his audience highly regarded or which he wished them to regard highly (and which he wanted them to associate with him), they might properly be called values.

To demonstrate this notion as it applies to Harding it is useful to give one example of this process. Harding perceived a certain feeling of popular distrust of him and his

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[9]James H. McBurney and Ernest J. Wrage, The Art of Good Speech (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 493.

[10]Paul I. Rosenthal, "The Concept of Ethos and the Structure of Persuasion," Speech Monographs, XXXIII (June, 1966), 120.

administration and responded by espousing the theme of competence, a value at least nominally shared by most Americans. The theme was then developed in different ways depending on the audience. In other words, Harding used varied materials and forms of argument to develop his theme.

A reading of the eighty-six speeches of the western tour reveals several of these recurrent themes which were used by Harding. These recurrent themes are not always the central premise of the speeches, but are consistent in their appearance in the speeches. Some of these themes seem to be commonplace to most Americans of that time, while others appear to be an outgrowth of the immediate problems which surrounded Harding as an incumbent President.

The study will attempt to answer these questions:

1. What are the recurrent themes (values) which Harding espoused in the speeches of the western tour?
2. What materials and forms of argument were employed in the development of these themes?
3. What generalizations can be made about the findings, and what are the implications of those generalizations for further research?

III. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

An investigation of The List of American Doctoral Dissertations, 1912-1938; Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities, 1933-1955; Dissertations Abstracts, 1938 to the present; Index of American Doctoral Dissertations, 1959 to the present, and Speech Monographs, 1935 to the present, revealed only four studies in progress or completed dealing with Warren G. Harding. Fields considered in the investigation were speech, history, and political science. The studies found are: Presidential Election of 1920 by Rocco M. Paone, a doctoral dissertation completed at Georgetown University in 1951; Presidential Campaign of 1920 by T. William Goodin, a doctoral dissertation completed at Ohio University in 1951; Evolution of a President: The Political Apprenticeship of Warren Gamaliel Harding by A. Boatman, a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of South Carolina in 1967. All three of these studies were done in the field of history. After reading the abstracts of these dissertations, I felt that none of them were useful for the purposes of this study. By far the most valuable study done that would aid this thesis is a doctoral dissertation recently (1967) completed at Wayne State University: The Public Speaking of Warren G. Harding

by Dale E. Cottrill. Since the dissertation does not examine the western tour speeches in any depth, Dr. Cottrill has assured me that there will be no danger of overlapping except on certain pertinent facts regarding the timetable of the tour.

IV. SOURCES OF MATERIAL

The material to be used in this study falls into four categories: (1) texts of the speeches; (2) historical data on Warren Harding; (3) historical data on the tour; (4) material dealing with the development of ethos.

The texts of the speeches to be used are to be found in The Last Speeches of Warren G. Harding edited by George Murphy. These texts, according to Dr. Cottrill, are quite accurate. They were taken down from the actual delivered speeches and not from texts submitted later by Harding. These texts were compared with the original manuscripts of the addresses by Dr. Cottrill.

Historical data on Warren Harding will come primarily from books and periodicals. Books found most useful were: Incredible Era by Samuel Hopkins Adams; Our Times, Vol. VI, by Mark Sullivan; A Calm Review of a Calm Man by Samuel G. Blythe; Warren G. Harding: The Man by Joe Mitchell Chapple;

The Illustrious Life and Work of Warren G. Harding by Thomas H. Russell; and Masks in a Pageant by William Allen White.

Newspapers considered were the Marion Star, and, when available, newspapers of the cities in which Harding spoke on the tour were utilized.

Magazines which were used include The Saturday Evening Post, Current History, and other news magazines of the time which gave accounts of the tour.

Historical data on the tour came from the same sources as listed above.

Materials dealing with ethos and materials and forms of argument was derived through an examination of Aristotle's Rhetorica, Cicero's De Oratore, and the works of several contemporary theorists.

CHAPTER II

WARREN HARDING AND THE WESTERN TOUR

I. HARDING: THE MAN

1920 was a year of disillusionment for America, left in the wake of a World War which had either killed or wounded over 200,000 of its citizens. Unemployment due to a rash of strikes had reached a new high. Business was floundering, and the economy was in a general uproar.[1] The people of the country sought hope and reassurance that America would once more revive and prosper. The call was for "normalcy," and the answer to the call seemed to be a repudiation of the idealistic policies of Woodrow Wilson.[2] It was in the midst of this search for normalcy that Warren Gamaliel Harding rose to new national prominence.

Most political observers, even prior to the national conventions of 1920, predicted a massive victory for the Republicans at the polls in November.[3] The question seemed

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[1] Sullivan, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] Israel, op. cit., p. 230.

[3] Ibid., p. 231.

to be: who would the Republicans choose to be the next President of the United States? The convention, held July 8th - 12th had two major contenders, General Leonard Wood and Governor Frank O. Lowden of Kansas. There were other candidates as well--others who, by their refusal to pledge themselves firmly to a candidate in the hope that they themselves might be the bearers of the Republican Banner, unwittingly handed the nomination to Warren Harding of Ohio.[4] By the fourth ballot the convention was hopelessly deadlocked and so it recessed. With its adjournment, for all practical purposes, it concluded its role in the selection of the next President.[5] The actual choice was finally made in the legendary "smoke-filled room" at 2:11 the next morning. Harry M. Daugherty had predicted "At that time Senator Harding will be selected" and at that precise time, Senator Harding was selected.[6] When the convention reconvened the next day, six ballots were necessary to place Warren Harding's name officially atop the Republican ticket, and Harding subsequently won the ensuing election by the largest number of votes until that time.[7]

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[4]Adams, op. cit., p. 136.

[5]Ibid., p. 147.

[6]As cited in ibid., p. 130.

[7]Israel, op. cit., p. 231.

Harding rose to the Presidency from the editorship of a small-town newspaper in Ohio. In 1884, Harding and two of his friends pooled resources to purchase the bankrupt Marion Star. Before long they turned the floundering newspaper into a reasonably profitable business venture with Harding as the central figure in its success.[8] He enjoyed his work, and most who knew him have since concluded that he would have been content had he never left the small newspaper.[9] But the newspaper as an organ of communication eventually became involved with politics, and in Ohio then, politics meant the Republican Party.

Harding's entry into politics began because of his role as a speaker.[10] Given his first real opportunity to speak when he substituted for a man who was to introduce the principal speaker at a lecture in a nearby community, Harding found speechmaking easy and agreeable, two attributes, it might be suggested by some critics, that Harding favored in regard to anything. Challenged later to oppose a man with whom he disagreed, Harding entered local politics. He lost--one of

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[8]Adams, op. cit., p. 17.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 35.

the only two instances where this would occur in a political career spanning more than twenty years.[11] Since the remainder of Harding's political career preceding election to the Presidency has already been reviewed, there is little need to delve any further here into the background of Harding's political climb.

As suggested earlier, Harding faced many challenges upon entering the White House. In response to the growing concern for security, Harding espoused and nurtured the term "normalcy." It was to be more than just a word for many years to come. With many, and I think it is not unfair to include Harding in this group, it became an obsession, serving as a guideline for the formation of policy to meet the growing demands of a war-weary country.[12]

It is not the purpose of this study to make any value judgments on the concept of normalcy. It is important to this study, however, to examine some of the conditions which surrounded the administration which sought as its end this elusive condition. To understand Warren Harding's administration--its

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[11]The other loss was the Governorship of Ohio in 1912.

[12]Israel, op. cit., p. 231.

strengths and its well-publicized faults, it is imperative to take a closer look at the man himself.

Harding might be termed an "easy-going sort of person" with several noteworthy traits. One of the ironic twists of fate was that it was often these traits, which most would consider traits of a good man, which brought him to disfavor and ruin. As Samuel Hopkins Adams noted, "Friendship in politics undermines more principles than fraud, and gratitude is a worse poison than graft."[13]

Sullivan spoke of his most persistent trait--kindliness: " . . . a kindliness that expressed itself in generous responsiveness to any appealing situation."[14] He was both good-natured and tolerant. There were countless stories about his willingness to accept the good in men and overlook the bad. After his death, this attribute would be misconstrued to attempt to implicate him in the shady dealings of some of those in whom he placed his trust, but no such involvement, even by knowledge, has ever been proven.[15] He was, above all, a man of integrity who realized the need for service to the

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[13]As cited in Sullivan, op. cit., p. 243.

[14]Ibid., p. 92.

[15]Noggle, op. cit., p. 58.

country. He respected service, extreme patriotism, loyalty and happiness and tried to make them a functioning part of his life. It was his deep conviction that every American should possess these qualities. With all these admirable traits, he had neither the experience nor some of the more fundamental qualities of leadership to ever assume the awesome responsibilities of the highest office in the land.[16]

In an almost uncanny prediction, one of Harding's friends had once remarked, "Warren, your weakness is that you always treat everybody as good 'til you find them bad."[17] Perhaps because Harding felt that the job was too much to handle for a man of his abilities and because of his supreme loyalty to his friends, he soon surrounded his office with men whom he had known as comrades and those who had helped him to secure the nomination. Perhaps Mark Sullivan in Our Times has the most concise and historically accurate statement regarding the new President's appointments: " . . . of which many were adequate, some excellent, others very bad."[18]

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[16]Adams, op. cit., p. 441.

[17]Sullivan, op. cit., p. 102.

[18]Ibid., p. 138.

Harding's non-cabinet appointments are hardly worthy of note. Only three of these men--Charles F. Cramer, Jess Smith, and Charles R. Forbes--ever seriously affected what the President did or thought. Both Cramer and Smith would later commit suicide to escape responsibility for their actions. The appointment of Forbes as director of the Veteran's Bureau is worthy of mention because of the emotional involvement of the President. Harding admired him, and both he and Mrs. Harding looked upon the fun-loving Forbes as a younger brother.[19]

II. THE CABINET

Harding's cabinet seemed to embrace all extremes of competence. It included three men who might be classed among the best of public servants--Charles Evans Hughes, Secretary of State; Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury; and Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce. It also included the men who were to bring Harding to disgrace and humiliation--Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy; Harry M. Daugherty, Attorney General; and Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior (whom Harding appointed because of his ability to tell stories of the old west.)

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[19]Adams, op. cit., p. 234.

It might be said generally of Harding that he made his appointments in the spirit of rewards for those he admired. Because he felt so strongly toward his old friends, it was his natural reaction, to do what he could to catapult them to glory and power.[20] At one time, he even wanted to appoint Albert B. Fall as Secretary of State; fortunately, through various pressures, he was compelled to accept Charles Evans Hughes.[21] Such are the hairbreadths of which history is made.

Many of Harding's appointments were men from Ohio, several of whom were from his hometown of Marion. As one biographer put it:

> The capture of the City of Washington by the State of Ohio is unrecorded history. Harding's election was the signal for the descent of the locust swarm, hungry for pickings. The small fry came in the wake of the large. 'W. G.' could be trusted to look after his friends.[22]

III. PROBLEMS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

It did not take long before the forces of greed and power began to rear their ugly heads in the Harding administration. Gifford Pinchot, in 1920, made an accurate appraisal of

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[20]Sullivan, op. cit., p. 144.

[21]Ibid., p. 145.

[22]Adams, op. cit., p. 231.

Senator Albert B. Fall. When Harding wrote Pinchot to get his opinion on the possible appointment of Fall as Secretary of the Interior, Pinchot wired back:

> Don't quote me yet on Fall. Want to go carefully over his record in Senate, and other records not immediately available. He has been with exploitation gang, but not a leader. Has large personal holdings in mining and in other resources in this country and Mexico. Trouble ahead.[23]

And there was trouble ahead for Harding. Fall's exploits are well known to anyone who has ever had an introductory American history course.

His most infamous and, perhaps, most unfortunate endeavor was the sale of the Teapot Dome government oil leases to a private company early in 1921. This sale, apart from being more than a little fraudulent, was highly imprudent. Through an unfortunate slip-up in communications between Fall and a naive associate, a feature story of this sale proclaiming new understanding between business and government was published in the Wall Street Journal.[24] Congress was not as interested in the sale as a new step towards greater understanding between government and business as the Wall Street Journal had been.

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[23]As cited in John Ise, The United States Oil Policy (New Haven: 1926), pp. 365-66.

[24]Noggle, op. cit., p. 13.

On the contrary, it was curious as to what this new relationship might be and was not very attentive to Albert Fall who liked to describe how he had once disarmed John Wesley Hardin singlehandedly. While Fall may have had the upper hand with Hardin, he was not strikingly successful against his new adversary, Senator Thomas B. Walsh of Montana, who had made it his personal ambition to place Albert B. Fall, glamorous adventurer, behind bars.[25]

Meanwhile, the President's "younger brother," Charles R. Forbes, was busily engaged in a profitable business venture--selling goods out of the government's warehouse. Forbes organized the sale of what he described to the liaison officer as surplus and practically worthless material. Many of the goods sold to a private wholesaler in Boston were actually in great demand by several departments in the government. The government lost $2,400,000 when $3,000,000 worth of goods were sold to the company in Boston for about $600,000.[26] Naturally, other wholesalers, eager for their "rightful" share of the booty, protested to Harding that their bids were not being recognized. The protests of these companies led Harding

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[25]Noggle, op. cit., p. 36.

[26]Adams, op. cit., p. 294.

finally to an investigation of Forbes' activities.[27] After being reassured, however, by Forbes that the problem was one of loose administration which would be cleared up immediately, Harding dismissed the accusations against his friend as vicious gossip.[28]

By late January, 1923, more extensive data had given credibility to the gossip, and Harding, in a last feeble attempt to save his comrade from shame and scandal, sent him abroad. Mrs. Harding later noted that her husband "never recovered from Forbes' betrayal of himself and the administration."[29]

Charles Cramer, one of Forbes' partners in the enterprise, chose suicide over exile and not long afterward, Jess Smith, an aid to Daugherty, picked the same solution as a way to escape responsibility for his actions.[30]

As the summer of 1923 neared, Warren Gamaliel Harding, the amiable senator who had been thrust into the highest office in the land, was a changing man, disheartened by the election

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[27] Ibid., p. 295.

[28] Ibid., p. 296.

[29] Mrs. Warren G. Harding, as cited in ibid., p. 297.

[30] For additional data on these two men and their deaths, consult Adams, op. cit., pp. 298-311.

of the previous year which had reduced the Republican majority in both houses of Congress and betrayed by some of his trusted friends. Two men in his administration had committed suicide, and one of his closest friends had to be sent out of the country. Every day more stories of graft and corruption filled the corridors of Congress.[31] He was a troubled and brokenhearted man, beginning to lose faith in himself and everything that he might be able to accomplish. William Allen White may have given the most vivid picture of the way Harding must have felt early in 1923:

> . . . he must have been assailed by the devils of his past. Always there must have been, in the dark periphery of his consciousness, cackling, ribald voices . . . drunken, raucous in debauch; . . . the voices of men whispering in the greedy lechery of political intrigue.[32]

It was this mood, instilled in Harding as the natural result of the events of the preceding months, which ultimately convinced him to make a speaking tour into the country.[33] He had contemplated such a "Voyage of Understanding"[34] for over a

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[31]Noggle, op. cit., p. 56.

[32]William Allen White, Masks in a Pageant (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1928), p. 425.

[33]Noggle, op. cit., p. 56. See also Adams, op. cit., pp. 366-368; Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 245-247.

[34]Adams, op. cit., p. 366.

year, and now the idea was made more concrete by the personal and political realities that surrounded him. The purpose of the trip was to restore the faith of the people whom Harding felt had become critical of him.[35] He hoped that the tour would bring "the government closer to the people, and the people closer to government."[36] While there were definite political implications overriding the whole endeavor, Harding was also concerned about restoring his personal good-standing with the people. This notion seems likely because Harding always wanted people to like him. He once remarked to a friend that he knew he would not be the best President that the nation ever had, but he did hope that he might be remembered as the best-loved.[37] He seemed to think that if he might meet with the people and talk to them again, he would be able to restore their confidence in him. The view may have been over-simplified, but Harding did have confidence in himself as a speaker. He enjoyed speaking and felt that it was the one thing which raised him above most of his contemporaries.[38] He was extremely

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[35]Noggle, op. cit., p. 56.

[36]As cited in Thomas H. Russell, The Illustrious Life and Work of Warren G. Harding (New York: T. H. Russell, 1923), p. 227.

[37]Adams, op. cit., p. 195.

[38]Ibid., p. 35.

vain about his ability to speak. While modest about most of his abilities, he would often confide to friends, "I really think I know how to deliver a good speech."[39] He even coined his own word about his speaking--"I like to go out into the country and 'bloviate'."[40]

IV. HARDING AS A SPEAKER

While it is not the purpose of this study to examine Harding's public speaking career, it may be useful to note a few general considerations of Invention, Disposition, Style, Delivery and Memory as they relate to the speaking of Harding. Before considering these individually, however, it is necessary to make a few observations on Harding as a speaker.

Harding's public speaking career covered a period of approximately forty-one years, during which time (1882-1923) he delivered occasional addresses, spoke on the Chatauqua Circuit, and spoke as President. The presidential period includes campaign speaking as well as those speeches that he made after the election. Because of the recent discovery of the Harding papers, over three thousand situations in which

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p. 195.

Harding made a major speech have been traced.[41] Until the discovery of many of the papers, it was not generally believed that Harding was that prolific a speaker. Perhaps an even greater insight into the man is that the manuscripts for many of these three thousand speeches have been located, along with many preparatory notes--all in Harding's handwriting, which would seem to deny any notion that his speeches were solely the work of ghostwriters.[42] Harding did have one major ghostwriter, Richard Washburn Childs, who, while he later perhaps influenced Harding's style, certainly was not the sole author of his speeches.[43]

With those observations in mind, a consideration of Invention, Disposition, Style, Delivery and Memory seems in order.

One of the most unique aspects of Harding's invention was the shallowness of many of his ideas. The examination of invention here is not complete, but does focus on the most important items relevant to Harding.

Harding's selection of arguments and ideas was often criticized. There were many who felt as if Harding's speeches

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[41]Statement by Dr. Dale E. Cottrill, personal interview, Marion, Ohio, July 5, 1968.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

lacked any important substance, because he often chose ideas which could be termed platitudes. This idea will be further demonstrated when the themes that Harding used on the western tour are examined. As Samuel Hopkins Adams noted, "What special aptitude Harding possesses . . . is for the choice of the safe, sane, and sanitary cliche in all its banality."[44] In referring to the lack of substance in Harding's speeches, Senator William McAdoo was even less kind:

> His speeches leave the impression of an army of pompous phrases moving over the landscape in search of an idea; sometimes these meandering words would actually capture a straggling thought and bear it triumphantly, a prisoner in their midst, until it died of servitude and overwork.[45]

While these are certainly overstatements of the facts, nevertheless Harding often appeared inane to many of his critics. It should be noted, however, that the period in which Harding served as President was a period which admired the safe, sane and sanitary cliche. It was a time in which the people were tired of thinking weighty thoughts about the problems of the rest of the world. More detailed examination of this subject will be made in Chapter III which

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[44]Adams, op. cit., p. 117.

[45]As cited in Israel, op. cit., p. 231.

will show some of the ideas that Harding espoused in his speeches and how they were used.

It is difficult to discuss Harding's technique of organization of his ideas because he used no consistent pattern. Much of the time his thoughts seem to flow out in a stream of consciousness (or perhaps as McAdoo might suggest, stream of unconsciousness). Harding was consistent in only one respect. He usually spent at least one third of the entire speech developing an association with his audience. He often began speeches with anecdotes or references about the particular place where he was delivering the speech. While there is evidence that he often outlined his speeches before writing them, there is more evidence (Harding's manuscripts) that he did not consciously lay down any particular organizational pattern. Thoughts would often move around within the context of one speech to the point where one would be hard-pressed to render a thesis sentence out of the speech.

Harding received the most criticism on his style. H. L. Mencken commented that Harding's use of words reminded him of "a string of wet sponges."[46] There seems to be little question that Harding was an ornate speaker. The words and phrases he chose were highly figurative, often to the point

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[46]As cited in Adams, op. cit., p. 115.

of disguising what he wanted to say. Mr. Frederick E. Schortemeier, collector and editor of the Harding addresses, says that Harding possessed "a remarkable aptitude for the choice of accurate and meaningful words."[47] Adams, however, in his discussion of the "Four-Minute Men" commented:

> Given four minutes wherein to say something he might well have choked to death. On the other hand, he could use up two hours in saying practically nothing . . . At his best, he was an over-ornate speaker; at his worst he was a purveyor of flatulent claptrap.[48]

After reading Harding's speeches, most would probably tend to agree with the conclusions of Adams over those of Schortemeier. Harding himself acknowledged this criticism of his style and consciously, with the aid of Childs, sought to correct the problem--with some success. A reading of some of the later speeches reveals a lesser amount of the verbosity which had earlier characterized his oratory. It would be inaccurate, however, to leave the impression that he ever consistently abandoned his overuse of stylistic devices. One of the most quickly recognized devices that Harding often used was alliteration. He was consistent in his overuse of

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[47]As cited in ibid., p. 117.

[48]Ibid., p. 115.

this device, but never did it reach the epitome of tediousness that it reached in the speech delivered before the Boston Home Market Club, May 14, 1920. Adams calls the speech " . . . the acme of alliteration's artful aid at its most artful":[49]

> . . . not heroism but healing, not nostrums but normalcy, not revolution but restoration, not agitation but adjustment, not surgery but serenity, not the dramatic but the dispassionate, not experiment but equipoise, not submergence in internationality but sustainment in triumphant nationality.[50]

Regardless of Harding's faults in regard to style, his audiences often found an easy comfort and some inspiration in the over-ornate speaker. William Allen White seemed to sum it up when he said:

> What he said was trivial. But he said it with a manner and spoke it with a flare . . . He had the air of a Roman Senator, and in the midst of his oratorical flights would drop in an occasional apostrophe, "Oh, Senators," or "My Senators," or "Senators," by way of adding a certain ponderous unction to his phrases.[51]

Harding's delivery was one of his stronger points. His voice was deep, resonant, and superbly melodic. He used very elaborate inflection patterns which suited well his general

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[49]Ibid., p. 117.

[50]As cited in ibid.

[51]White, op. cit., p. 400.

style of meandering sentences and ornate words.[52] He emanated an aura of virility combined with statesman-like dignity. There is little doubt that this physical image of Harding aided him tremendously in securing the Presidency.[53] When he spoke, he could make his voice carry enthusiasm and conviction (not to mention distance).[54] His physical bearing on the platform has already been described by White as that of a Roman Senator. Some of his contemporaries even suggested that he would have looked quite impressive in a toga. He was active on the platform both in argument and in gesture. His gestures have often been described as quite vigorous.[55]

Harding always wrote out a manuscript for a major address, often used it, and more often departed from it for what would be several pages if printed. His tendency was to add to his written manuscript rather than delete parts of

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[52]This is the impression of this author after hearing several recordings of Harding's speeches. This conclusion was confirmed by Dr. Cottrill in personal interview.

[53]Cottrill, personal interview, recalls that stories told to him by many who heard the campaign speeches indicate that many of the women (this was the first presidential election in which they were permitted to vote) would tear at his clothes and often swoon during his speeches.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

it.[56] Although it is not widely known, Harding seems to have had a photographic memory, which would certainly contribute to the phenomena just mentioned.[57]

Despite his handicaps as a speaker, Harding was always able to maintain good rapport with his audiences. He was a successful Chautauqua speaker and often spoke with William Jennings Bryan on that circuit.[58] By appealing to the feelings of the audience through dealing with almost universally accepted ideas, Harding was able to stir his audiences with a deep respect for him as an individual. It was not entirely without basis, then, that Harding felt that if he could have an opportunity to speak to the people, he would be able to win back their love and admiration.

V. THE WESTERN TOUR

On June 20, 1923, the special train bearing the car labeled "Superb" which carried the President of the United States rolled out of Washington. It was the last day that Warren Gamaliel Harding would look upon the city which had been his home since 1914. Accompanying the President were:

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Dr. Hubert Work, Secretary of the Interior (Fall had resigned); Dr. Sawyer, the President's physician; George Christian, Secretary to the President; their wives; a Dr. Joel T. Boone; some personal friends; secretaries; stenographers; several newspapermen (among whom was Joe Mitchell Chapple who later wrote a biography of Harding); Secret Service men; a Navy band; and Mrs. Harding and her trained nurse.[59] One of the ironies of history is that Harding did not want her to make the trip for fear that her health might not hold up to the rigors of the journey.[60]

Careful preparations were made prior to the actual tour. The areas where speeches were to be made were carefully researched. Harding had given instructions to one of his aides, Walter Brown, to

> . . . visit everyone of the cities in which speaking engagements or any sort of stop or stay is contemplated and check up thoroughly on the local arrangements and make certain that nothing is unprovided for, and especially . . . make sure that there have been no cases of unmindfulness which are likely to leave a trail of disappointment or wounded feelings behind us.[61]

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Andrew Sinclair, The Available Man: Warren G. Harding (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 284.

Harding had carefully worked out his relationship to the mass media of the time. He made sure that there were plenty of reporters along with him and saw to it that the stories reached the newspapers. One of these reporters was a Senate reporter, who carefully transcribed all the speeches of the tour and later printed them as they were originally given. It is this compilation of texts prepared by James Murphy that is being used in this study. Arrangements were also made so that many of the speeches would be broadcast over the radio.[62] As a result, many times during the course of the tour, Harding was forced to use a microphone, which he felt impaired his delivery.[63] He may have been right, at least to some degree, because Mark Sullivan noted that the microphones seemed to "cost him a double expenditure of effort."[64]

Since the timetable of the tour will be given in tables later in the text, it is unnecessary to recount the tour, stop by stop, at this point. On this tour, Harding delivered eighty-five speeches in six weeks. Most of these he himself

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[62]Sullivan, op. cit., p. 246.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

composed in longhand.[65] Some of the speeches were written before the tour commenced, but it is not certain how many. Sullivan says some,[66] and Cottrill places the number at six.[67] We do know that Harding wrote many of the speeches during the tour.

The composition of Harding's audiences was varied. He spoke in a large number of farming communities but also spoke to more sophisticated audiences in places like San Francisco and Vancouver. In size the audiences ranged from several hundred into the thousands.[68] At the start of the tour the crowds were small and apathetic, but as the tour progressed westward, the audiences grew in size and in enthusiasm.[69] In St. Louis he met his first big audience which numbered in the thousands.[70] In Kansas City he met with the same response, and it continued for the rest of the tour. By the time the

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[65]Sinclair, op. cit., p. 283.

[66]Ibid., p. 246.

[67]Cottrill, personal interview.

[68]Adams, op. cit., p. 367.

[69]Sullivan, op. cit., p. 245.

[70]Adams, loc. cit.

train reached Tacoma, Washington, the President was visibly worn out.[71] The trek to Alaska was excessively long and tedious, and as a result, when, on his return trip he was met with highly enthusiastic crowds at Vancouver, British Columbia, he was too tired to reciprocate the enthusiasm.[72] Several times during his speech, he faltered and was hardly able to finish.[73] During the summer the weather was extremely hot. For a man of Harding's age, a schedule such as this would have been considered rigorous under any conditions, and the factor of heat weakened his endurance even further. After the incident at Vancouver, those in the party were beginning to feel apprehension.[74] All agreed that the tour would be given up--all, except Harding. He refused to halt the tour.[75] The heat became more intense as the party moved on to Seattle. Adams described the Seattle speech:

> Gamely the President stood forth in the sun . . . and went through with his stint. But he faltered more than once, once became confused and drooped as if he

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[71]Sullivan, op. cit., p. 247.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Adams, op. cit., p. 373

[75]Ibid.

were going to give up the struggle, only to master his weakness by an effort of will and finish.[76]

After the incident in Seattle, all were certain that the tour should be ended--except one.[77] The tour continued, but Warren Harding had made, quite unknowingly, his last public speech. His doctor was summoned as the train sped onward toward San Francisco.[78] On July 29, the train arrived in San Francisco, and the President walked into the Palace Hotel. He would leave the same hotel three days later on a bier. And so the western tour came to an abrupt end. Sorrow and grief poured from the heart of the nation. He had, in death, won the love and respect of the nation. The adoration would not last long as more and more of the scandals came to public attention. He would soon be hated, reviled and scorned. Several years later William Allen White would write:

> Some day America will realize the tragic drama in which he moved, will realize how wickedly unfair the Republic was to pick up that man--weak, unprepared, with no executive talent, and with an unused mind--and pinnacle him in the most powerful office in the land. He was but a child in heart and head set down to fight the dragon, and in the end his terror conquered him.[79]

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] White, op. cit., p. 400.

CHAPTER III

THEMES AND THE MATERIALS AND FORMS OF ARGUMENT

A careful examination of all the speeches delivered by Harding during the western tour revealed certain topics which frequently occurred in the speeches. Several of these themes are used repeatedly and in a certain pattern throughout the eighty-six speeches of the western tour. These particular themes are referred to as recurrent themes. Recurrency was determined by an examination of all of the themes that Harding used. The four recurrent themes chosen for this study were arrived at by (1) how often they appeared in the speeches and (2) where they appeared. To be considered recurrent, then, they had to appear in almost every speech and in every area in which Harding spoke. It was not enough if a particular theme appeared frequently but only in a particular area. The theme had to appear consistently on the tour.

There was no magic cut-off point insofar as the number of appearances by each of the themes chosen; however, all four were used at least eighty-six times. These themes have been categorized under four labels: service, the superiority of America, competence, and good character. Before beginning an examination of these themes and their development, a brief

definition of each would seem to be in order.

The term service may suggest many ideas. It can imply a broad general cqncept, or it may mean service to the State, service to mankind, or the many subheads under all of these. In the speeches of the western tour the theme seems to take on all these notions at various times. Harding was deeply convinced that everyone should do his part to make a better, happier and more normal world, and often mentioned it in his speeches long before the western tour. The western tour, however, was the first occasion where the theme had appeared in virtually every speech. Certainly, his own life had been affected by close friends who put other things ahead of service. He seemed to be personally more aware of new national responsibilities, and it is probable that he hoped to convince the people of the country that he was prepared for such national responsibilities.[1]

The superiority of America was a familiar theme to speakers of this time. Many modern critics of the period would classify it as a platitude. Nevertheless, it was a popular thought with Americans of that period, and one might insure his unpopularity by even suggesting the fallibility

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[1]Adams, op. cit., p. 368.

of America. America in 1923, while not willing to prove its superiority through active participation in world affairs, constantly asserted it. There is little doubt after reading the speeches that the superiority of America was one of Harding's particular favorites. It has always been a favorite topic for discussion in his speeches. One need only look to his keynote address at the Republican Convention in 1916 which he closed with the words "In the spirit of the Republic, we proclaim Americanism and acclaim America."[2] Four years later he pronounced that America's present need is " . . . not submergence in internationality but sustainment in triumphant nationality.[3] More than ever, in the western tour he garbed himself in the superiority of America, his favorite topic from which to build speeches.

His own competence, however, was not a frequent topic of conversation for Harding. From the outset of his nomination, he himself had many questions about his competence and did not frequently talk about anything that he had done while in office. Yet with Washington whispering ugly rumors about his abilities, it became imperative to discuss not only what

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[2]As cited in Adams, op. cit., p. 115.

[3]Ibid., p. 117.

he had done but what he intended to do in the future. It would simply not do to have the people believing that he was a lazy buffoon who only played golf (Harding was an avid golfer) and ran away from any serious thought that might happen his way. Moreover, he had to demonstrate that he was going to straighten out the problems which plagued his administration. It was a newly discovered area for Harding, and he used it admirably. It should be noted, however, that this theme was the least frequently employed of the four that have been suggested.

Harding had long been exposed to questions in regard to his character. Not only had his lineage been questioned, but his fidelity as well. There was also the question of his drinking during prohibition, and inferences were being made about his favorite sport--playing poker with his cronies in the White House office.[4] All these and several other less important attacks on him personally served to convince Harding that the people of the country should be made aware that he was of high moral character, believed in all the "good" traits--e.g., loyalty, honesty, temperance--and that he practiced them. It seems apparent that he consciously was

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[4]Adams, op. cit., pp. 273-283, 428-432.

trying to change. For example, he had begun to abstain from the use of liquor several months before the tour because he believed that he needed to set a good example for the rest of the people in the country.[5]

Such were the themes that appeared frequently in the eighty-six speeches of the western tour. Two of the four were not new to Harding; the other two seem to have grown out of the particular problems that Harding faced at this period in his life. They all have one thing in common, however; they all embrace ideas that were highly revered by most Americans at that time. The relationship of these four recurrent themes to values is a simple one. All of these themes represent values at least nominally held by Americans. That is, they dealt with ideals or institutions that Harding's audiences regarded highly.[6]

The last item to be considered is the relationship of values and ethos. Most of this chapter will discuss this relationship out of necessity, but a general view is offered now for the purposes of clarification, and to give a broad

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[5] Ibid., p. 369.

[6] For an analysis of this period see Henry W. Bragdon and Samuel P. McCutchen, History of a Free People (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 541-562.

base upon which to make a detailed discussion.

Aristotle suggested that, to gain ethos, a speaker must demonstrate in the speech that he possesses three qualities--good will, good sense, and good moral character.[7] The success or failure of this demonstration depends in part on the topics the speaker emphasizes and the way in which he develops those topics.[8] In other words, the speaker must make many choices when he is called upon to make a speech and depending upon which choices he makes, he will either show that the three characteristics--good will, good sense, and good moral character--are within him, or that they are not. Even a superficial reading of the four themes will suggest that they are values and that they could be categorized as representative of either good will, good sense and good moral character, or possibly all three. If an arbitrary classification of the four themes were to be made under the main heads of good sense, good will, and good moral character, the first two themes, service and superiority of America, would seem to fall under good will (this is not to imply that, given a certain instance, they might not fall into one or more of the

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[7]Aristotle, op. cit., 1378a, 5-15.

[8]McBurney and Wrage, op. cit., p. 493.

other categories, but merely to suggest the relationship of these themes to the constituents of ethos). The third theme, competence, is clearly in the sphere of good sense, and the fourth, good character, is almost a virtual restatement of Aristotle's good moral character.

In short, the themes that Harding chose most frequently as topics for emphasis in his speeches are values representing either good will, good sense, or good moral character, or some combination of the three. With this relationship in mind, an examination of the speeches of the western tour can be made with special reference to the materials and forms of argument.

Aristotle, when discussing choices made by the speaker, not only included topics, but also their development. The following is an examination of the materials and forms of argument that were used by Harding in the development of his themes. Such an examination is often a difficult one, not simply because of differing definitions of materials and forms of argument, but often from the argument itself. The difficulty often arises in the determination of intent. For example, one might argue within the structure of a particular group of sentences from analogy and yet if the argument were extended it might also be argument from sign or a causal argument. Hence, if extended, one form of argument may be many

forms of argument. Generally, in this study, considerations of materials and forms of argument have been made only on the immediate structure of the argument. In a few cases an attempt at extension of the argument has been made for purposes of clarification. When necessary for understanding, editorial note has been added regarding the substance of the arguments.

Harding seldom took much time in the development of arguments. His inclinations toward verbosity often led him through many ideas during the course of one speech.[9] He rarely spent enough time on a particular idea in a given speech. He tended to state his argument briefly and then hurry off to catch another fleeting thought. This is not to infer that his arguments were weak, but only to suggest some of the problems encountered when discussing precisely how Harding used an argument, and what he might have implied from it.

Representative examples of the materials and forms of argument of each of these themes were chosen for illustration in this study. The examples were selected because they were typical ones from each of three areas--Midwest, Northwest, and the West Coast. The discussion of materials and forms will be

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[9] Supra, p. 27.

divided into four sections corresponding to the four themes recurrent on the western tour.

I. SERVICE

As the train moved away from Washington, Harding apparently felt more relaxed, making several short speeches of greeting to those who met the train. He had already made five such speeches when he arrived at Flora, Illinois, on June 21st. The speech dealt with higher wages for the railroad workers, and Flora, Illinois, was at this time almost solely a railroad community. He took this as his first opportunity to discuss the theme of service, and he approached it in such a way that the audience hardly could have questioned his good will:

> I understand yours is a railroad community; but railroad communities are not any different from other communities in the United States. The service of communication [transportation] is an essential American service; and we are all interested in the affairs which are necessary for our common happiness.[10]

The argument, of course, is analogy, and the material he used was example (fact). As was Harding's habit, his example

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[10]Warren G. Harding, Speech at Flora, Illinois, Last Speeches of President Warren G. Harding Delivered on His Alaskan Tour June to August 1923, ed. James W. Murphy (Washington, D. C.: James W. Murphy, 1923), pp. 24-25. Any further citations of Harding's speeches will be from the above and not footnoted.

related to the particular audience with whom he was speaking. In fact, he would often use the audience itself as the example from which to draw his arguments. By making the Flora, Illinois, audience analogous to the rest of American society which he has already lauded in the speech and which he would laud again, he adds to his own good will as a speaker.

Harding's first major address was before the Rotary National Convention at the Coliseum, St. Louis, Missouri, on June 21st. To convey his ideas on the value of service, which was the subject of the entire speech, he used argument by example. The examples used in the speech were generally long illustrations. The following excerpt seems to be typical of the speech:

> Some of you, perhaps, have seen what I consider one of the greatest plays, if not the greatest, that was ever written. You may have seen Forbes Robertson, the great English actor, in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." In that play he became a dweller in a boarding house where boarders were ill-tempered, irritable, and living at cross purposes, and he brought to that unhappy place the spirit of service. He taught the dissatisfied house servant that after all there was dignity to the humblest service in the world, and that honesty ought to attend it; he taught the dishonest gambler how honesty would elevate his life; he put an end to the snob, and everywhere, by the preaching of the dignity of and the compensation in service he transformed an unhappy household into one of the happiest and most harmonious.

Three forms of argument are suggested by this example. It could be, for example, an implied analogy which compared

the boarding house to the country. If we examine the results of the boarding house change and extend the analogy, the argument can also be causal. In its internal structure, however, it would have to be classified as argument by example. The analogy is not clearly drawn in the speech but is merely left for the audience's consideration. It is likely that Harding intended his to be an analogy between the boarding house and the country and then to suggest a causal relationship of service and happiness and harmony, but the internal structure still remains basically argument by example.

Harding was no newcomer to the state of Kansas. He had been there years earlier when he was traveling the Chatauqua Circuit.[11] He enjoyed a high degree of popularity in Kansas, and he capitalized on it. In Hutchinson, Kansas, he not only made two addresses to audiences which numbered in the thousands but managed to chat with a childhood sweetheart, drive a binder around a wheat field and even spend time stacking hay. The local newspaper described the visit:

> He was given a warm welcome . . . He was taken immediately to Sylvan Park where 8,000 school children were assembled. A corsage was presented to Mrs. Harding by two little girls. Boy Scout Troops were on hand carrying flags and helping to keep back the crowd . . .

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[11]Cottrill, personal interview.

> Later in the day he was taken to the Chester Oneal farm . . . to observe harvesting. At the wheat field he discussed with Chester Oneal the price of wheat. He wanted first hand information and he was getting it. He climbed onto a new 10-foot power binder operated by tractor and ran the machine around a quarter section of wheat field. Then he grabbed hold of wheat bundles, following the tractor binder, and shocked wheat like an old-timer.
>
> "Do I get the farm bloc now?" he laughingly remarked to Senator Arthur Capper, head of the Senate farm bloc, as he brushed some of the wheat straw from his dark coat and white flannel trousers.[12]

This somewhat long description serves to indicate the situation in this area of the country. Harding was still highly popular here, despite the suggestive grumblings of William Allen White, the small town editor to the north and east of Hutchinson. Because he felt such a close relationship with this particular audience, it was not unusual that he chose them in the two speeches as examples. In the first address at Hutchinson, Kansas, the city served as the example upon which he based a causal argument:

> It is not enough to have a citizenship; it is essential to have a citizenship fit for the duties and obligations of life and ready to make use of the privileges and advantages thereof . . . Whatever happens to Hutchinson, Kansas, is bound to be reflected in other great communities throughout the nation.

In Dodge City, Kansas, the next stop, he again used the

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[12]Hutchinson News, June 23, 1923, p. 1.

audience as the example from which to develop a causal argument:

> The farmer, better than all other toilers in our community life, has learned that only the rewards of endeavor spur humanity on to larger achievement.

At Denver, Colorado, Harding began taking examples from the Bible. While the practice was not entirely new to him, Adams suggested that the intent behind the usage may have undergone some change:

> That something was stirring within him, he was himself aware. He told friends that he felt "a conscious spiritual influence" on his actions. Here [at Denver] he spoke without reservation for the faith that now inspired him.[13]

At Denver, Harding chose as one of his examples the Golden Rule and then argued for service from that example:

> I am thinking of the law of the Golden Rule, a statute from the man from Nazareth, who brought new hope and new peace to mankind and proclaimed service to men the highest tribute to God.

At Toquerville, Utah, the President again chose to argue from example, and the example chosen was familiar to all who lived in that part of the country:

> The work of the pioneer is of vast importance and high tribute should be paid to the men and women who, taking with them their all and leaving behind the comforts and refinements of civilization, have advanced

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[13]Adams, op. cit., p. 368.

> into the wilderness and given of their energy and courage to bring a new land to fruitfulness.

Brigham, Utah, saw the President refer to those who espouse a spirit of service as "Empire Builders." For his example, he chose the immediate audience, and constructed the following argument from sign:

> I believe that you must belong to the race of "empire builders" because you have in your faces those evidences of strength, determination, cheer and devotion which characterized them.

In a speech at Pocatello, Idaho, Harding, concerned with an impending railway strike, used the railroad workers for an example and then drew an analogy to put forth the idea of service:

> We have all the same interest in this America of ours and you are just as much concerned in the continuity of transportation as are the people on my right [the railroad workers] who are dependent upon it.

During the course of the speech he then suggested that service in one isolated area is equivalent to service everywhere in the country. Thus he related the theme of service to that with which the audience was most familiar. It is essential to note, that, because the implications for the notion of a higher sort of service are not precisely stated in that excerpt, it was necessary to extend the consideration of this argument to the entire speech so that its full

implications might be made clear. In the same speech, he uses a factual example from which to make his argument by example. The example was drawn from a segment of the audience present, and demonstrates Harding's ability to relate to an immediate audience:

> The Indians have given wonderful service. . . . During the World War, 12,000 of our Indians gave of their service in the khaki uniform and distinguished themselves in battle quite as notably as any other class of our citizenship.

At Ketchikan, Alaska, he developed a long illustration for his argument by example:

> I like to hear of your patriotic devotion. I read a little story of an Alaskan, who was not of American descent, which made a deep impression upon me and which perhaps will impress you if you love dogs as much as I do [Since at this time dogs were the principal mode of everyday transportation in Alaska, Harding could have been reasonably assured that they did] . . . I remember early in the war when the French Government was sending in all directions to recruit its armies, an agent visited some place in Alaska, and among others found an old Frenchman who was too well along in life to be fit for service. His heart was with the allies and when he found he was too old to serve he wanted to do the next best thing, and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, he sent his favorite dog into the service.

These selected examples are, by no means the only ones. Harding developed the theme of service in nearly all the speeches that he made during the course of the western tour. They are, however, representative of the ways in which Harding

handled this theme. He generally preferred to argue from example, often in illustration form. It was his way of relating the higher thought of service to the audience which he faced.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF AMERICA

The use of the theme, superiority in America, was not new to Harding. This may have been one of the reasons why the theme appears or is suggested in some way, in every speech of the tour except three, and these three are so short that it may even be stretching the point to call them speeches at all. Generally Harding suggests our superiority without actually stating that he believes that the United States is superior to every other country in the world. There are examples, however, where the proposition is simply stated. Harding often extended this idea and seemed to express his belief in a concept of manifest destiny. Throughout the speeches, after he asserts the superiority of America, he generally concludes that we should do something with our superiority to make the world a better place in which to live. Some of the following examples will appear repetitive because this theme was often phrased the same way more than once. This is a typical example.

> We are doing pretty well in the United States; we are doing better than any other people in the world.

Another example is almost a restatement of the first:

> I say to you frankly I think we have done better in the United States than has been done anywhere else in the world.

These two, the first in a speech at Washington, Indiana, and the second from the Denver, Colorado, address, are typical of the way in which Harding dealt with the subject. Both argue from the base of his own quotation. It should be remembered here, that Harding, speaking from his office, could use the prestige of the Presidency for his cause; thus, in turn, the thought would be reflected in the person holding the office. In doing so he demonstrated his good will. The arguments are both arguments from sign. If the United States is a nation doing better than any nation in the world, it is a clear sign of superiority. There is little question that Harding really believed this to be true. The subject had been expressed in his speeches long before this tour.

He referred to the Bible again at Carlyle, Illinois, when he discussed the superiority of America.

> . . . we have done so well that I believe God Himself must have intended that this great republic of ours, this wonderful land, should be an inspiration to the world.

In making the argument, he uses the United States as an

example to make his argument from sign. The superiority of America was a many-sided idea for Harding. He saw us as superior in achievement and superior in philosophy of government to the other nations of the world. This is not to imply that he did not respect the other nations of the world. In fact, in his speech on the International Court of Justice, delivered in St. Louis, Missouri, he used a quotation from a leader of another country in developing his argument:

> Very recently, a striking message was flashed through the air from Rome to Washington. "Tell America," said the vigorous Prime Minister, "that I like her, like her because she is strong, simple and direct. I wish Italy to be the same and shall try to make her so." God speed him! And God grant America shall never forfeit the high honor borne by that sentient tribute from Mussolini.

Lest the reader should be perplexed at the allusion to Mussolini in this speech, he should remember that the Italian leader was at this period in history very popular in his own country and the world. Harding used his words to develop an argument from sign; if a leader so well respected as Mussolini would use the United States as an inspiration for his own country, it is a good indication that the United States is a superior country.

In his address at Salt Lake City, Utah, the President argued by example, using as his material the American Legion:

> The American Legion, baptized anew in the supreme test on foreign battlefields is playing its splendid

> part. Those who bore war's burdens at home have joined, and all America must fully participate . . . We must make sure for ourselves, that we cling to the fundamentals, to the practices which enabled us to build so successfully, and avoid the errors which tend to impair our vigor and becloud our future.

Much of the audience was made up of members of the American Legion, and so Harding once again drew closely upon the makeup of his audience as the basis for his example.

His compliment heaped upon the people of Utah was not to spend itself entirely in Salt Lake City, however. The next evening at Cedar City, Utah, the President employed the same tactics; this time he expanded his example to all the people of Utah. The material of the argument is testimony, and the argument is by example.

> You live in a wonderful state, and the people of Utah are truly "Empire Builders." Senator Smoot was telling me today that the resources of Utah are so great and her industries so varied that although a wall were built around the state, shutting it off from the world, yet her people could live within and for themselves alone. But you do not want to do that. You are citizens of the greatest republic in the world, and the republic wants you to be a part of it.

At Butte, Montana, on June 29th, the President spoke similarly using as his example the accomplishments of the nation to argue from sign:

> Instead of strikes, riots, sabotage and preachments of revolution, we reaped a harvest of understanding, of establishment of respect among groups, of enhanced regard for each other's viewpoints . . . That is what the

> American people have done in the last two years. No other people have had the good fortune to parallel the achievement.

The same is true of this example taken from the address at Portland, Oregon:

> The progress from the day of reunion for a half-century is unparalleled in the recital of human progress.

Most of the developments of the theme of superiority of America are brief and to the point. Harding often used factual data as the base of his examples and quite often wed these to argument from sign. His espousing of the theme was nothing new, but the frequency with which the idea appeared, however, was significant.

III. COMPETENCE

His own accomplishments were not a frequent speech topic for Harding, but on the western tour he faced a unique problem in this area. His competence was being questioned all over Washington, and he was afraid that this feeling of apprehension might have spread to the rest of the nation, or that it might later on. He did not wait long to begin his defense. In the second paragraph of his first speech, delivered at Grafton, West Virginia, he said: "As you know, when one gets ready to go away he tries to clean up everything and leave matters in

shipshape so that they may be readily taken up when he returns."

The material used for the argument is an example which has been carried into illustration. The form of argument is argument from example. If one does it, then it seems to be representative of the class. It should be noted at this point that I am considering only the internal structure or form of each of these arguments. Of course, if carried to their logical conclusions all of these arguments become argument from sign. Hence, if one tells someone else to do something because it is the best thing to do, it suggests that the person giving that advice also does that which he recommends.

At Vincennes, Indiana, he defended his own efficiency through the use of an elaborate illustration developed through analogy. This would probably have to be noted as his most completely developed argument of this theme:

> We till the soil; we plant the seed, and we look forward to the harvest with confidence . . . and if we find that the growing crop is interfered with by insect life, we attack the grub of the cut worm or the boll weevil, or whatever it may happen to be, and give our energies to the destruction of the evils which impair the development and the realization of a bountiful harvest. We do not however quit raising wheat or corn or other products because we encounter difficulties in production, but apply our energies to the cure of the evil, to the removal of those things which interfere with ultimate satisfactory fulfillment. . . . It is the duty of Americans in their governmental affairs to do precisely what they do in their productive affairs. We must diligently, conscientiously

> and patriotically try to cure the evils which afflict us, and then go ahead.

This again is a good example of the way in which Harding applied his materials and forms of arguments to the particular type of audience for which he was speaking. In dealing with a rural audience dependent on farming and familiar with what he was talking about, he was able to make an association with their problems.

In Denver, Colorado, the President departed from his long established habit of not including statistics in his speeches and used them to argue from analogy:

> We have so managed the business of government that we have reduced Federal expenditures, which consumed 70% of all of the taxes collected at the height of the war outlay, down to 40%, while the local and State taxing authorities, though the war has long since ended, have increased their proportion of all taxes collected from 40% to 60%. I say to you, my countrymen, a Republic cannot live under excessive taxation.

Later in that same speech, Harding uses his own testimony as a sign that the government is strong. He discusses what would happen if the entire burden of law enforcement should fall upon the back of the federal government:

> I have no doubt that if the burden is cast, in undue proportion, upon the national authority the Federal Government will, not only under this administration but whatever others may come in the future, assume and discharge the full obligation.

In Cheyenne, Wyoming, the President offered an example of what his Administration had done and drew a causal relationship from it. It was particularly applicable to his audience and served to demonstrate that he was administering the government effectively. In the speech he said:

> My thoughts have carried me far away from the thought of your post war depression. I meant to make proud allusion to the prompt and effective assistance that the government was able to give to your stock raisers thus helping them and their creditors to renewed confidence and restored stability.

In Salt Lake City, he addressed himself once more to the question of taxation:

> A short time before we left Washington on the present trip, another friend said to me, "The administration has saved the country a good deal by reducing its expenses and cutting down on its tax burden. But take my advice, and don't talk to any of your audiences about it. People always grumble about taxes, but they don't want to hear anybody talk to them on that subject." To which I replied that I believed in the present state of affairs, all such rules were suspended, and any public man who had anything cheerful to say on the subject of taxes and government expenses would find plenty of audiences altogether willing to listen to him.

The argument, of course, was based on testimony and the form was causal. To a nation that had been introduced to heavy taxation during the war, it was quite an easily acceptable theory.

IV. GOOD CHARACTER

While the issue of competence was a growing question, the question of Harding's character was one which had plagued him since he was a very young man. There were rumors about his wild poker parties in the White House, his madcap affairs with young ladies, and his drinking while the nation sat dry in prohibition.[14] These questions must have troubled him all the more if what Adams says is true, that "dimly and with struggle, he had been groping toward a new conception of the social ethos."[15]

At Vincennes, Indiana, the President hinted that the office itself inspired a feeling of modesty and inspiration. He argued through his own testimony to indicate that there might be a causal effect between the office (and hence the man who holds it) and these virtues:

> You think it is a wonderful privilege to be president, my countrymen, though the man who occupies that office cannot escape having at times a somewhat different feeling, one which he will never know in any other capacity, when he comes to realize his responsibility for the welfare of this marvelous land of ours.

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[14]For further information regarding Harding's private life, consult Adams, op. cit.

[15]Adams, op. cit., p. 368.

The President again relied on the authority of his office in a speech at Kansas City, Missouri, but this time the argument is clearly sign, and the material is testimony.

> I do not mean that there are any circumstances under which the President would say a thing in Kansas City that he could not say in New York, New Orleans or San Francisco, because our varied national interests are wholly mutual in their last analysis, and the President would not be worthy of his high office if he did not speak in the utmost sincerity whenever he addresses an audience anywhere in these United States.

If a President must be sincere, then it is evident that Harding must possess this quality of sincerity too. There is little question that Harding was sincere and that when he made that statement, he was being perfectly honest. In Denver, Harding set up the example of the Golden Rule again and discussed the natural results of following it. The argument is causal and is typical of the types of argument that he used in the Denver speech.

> I would like the ages of envy and hate, and conquest and pillage, and armed greed and mad ambitions to be followed by understanding and peace . . . by the observance of the Golden Rule as the law of human righteousness, so that the wail of human suffering and sorrow might be lost in the glad rejoicings of the onward procession of mankind.

At Greeley, Colorado, the same day, Harding again used his own words as the basis for a causal argument.

> I preach the gospel of individual and personal fraternity, the gospel of State fraternity, the

> gospel of fraternity among nations so that we can each be helpful to the other and by our common effort do something to uplift and forward human progress throughout the world.

Harding, through the use of his own words, linked himself with an idea and tried to show that it was a functioning part of his life. The idea of fraternity between State and Federal governments was a popular one, and Harding chose this occasion to indicate that he favored it.

At Dubois, Idaho, the President illustrated briefly the qualities of a leader, and then drew an analogy between leaders and the rest of the people of the country:

> Yet those in authority are like you in every way; they are no bigger; they are no better, but you clothe them with the authority of law and make them responsible for public affairs.

It was his way of telling the audience that he was not arrogant nor was he any better than they. Modesty was not a trait that Harding simply put on for an audience, however. He basically was a man of modesty and felt that the people should know it.

In Dillon, Montana, he once again used his audience for his example and outlined a causal relationship to the progress that they had made in developing the area where they lived:

> We cannot have a great nation, my countrymen, unless its citizenship is made up of men and women of a high character . . . The reason you are such a wonderful, surprising and admirable West is because of the character of your citizenship.

While in Fairbanks, Alaska, the President was presented with the gift of a collar for his dog Laddie Boy. Harding had always been a great lover of dogs, and he took this opportunity to use them as an example from which to draw an analogy.

> I cannot understand anybody who does not love a dog. I like his unfailing fidelity and his unquestioning confidence and his ever-willingly expressed admiration and love and his utter restraint from ever saying anything unkind about one.

At the outset of the argument, Harding expressed his admiration for dogs and therefore the traits which dogs possessed.

It is reasonably clear from what Adams and others have suggested that the espousing of the theme of good character was a natural result of the state of mind in which Harding found himself during the tour. If he did feel a conscious spiritual influence, then it was highly likely that he would have spoken of factors relating to good character. The eventual result of this influence was to be found in the theme of good character. By espousing this theme, he contributed to his ethos through the element of good character.

V. SUMMARY

By espousing the four themes service, the superiority of America, competence, and good character, Harding aligned himself with four values held by most Americans. They were

also values which would show that the speaker who used them possessed good will, good sense and good moral character. Perhaps depending upon the speaker, the simple embracing of those themes would often enhance ethos; their recurrence certainly reinforced Harding's position. The four themes combined appeared in some form over 400 times within eighty-six speeches. The superiority of America was the most frequently used, and competence was the least frequently employed. Harding has been described as a conciliator,[16] that is one who is able to unify varied segments and be compatible with all. Harding liked to pay compliments, and he liked to tell his audiences what they wanted to hear. Such an approach gave Harding a devoted following. He was amiable, and he always tried to choose ideas which he knew that the audience held in high esteem.

This conciliation was not only in the choice of themes, but also in the development of those themes. In the choice of his materials and forms of argument, Harding used generally two approaches. The first of these was the use of the audiences as the basis for an argument. Of the thirty-one examples selected for use in this study, fully one-third use as their

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[16]Cottrill, personal interview.

basis, the immediate audience. Harding liked to associate with each audience and used them whenever he could in making an argument. He thus showed his good will toward the audience and contributed to the enhancement of his ethos. When he could not use the audience itself as the material for his argument, he always chose an idea or instance with which they could easily associate. For example, when he spoke of service in a railroad community, he spoke of the service of the railroad; when he spoke to a farming community, he spoke of the farmer. Perhaps because of his keen awareness of the power of the mass media, and perhaps simply because of his character, he never said anything that was contradictory. He seemed to have a unique ability to relate to his immediate audience's desires without offending another segment of the population that might disagree with the audience to whom he was speaking--hence the term "conciliator."

The second approach that Harding used was that of complimenting his audience directly. Again, approximately one-third of these examples demonstrate this technique. Often the compliment is stated, and often it is implied by the argument.

In examining the effects of the tour on Harding's ethos, one encounters a very serious stumbling bloc--Harding's death on the tour. Often the devotion that a President has grows

considerably upon his death, and for that reason, it is difficult to separate the effects of the speech from the effects of sudden death. There are, however, several suggestions of audience response prior to his death that seem to indicate reaction to the speeches. The first of these suggestions is that he was well received by most of his audiences. The Hutchinson News reported that the President's speeches were enthusiastically received and that the audiences were extremely large.[17] It might be noted that shortly after the President left Hutchinson, Kansas, a monument was erected at one of the places where he made a speech. Reports from other stops of the tour indicate that the audiences seemed to be responding very favorably to the speeches. The Marion Star noted that:

> . . . He [Harding] was fully prepared for some heckling when he left Washington. But he has not been bothered in this respect. His audiences have listened to his prepared addresses with marked attention.[18]

The President himself remarked to a friend during the tour that he believed that his utterances had not been "without effect in allaying some way the general unrest."[19]

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[17] Hutchinson News, op. cit., p. 1.

[18] Marion Star, July 2, 1923, p. 1.

[19] Ibid.

As the tour neared its end, the speeches were lauded highly by many of the newspapers, and Harding's political advisors expressed their pleasure at the amazing success of the tour.[20] In fact, the complimentary remarks of the Vancouver newspapers and the enthusiastic crowds there were probably important factors in the decision to continue the tour.[21] After Harding's death, Charles Evans Hughes commented on the tour and its effects:

> Throughout his journey he was received with the most cordial greetings. Warmed and uplifted by the enthusiasm of the countless thousands who were fascinated by the charm of his presence and hung upon his words . . . he displayed an earnestness and dignity, and a convincing quality of utterance . . . by which he surpassed himself in eloquence and moving appeal.[22]

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[20] Marion Star, July 5, 1923, p. 1.

[21] Ibid., July 28, 1923, p. 1.

[22] Charles Evans Hughes, cited in Congressional Memorial Services and Tributes (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), p. 24.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

President Harding faced many problems in the spring of 1923. His administration was being smothered by corruption, and he feared that the people were losing confidence in him. He went on a speaking tour into the country to try and restore that confidence. Charles Evans Hughes said, "Above all, he craved the inspiration of direct contact with the people in many communities and the assurance of their personal interest and kindly support."[1] Harding set about gaining the confidence of the people by espousing certain themes which would appear in most of the eighty-six speeches of the tour. The four recurrent themes in the western tour represented values which were held, at least nominally, by most Americans of that time. These values in turn demonstrated either good will, good sense, or good moral character, or some combination of the three, which are the constituents of ethos. By choosing these themes, Harding was able to demonstrate to his audiences that the values represented therein were values that he possessed which worked to enhance his ethos. While it is difficult to prove

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[1]Hughes, op. cit., p. 24.

that Harding reviewed all the constituents of ethos and then sat down to choose themes that represented either good will, good sense, or good moral character, it is not difficult to show that the results can be examined by these criteria. If Harding was concerned about the people having a personal liking and a personal respect for him then, it is not difficult to assume that he would consciously choose themes for his speeches that would be favorable to all of his audiences, hence the selection of certain values as themes. These values would be useful for almost any American audience, because of their almost universal acceptance.

Evaluation of the results of the trip is difficult. Had Harding lived and run for President in 1924, there might have been a much more concrete basis on which to make a judgment of the effects of the western tour. His death alone complicates this process of evaluation. There are, however, several observations that can be made regarding Harding's ability in creating ethos on this tour. The first of these is that the immediate response to the speeches was good. Indications of this can be noted in Chapter III.[2] The second

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[2]Supra, pp. 48-49, 67-68.

of these observations is that the immediate follow-up response was good. Newspapers in many of the cities lauded the speeches by the President.[3] The third evidence of the effect of this tour at "allaying the general unrest"[4] was simply that Calvin Coolidge was elected in 1924 amidst much controversy over corruption, still retaining most of the Harding cabinet and the policies of Harding.

Harding gained the good will of the people throughout his career by playing the role of a conciliator. He always worked with those ideas that he felt would be popular with a majority of the people. It was not unusual then that he selected the themes which he did for the western tour. He liked a close association with his audiences and so he developed those themes in a way that the audience could relate to them.

Of the themes considered, the total frequency of appearance was as follows: service appeared 157 times in the eighty-six speeches; the superiority of America appeared 202 times; competence, 86 times; and good character, 89 times.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Supra, p. 68.

It should be noted that the number of appearances is a highly subjective analysis. These appearances are obvious ones. Another reader might change these exact figures somewhat. It is clear, however, that by anyone's judgment the theme of the superiority of America was, by far, the most frequent with service second.

This is probably because at this time (just after a world war) these ideas were uppermost in the minds of the people. They were ideas that were easily accepted and easily related to the contemporary situation. While the other two themes were also universal, they were not as timely.

In the development of these themes, Harding chose several materials of proof and several kinds of argument. By far, the most often used material of proof was the example. Out of the thirty-one excerpts chosen for this study, examples were used in twenty of them. Testimony was used in half as many instances and statistics were used but once.

Harding generally argued by example. He chose this method ten times; causal, eight times; sign, seven; and analogy, six.

In an overview, Harding used most frequently the themes of service and the superiority of America. These seem to be, of the four themes, the most responsive to the feelings of the

people at that time. Harding's favorite material of proof and kind of argument was the example. McBurney and Wrage note as did Aristotle that the example "is the most common and most generally useful method of amplification."[5]

In the instances chosen for examination here, approximately two-thirds of the materials of argument and one-third of the kinds of argument were example.

To be effective, Harding had to exemplify many of his ideas, and he used the most popular and as most would say, the most effective means of doing that. An examination of all the appearances of the four themes shows approximately the same results regarding materials and kinds of argument.

While the instances chosen for this study certainly are not nearly all and are, in fact, a small number, they appear to be representative. The method of choosing them has already been discussed, and one further note should be added. More than half of these arguments are duplicatory. The only thing which changes is generally the example. For this reason and because the relative usage percentages (of example and kinds of argument) are almost exactly the same in the thirty-one examples and the total number of instances, it is probably

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[5]McBurney and Wrage, op. cit., p. 160.

reasonable to assume that these thirty-one excerpts are representative of the whole.

Harding went through several distinct periods in his career as a public speaker. The period covered by this study is only a small part of the forty-one years that he was a public speaker. There are many avenues of study still open to the researcher. For example, there are clear indications of at least three changes in Harding's style during his speaking career. With proper methods of selecting criteria, a stylistic analysis of Harding's speeches could prove extremely interesting and worthwhile.

Suggestions for further research on Harding could go on endlessly because there has been so little done on his public speaking. Perhaps one reason for this is that he is not considered competent. Yet the question of competence, as history has shown, seemingly has little to do with ability as an orator, and while there is a question of Harding's competence as President, the evidence seems to indicate that for a majority of people in his time, there was no question about his abilities as an orator.[6] He was soothing and

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[6]Supra, pp. 30-32, 67-68.

effective to an electorate that was tired of conflict, and in that capacity he became a leader of the rhetoric of normalcy.

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