

The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control Then and Now: Studies in Memory of Donovan J. Ochs



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Don Ochs (1938-2012) served on the University of Iowa faculty from 1967 until his retirement in 1995. Earning his B.A. from Loras College and both his M.A. and Ph.D. from Iowa's then Speech and Dramatic Art department, he spent most of his years in the state, having been born and raised near a farming community, Charles City, close to the northern border. His academic career, largely as a specialist in classical rhetorical theory and practice, was exemplary: he wrote nine books, published over a hundred book chapters, reviews, and journal articles, and delivered his share of professional papers. He edited the state and central regional journals and was President of the Central States Communication Association.

The following series of four essays, however, has been written about what many would take as his second interest: agitation and social movement studies. As the student activism of the '60s began to rock even Iowa City, faculty felt compelled to react to matters both inside and outside the university. Student behavior, difficult circumstances in which to assess student achievement, questions about city and county law enforcement near or on the campus, and nightly news about riots as well as military and police brutality around the country and the globe dominated thought and conversation. Voices were shrill, bodies were put on the line, windows were broken, and a building—the one I'd had an office in my first two years of graduate school—was burned down. The University shut down three weeks early the spring of 1970. By then, John Waite Bowers and Donovan J. Ochs had already been teaching their class on the rhetoric of agitation and control for two years as well as drafting the book that is the focus of this set of essays. (Bowers sets the scene more fully in the first essay.)

As Bowers and I assembled a National Communication Association convention panel remembering Ochs and the book for November 2012, we hoped to illuminate various facets of the work. And we did that. John Waite Bowers's essay takes us back to the '60s and '70s to better comprehend the book's emergence from its milieu at the hands of two politically divergent scholars. Jacqueline Schmidt was a graduate student of Ochs, became thoroughly steeped in the books' subject matter, and so was interested in how far and wide it circulated in the scholarly literature of the humanities and social sciences. David Schulz was the student of a

student, Richard Jensen; Jensen, too, was a graduate student of Ochs, and someone added as the third author when the book went into a second edition in 1993. When a fourth author was sought for the third edition, Jensen's student Schulz answered the call. His essay gives us a glimpse at decisions made on how to integrate the late '60s perspective of the book's frame with some of the new shoots of movement theory and agitational practice that arose in next thirty-five years. Bruce Gronbeck had gone to graduate school with Ochs, was in part a student of Bowers, and was fortunate enough to teach out of a dittoed copy of the manuscript during the spring semester of that fateful year, 1970. He was back in Iowa City on the day when the building housing the University's Rhetoric Program burned to the ground. His essay examines some of the defining characteristics of movement theory in the book, follows theoretical developments in movement theory over the years, and then tries to explain the third edition's relevance to today.

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–Bruce E. Gronbeck