KENNETH BURKE’S PENTAD:  
A STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE REVIEW, 2001-2010

David Christopher Graham  
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Department of Communication Studies
Abstract

of

KENNETH BURKE’S PENTAD:
A STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE REVIEW, 2001-2010

by

David Christopher Graham

This study reviews pentadic scholarship from 2001-2010 in order to assess the state of Kenneth Burke’s famous critical tool and to provide the Burkean student a comprehensive guide for the pentad. The study first outlines trends in dramatistic and pentadic scholarship and reviews sources of misunderstanding within Burke’s writings. Second, the study provides an in-depth review of the pentad, situating it within the context of other dramatistic concepts with which it is frequently paired. Third, the study assesses several previous exemplars of pentadic analysis as a baseline for comparing more recent scholarship. Fourth, the study provides a critical overview of the state of the pentad in scholarship from 2001-2010. Finally, the study provides conclusions and possible directions for future applications of the pentad.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Christine Miller, Ph.D.

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Date
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends in Burkean Scholarship .................................................. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Misunderstanding .................................................... 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF DRAMATISTIC THEORY ........................................ 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stairway to Pentad” ............................................................... 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK .................................................... 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentadic Exemplars ................................................................. 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact Selection ................................................................. 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CURRENT PENTADIC SCHOLARSHIP ......................................... 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: Which Disciplines are Currently Using the Pentad? .......... 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: To What Subjects do Scholars Apply the Pentad? .......... 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: What are the Formats for Secondary Sources of Pentadic Scholarship? ......................... 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4: What are the Formats for Secondary Sources of Pentadic Scholarship? ......................... 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: Are Currently Pentadic Scholars Mainly Focused on Critical Application or Theoretical Development? ......................... 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6: In What Ways do Scholars Apply the Mechanics of the Pentadic Method? ......................... 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS ............................. 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix. Categorized Research Sample .................................... 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ................................................................................. 114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, Kenneth Burke has been a key figure in the communication studies field (formerly speech communication). In addition, he has also been “adopted” by several other fields such as English and disciplines in the social sciences. As of 2007, 603 primary works by Kenneth Burke (some posthumous) and over 1,500 secondary works about Kenneth Burke had been published (Roundtree, 2007, para. 9; “Works by Kenneth Burke,” 2007). The Kenneth Burke Society maintains a division of the National Communication Association, holds a triennial conference, and publishes the *KB Journal*, which is the only journal devoted exclusively to a rhetorical theorist (McKenzie, 2010, para. 1).

One reason why Kenneth Burke is so widely read and studied is due to his focus on symbol systems, which are the primary means of “intellectual exchange and scholarly effort for most researchers working in the humanities” (West & Turner, 2010, p. 329). It was Burke’s focus on symbols, and specifically, what he calls “symbolic action,” that formed the basis of his critical theory of dramatism. In this theory, Burke advances a perspective that he developed from the analysis of drama, which primarily treats language and thought as modes of symbolic action (Burke, 1969a, p. xxii). Burke’s perspective, or framework, attempts to account for “human action and knowledge within the context of his concepts, theoretical propositions, and critical methods of analysis” (Chesebro, 1996, p. 200). Dramatism’s key methodology, the pentad, is a means to uncover “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing
it” (Burke, 1969a, p. xv). The pentad relies on five elements (agent, act, scene, purpose, and agency) to tease out the motives underlying symbolic action, similar to the journalistic “5 Ws and an H”—“who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how.” Interestingly, Burkean scholar Clarke Rountree notes that the pentad is the most used and yet misunderstood dramatistic concept (1998, para. 1). As a side note, it is also important to note another unclear concept—the spelling of the adjective form of “Burke.” While some use “Burkeian” (e.g. Chesebro, 1992; Willis, 2010) others use “Burkean” (Fisher, 1974; Rountree, 2010). In this paper I will use “Burkean” based simply on my own personal preference.

As the first decade of the twenty-first century is now behind us, it seems an opportune time to reflect on the state of “the most important rhetorical theorist of the twentieth century[‘s]” (Rountree & Huglen, 2004, para. 10) most frequently used critical tool, the pentad. The aim of this paper is not only to provide an overview of recent developments and trends in the use of the pentad, but also to address users’ misunderstandings of the tool and other dramatistic concepts.

Toward this end, I will review the last 10 years of pentadic scholarship (2001-2010). Moreover, I have divided this paper into the following five chapters. In this first chapter, I will provide an overview of dramatistic and pentadic scholarship. Specifically, I will cover general trends in the application of Burkean ideas and review the sources of misunderstanding of Kenneth Burke. These trends and sources will provide a basis for my research questions. In the second chapter, I will provide an in-depth review of the pentad, situating it within the context of other dramatistic concepts with which it is
frequently paired. In the third chapter, I will present the framework of my analysis in
which I will review several exemplars of pentadic analysis, which I will use as a basis to
compare the more recent uses of the pentad. In the fourth chapter, I will provide the
findings of my state of the discipline review. Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will provide
conclusions of my study and list possible directions for future applications of the pentad.
In all, I hope to provide the Burkean student with a twenty-first century guide for the
who, what, when, where, why, and how of the pentad.

**Trends in Burkean Scholarship**

As a starting point for my research, I will first focus on Burkean scholarship at
large to help me frame my research in the narrower field of pentadic scholarship. First, I
will review the current level of scholarly activity related to Burke. Second, I will review
the disciplines that draw upon Burkean concepts. Finally, I will review the general types
of Burkean scholarship.

In reviewing the current level of scholarly activity, it appears that the number of
publications about Kenneth Burke may be on the decline. According to a comprehensive
bibliography compiled by the *KB Journal*, Rountree (2007) calculated a count of
publications by decade. Starting in the 1920s, which contained 8 publications, each
decade saw an increase with 36 publications in the 1930s and 119 by the 1970s. Then, in
the 1980s, activity jumped to 400, and in the 1990s it peaked at 490. By late 2007, there
were a total 321 publications so far in the 2000s. Drawing from Rountree’s numbers and
the *KB Journal’s* bibliography (“Works About Burke,” 2007) I calculated the average
per-year number of publications by decade (I excluded publications from 2007 since it
was a partial year, and calculated the 2000s average based on the seven years of 2000-2006). I found there were 49 publications per year in the 1990s and 45.1 per year in the 2000s. Huglen and Rountree note:

Despite the continued relevance of Burke and the opportunities for extending and applying Burke in new ways, it appears that the number of publications about Burke has reached a plateau and is waning…. That would mean that the number of works about Burke may decrease for the first time in eighty years. While numbers of publications provide a measure of account, we believe it is difficult to account fully for the expansive influence Burke and Burkeans have had in various fields…. While the number of specific works about Burke may indicate a potential decline for this decade by 2010, KB’s influence is more far reaching now than at any other time. (2008, para. 24-25)

While there is a plateau in the volume of publications, the 2000s have the second-highest number of publications per year. For the time being, one can conclude that Kenneth Burke is still widely used and is a source of influence.

Next, it should be noted that a wide range of disciplines draw upon Kenneth Burke’s ideas, such as architecture, religious studies, business studies, art, and literature. However, communication studies and the interdisciplinary field of rhetorical studies are the most significant torchbearer of Burkean studies (Huglen & Rountree, 2008, para. 30). This interdisciplinary use of Burke necessarily corresponds to a wide range of applications of his work, which leads to my first and second research questions: “Which disciplines are currently using the pentad?” and “To what subjects do scholars apply the pentad?”

In addition, works about Burke have been published in 324 different journals (Rountree, 2007, para. 21), with the top five (The Quarterly Journal of Speech [77 articles], KB Journal [34 articles], Rhetoric Review [28 articles], Western Journal of
Communication [28 articles], and Communication Quarterly [24 articles]) making up 26% of the total 728 publications (Rountree, 2007, para. 23). This leads to my third research question: “Which journals are leading pentadic scholarship?”

While journals comprise 47% of secondary sources about Kenneth Burke, 29% of the sources are theses and dissertations, 11% are books, 9% are book sections, and 4% are magazine articles (para. 8). Therefore, my fourth research question is, “What are the formats for secondary sources of pentadic scholarship?”

Finally, I will draw upon Barry Brummett and Anna Young’s (2006) classification of three different types of Burkean scholarship, which they identify as extratextual, textualcentric, and seminaltextual. Extratextual works are largely biographical studies that look at the historical context of Burke. They trace the influences of contemporary events, ideologies, and the nature of Burke’s working environment on his thoughts and writing (para. 11). Textualcentric works focus on the body of Burke’s work, attempting to explain key concepts and identifying connections, contradictions, and missing links between ideas (para. 12). Seminaltextual works apply Burke to texts for critique or attempt to link Burke as either a predecessor or successor to other theorists (para. 25). In applying these categories here, my focus on clarifying misunderstandings of dramatistic concepts is textualcentric.

In their review of Burkean scholarship in communication studies, Brummett and Young find that in the first 30 years (1950s-1980s) the focus was largely on textualcentric theoretical development more than seminaltextual critical application (para. 8). However, since the 1980s, scholars have increasingly focused on critical application. This leads to
my fifth research question: “Are current pentadic scholars mainly focused on critical application or theoretical development?”

Sources of Misunderstanding

In this second section I will locate the sources of misunderstanding within the corpus of Burke’s writings. Burke developed his theory of dramatism over the course of several books and articles spanning more than 70 years. He first outlined the pentad in the opening section of 1945’s *A Grammar of Motives*. At this point, Burke had already successively laid out the foundation for dramatism in earlier works such as *Counter-Statement* (1931), *Permanence and Change, An Anatomy of Purpose* (1935), *Attitudes Toward History* (1937), and *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941). Originally, *A Grammar of Motives* was to be called “On the Imputing of Motives” in which he would explore what occurs when anybody says why anybody does something (Burke, 1978, p. 333). However, in developing this book, Burke began to envision a trilogy: first, a grammar that explained the principles or rules of this motivational process; second, a rhetoric that explores the strategies people employ to “outwit” or “cajole” one another; and third, a symbolic that outlines the psychological aspects of his system with modes of expression and appeal based in the fine arts (Burke, 1969, pp. xvii-xviii). Eventually, he would publish *A Grammar of Motives* in 1945 and *A Rhetoric of Motives* in 1950. While he continued to work on *A Symbolic of Motives* for several more years, it would not be published until 2003, ten years after his death. Burke wrote several essays between 1950 and 1955 that he intended to go into *Symbolic*, but was unable to put them into a coherent whole and abandoned the project in the late 1970s (Rueckert, 2003, p. xii). Eventually,
William Rueckert compiled *Essays Toward a Symbolic of Motives* based on Burke’s lists and notes. Other major works include 1961’s *Rhetoric and Religion* and 1966’s *Language as Symbolic Action*.

Not only does the vastness of his body of work provide a challenge to students and scholars, but Burke’s writing style can also be a source of difficulty. For example, Kenneth Burke’s longtime enemy, Sidney Hook wrote in describing *Attitudes Toward History*, “The greatest difficulty that confronts the reader of Burke is finding out what he means. His individual sentences seem to be clear, but when put together they are obscure, sometimes opaque” (1969, pp. 89-90). Even Kenneth Burke’s champion, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, in the article that introduced Burke to communication studies discipline conceded:

Burke is difficult and often confusing. He cannot be understood by casual reading of his various volumes. In part the difficulty arises from the numerous vocabularies he employs. His words in isolation are usually simple enough, but he often uses them in new contexts. To read one of his volumes independently, without regard to the chronology of publication, makes the problem of comprehension even more difficult because of the specialized meanings attaching to various words and phrases. (Hochmuth, 1952, p. 144)

In a review of *Permanence and Change*, Wirth noted “There is much in this treatise that will appear unsystematic and irrelevant to those accustomed to a less personal and poetic mode of discourse” (1938, p. 483). Others have commented on Burke’s “idiosyncratic style” (Overington, 1977, p.132) and that his language can be seen as “jargon-ridden, confusing, and idiosyncratic” (Warnock, 1996, p. 90). Even Burke admitted that in evolving the elements of dramatism throughout his works his “discussion of the terms as I use them is quite roundabout and a bit unwieldy” (1978, p. 330).
However, it is important to consider the background of Burke’s writing style, which could be called a type of “thinking out loud.” Burke’s thinking took the shape of an internal conversation in which he acted out the various parts. This many-sided conversation enabled Burke to consider the various aspects of a particular item under inquiry. As the voices advocated competing points of view, a solid meaning would eventually emerge. At the core of this method is Burke’s idea that any one point of view is only a part of the attainable truth—one must consider all sides of an idea in order to get at its full meaning (Fogarty, 1959, p. 61). It is upon this same idea that Burke created the pentad as a means to examine human motives from a multitude of points of view in order to consider them in all their complexity. As the reader wades through Burke’s writings they experience his thought process in almost real time. In this privileged position, the reader gains identification with Burke (Warnock, 1996, p. 92). While Burke’s writing can be difficult to read, it also encourages us to seek alternative viewpoints. As a means to help clarify these misunderstandings, I will not only provide a detailed review of dramatistic theory in Chapter 2, but also review how the pentad is applied in order to locate points for clarification.

Thus, while Burke’s writing style may result in confusion, it can also generate identification with Burke’s thinking process and encourage alternate points of view. In the Winter 1985 issue of Communication Quarterly, Bernard Brock acknowledges this situation and argues that dramatism is both paradoxically simple and complex (Brock, Burke, Burgess, & Simons, p. 22). Because of the sheer span and sometimes confusing nature of Burke’s work, many rhetorical critics focus on the complexity of dramatism,
while those who seek simplicity tend to only focus on certain concepts within the theory, usually the pentad, with sometimes mixed results. In reviewing early Burkean scholarship, Brumment and Young note:

The pentad was eagerly seized upon by some for its deceptive simplicity, and some poor, early studies were churned out that treated it as a “who, what, when, where, how” sort of checklist to be filled in by naming objective entities. (2006, para. 5)

In addition, Huglen and Rountree confirm that some scholars misuse the pentad (2008, para. 16). This link between Burke’s writing style and potential misapplication forms my sixth research question: “In what ways do scholars apply the mechanics of the pentadic method?” Given the vast scope of dramatism, I will add further focus to my analysis of pentadic application by adding four sub-questions: “Which element dominated most frequently?” “Are scholars using attitude as an element?” “Are scholars using philosophies?” and “Which other dramatistic concepts do scholars use?”

In this introductory chapter, I have set a foundation for my study and previewed its main sections. In addition, I have conducted a high-level review of general trends in Burkean scholarship and sources of misunderstanding within Burke’s writings. Based on this high level review, I have developed the following research questions:

1. Which disciplines are currently using the pentad?

2. To what subjects do scholars apply the pentad?

3. Which journals are leading pentadic scholarship?

4. What are the formats for secondary sources of pentadic scholarship?
5. Are current pentadic scholars mainly focused on critical application or theoretical development?

6. In what ways do scholars apply the mechanics of the pentadic method?
   a. Which element dominated most frequently?
   b. Are scholars using attitude as an element?
   c. Are scholars using philosophies?
   d. Which other dramatistic concepts do scholars use?

I will use these questions as a framework for my analyses of pentadic works. However, as a starting point, I will next provide a review of dramatistic theory as a basis for my research.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF DRAMATISTIC THEORY

To paraphrase John Donne, no dramatistic concept is an island. Burke’s own analyses of texts, for example, the first three chapters of Genesis (1970, pp. 172-272) and Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Hyman, 1964, pp. 145-172), employ multiple dramatistic concepts in addition to the pentad. In fact, Conrad argues, “… reducing the [dramatistic] framework to one of its constituent constructs [i.e. the pentad] threatens its integrity” (1984, p. 94). Likewise, scholars often draw upon other dramatistic ideas in conjunction with the pentad to conduct their analysis or theory building. In my review of recent pentadic scholarship (see Chapter 4), I found that in nearly 60% of artifacts, scholars drew upon at least one other dramatistic concept in addition to the pent: identification, guilt-redemption cycle, terministic screens, frames of acceptance/rejection/transition, representative anecdote, cluster, form, perspective by incongruity, definition of human, orientation, piety, and trained incapacity. Given the vast scope and challenging nature of Burke’s writings, it can be daunting for the Burkean student to grasp the pentad fully, let alone several additional dramatistic ideas. With this in mind, the goal of this chapter is to provide an accessible and cohesive picture of each of these ideas. To accomplish this, I will use a short stairway as a step-by-step metaphor to organize the various concepts.

Using the idea of stairway as an organizing principle, I will begin with the first step by explaining the concept of representative anecdote, which is the starting point for dramatism. Then, moving on to step two, I draw upon the idea that humans are symbol-
using animals (this is from Burke’s “definition of human”). In step three, our nature as symbol users defines how we view our world, or as Burke calls it, “orientation.” Within this symbolically defined worldview, we develop motives (step four) and attitudes (step five) as a means to interpret and deal with the various situations we experience. Based on these motives and attitudes, in step six, we take action, or as Burke would say, “symbolic action.” At this point, the pentad becomes prominent. The critic can use the pentad to assess a rhetor’s symbolic action. By starting with the symbolic action at step six and working backward, the critic can locate the rhetor’s attitudes from step five and motives from step four. In addition, I add a seventh step containing two additional concepts that focus on symbolic action, form and cluster. As I move up the stairway in describing these steps, I will also include explanations other relevant dramatistic concepts, such as the guilt-redemption cycle and frames of acceptance/rejection/transition.

I want to add a caveat. I do not maintain that this is the definitive reading of dramatism, and that these concepts may only interact in the way I will describe. However, I believe that organizing this section using the stairway metaphor is useful in situating these concepts into a meaningful and cohesive context for the Burkean student who is confronted with the sheer volume of dramatistic ideas.

“Stairway to Pentad”

Step 1: Representative anecdote.

In this first step, the representative anecdote of “drama” is a starting point for the overall theory of dramatism. In addition, the concept of representative anecdote can be generalized and applied to other concepts. Therefore, I will outline the specific
“drama”/dramatism anecdote as the jumping off point for overall dramatistic theory and will then cover how scholars have used the concept in a more general sense.

Burke outlines his concept of the representative anecdote in *A Grammar of Motives* (pp. 59-62, 323-325, 507-511). Here, the representative anecdote is the point of departure for dramatism. In selecting drama as the “anecdote” for dramatism, it is like an “introduction to dramatism that is deduced from dramatism” (p. 60). Thus, the term “drama” becomes a summation of the whole of dramatistic theory, including “implicitly what the system that is developed from it contains explicitly” (ibid.). The core idea is a type of relationship between a part of something and its whole. On one hand, the representative anecdote of “drama” is like a slogan or catchphrase that characterizes the grander concept of dramatism. On the other hand, the overall theory of dramatism is derived from the anecdote of drama. Here, the anecdote as a part of a whole both represents and acts as a source for that whole. In selecting drama as the starting point of dramatism, Burke did not use the term as a metaphor for the theater but as a jumping off point for a philosophy of human symbol use (Chesebro, 1996, p. 200).

It is important to note the use of the term “anecdote,” which is a short story regarding an interesting experience. These stories contain the essential ingredients of the more complex narratives of experience from which they may be derived (Blakesley, 2002, p. 97). Therefore, while drama works as a representative anecdote for dramatism at large, the concept can be applied to other situations as well. Essentially, a representative anecdote is a form from which one can generate a vocabulary that adequately conveys the complexity of a particular subject (p. 199).
While some scholars have used the representative anecdote as a critical method of rhetorical analysis (e.g. Brummett, 1984; Madsen, 1993), for our purposes here (based upon the use of the representative anecdote within recent pentadic analysis) I will treat it as a descriptive term. An example of this type of use is found in Tonn, Endress, and Diamond’s 1993 pentadic analysis “Hunting and Heritage on Trial,” which I will cover in more detail in Chapter 3. In the meantime, it is sufficient to note that the essay focuses on the rhetoric surrounding the accidental shooting of a Maine homemaker by a hunter on her wooded property. This act occurred against a backdrop of conflict between Mainers’ traditional hunting lifestyle colliding against the beliefs of an increasing number of recently migrated of out-of-state residents. The authors note that the “heated debate over culpability in the shooting death of Karen Wood was, in essence, a ‘representative anecdote’” for that conflict between native Mainers and “outsiders” (p. 167). Therefore, the shooting not only acted as an overall symbol for the conflict but also helped perpetuate it.

In this section I have outlined the particular “drama” anecdote that is the point of departure for dramatistic theory. In addition, I have covered how in creating this drama/dramatism relationship, Burke also generated a concept that can be generalized and used in other contexts. Now, having set the stage using drama, I will move on to step two.

**Step 2: Definition of human.**

In using drama as the starting point for dramatism, Burke has defined a perspective that “being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and
thought primarily as modes of [symbolic] action” (1969a, p. xxii). This focus on human thought and language use as symbolic action results in—and is perhaps derived from, like a representative anecdote—a particular definition of what human beings are. Burke developed his “Definition of Human” (formerly “Definition of Man”) over several years and writings: 1961’s *Rhetoric and Religion* (1970, p. 40), an article in *The Hudson Review* (Winter 1963-1964), *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966, p. 16), and finally in a Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) presentation (1989) (Ross, 1999, para. 1). For the purposes of this paper, I will rely on the most common version, from *Language as Symbolic Action*. Thus, humans are: (1) the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal; (2) inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative); (3) separated from our natural condition by instruments of our own making; (4) goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order); and (5) and rotten with perfection. Understanding of this second step of our metaphorical stairway is important, so Burke’s definition deserves explication.

**(1) The symbol-using animal.**

According to Burke, unlike other animals, humans use (and misuse) symbols to communicate. To illustrate this point, Burke describes the plight of a particular set of wren parents whose offspring refuse to leave the nest (1966, p. 4). After several days, one of the parents, in a stroke of “genius,” enticed the fledgling out of the nest with food and then knocked him off the branch. The invention of this new method for dealing with stubborn youngsters was likely a one-time fortunate accident. However, if the wren had the ability to symbolize, it could have possibly generalized this invention and repeated it
in other situations or shared this invention by using a symbolic description with other wrens. However, because wrens lack the ability to symbolize, they are spared from the misuse of symbols such as “demagogic tricks” or psychosomatic illnesses (p. 6). This story not only illustrates the action that symbol-use enables, but also the side effects of its use.

(2) Inventor of the negative.

Because of our capacity of symbolic abstraction, humans developed the ability not only to communicate in terms of what things are but also what they are not. Before language, there were “no negative acts, states, or commands. The negative is the very essence of language and the ability to use it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of man” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 130). There are no negatives in nature. A rock is positively a rock—it has no ability to be anything other than what it is (e.g. not a rock). In addition, one could go on forever stating all the things that the rock is not (i.e. it is not a table, not a chair, etc.) (Burke, 1970, p. 19). However, from a dramatistic perspective, the negative begins “not as a resource of definition or information, but as a command, as ‘Don’t’” (1966, p. 10). With this dramatistic take, the negative implies commandments one must follow, but also implies that one has a choice or ability not to follow them—they may either follow the commandments or negate them (as a sort of double negative) by saying “No.” However, this ability to say no has consequences. Burke notes, “out of the negative, guilt will arise. For the negative makes the law; and in the possibility of saying no to the law, there is guilt” (1970, p. 294). Thus, through the negative humans enjoy the
power of choice in upholding the negatively charged “thou-shalt-not’s of morality” (1966, p. 11) while facing the possible consequences of guilt in exercising this ability.

(3) Separated from our natural condition by instruments of our own making.

Human technological ability, which is guided by our prowess as “symbol-using animals,” enabled us to transcend our generic nature as “sheer animals” (Burke, 1970, p. 41). Our tool making abilities led to the division of labor, which separated us from other “animals.” We were no longer the hunter-gatherers that nature dictated—we became farmers, builders, potters, and a variety of other trades. The stratification of our Neolithic ancestors into specialized groupings gave rise not only to ownership of property, rights, and obligations, but also to various hierarchical levels of class, status, or rank (1970, pp. 138-141; 1984a, p. 283).

Our new sense of hierarchy introduced division to humankind. Whereas humans once shared a common class of being, we became ranked into various classes and thus divided from others of different classifications. Thus, specialists in one class with a certain way of life, skills, and standing become mysterious (and strange) to others in another class who have a different way of life, skills, and standing (1984a, p. 276). This estrangement leads to a general feeling of separateness from others.

(4) Goaded by the spirit of hierarchy.

Beyond the initial implications of division, hierarchies are also value-charged structures in which people not only rank themselves, but also things, words, acts, and ideas (Rueckert, 1982, p. 131). Hierarchies imply a pyramidal shape in which there are fewer things at the top and more at the bottom. This top / bottom orientation suggests an
infinite range of value-laden binaries from “up / down” and “high / low” to “good / evil,” “rich / poor,” “beautiful / ugly,” etc. In each case, items near the top of the hierarchy have a higher value than items at the bottom of the hierarchy. Thus, one’s position within a hierarchy is never neutral. One’s status within the structure is an offense by its very nature—“Those ‘Up’ are guilty of not being ‘Down,’ those ‘Down’ are certainly guilty of not being ‘Up’” (Burke, 1966, p. 15). Burke views this endemic “categorical guilt” as a secular version of “original sin” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 132) and uneasiness stemming from this situation as “hierarchic psychosis” (Burke, 1984a, p. 290).

Hierarchies also present the possibility of movement within the structure. One may be able to gain greater status ascending the hierarchy, or one may lose status by descending the hierarchy. The possibility of gain or loss leads to what Burke calls the “hierarchic motive,” or the dual drives in which one simultaneously works to ascend the hierarchy while also working to avoid descent (Rueckert, 1982, p. 132).

(5) Rotten with perfection.

As an extension of the hierarchic motive, humans have a drive to seek perfection. Burke argues that this quest for perfection is implicit in the nature of symbol systems (1966, p. 17). Because the human animal is unique in its symbol use, we alone in the animal world not only strive to mount hierarchies, but also do so at our maximum capability. Our drive can be summed up by the attitude, “Don’t be satisfied with not being number one, or not striving to get as close to number one as you can, or at the very least not knowing who or what is number one” (Appel, 1993, p. 59). As a means to illustrate this drive, Burke draws upon the Aristotelian idea of entelechy “which classifies
a thing by conceiving of its kind according to the perfection (that is, finishedness) of which that kind is capable” (1969b, p. 14).

By adding the word “rotten” to his definition, Burke is cautioning that our drive for perfection is not necessarily positive. He advises that we need to widen our view of perfection also to include ironic uses. For example, in a positive view of perfection, one may think of a “perfect husband” or a “perfect job” while in an ironic view one may think of a “perfect catastrophe” or a “perfect villain.” An example of this ironic perfection is revealed in the Nazi version of the Jew, as developed in Mein Kampf, as the “perfect enemy” (1966, p. 18).

While our abilities as symbolic animals have enabled us to transcend our natural condition, we carry with us several consequences of our symbol use: our use of the negative results in personal guilt; our technological abilities lead to a feeling of separateness; our position within hierarchies leads to categorical guilt and hierarchic psychosis; and our quest for perfection not only strengthens our drive to ascend hierarchies but can also take a negative turn. These side effects of our symbolic nature call for a means by which we can overcome our separateness, purge our guilt, and navigate the uncertainties of the hierarchy. Thus with these requirements the stage is set for what Burke calls the “ethical drama of human relations” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 131). As we attempt to make sense of, and deal with, our world and the situations we encounter, these side effects of symbol use not only shape our reality and drive our actions but also do so in a dramatic way.
In this step, I have covered Burke’s definition of human. This definition seeks to account for the nature, form, function, and outcome of symbolizing. Grasping this definition is important to understanding Burke’s overall philosophy and the resulting critical systems that emerge from it. With the stage set for the “ethical drama of human relations,” we are now ready to take the next step on the stairway.

**Step 3: Orientation.**

In orienting ourselves with our environment and the situations we encounter, we develop a certain way of looking at the world, or as Burke calls it, “Weltanschauung” (German for “world view”). We develop our Weltanschauung by fitting our experiences into a unified whole. Burke calls this sense of fitting together “piety,” which is the sense of knowing what properly goes with what (1984a, p. 74). He also notes that piety is “a schema of orientation, since it involves the putting together of experiences” (p. 76). Thus, our Weltanschauung is a framework of individual orientations.

It is important to note, “orientation[s] can go wrong” (Burke, 1984b, p. 6). For in selecting a way of orienting ourselves, we are not selecting alternative ways of looking at the world. As we develop our worldview, we likely build new orientations in a manner consistent with our existing ones, or as Burke calls them “training.” He notes that our training may come to act as blindnesses (p. 7). He offers the example of conditioned chickens that “interpret the sound of a bell as a food-signal, and if we now rang the bell to assemble them for punishment, their training would work against them” (ibid.). Burke calls this circumstance “trained incapacity.” In this case, the chickens’ orientation (based on their past training) was faulty in that they misjudged their present situation. However,
this perspective is useful in viewing the chickens’ seemingly illogical behavior of arriving for punishment—the cause is not bad logic, but a faulty orientation.

The concept of trained incapacity also illustrates another Burkean concept called perspective by incongruity, which is "extending the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and applying it to another" (1984b, p. 89). Essentially, this is the creative use of a contradiction in terms as a means to generate new insight. The very use of the words “‘trained incapacity’ encourages perspective by incongruity because we do not normally think of training as incapacitating. Training is supposed to prepare, not impair” (Blakesley, 2002, p. 53). The insight here is that while our routine ways of building orientations are worthwhile, they are not foolproof.

Within our framework of individual (and sometimes faulty) orientations, we generate motives and attitudes as a means to interpret particular situations. Motives are “used to comprehend, describe, and define the circumstances and events in which human beings find themselves” (Blankenship, Murphy, & Rosenwasser, 1974, p. 7). Attitudes, based upon our motives, are essentially strategies for dealing with situations. In fact, Burke notes that attitudes and strategies are synonymous (1973, p. 297). Specifically, attitudes are “a general disposition (involving thought and action) to respond (by thought and action) in a particular way” (Wolin, 2001, p. 100).

In this step, I have covered the concepts of orientation, trained incapacity, and perspective by incongruity. In addition, I have highlighted the two components of orientations, which are motives and attitudes. In the next two steps I will cover these components in more detail.
**Step 4: Motives.**

Perhaps our most fundamental motive, which lies at the heart of the human drama, is identification. It is through identification that humans deal with our feeling of separateness. Burke’s description of identification is as follows:

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are or is persuaded to believe so…. In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (1969b, pp. 20-21)

Thus, the “universal” rhetorical situation is the state of being simultaneously separate and joined with others (1970, p. 146, p. 211). The key point behind our rhetorical human drama is to gain identification with others (p. 59), and in so doing we may overcome our separateness brought about by hierarchical division.

In addition to dealing with our separateness via identification we also require a means to cope with the other byproducts of our symbol use. This need gives rise to the four basic motives of hierarchy, guilt, victimage, and redemption (Burke, 1984a, p. xxxi), which combine to form the guilt-redemption cycle.

The cycle’s starting point is the order inherent in hierarchies. This order produces in us both categorical guilt, by virtue of our position within the hierarchy, and personal guilt when we say “no” to a moral law. As a means to purify ourselves of this guilt, one option we have is to transfer it onto a victim, or scapegoat. Burke calls this “victimage.” If we choose this avenue of purification, the first step in the victimage process involves
choosing a scapegoat (a person, an animal, a symbol, etc.) that is worthy of sacrifice. A few basic strategies for making [a scapegoat sacrifice-worthy] may be listed:

(1) He may be made worthy legalistically (i.e., by making him an offender against legal or moral justice, so that he ‘deserves’ what he gets). (2) We may make him worthy by leading towards sacrifice fatalistically (as when we so point the arrows of the plot that the audience comes to think of him as a marked man and so prepares itself to relinquish him)…. (3) We may make him worthy by a subtle kind of poetic justice, in making the sacrificial vessel ‘too good for this world,’ hence of the highest value, hence the most perfect sacrifice (as with the Christ theme, and its secular variants…). (Burke, 1973, p. 40)

The second step in victimage involves the use of identification to transfer the guilt over to the scapegoat, which in turn contains three sub-steps:

(1) an original state of merger, in that the iniquities are shared by both the iniquitous and their chosen vessel; (2) a principle of division, in that the elements shared in common are ritualistically alienated; (3) a new principle of merger, this time in the unification of those whose purified identity is defined in dialectical opposition to the sacrificial offering. (1969a, p. 406)

With the guilt now transferred, one symbolically (or at our most extreme, literally) kills the scapegoat, drives it away, defiles or punishes it, or it simply absorbs, absolves, or dissolves the evil that was transferred to it (as with Christ) (Rueckert, 1982, pp. 151-152). This process enables us vicariously to purge the guilt that we would otherwise be forced to recognize within (1969a, p. 301) and amounts to a type of rebirth of the self (p. 407).

Alternatively, another means of purging guilt is when we victimize ourselves rather than something external. This second form of purification is known as mortification. In mortification, we scapegoat an aspect of ourselves that we view as unruly. Upon this aspect we enforce a type of extreme self control, which is a “deliberate, disciplinary ‘slaying’ of any motive that, for ‘doctrinal’ reasons, one thinks of as unruly”
Burke, 1970, p. 190). Whereas the most extreme version of victimage is homicide, the most extreme version of mortification is suicide.

Thus having purified ourselves from guilt via externalized scapegoating and/or internalized mortification, we reach the final stage of the cycle, redemption. However, while the particular guilt with which we struggled may be dealt with, “the cycle of terms implicit in the idea of worldly order continues, forever circling back upon itself, thus forever ‘guilty,’ thus forever demanding ‘redemption,’ thus forever inciting anew to the search for a curative victim” (Burke, 1970, p. 223). Therefore, the basic way in which we comprehend, describe, and define situations is based upon an unending motivational cycle of guilt and purification in search of redemption.

In this step, I have explored the concepts of motives, identification, and the guilt-redemption cycle. In understanding and defining our basic situations, we work to gain identification through an unending process of guilt, purification, and redemption. Now that we have a means to define situations, in the next step I will explore the ways in which we strategize and prepare to take action within these situations.

**Step 5: Attitudes.**

Building upon our motives, we next create attitudes, or strategies, for dealing with recurring situations. In developing this concept, Burke drew upon the various genres of poetry: epic, tragic, comic, elegy, satire, burlesque, grotesque, and didactic. The core idea is that these poetic categories tend to embody our basic strategies. Wolin notes:

… attitudes find their instantiation in structural relations inherent in the various poetic categories. Rather than emphasizing the creation of literature as an individual’s response, Burke focuses on the widespread ability of a poetic form to
In fact, we could view the different poetic genres as what Burke calls “equipment for living,” sort of like pre-packaged strategies we may draw upon to size up situations in our day-to-day lives in particular ways (1973, p. 304). Brummett notes:

Throughout [Burke’s] … writings runs the idea that types, components, or structures of literature recur as appropriate responses to recurring types of situations; that there are ways of speaking about war, victory, civil unrest, martial problems, etc., which will reliably equip us to live through those situations. (1984, p. 161)

Burke subdivided these eight poetic genres into what he calls “frames of acceptance,” and its variants “frames of rejection” and “frames of transition.” Burke based these subdivisions on what he called “… the most basic of attitudes: Yes, No, and the intermediate realm of Maybe” (1984b, p. i). These basic attitudes involve one saying “yes,” “no,” or “maybe” to the particulars of a situation. He calls these particulars the “reigning symbols of authority” (pp. 305-306), which essentially constitute the hierarchical implications of a situation (the moral laws, one’s hierarchical position relative to the situation, etc.). In addition, by drawing upon these genres (and the typical story rules they embody), we begin to see a clearer connection to our dramatic tendencies. As we explore the individual frames, this concept becomes visible.

**Frames of acceptance.**

Acceptance frames say, “yes” to the symbols of authority in a given situation. In this type of attitude humans gauge all the elements of the situation and essentially acknowledge them (and to some degree accept them, depending on how much we
dramatically manipulate particular situational elements). Burke designated the epic, tragic, and comic genres as acceptance frames. In describing these frames, I will explore how rhetors in general use individual characters within the genres as strategic responses to particular situations.

The epic frame enables humans to be at ease in primitive or adverse conditions (Burke, 1984b, p. 36) by magnifying a particular hero’s character to be as great as the situation confronted (p. 43). For example, epic heroes ranging from the ancient Odysseus to the more modern war hero (and even unexpected heroines such as Scarlett O’Hara) all rise to the challenges of the respective situations they faced through larger than life characteristic abilities. This magnification of the hero not only acts as a model of courageous behavior for us “ordinary people,” but also as a means for us to become vicariously heroic through identification with the hero (p. 36).

In her paper on dramatistic frames, Krug notes, “Whereas the epic elevates the nobility of the act, the tragic elevates the nobility of the agent…. Reflected in the agent is the complex of circumstances leading to destruction” (1983, p. 6). In this frame, the tragic, yet noble, protagonist is resigned to the situation they confront. The tragic plot involves a protagonist’s transgression (or “crime”) against established values, which then fatalistically necessitates the protagonist’s punishment and ultimate demise. However, the “criminal” protagonist is treated sympathetically. Burke explains, “Even though the criminal is finally sentenced to be punished, we are made to feel that his offense is our offense, and at the same time the offense is dignified by nobility of style” (1984b, p. 39). The Shakespearean protagonists Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet and the more modern
Anakin Skywalker (who becomes Darth Vader) from the Star Wars prequels all serve as examples of tragic protagonists.

Whereas the epic and tragic frames elevate the protagonist’s action or nobility in terms of the momentous situation, the comic frame reduces the situation in terms of the protagonist’s weaknesses or faults—it is “the dramatization of quirks and foibles” (Burke, 1984b, p. 42). Unlike the epic and tragic frames, which tend to gloss over the protagonist’s shortcomings, the comic frame depicts the protagonist unwittingly engaging in acts in which character flaws rise to the fore. In the end, the agent realizes that they share these flaws with all (Krug, 1983, pp. 7-8). In the comic frame, the protagonist becomes a student learning the lesson of humility (Burke, 1984b, p. 41). Burke notes, “…the comic frame should enable people to be observers of themselves, while acting. Its ultimate would not be passiveness, but maximum consciousness. One would ‘transcend’ himself by noting his own foibles” (p. 171). The comic frame is the most complete of all frames because it gauges the situation the most realistically. An example of a comic figure is Luke Skywalker from the Star Wars trilogy.

**Frames of rejection.**

Rejection frames say, “no” to some of the elements in a given situation. While a rhetor adopting this type of attitude may gauge all the elements of the situation, they will reject some of them and will dramatically manipulate other elements to suit them. Burke noted that, “Frames stressing the ingredient of rejection tend to lack the well-rounded quality of [acceptance frames]…. They make for fanaticism, the singling-out of one
factor above others in the charting of human relationships” (1984b, pp. 28-29). Burke designated the elegy, satire, and burlesque as rejection frames.

The elegy frame involves a passive protagonist resigned to a particular situation. Unlike the epic frame in which the hero is elevated to meet the situation, the elegiac protagonist is rendered powerless in terms of resources in the face of the (Burke, 1984b, p. 44). With the elegiac protagonist’s rejection of the reality of personal resources or abilities, the protagonist adopts the idea or surrendering to, or simply making the best of the situation (p. 46n). A famous example of an elegiac character is Eeyore from the Winnie-the-Pooh books.

Unlike the comic protagonist who eventually learns to accept personal weaknesses and limitations, the protagonist of the satire frame rejects weakness. In this process of rejection, the satirist scapegoats others who share the particular weakness to purify the guilt associated with this secret vice (Burke, 1984b, p. 49). While the elegy frame endorses an attitude of “we might as well cope with it,” the satire frame comprises the attitude of “it’s a dog-eat-dog world” and “every man for himself” (Krug, 1983, pp. 8-9). An example of a person famous for his use of the satire frame is Stephen Colbert and the self-righteous television commentator character he portrays on The Colbert Report.

The burlesque frame is similar to the satire frame in that the protagonist focuses the faults of others. However, instead of attacking a common weakness, the burlesquer focuses on the target’s external behavior (Burke, 1984b, p. 55) deliberately simplifying and distorting it. They blow “allegedly faulty attributes way out of proportion.

Burlesquers desituationalize their enemies, strip them of excuses, of dignity. They depict
them as clowns, buffoons, klutzes” (Appel, 1996, p. 272). In focusing only on a small, incomplete portion of the victim’s being, the burlesquer rejects a complete picture of the victim as a whole. An example of a person famous for his use of the burlesque frame is William F. Buckley (Appel, 1993).

**Frames of transition.**

Transition frames, comprised of the grotesque and didactic frames, say, “maybe” to the elements in a situation undergoing change. Wolin notes “Our lives … are profoundly structured by our previous experiences…. As conditions change, our pieties may not support the best perspectives and actions needed for the new conditions or even for transitional states” (2001, p. 104). For example, the 1960s in the United States were a famously turbulent time of change. As old orientations began to collapse, such as implicit trust in institutional authority (military, government, education, etc.), some gauged the elements in the situation and adopted a passive attitude within the grotesque frame (see below for more detail). They sought refuge by heeding the call to “turn on, tune in, and drop out” in retreating to psychedelic (and by extension, subconscious) imagery. Within the transition frames, one dramatically manipulates situational elements relating to the imagination.

Like the comic frame, the grotesque’s strategy reduces the magnitude of obstacles or threats present in the situation. However, the grotesque reduces without the laughter afforded by the comic frame (Burke, 1984b, p. 58). In The Seven Basic Plots, Christopher Booker notes that narratives based on an attitude of acceptance, such as Shakespeare’s comedies and tragedies, employ imagination that produces “original
observations and images which heighten and deepen our perception and understanding of the world” (2004, p. 650). However, grotesque narratives employ fantasy that favors entertainment or self-gratification instead of understanding (p. 648). Rather than dramatization of the protagonist’s weaknesses or faults with the goal of understanding that occurs in the comic frame, the grotesque frame emphasizes the subconscious, “subjective elements of imagery” over the “objective, or public, elements” (Burke, 1984b, pp. 59-60).

By emphasizing subjective imagery, the grotesque frame explores questions of a metaphysical nature by distorting the real into the absurd (Browning, 1975, p.261). In the grotesque frame:

We find that the writer has made alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life. We find that connections which we would expect in the customary kind of realism have been ignored. (O’Connor, 1960, para. 9)

By ignoring what is real, the grotesque passively revels in absurdity without providing much positive direction for dealing with a situation (Wolin, 2001, p. 104). Narratives exemplifying the grotesque frame include *Frankenstein*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Whereas the grotesque frame passively retreats into fantastic and absurd imagery rather than using the full faculties of the imagination, the didactic frame actively works to subjugate and coach the imagination “in obedience to crucial [and critical] postulates” (Burke, 1984b, p. 75). Burke notes that:

In the *spontaneous* unfoldings of history, the imaginative expression of a trend precedes its conceptual-critical counterpart—as Greek tragedy went before its
essayistic formulation in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; ... or as the organized literary movement of symbolism preceded its corresponding critical formulation in psychoanalysis. (p. 75)

In other words, imaginative expressions occur naturally, which provide the foundation for later critical formulation. However, the didactic reverses this imaginative/critical process so that the critical formulation attempts to bend the imagination to its will. As in the elegy frame, which involves the denial of one’s resources, the didactic denies the full resources of the imagination—using it solely as a means to further goals of a particular agenda instead of as a means to more fully perceive and understand a situation. Here, didacticism takes the form of propaganda, rhetoric, and “applied” art (p. 75) all with the aim to further an ideological, political, or commercial purpose (Nelson, 1996, pp. 232-233).

*Attitudes as incipient and substitute acts.*

Because attitude is synonymous with strategy, an attitude implies a plan, or program of action, for dealing with a situation. Burke explained, “The symbolic act is the *dancing of an attitude*” (1973, p. 9). In other words, the symbolic act is the doing or acting out of a corresponding “state of mind” (p. 11). Thus, attitudes (informed and shaped by poetic genres) lead to corresponding acts. Burke provides further detail to this link between attitudes and action:

Thus approached, an attitude is ambiguous in this sense: It may be either an incipient act or the substitute for an act in that the sympathetic person can let the intent do service for the deed (precisely through doing nothing, one may feel more sympathetic than the person whose mood may be partially distracted by the conditions of action). In either case, an attitude is a state of emotion, or a moment of stasis, in which an act is arrested, summed up, made permanent and total. (1969a, p. 476)
Therefore, attitudes contain action within. If one chooses to release (or take) action from the attitude, we can view the attitude as an incipient act. Burke defines an incipient act as a first step toward an act (1969a, p. 236), or a “leaning or inclination” toward some sort of action (1969b, p. 50). However, if one chooses not to act by continuing to contain the action within an attitude, the attitude becomes a substitute act. A way to view the difference between the two is whether the attitude manifests itself outwardly or inwardly (Anderson & Althouse, 2010, para. 23). In the next step I will cover the outward manifestation of an incipient act, which Burke calls “symbolic action.” However, if an attitude only manifests itself internally it remains as a substitute act.

In this section, I have explored the concepts of attitude, equipment for living, frames of acceptance/rejection/transition, and incipient and substitute acts. In this realm of attitudes, humans strategize and prepare to take action based on a personalized understanding and definition of the situation (i.e. motives). In addition, these strategies tend to embody certain story genres. Based on these strategies, which were informed by a particular genre, humans then prepare to take action. We are now ready to take the next step and explore symbolic action.

**Step 6: Symbolic action.**

When one chooses to do something based upon an attitude, they take symbolic action. The idea of symbolic action rests upon the difference between motion and action. To Burke, motion, such as the crash of waves on the beach or the falling of a leaf are not symbolic in and of themselves. These are “sheer” motions that do not require any
decision or thought on the part of the water or leaf. In contrast, action is an expression of
human attitudes, and only occurs consciously or purposefully (Burke, 1969a, p. 14).

However, sheer motion and action are related:

  Action is not reducible to terms of motion. For instance, the “essence” or
  “meaning” of a sentence is not reducible to its sheer physical existence as sounds
  in the air or marks on the page, although material motions of some sort are
  necessary for the production, transmission, and reception of the sentence … This
  is the distinction between “action” and “sheer motion.” “Action,” is a term for the
  kind of behavior possible to a typically symbol-using animal (such as man) in
  contrast with the extrasymbolic or non-symbolic operations of nature. (Burke,
  1968b, p. 447)

While the symbol-using human animal uses non-symbolic motion (i.e. biological
electrical movements in the brain, vibrating vocal chords to speak, etc.) action only
occurs when these motions are the expression of a particular human attitude—in other
words, when these motions take on a symbolic meaning. This symbolic action is
conventional, arbitrary, learned, and socially constructed by humans. In addition, this
symbolic action occurs in a continual feedback loop upon humans that alters how they
subsequently understand and act by defining and imposing attitudes and meaning
(Chesebro, 1996, p. 200).

Burke calls this feedback loop the “drama of the self” (1973, pp. 317-318). In this
drama a human confronted with change must reorganize his or her mind (ibid.) via new
orientations and perspectives. At the core of this drama is the continuous interaction
between a person and their environment and their conflicting impulses within (Rueckert,
1982, p. 44). In the face of constant change, we confront dueling pressures. On one hand
we wish to retain our established belief system. We invest much of our resources in
developing our existing meaning structures. However, we must also change these mindsets, when needed, to adapt to new situations. We do this because “The self must either confront these issues and adjust to them by making such changes as are necessary or retreat into the abyss of itself and perish” (Rueckert, 1982, pp. 44-45).

It is here that the link to drama becomes explicit. Burke developed his theory of dramatism based upon his analysis of drama. He found that his observations on drama should not only apply just to literature but to life in general (1973, p. 296). From this, he developed his idea of symbolic action because action is “so important an aspect of drama, and I define language as a species of action: ‘symbolic action’” (1970, p. 38). In addition, he noted, “If action is to be our key term, then drama; for drama is the culminative form of action” (1966, p. 54). Therefore, our dramatic representative anecdote (step 1), symbol use (step 2), orientations (step 3), motives (step 4), and attitudes (step 5) culminate in the symbolic action (step 6) of our language and thought. This relationship between drama and symbolic action fully illustrates the synecdochic nature of our drama/dramatism representative anecdote.

**Pentad / hexad.**

In tying dramatic action to drama, Burke argues that our symbolic action “necessarily takes the form of ‘story,’ the approach to [the] essence [of motives] is conveyed in temporal, or ‘storial’ terms” (1969a, p. 433). In other words, symbolic action embodies our motives (and is the enactment of our attitudes) within the format of a story, or narrative. These narratives involve the telling of a series of events that occurred over some span of time. As identification is the fundamental motive, the narrator advocates a
particular point of view within their story so that they may rhetorically gain identification with their audience when the audience accepts this same point of view. Teacher and author Jim Corder argues, “Each of us is a narrative.” He states that identification “requires a readiness to testify to an identity that is always emerging, a willingness to dramatize one’s narratives in progress before the other” (Baumlin & Miller, 2004, p. 170, p. 183; Youngdahl & Warnock, 1996, p. 339). Therefore, narrators, or rhetors, create a story that embodies their motives and selects a certain point of view in an attempt to gain identification. Burke developed his dramatistic method he initially called the pentad as a means to unravel the narrative elements of symbolic action so that one may discover the rhetor’s motives. By employing the pentad, a rhetorical critic works backward on the metaphorical staircase from the observable events contained in a symbolic action to identify the attitudes and the unseen motives upon which they are based. Like other dramatistic concepts, Burke continued to develop the pentad throughout his career.

Kenneth Burke first outlined the pentad in the opening section of 1945’s *A Grammar of Motives* as a method to explore the motives behind any symbolic action. The pentadic method involves a three-step process: (1) identify the elements of the symbolic action (similar to the journalistic “5 Ws and an H”—“who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how”); (2) consider how each element interacts with the others to decide the overall dominant element; (3) consider the philosophic school associated with the dominant element to determine the rhetor’s motives. Below I will describe the steps in more detail.
Identify the elements of the symbolic action.

The first step is to identify the elements of the symbolic act. The term “act” implies the other elements of symbolic action. For example, every action requires a background, or “scene” against which the act occurs. The act also requires an actor, or “agent,” to perform the act. The agent, then, requires a means, or “agency,” by which they can conduct the act. Finally, the very fact that an agent performs the act requires that they do it for some “purpose.” The pentad considers each of these five elements (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose). Burke later added the sixth element, attitude, which turned the pentad into a hexad. It must be understood that in this context, attitude has a different meaning than the prior definition of attitude as a strategy for dealing with a situation. In the realm of symbolic action, Burke defines attitude as the “how,” or “in what way” an agent performed an act.

It is important to note that while Burke systematically presented the pentad in *Grammar*, its modification into a hexad was less methodical. While Burke may have initially chosen only five elements—either because they easily relate to five fingers of the hand (Burke, 1969, p. xxii) or the fact that Burke had five children (Rueckert & Bonadonna, 2003, p. 368), each of whom he related to a pentadic element—he later expressed regret for not adding attitude to the pentad (1972, p. 23). In addition, he stated that it would have been a hexad from the start if he had been clear (1984b, pp. 393-394). Due to this confusion, dramatistic critics have both employed the pentad and the hexad. Anderson and Althouse (2010) argue the relative merits and drawbacks of each approach in their article “Five Fingers or Six? Pentad or Hexad?” which I will cover in more depth.
in Chapter 4. In the meantime, I will draw upon Burke’s statement that, “the main ideal of criticism, as I conceive it, is to use all that is there to use” (1973, p. 23). Therefore, I will consider attitude as the sixth element of the hexad. However, given the ubiquity of the term “pentad” in dramatistic literature, going forward, I will use “pentad” even though I am including the sixth term.

Each of the elements function as a heuristic device, similar to the aforementioned 5Ws and an H. It is not surprising then that Burke’s choice of elements is not completely original. For example, the elements align with Aristotle’s four causes (formal cause aligns with act, material cause with scene, efficient cause with agent, final cause with purpose, and as a subdivision of the final cause, means with agency) (Overington, 1977, p.141). The elements also align with the mediaeval Latin hexameter: quis (who), quid (what), ubi (where), quibus auxiliis (by what means), cur (why), quomodo (how), quando (when) (Burke, 1978, p. 332). Burke even noted that:

I could have cited, if I had known it, a related passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle says, “A man may be ignorant of who [agent] he is, what [act] he is doing, what or whom he is acting on [scene], and also what instrument [agency] he is doing it with, and to what end [purpose] … he is doing it (e.g. whether gently or violently)—which would indicate why I would class “how” (quo modo) with “attitude.” (1978, p. 332)

Burke also underlines the dramatic nature of the pentad by aligning five of the elements with Aristotle’s six elements of tragedy (spectacle, character, plot, diction, melody, and thought) as outlined in *Poetics*:

*Plot* would correspond to *act*. *Character* would correspond to *agent*…. We should probably assign *purpose* to the third element, *Thought*…. Since Aristotle himself calls Melody and Diction ‘the means of imitation,’ they would obviously fall
under *agency*. The sixth element, Spectacle … [corresponds to] *scene*. (1969a, p. 231)

The pentadic elements’ commonality, leading to ease in recognition, is what made them attractive to Burke (1969a, pp. xv-xvi). While not completely original, Burke chose the particular elements not only to be easily understood, but also as a means to highlight their dramatistic nature (1978, p. 331). The similarities of these heuristic devices (even those of which Burke was initially unaware when creating the pentad) reassured Burke of the elements’ basic nature and universality (Fogarty, 1959, p.63).

In considering the pentadic elements in terms of their dramatic nature, I will review the individual terms more fully. The symbolic act considers what the agent did. The criteria for an act are the performance or occurrence of a thought of deed. It is important to keep in mind that “Any action of a symbolic nature—one that involves language use explicitly or implicitly—is an *act*” (Bridges, 1996, p. 500).

The scene is the background setting of the act or the environment (in a physical sense, cultural sense, etc.) in which the act occurs.

The agent may be a person or a group of persons (i.e. a family, a school board, a corporation). However, it is important to note that the agent does not necessarily have to be human. The agent can be any object to which one may attribute with the ability to act symbolically. In the non-symbolic world of sheer motion, nature acts without thought or reason, while in the world of symbolic action, the rhetor may personify nature as a vengeful mother, imbuing her with destructive symbolic abilities. For example, the rhetor
may attribute to “mother nature” the ability to devastate via the agency of a tsunami or “perfect storm.”

The agency is either the concrete instrument the agent used to accomplish the act (i.e. a gun, a car, a large amount of money, etc.) or something more abstract (i.e. the agent’s intelligence, inability to tell right from wrong, etc.).

The purpose is the result, effect, or outcome of the act that the agent intended or the function the agent wishes to fulfill by conducting the act.

The agent’s attitude is reflected in the manner in which the agent performs the act. For example, a student (agent) may study for a test (act). The rhetor may portray the agent as studying with an attitude of diligence (i.e. the student studied diligently) or an attitude of expedience (i.e. the student studied only what was necessary to receive a passing grade). Furthermore, manifestations of an agent’s attitudes are often revealed through the tonalities of style (Anderson & Althouse, 2010, para. 37). For example, an agent who uses extravagant words or a bombastic style in a speech would be expressing a different attitude than an agent who uses simple words and a plainspoken style.

In this section, I have reviewed the initial five elements of the pentad, the addition of the sixth element of attitude, the similarity of the pentad to other heuristic devices, and definitions of each of the six elements. Once a critic has identified the individual elements of the symbolic act, the next step is to consider how each element interacts with the others as pairs called ratios.

Consider the ratios.
The second step of pentadic analysis involves systematically considering the inherent relationships between the six elements, or as Burke calls them, “ratios.” The partners in each of the relationships are not equal. For example, when an agent commits a symbolic act, they make certain choices (among an infinite variety of symbolic possibilities). It is this choosing, or symbolic selection, which causes the agent (and therefore the act’s audience) to focus attention on some things while ignoring others. Burke calls this direction of attention a terministic screen. He notes, “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (1966, p. 45). This selecting and deflecting of reality comes into play especially when considering the terministic relationships in the individual ratios. For example, when a rhetor chooses to characterize an element in a certain way, and since all the elements are interrelated, the rhetor’s choices similarly affect all the other ratios.

Burke initially only named ten ratios in *A Grammar of Motives* (scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose) and their naming suggests that they work in a left-to-right direction as expressed in the pairing. In a scene-act ratio, for example, the scene is the dominant element, “containing” the act (Burke, 1969a, p. 3). However, he did elaborate that the elements in a ratio are reversible so that, in this example, the act could dominate the scene (1969a, p. 16). In his addendum to the 1969 edition of *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke noted that he found it helpful explicitly to differentiate the ratios by the order of the elements (p. 443), thus adding ten more ratios (act-scene, agent-scene,
agency-scene, purpose-scene, purpose-act, agent-act, agency-act, purpose-agent, agency-agent, and purpose-agency). Now in considering the sixth element of attitude, it is also necessary to add ten more ratios to total 30 (scene-attitude, act-attitude, agent-attitude, agency-attitude, purpose-attitude, attitude-scene, attitude-act, attitude-agent, attitude-agency, and attitude-purpose).

In each of the 30 ratios, a particular element may dominate, or influence, the other. For example, the scene may influence the act. In other words, the nature of the scene may determine the nature of the act. Burke notes, “The Supreme Court would be exemplifying a 'scene-act ratio' in deciding that emergency measures are admissible because there is a state of emergency” (1969a, p. 443). In this case, the scene (the state of emergency) determines the act (emergency measures). This relationship is causal (Benoit, 1983, p. 49). After considering all 30 ratios, the overall dominant element is the one that dominated most frequently in each of the ratios. Once the critic has identified the dominant element, the next step is to consider the philosophic school associated with that element.

*Consider the philosophic school.*

The third step of pentadic analysis involves considering the particular point of view the agent advocated by terministically directing attention to the dominant element. Burke found the individual philosophical schools’ accounts of motivation as too limiting for an overarching explanation (Bridges, 1996, p. 501). However, he did draw upon various philosophies to argue that when a rhetor favors a certain pentadic element they are advocating a particular philosophic point of view. He stated that rhetors employ a
philosophic idiom as a “temporizing calculus of motives” (1969a, p. xvii). In other words, a rhetor’s interpretation (or motives) of a particular situation will subscribe to the principles held by a certain philosophy. Similar to the way that attitudes will embody a particular poetic genre, we may also view these pre-defined philosophies as “equipments for living.” Therefore, by considering the philosophic viewpoint associated with the dominant element, we may discover the rhetor’s interpretation of the situation (i.e. their motives).

When a rhetor directs attention to the act, the corresponding philosophy is realism. At its core, realism holds that the world is a product of the ways in which we empirically experience it, not necessarily how or what the world is in and of itself independent of us. By observing the “universal facts” of a thing, we gain an understanding of its reality. This is similar to the idea of scientific testability in that what is real exists independently of what we may think or believe so we must conduct scientific testing to get closer to the truth (Craig, 1998, para. 1).

When a rhetor directs attention to the scene, the corresponding philosophy is materialism. According to Crable and Makay, “Materialism implies that the agent’s purposive motion is dictated by persons, events, and ideas existent in the agent’s environment” (1972, p.14). In other words, the material elements in the scene determine the agent’s symbolic action. Tonn, Endress, and Diamond, further explain:

Arguments dominated by 'scene,' Burke claims, reflect a perspective that is committed to viewing the world as relatively permanent and deterministic. Personas functioning within the scene are regarded as seriously constrained by scenic elements. Immutable factors in the natural or social landscape limit their
ability to act on their own volition: free will is supplanted largely by fate, thereby reducing action to motion. (1993, p. 166)

When a rhetor directs attention to the agent, the corresponding philosophy is idealism, which holds that “the mind or spirit as each person experiences it as fundamentally real, with the universe seen as mind or spirit in its essence” (Foss, 2004, p. 389). In other words, idealism is a perspective that views agents as rational and reality as constructed or caused by human choices (Tonn, Endress, & Diamond, 1993, p. 166).

When a rhetor directs attention to agency, the corresponding philosophy is pragmatism. Pragmatism is “the means necessary for the attainment of a goal…. The meaning of a proposition or course of action lies in its observable consequences, and the sum of these consequences constitutes its meaning” (Foss, 2004, p. 389). In other words, if something works well, it is good or true. If it does not work well, it is bad or false. In a rhetor’s case, this could be summed up in the common maxim, “if it ain’t broke, why fix it?”

When a rhetor directs attention to purpose, the corresponding philosophy is mysticism. In mysticism, the agent is aligned with a higher order or union with reality—the agent works with “some cosmic or universal purpose” (Foss, 2004, p. 389). In this case, the agent’s purpose takes center stage. The agent must do what ever it takes to meet the goal of their purpose. In this case, “the ends justify the means.”

There are two remaining philosophic schools: nominalism and rationalism. Burke did not tie these schools to a particular pentadic element because nominalism:
… applies to all the other six schools insofar as each of them can have either a collectivistic or and individualistic (“nominalist”) emphasis; and [rationalism] … applies to all in the sense that it is the perfection, or logical conclusion [of the other schools]. (1969a, p.129)

When Burke added attitude to the pentad, he did not specify a philosophic school. In this case, Anderson and Althouse argue, “Since attitude is an ‘incipient act,’ each of the seven philosophical schools can be read rhetorically as inducements to attitude” (2010, para. 32). However, because nominalism and rationalism are characteristic of the other schools, it would appear that attitude would take on one of the five philosophies, which in turn may contain nominalist or rationalist properties, rather than taking on any of the seven individually. It is not clear at this point what procedures a critic would follow to identify the motivational philosophy when a symbolic act features attitude.

**Symbolic Action Conclusions.**

In this stair step, I have explored the realm of symbolic action. The pentad is centered within this realm, with the symbolic “act” as its core element. In addition, as the pentad is the focus of this paper I have attempted to provide a detailed account of the process of pentadic analysis. Before moving on, I would like to point out one additional concept related to the pentad. In applying the pentad to specific texts, some scholars have conducted a multi-pentadic analysis of single texts (Birdsell, 1987; Ling, 1970; Rountree, 1988). This occurs when the rhetor explains more than one symbolic act within the same text or provides different accounts of the same act. In my state of the discipline review I will track how many artifacts contained multiple pentads as part of question six, “In what ways do scholars apply the mechanics of the pentadic method?” Having covered the stair
steps leading from drama to symbolic action, I will now move on to the final step that contains two additional means to analyze symbolic action.

**Step 7: Form and cluster.**

Having thus provided an account of dramatistic concepts in a stairway progression that lead up to the pentad, I will now review form and cluster. These two concepts are admittedly less directly connected to the pentad and were each developed before it. Burke developed form based on his work as a literary critic and outlined the concept in his early book, *Counter-Statement*, published in 1931. Next, Burke briefly outlined cluster in *Attitudes Toward History*, released in 1937, and then more in-depth in 1941’s *Philosophy of Literary Form*. However, while form and cluster may not connect directly to the pentad, they do perform a similar function; they also provide a means to analyze symbolic action.

In continuing our stairway metaphor, now imagine each step as progressively gaining more detail. At step one, drama acts as the starting point. Based on this dramatic viewpoint, at step two, our basic makeup as humans (definition of human) is a high-level set of attributes that defines us as symbol users. At step three, these attributes lead to a more defined set of worldviews, or orientations. At step four, within these orientations, we use motives to define the situations in which we find ourselves. At step five, we use attitudes as strategies to deal with those situations. Based on those attitudes, at step six, we take symbolic action or actions, comprised of six elements. In continuing this trend, I now add a seventh step, which contains even more detailed elements of our symbolic action. On this step, I will cover the concepts of form and cluster.
First, form explains how the shape and structure of a symbolic act both arouses and fulfills desires within an audience (1968b, p. 124). For example, consider the form inherent in a romantic comedy movie. Based on the form of this well-known film genre, the audience comes to know and anticipate the various parts of the movie. Notwithstanding wacky comedic antics along the way, by the end of the film, we expect the boy to get the girl and are gratified when romance finally succeeds. Wolin notes:

Form, [is] the creation and satisfaction of expectations…. A successful expectation-satisfaction curve depends upon an artist understanding the needs of the audience and how the audience will be affected by art. The artist tailors the artwork to both the psychological tenor of people in general and the specific social and aesthetic characteristics of the audience addressed. Form is the foundation of aesthetics in that is makes art fundamentally about how effects are shaped by the audience’s psychological disposition. As much as the message affects the audience, the audience affects the message. Thus, there must be some kind of fit between message and audience—in a way, a sense of propriety. (2001, p. 75)

In all, Burke identified four main aspects of form: progressive form, repetitive form, conventional form, and minor or incidental forms.

Starting with progressive form, Burke further divided this concept into two parts, syllogistic and qualitative progression. Of syllogistic progression, Burke writes:

*Syllogistic progression* is the form of a perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step…. To go from $A$ to $E$ through stages $B$, $C$, and $D$ is to obtain such form. We call it syllogistic because, given certain things, certain things must follow, the premises forcing the conclusion…. The arrows of our desires are turned in a certain direction, and the plot follows the direction of the arrows. (1968b, p. 124)

An example of syllogistic progression is Agatha Christie’s *And Then There Were None*, in which 10 characters who were invited to a private island are systematically murdered one by one in the same order as outlined in a nursery rhyme called “Ten Little Soldiers”
(Christie, 2009). In contrast, qualitative progression lacks the pronounced “step by step” nature of syllogistic progression. Instead, qualities inherent in the symbolic action lead us to expect other qualities (Burke, 1968b, p. 125). Rather than move from step to step, we move from quality to quality. This less distinct progression may be more difficult to recognize during the symbolic action than it is after. An example of qualitative progression is the “comic relief” scene that frequently follows a scene of high tension or violence (Kimberling, 1982, p. 46).

Second, repetitive form is the “restatement of the same thing in different ways,” or “the restatement of a theme by new details [is] basic to any work of art” (ibid.). An example of repetitive form is in The Wizard of Oz (1939), in which Dorothy’s successive encounters with the Tin Man, the Lion, and the Scarecrow each identify the character and a particular characteristic each one lacks.

Third, conventional form is when “a form appeals as form,” for example, as in a fairy tale starting with “once upon a time” (Burke, 1968b, p. 126). In this case, the form of the symbolic act gives rises to expectations by its very nature. An example of conventional form is found in Aesop’s fables. In these stories, the audience comes to know and expect that the form of the fable is a narrative concluding with a pithy moral lesson. These audience expectations occur because the audience has previous experience with the particular type of form and comes to expect its constituent parts.

Finally, Burke lists several examples of minor or incidental forms that may be present in a symbolic act such as “metaphor, paradox, disclosure, reversal, contraction, expansion, bathos, apostrophe, series, chiasmus—which can be discussed as formal
events in themselves” (p. 127). Here the critic has the option to view how the individual incidental forms, for example, a metaphor, may function within the whole of the symbolic act or as distinct events apart from the whole. An example of a minor form could be the analysis of my use of the metaphorical staircase as a means to organize and contextualize dramatistic concepts. Here, the critic could trace the form’s appearance throughout the chapter or as an entity separate from the chapter.

In all form is a means to gain identification between a symbolic actor and their audience. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke notes:

> Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is presented in this form. (1969b, p. 58)

By locating the formal elements within symbolic action, we can identify additional points at which symbolic actors attempt to gain identification with their audience.

Next, through the concept of clusters, we gain another avenue into the motivations of the symbolic actor. To accomplish this, cluster analysis focuses on the key terms contained within the symbolic act and the other ideas that cluster around them. In this case, the actor subconsciously encodes their motives into the “text” of the symbolic act. Burke explains:

> Now, the work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He uses ‘associational clusters.’ And you may, by examining his work, find ‘what goes with what’ in these clusters—what kinds of acts and images and personalities and situations go with his notions of heroism, villainy, consolation, despair, etc. And though he be perfectly conscious of the act of writing, conscious of selecting a certain kind of imagery to reinforce a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations. Afterwards, by inspecting his work ‘statistically,’ we or he may disclose by
objective citation the structure of motivation operating here. There is no need to ‘supply’ motives. The interrelationships themselves are his motives…. The motivation out of which he writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes; and however consciously he may go about such work, there is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he could not have been conscious of, since the generalization could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work. (1973, p. 20)

To identify the key term, according to Foss (2004, p. 73-75), the critic selects the terms that repeat most frequently or those that are used with great intensity or importance. Once the key terms are identified, the critic next locates terms that cluster around the key term. Finally, the critic then attempts to find patterns within these associations, which contain the actor’s motives.

“At the top of the stairs.”

This chapter has attempted to explain the some of the key tenets of dramatism as interacting parts of an overall whole. As dramatistic concepts are frequently used together, my main purpose has been to situate them in context with each other. Using a staircase as a metaphor, I outlined a seven-step process. Starting with the high-level representative anecdote of drama, I outlined successively more detailed dramatistic concepts in each subsequent step: (step 2) definition of human, (step 3) orientations, (step 4) motives, (step 5) attitudes, and (step 6) symbolic action. Finally, in step 7, I outlined two attributes of symbolic action, form and cluster. This stair step approach not only enables a comprehensive view of these concepts in relation to each other but also affords a clear view of how the critic can use the concepts of form, cluster, and the pentad to step backward down the steps to trace a rhetor’s motives.
Along the way, I have also defined the following Burkean concepts: representative anecdote, definition of human, orientation, piety, trained incapacity, perspective by incongruity, motives, identification, the guilt-redemption cycle, attitudes, equipment for living, frames of acceptance/rejection/transition, symbolic action, terminsitalic screens, the pentad/hexad, form, and cluster. In addition, I have clarified Burke’s ambiguous use of the term “attitude” as a strategy employed to deal with situations, as substitute and incipient acts, and finally as a sixth element of symbolic action. Now that I have outlined the concepts of dramatistic theory, in the next chapter I will outline the procedures I will use to conduct my state of the pentad review.
Chapter 3

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will present the framework of my analysis. In my review of 14 “state of the discipline” studies (see Appendix for a complete list), I have found there is not a distinct format for a state of the discipline review. In general, the authors attempt to review the current state of scholarship, compare it with past scholarship, and speculate about future directions. Here, in Chapter 3, I will outline where the pentad has been by reviewing several exemplars of pentadic works. Then, in Chapter 4, I will outline where the pentad is currently by reviewing the last ten years of pentadic research. Finally, in Chapter 5 I will speculate where the pentad may be going.

For the rest of this chapter, I will first review exemplars of pentadic research, which ranged from 1970 to 1993. Then, I will review the procedure I used to choose my research sample of current pentadic works.

Pentadic Exemplars

As a starting point for selecting exemplars, I drew upon Clarke Rountree’s article “Coming to Terms with Kenneth Burke’s Pentad” (1998), because it contains a review of previous scholarly pentadic works. The article contains a list of 11 pentadic examples. In order to validate whether these analyses are viewed as common examples by other scholars, I cross referenced them with citations, “further reading,” and “selected bibliography” lists contained in pentad-related chapters in the following rhetorical theory textbooks: Foss’ Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice (2004, pp. 409-410), Stoner and Perkins’ Making Sense of Messages: A Critical Apprenticeship in Rhetorical
Criticism (2005, pp. 233-234), and Hart and Daughton’s Modern Rhetorical Criticism (2005, p. 277). Of the original 11 articles, eight were listed in at least one of the three texts: Ling’s “A Pentadic Analysis of Senator Edward Kennedy’s Address to the People of Massachusetts, July 25, 1969” (1970), Fisher’s “A Burkean Analysis of the Rhetorical Dimensions of a Multiple Murder and Suicide” (1974), Brown’s “Kenneth Burke and The Mod Donna: The Dramatistic Method Applied to Feminist Criticism” (1978), Brummett’s “A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies in Two Gay Rights Controversies” (1979), Blankenship, Fine, and Davis’ “The 1980 Republican Primary Debates: The Transformation of Actor to Scene” (1983), Birdsell’s “Ronald Reagan on Lebanon and Grenada: Flexibility and Interpretation in the Application of Kenneth Burke's Pentad” (1987), Kelley’s “The 1984 Campaign Rhetoric of Representative George Hansen: A Pentadic Analysis” (1987), and Tonn, Endress, and Diamond’s “Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy” (1993). Based on this cross-reference, I will use these eight as my example works. It is important to note that in selecting these exemplars from rhetorical criticism textbooks that my sample is not necessarily representative of all possible pentadic exemplars. In addition, I am not attempting an empirical review of all previous applications of the pentad. Instead, my goal is to create a qualitative baseline against which I can compare recent pentadic scholarship and then to provide the Burkean student a review of noteworthy studies as a foundation of understanding.

Next, as a framework for reviewing these exemplars, I will assess them in terms of the research questions I developed in Chapter 1:
1. Which disciplines are currently using the pentad?

2. To what subjects do scholars apply the pentad?

3. Which journals are leading pentadic scholarship?

4. What are the formats for secondary sources of pentadic scholarship?

5. Are current pentadic scholars mainly focused on critical application or theoretical development?

6. In what ways do scholars apply the mechanics of the pentadic method?
   a. Which element dominated most frequently?
   b. Are scholars using attitude as an element?
   c. Are scholars using philosophies?
   d. Which other dramatistic concepts do scholars use?

In addition, in the course of answering these research questions I will summarize each of the eight exemplars in this chapter as an additional resource for the Burkean student. My reason for this is that as exemplars, students are likely to encounter these articles within their studies. While I did not tally the number of citations, based on my own observations while gathering research artifacts, each of these exemplars was cited in at least one of the artifacts in my research sample. In some of the artifacts, an exemplar was cited in conjunction with one or more of the other eight. Interestingly, David Ling’s “A Pentadic Analysis of Senator Edward Kennedy’s Address to the People of Massachusetts” was easily the most-cited example of pentadic analysis. Perhaps this is due to it being the earliest commonly cited exemplar. In addition, the article’s easy-to-read style and relatively short length of six pages aids its accessibility and familiarity among scholars.
In all, I hope these summaries in addition to my analysis will provide a further understanding of where the pentad has been.

**Question 1: Which disciplines are currently using the pentad?**

Each of the exemplars came from the field of rhetorical studies. This is consistent with my earlier finding from Chapter 1 that rhetorical studies is one of the leading areas of pentadic activity. In addition, this is not surprising given that the source artifacts from which I selected the exemplars focused mainly on rhetorical criticism.

**Question 2: To what subjects do scholars apply the pentad?**

Four of the eight exemplars (50%) focused on subjects within the political realm. Two exemplars (25%) focused on the related topics of murder-suicide and manslaughter. The remaining two exemplars focused on feminist criticism and gay rights. In this section, I will first summarize the four political exemplars and then discuss the dominance of politics in pentadic analysis. Finally, I will discuss the application of the pentad to the remaining subjects.

The first artifact is David Ling’s “A Pentadic Analysis of Senator Edward Kennedy’s Address to the People of Massachusetts.” This article focuses on a speech given by Senator Edward Kennedy regarding his role in the Chappaquiddick drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne. Ling found that despite Kennedy’s stated goal in the speech to take responsibility for the incident and to decide on his own whether to continue in the senate, he rhetorically shifted blame to the murky scene of the accident and the choice to continue onto the people of Massachusetts. While Ling found two pentads within the speech with scene and agent as the dominating elements, Birdsell (1987) argues that there
was only one, with scene dominating the entire speech (with the Chappaquiddick scene and the people of Massachusetts as scenic elements both dominating Kennedy as agent).

The second article is Blankenship, Fine, and Davis’ “The 1980 Republican Primary Debates: The Transformation of Actor to Scene” (1983). This paper analyzes Ronald Reagan’s performance in the 1980 Republican presidential primary debates. Specifically, the authors explain how Reagan came to dominate the debates and later the Republican primary via his sheer presence, through which he transformed himself from mere actor into the actual scene itself—he took over the scene. Thus, the authors identified the dominant element as agent-scene.

The third article is Birdsell’s “Ronald Reagan on Lebanon and Grenada: Flexibility and Interpretation in the Application of Kenneth Burke's Pentad” (1987). This article focuses on a foreign policy address Ronald Reagan gave on the U.S. invasion of Grenada following an explosion in a Marine compound in Lebanon in 1983. The author found that this speech contained three pentads with scene, agent, and act dominating different sections, which served to highlight the “power and ability of the American military and the vision of the Reagan administration” (p. 267).

Finally, the fourth article is Kelley’s “The 1984 Campaign Rhetoric of Representative George Hansen: A Pentadic Analysis” (1987). This paper focuses on the 1984 election defeat—by the slimmest margin in Idaho history—of U.S. Congressman George Hansen. This narrow margin was surprising given that Hansen was facing four felony convictions for filing false financial reports at the time of the election. The author focuses on two pentads: (1) Hansen’s explanation of the felony conviction (with the
agent-purpose ratio dominating) and (2) his fight for reelection (with the agent-act ratio dominating).

It is perhaps not surprising that political speeches and statements dominate pentadic subject matter as each of the exemplars takes a rhetorical critical approach. While newer critical methods (including the pentad) displaced the traditional neo-Aristotelian approach in the 1960s, the analysis of public oratory is still a mainstay of rhetorical criticism.

In these exemplars, the authors have made explicit the usually unquestioned (and sometimes ulterior) motives behind political rhetoric. For example, while Ronald Reagan’s motives were not necessarily hidden in his 1980 Republican primary performances or in his speech on Grenada and Lebanon, the authors worked to reveal the strategies Reagan used to gain identification with his audience. In addition, Ted Kennedy’s continuation as a senator despite his involvement in Chappaquiddick and Congressman George Hansen’s near reelection despite four felony convictions are further revealing. The study of how politicians can gain identification with their audiences, even when embroiled in scandal, sheds light not only on the process audience identification but also on the critic’s role in uncovering these devices. This situation is exemplified in Burke’s own essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle’” (1973, pp. 191-220). In this essay Burke noted that despite Hitler’s claim that his rhetoric was developed in the name of “humility, love, and peace,” Mein Kampf falls under “the classification of hate…. And the patterns of Hitler’s thought are a bastardized or caricatured version of religious thought” (p. 199). Based on these observations, Burke then notes that the critic’s job is to
“find all available ways of making the Hitlerite distortions of religion apparent, in order that politicians of his kind in America be unable to perform a similar swindle” (p. 219).

Hochmuth helps to generalize Burke’s call for critical responsibility, stating that the critic should “be ready to alert a people, to warn what devices of exploitation are being exercised, by what skillful manipulation of motives men are being directed to or dissuaded from courses of action” (1965, p. 17).

While general political discourse may not necessarily share the same motivations as Hitler’s rhetoric, critics applying the pentad to political rhetoric are heeding Burke’s and Hochmuth’s advice. However, given the general belief and frequent proof that politicians act in self-serving ways and lie (e.g. Simons & Chabris, 2010), are the findings of these political analyses surprising? Is it necessarily interesting that a politician may dramatize in self-serving ways? This is an interesting point to make regarding pentadic analyses that focus on politics: while the results of the analysis in some cases may not be particularly surprising or interesting, it appears their value is in exposing the motives that underlie public rhetoric.

I will now discuss the remaining subjects to which scholars applied the pentad. Of the four remaining exemplars, two of the artifacts focused on areas that fall safely into the traditional realm of rhetorical analysis, public discourse and rhetorical critical methods. However, these articles applied the pentad to new subjects that gained prominence in the 1970s. While Brummett’s 1979 article focused on the public discourse surrounding gay rights, Brown’s 1978 article worked to define feminist criticism using the pentad. The two remaining articles focused on murder-suicide (Fisher, 1974) and manslaughter
(Tonn, Endress, & Diamond, 1993). These articles are interesting in that they applied the pentad to situations that fall outside the traditional realm of rhetoric. However, as dramatism focuses on symbolic action, not just discourse, these studies signal an exciting extension of the use of the pentad and additional opportunities to uncover the worldviews underlying various types of symbolic acts. While some scholars may disagree with these non-traditional applications (e.g. Baskerville, 1971), others encourage these extensions (e.g. Tompkins, 1969). I will discuss these articles in more depth later in this chapter and will explore other possible pentadic applications in Chapter 4.

The subjects covered in the eight exemplars demonstrate that earlier pentadic studies focused not only on traditional applications such as political discourse, but also new emerging subjects of contemporary interest such as gay rights and feminism. In addition, they also signal the emerging application of the pentad to non-traditional subjects such as murder. In all, the range of subjects illustrates the role of the critic in exposing motives in a variety of contexts.

**Question 3: Which journals are leading pentadic scholarship?**

Three different journals published these eight exemplar articles. The *Quarterly Journal of Speech* leads with four, the *Central States Speech Journal* (which later became *Communication Studies*) published three, and the *Western Journal of Speech Communication* (which is now *Western Journal of Communication*) published one. Given that the exemplars are from the field of rhetorical studies, which, while interdisciplinary, has a strong relationship with, and is sometimes classed under, communication studies, it is not surprising that communication journals published all of the exemplars.
Question 4: What are the formats for secondary sources of pentadic scholarship?

Each of the exemplars is a scholarly journal article. Given that the exemplars’ focus was on teaching pentadic application versus theoretical development, it is not surprising that the inclusion of only journal articles served to provide relatively short and accessible examples of pentadic application.

Question 5: Are current pentadic scholars mainly focused on critical application or theoretical development?

Despite Brummett and Young’s finding that the period between the 1950s and the 1980s focused largely on theoretical development of dramatism, only one of the eight pentadic exemplars (13%) focused mainly on theoretical development—Brown’s “Kenneth Burke and The Mod Donna: The Dramatistic Method Applied to Feminist Criticism” (1978). Perhaps a reason for this is that, again, the exemplars’ focus was on teaching pentadic application versus theoretical development. This article was written when “a consensus on what is meant by ‘feminist criticism’ or by ‘feminist drama’ has not been reached” (p. 138). Therefore, this paper’s goal was to create a definition of feminist drama. To do this, the paper outlines a critical tool to identify the feminist characteristics in a work of dramatic art (p. 140). The author creates this tool by defining a particular pentad with purpose as the dominant element: the agent is a woman, the scene is an unjust socio-sexual hierarchy, the purpose is the achievement of autonomy, and the act and agency vary depending on the plot of the artifact under review (pp. 140-141). The author then applies this pentad to a play called The Mod Donna by Myrna
Lamb. In all, the author argues, “Burke’s dramatistic theory offers a definition of feminist drama, and an analytic means of tracing its action” (p. 143). The interesting point to consider about this article is that it does not seek to develop dramatistic theory per se, but instead uses dramatism to develop feminist theory. At its core, the idea is that dramatism is in itself a comprehensive theory that is useful as a means to advance other critical methods. Since the article confirms dramatism theory rather than critiquing it or working to clarify it, perhaps this is one reason why textbook authors cite this theory-focused paper as an exemplar.

**Question 6: In what ways do scholars apply the mechanics of the pentadic method?**

**Question 6a: Which element dominated most frequently?**

I found that the eight exemplars contained 13 pentads (five exemplars contained two or more pentads while four only contained one). Of these 13 pentads, agent dominated most frequently (six times), followed by scene and act tied with three. Purpose dominated once while agency never dominated. Perhaps this is not surprising considering that Burke considered agent, scene, and act the “big three” of the elements, while agency and purpose are aligned in more of a means-end relationship (1969a, p. 274).

**Question 6b: Are scholars using attitude as an element?**

Only one of the eight exemplars (13%), Fisher’s “A Burkean Analysis of the Rhetorical Dimensions of a Multiple Murder and Suicide” (1974), used the sixth element of the pentad, attitude. The author notes, “prior to this study, the existence of the sixth term, ‘attitude’ has rarely been acknowledged in Burkean criticism” (p. 189). This is
noteworthy given that Fisher’s 1974 article (the second oldest of the exemplars) employs attitude at a time when there were only three primary Burkean references to its existence (Burke, 1968, 1969a, 1972). In addition, the subsequent six exemplars only used the five elements. Perhaps the cause for this is that Fisher had extensively researched the use of the sixth element (or as she called it, “pentad plus one”) in her 1970 dissertation (1974, p. 182, n. 21) while contemporary exemplar authors had less exposure to this concept.

Fisher’s paper focuses on the 1970 multiple-murder suicide involving Joseph White’s shooting of several of his coworkers. This early pentadic analysis is also significant because it applies the pentad to a subject that is not considered traditional rhetoric. Because White’s act was widely publicized as being “motiveless” in the contemporary press, the author applied the pentad since it centers on uncovering human motivation. The author found that in White’s pursuit of gaining redemption—he had previously changed his name and obtained plastic surgery in partial attempts at self-mortification—he finally sought total transformation (and redemption) via his act of murder and suicide, as exemplified in an act-agency ratio.

**Question 6c: Are scholars using philosophies?**

Three of the eight exemplars (38%) drew upon the philosophy related to the dominant pentadic element: Ling (1970), Birdsell (1987), and Tonn, Endress, and Diamond (1993). However, while Brummett did not use philosophy in “A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies in Two Gay Rights Controversies” (1979), he did acknowledge the concept. This article focuses on the rhetorical appeals surrounding two elections in which voters decided to repeal gay rights ordinances in Dade County, Florida in 1977 and
St. Paul, Minnesota in 1978. The author found two pentads, one for each of the opposing sides of the dispute. Those in support of gay rights featured the agent-act ratio, holding that homosexuals are first people that deserve rights—who they have sex with (their acts) are derivative of who they are as people. Those in opposition to gay rights featured an opposite pentad with a dominant act-agent ratio. In this pentad opponents argue that people are defined by their actions. While the author did not explicitly draw upon idealism or realism (the philosophies related to agent and act) he did acknowledge the concept of philosophy (p. 252, n. 7) as a means to argue that non-dominant elements or ratios need not be covered in the space of the essay. Given this explanation, it is important to note that there may be particular reasons an author may not include the philosophic schools in the text of the analysis. For example, scholarly journal length constraints or the fact that naming the corresponding philosophic school may simply repeat findings established earlier in the text, may be possible explanations as to why an author would exclude an explanation of philosophies. However, since I do not have specific knowledge about any of the elements that may have constrained the exemplar authors, for the purposes of my analysis, I will only count an author as using philosophies if they explicitly name them within the study.

**Question 6d: Which other dramatistic concepts do scholars use?**

Three of the eight exemplars (38%) drew upon other dramatistic concepts (including the guilt-redemption cycle, identification, and representative anecdote) in addition to the pentad: Fisher (1974), Brown (1978), and Tonn, Endress, and Diamond’s “Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy” (1993). These
studies demonstrate that the use of other dramatistic concepts in conjunction with the pentad has been, if not a standard practice, a pattern that has existed since at least the 1970s. This insight will provide an interesting base of comparison for current studies. As I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 2, approximately 60% of recent pentadic artifacts used at least one additional dramatistic concept. I will discuss this in more depth in Chapter 4. In the meantime, since I have covered Fisher’s and Brown’s articles above, I will now review “Hunting.” Like Fisher’s article, this essay focuses on the aftermath of a shooting death. In this case, the authors analyze the rhetoric surrounding the accidental shooting of a Maine homemaker on her wooded property by a hunter. This act occurred amidst a backdrop of conflict between Mainers’ traditional hunting lifestyle colliding against the beliefs of an increasing migration of out-of-state residents. In this article, the authors draw upon the guilt-redemption cycle as a lens to explore the strategies pro-hunting rhetors used to expunge the guilt that the homemaker’s death placed upon the sport of hunting. The authors find that aspects of the scene had to be interpreted and emphasized in different ways in order to place blame on the victim by pro-hunters. The authors also found parallels in the pro-hunter account with stories that place female victims as the cause of their own sexual assaults.

Conclusion of Exemplar Review.

Based on this initial review of exemplars, I have defined my analytical framework according to my research questions. In the process I have created a baseline against which I can compare current pentadic scholarship and have provided a review of exemplar studies as a means for Burkean students to gain familiarity with where the
pentad has been. I have found that while scholars mainly focused on political discourse in the exemplars, half the articles focused on new subject matter. In addition, while few used attitude as the sixth element or included the philosophic schools in their texts, the use of additional dramatistic concepts has been in place for almost 40 years. In all, creating this framework has set the stage for understanding how the use of the pentad has evolved and the possible directions in which pentadic scholars may be going.

Artifact Selection

In this section I will outline my method for selecting and assessing artifacts. I chose to include the last 10 years of scholarship (2001-2010) in order to provide not only a current but also a broad sample. I included scholarly articles, books, conference papers, and doctoral dissertations within my search that dealt substantially with the pentad—I excluded any artifacts that contained only passing mentions of the concept. To locate the artifacts, I used general Internet searches and the following databases: Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), Communication & Mass Media Complete (EBSCO), and Dissertations and Theses Full Text - Part A: Humanities and Social Sciences (ProQuest). I used the following search terms: “pentad,” “hexad,” and “Kenneth Burke.” I also relied upon a comprehensive bibliography of secondary Burkean sources available from KB Journal (Rountree, 2010).

In all, I gathered 62 artifacts. However, upon further review, I excluded six artifacts because they did not deal substantially with the pentad. Therefore, my research net contained 56 artifacts: 1 book, 16 conference papers, 13 dissertations, and 26 journal articles (14 from scholarly journals at large and 12 from the Kenneth Burke Society’s
journal, www.kbjournal.org). See Appendix for a categorized list of artifacts. Now that I have outlined the procedures I used to select my research sample, I will now present my state of the pentad analysis in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

CURRENT PENTADIC SCHOLARSHIP

In this chapter, I will review the last ten years of pentadic scholarship in order to assess the current state of pentadic scholarship. Using the research questions I developed in Chapter 1 and further refined in Chapter 3, I will assess the 56 artifacts and locate trends as a means to identify the pentad’s scholarly status.

Question 1: Which Disciplines are Currently Using the Pentad?

As I found in chapter 1 and in my exemplar review, the interdisciplinary field of rhetorical studies is the leading area of pentadic activity, representing 34 (61%) of my artifacts. Communication studies follows with 12 artifacts (21%). Of these, six artifacts related to mass media, three to organizational communication, and three to public relations. Next, three artifacts (5%) related to English and two (4%) related to education and instruction. The remaining disciplines each had one artifact: nursing, philosophy, gay and lesbian studies, social science, and theology. While rhetoric and communication studies dominate pentadic scholarship, the remaining disciplines attest to the wide range of interest in the pentad. However, the fact that 82% of pentadic scholarship is generated by rhetorical studies and communication studies tends to limit the application of the pentad to particular subjects. I will discuss this in more depth in reviewing the next question.

Question 2: To What Subjects do Scholars Apply the Pentad?

As in my exemplar review, scholars focused most frequently on subjects within the political realm. My research net contained 15 artifacts (27%) that focused on political
speeches, statements, and articles on subjects such as race, religion, stem-cell research, congressional testimony, terrorism, and Bill Clinton’s impeachment. Other subjects include mass media, with 10 artifacts (18%), dramatism theory, with 8 artifacts (14%), rhetorical analysis of TV shows, plays, and films also with six artifacts (11%), and workplace-centered communication with topics such as diversity, maternity leave, and professional writing with five artifacts (9%). Some of the remaining subjects with 3 or fewer artifacts were the rhetoric of science, public relations, the rhetoric surrounding public sex and HIV, and theology. While pentadic scholars continue to focus on politics (which is perhaps explained by the dominance of rhetorical and communication studies as the leading disciplines using the pentad), the overall range of subjects highlights the flexibility and utility of the pentad in a variety of situations. However, there may be additional untapped subjects of pentadic application that offer the opportunity to uncover motives using the pentad. In this section, I will first discuss the continued dominance of politics as a focus of pentadic scholarship. Second, I will offer additional possible subjects in which the pentad may be applied.

First, while politically focused artifacts comprised 50% of the exemplars they only made up 27% of my research sample. Perhaps this is due to the small number of exemplars versus the expanded scope of my research sample. In addition, the exemplars’ status as teaching aids for learning pentadic analysis necessarily excludes most artifacts that focus on theory building or artifacts that use the pentad in unconventional ways. Therefore, it is important to reiterate that with my qualitative focus, I used the exemplars as a starting point for analysis, not as a strict statistical comparison.
With this in mind, it is interesting that politics continues to dominate pentadic application. Within these politically focused artifacts, President Bush’s rhetoric emerged as a leading topic with 4 artifacts. Koehn’s two conference papers (2008, 2009) and dissertation (2010) focus on Bush speeches related to same-sex marriage, stem-cell research, and September 11th. She finds Bush’s “ethical elitism” frames situations in which few powerful elites make decisions instead of the Americans directly affected by those decisions. Kephart’s conference paper focused on three early terrorism-related speeches given by President Bush in 2001 and 2002 and finds that Bush’s ambiguous terminology enabled him to create an open-ended call to action for the American people. This ambiguity acted as sort of a “blank check” which could be used for multiple purposes. As I stated in the previous chapter, these analyses serve to expose the dramatic tactics the president used to gain identification for his programs, which is an important function of rhetorical criticism. However, this focus on Bush’s speeches serves to illustrate a particular drawback of studying popular politics. Here, the results echo much of the rhetoric for those who opposed Bush’s policies. I want to point out that I am not labeling these studies as partisan or implying that their results were not valid. However, I am arguing that the results seem somewhat obvious. This is consistent with the findings from my exemplar review, wherein I noted that the value of pentadic analyses focusing on politics is in exposing the motives that underlie public rhetoric and not necessarily in providing startling findings.

While I acknowledge the focus on politics is important and heeds Burke’s call, I argue that applying the pentad in new contexts and uncovering new insights is equally
important. Therefore, it is worth examining potential subjects that may be sources for
further pentadic application. As a starting point, I will review MacLennan’s article, “A
In this article, MacLennan completes the link Jeanne Fisher first introduced between
crime scenes and rhetorical analysis. In this essay, the author explicitly ties the technique
of crime-scene profiling with dramatism. While crime-scene profiling developed
independently of the pentad, the author argues it is essentially a rhetorical method using
the same elements and ratios found in the pentad, albeit with different names. The author
notes that the crime-scene profiler:

> “Reads” the crime scene in exactly the way a critic studies any other text,
> revealing its symbolic structures and deciphering its message in order to
> understand, as Kenneth Burke would have it, “what people are saying—or are
> trying to say.” (para. 4)

In the article, the author compares FBI profiler John Douglas’ works *An Anatomy of
Motive, Obsession, Mindhunter*, and *Journey into Darkness* with dramatistic analysis.
Some parallels between the methods are immediately apparent in a comparison of the
agent-act-scene-agency-purpose of the pentad and the analytical pattern of who-what-
where-when-how-why of Douglas’ profiling (para. 12). However, there is an even deeper
philosophical linkage. In both systems, the criminal act is a drama of transformation in
which the offender both redefines himself, the victim, and the social scene through a
series of steps that mirror the guilt-redemption cycle (para. 45). The fact that both
methods developed independently and yet arrived at the same result further validates the
utility and veracity of dramatistic theory. In addition, this linkage also provides support for the application of the pentad to other perhaps unconventional subject matter.

As a next step, I conducted a search for the term “motive” using Academic Search Premier (EBSCO) and Communication & Mass Media Complete (EBSCO) databases. In addition, I also searched the Criminal Justice Abstracts (CSA) database based on the connection between dramatism and crime scenes that MacLennan demonstrated. My goal was to locate current scholarship in a variety of disciplines (including traditional rhetoric- and communication-focused studies) related to uncovering motives. I want to point out that this was not an exhaustive or representative search. My goal was simply to identify subjects in which scholars study motives but have not used the pentad during the last ten years of my sample. I quickly identified three subjects that spanned multiple articles.

First, in the realm of criminal justice, I located articles focusing on the motives behind interpersonal violence (e.g. Hamel, Desmarais, & Nicholls, 2007; Weston, Marshall, & Coker 2007) and crimes such as rape (e.g. Bryden & Grier, 2011) and the motivations behind breaking parole (e.g. Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2007). Second, I found several articles regarding the motives behind using addictive substances such as alcohol (e.g. Martens, Pedersen, Smith, Steward, & O’Brien, 2011; Hasking, Lyvers, & Carlopio, 2011), marijuana (e.g. Potter, Vujanovic, Marshall-Berenz, Benstein, & Bonn-Miller, 2011), and smoking (e.g. Piasecki, Piper, Baker, & Hunt-Carter, 2011). Third, I located articles involving lying and deception (e.g. Levine, Kim, & Hamel, 2010; Bryant & Sias, 2011). While most of these studies used quantitative methods, and each drew from other theoretical foundations to uncover motives (usually theories from the fields of
psychology and sociology), their very focus on motives invites the use of the pentad as a theoretical alternative. In addition, by viewing these subjects as symbolic acts, scholars have an opportunity to assess these acts from a pentadic point of view.

In answering this question, I have outlined the subjects to which scholars currently apply the pentad. I have also discussed the dominance of political applications and have offered additional opportunities for pentadic analysis. In all I have found that while the pentad is applied to a breadth of subjects, there is still opportunity to expand its range.

**Question 3: Which Journals are Leading Pentadic Scholarship?**

The 26 journal articles within my research sample were published by 14 different journals. Of these journals, only two, *The Journal of Homosexuality* and *Qualitative Health Research*, fell outside the realm of communication studies. *KB Journal* published by far the most articles with 12 (46%) followed by Technical Communication Quarterly, which published 2 (8%). The remaining 12 journals only published 1 article each, which included *The Quarterly Journal of Speech (QJS)*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. In this section, I will cover two different implications of this distribution. First, most of the previous leading publishers of pentadic articles and Burkean scholarship at large are either low on this list or missing from it. Second, the relatively new *KB Journal* now dominates the publication of pentadic work.

Based on the list of the top five journals publishing Burkean scholarship from Chapter 1 and the publishers of the exemplar articles from Chapter 3, I have compiled a
general list of traditional leading journals: *QJS, Rhetoric Review, Western Journal of Communication, Communication Quarterly, Communication Studies,* and *Western Journal of Communication.* Within my research sample, *Rhetoric Review,* *Communication Studies,* and *Western Journal of Communication* did not publish any of the articles, while the remaining journals published only one each. In comparison, while the *KB Journal,* as of 2007, had published approximately 5% of the total of Burkean scholarship published in journal articles (Rountree, 2007, para. 21), it has published nearly half (46%) of pentadic scholarship in the last ten years. This is especially interesting as the *KB Journal* only started publication in Fall 2004, three years into my sample date range.

This recent domination is perhaps not surprising given the journal’s focus devoted exclusively to Burke, but it does pose some interesting points for consideration. On one hand, the journal is fully online and open to anyone with a web connection, unlike other scholarly journals that require a subscription. This means that an Internet search of Kenneth Burke will likely return one of their articles. The *KB Journal* website itself acts as a useful type of storehouse on information on Kenneth Burke and dramatistic theory. This open access approach not only increases the availability but possibly also interest in Burkean thought. On the other hand, certain questions come to mind. Could this concentration of publication potentially isolate scholarly interest in Burke? For example, will other journals be less likely to publish dramatistic works because they reason the *KB Journal* will publish them anyway? In addition, how will the editorial policy of the *KB Journal* affect the content of Burkean scholarship? Will particular viewpoints that may
have found a voice in other journals now not get published? While the emergence of the
*KB Journal* is an exciting trend in dramatistic scholarship and promises to increase
interest in the work of Kenneth Burke and the pentad, I feel it is important to pose these
questions.

In all, 14 different journals published pentadic scholarship within the last 10
years. However, the *KB Journal* has recently come to dominate publication with former
leading journals publishing few or no articles featuring the pentad. This trend means that
nearly half of the pentadic articles are now freely available on the Internet. In addition, as
an advocate of Kenneth Burke’s ideas, the *KB Journal* is working to increase interest in
dramatism and Burke at large. However, this recent emergence also poses some
interesting questions, which may be answered in the coming years.

**Question 4: What are the Formats for Secondary Sources of Pentadic Scholarship?**

My research net contained 56 artifacts: 26 journal articles (46%), 16 conference
papers (29%), 13 dissertations (23%) and 1 book (2%). In this case, 52% of recent
pentadic works are conference papers and dissertations. This seems to indicate that
interest in the pentad is still strong and will continue for some time. It is interesting to
note that three of the conference papers and one of the theses were later published as
journal articles. This points to the general progression in scholarship that conference
papers and dissertations act as an early testing ground for emerging scholars, who then go
on to publish more formal works in journal articles and books.

As a means to gain insight into the publication process, in this section I will focus
on the changes authors may make to their analysis in the process of getting their journal
article published. To do this, I will compare the original and journal article versions of
the four artifacts in my research net that were published in a journal. Of these artifacts,
two underwent substantial changes between the original and the journal article versions
while the other two were virtually unchanged in the process. It is important to note that
in some sense I “double counted” these artifacts. For example, I counted Miller’s
dissertation (2002) focusing on Bill Clinton’s impeachment and his subsequent journal
article (2004) as two separate examples of political applications of the pentad. My
purpose in not attempting to exclude one of the artifacts as a duplicate was to maintain
consistency. Since my research net contained 56 artifacts published in different formats,
if I had excluded one of the versions of the study I would have skewed the percentage of
the dissertations or journal articles. However, by including both versions of this example,
I have in some ways skewed the distribution of pentadic subjects by inflating the number
of political examples. While these 4 potential duplicates represent 14% of my overall
sample, I believe maintaining the same overall number of artifacts in the process of
answering each of my research questions ensures consistency among each percentage
distribution.

To start, I will review the artifacts that underwent substantial change in the
publication process. First, I will compare the conference paper “‘We Were Allowed’: Investigating the Presence of a Bureaucratic Pentad in Women’s Maternity Leave Discourse” (Meisenbach et al., 2003) with the later journal article version “‘They Allowed’: Pentadic Mapping of Women’s Maternity Leave Discourse as Organizational Rhetoric” (Meisenbach, Remke, Buzzanell, & Liu, 2008). Both versions focus on the
discourse of mothers who take maternity leave. In comparing both versions, I found several changes. For example, in the journal article the authors added several sections to the paper. First, they explained the connection between maternity leave discourse and its significance for organizational communication research. Then, they added an explicit methods section and removed references to “bureaucratic pentads,” which was a recurring concept in the original paper. Finally, they added the use of philosophies and the representative anecdote in this paper. By making these changes, the authors shifted focus to applying organizational communication theory and the method of pentadic cartography in a new context (maternity leave discourse) rather than just on the discourse itself. In the process of adapting their study into a journal article, the authors worked to generalize their findings into a wider context. Rather than the original focus solely on maternity leave rhetoric, they also argued for the study’s importance as an example of pentadic application and pentadic mapping. Therefore, the authors expanded the article’s appeal to scholars who may wish to use the pentad, representative anecdote, or pentadic mapping in situations outside of just maternity leave rhetoric.

Second, I will compare the conference paper “A Pentadic Analysis of Celebrity Testimony in Congressional Hearings: Giving Voice to the Voiceless” (Darr & Strine, 2008) with its later journal article version “A Pentadic Analysis of Celebrity Testimony in Congressional Hearings” (2009). As the title suggests, the papers focus on the strategies celebrities employ when they testify in front of congress. The authors found that celebrities “portray their actions (giving voice to the voiceless) as controlled by the agent (their own personal experience with the subject—not their celebrity status) and
scene (the suffering of the people)” (pp. 14-15). In making changes, the authors rewrote introduction and method sections, making them more succinct, while leaving the conclusion virtually unchanged. In all, the article is approximately 1,500 words shorter than the 7,200-word conference paper. The changes made in this study were largely as a means to add clarity.

Now I will review the artifacts that went largely unchanged in the publication process. First, I will review Miller’s 2002 dissertation “Argument Efficacy: Evaluating the Public Arguments of President Clinton’s Impeachment Crisis” and its later version “Argument Efficacy: Evaluating the Public Argument of President Bill Clinton’s Impeachment Crisis” (2004). Essentially, the article was a condensed version of the dissertation and did not contain any substantial changes to the main ideas contained in the original version. This could be explained by the large amount of research and preparation that goes into completing a dissertation and the in-depth committee review process, which is similar to the journal review process. By condensing the key points of the highly researched and reviewed dissertation, the subsequent journal article reflects this level of preparation with its original ideas still intact.

Second, I will review Davisson and Booth’s conference paper (2007) and journal article (2007) both titled “Reconceptualizing Communication and Agency in Fan Activity: A Proposal for a Projected Interactivity Model for Fan Studies.” Interestingly, the journal article is virtually identical to its conference paper predecessor, which focuses on fan activity. Both artifacts point out some problems with current research methods related to fan activity and then present a new methodology called “projected
interactivity” which focuses on the interaction between the fan and the text itself. The artifacts propose a three-step method: (1) complete a pentadic analysis of a TV show, (2) survey and interview fans of the show, and (3) conduct an ethnography of the fan group. While the authors present a case for the need for this method, the artifacts do not make a case for a wider applicability as I noted in the maternity leave artifacts above. Perhaps this may be due simply on the authors’ preference.

In all, the four artifacts that were later published as journal articles provided insight into the publication process. I have found that in cases where authors changed their studies, they did so in order to appeal to a wider audience and to add clarity to their article. In cases where the authors did not make changes, it was perhaps because the study was already substantially researched and vetted or the particular journal’s editorial process did not require any changes. My point in highlighting this process was to provide insight to potential student readers who may submit pentadic works to scholarly journals.

**Question 5: Are Current Pentadic Scholars Mainly Focused on Critical Application or Theoretical Development?**

Only 13 artifacts (23%) focused on theoretical development of the pentad versus critical application. This is in line with Brummett’s and Young’s finding that since the 1980s, Burkean scholars have increasingly focused on critical application (2006, para. 8). However, I believe it is important to trace the continued evolution of the pentad within this minority of artifacts as a means not only to understand its current position but also to forecast how it may be used in the future. In this section, I will review two key theoretical
extensions introduced within the last ten years, pentadic cartography and “public relations counsel with a heart.”

**Pentadic cartography.**

To start, in “Pentadic cartography: Mapping the universe of discourse”, Anderson and Prelli (2001) introduce the most prominent theoretical extension of the pentad in my sample. In the last ten years, this article resulted in four follow up studies by other scholars that drew upon this extension of the pentad. In this section, I will review the source article and the four follow up artifacts.

**Source article.**

In formulating pentadic cartography, Anderson and Prelli note that “advanced industrial society is so pervaded with a technological rationality that it fosters a closed universe of thought and discourse that stifles and silences all other points of view” (p. 73). Instead of an open universe of discourse that encourages discussion and promotes viewing issues from a variety of perspectives, we live in a society that favors a certain (and closed) point of view, which excludes the possibility of competing perspectives. The authors draw upon the pentad as a means to chart the ways in which different terminologies function to open or close discourse.

Throughout the article, Anderson and Prelli draw upon the metaphor of mapmaking, or cartography, to explain their idea. Whereas a cartographer maps geographical terrain, the pentadic cartographer maps symbolic terrain. In addition, like maps, one may map the terminological implications of “large scale” (i.e. small scope) artifacts such as single speeches, individual newspaper articles, or poems, and “small
scale” (i.e. large scope) artifacts such as an entire “social order” (p. 83) or critical discourse. To illustrate this idea, the authors start by mapping an artifact with a small scope, a 1997 AT&T commercial. Then, they map the large-scope pentadic terrain of German philosopher Herbert Marcuse’s thoughts on the universe of discourse, as outlined in his 1964 book, *One-Dimensional Man*.

Interestingly, the concept of using the pentad as a map is not necessarily new. For example, in “The Pentad as Map: A Strategy for Exploring Rhetorical Cases” (1986), Mark Simpson advocated using the pentad to map the various decision points business communication students may make in the course of completing case study assignments of actual business situations. However, in the case of pentadic cartography, the authors use the pentad to map the highlighted ratios the rhetor is advocating. By doing this, the critic can then see which alternative viewpoints the rhetor is downplaying. For example, in the 60-second AT&T commercial, they uncover six separate pentads which each contain dominant ratios. The authors map out how each pentad links to the next at transformative pivot points that move the story along. In the commercial, AT&T depicts the cell phone as a savior for a mother who is struggling to balance the demands of work and home life. The commercial starts and ends with two drastically different pentads featuring a scene-agent ratio. At the start, the mother struggles to meet the demands of her job and the need of her daughters to have fun. By the end of the commercial, the family is at the beach with the mother happily taking a business meeting via cell phone. Rather than questioning the negative impacts of overwork on the family, AT&T merely combines the scenes of family and work together. This emphasis on the scene advocates a materialist
philosophy, or as the authors note, a “contemporary mindset which seeks in technology a solution to all of life’s problems” (p. 86). Thus, the commercial closes the universe of discourse to all views not rooted in “in scenic materialistic orientations toward reality” (p. 85).

This commercial illustrates how the critic can uncover not only the dominant element or ratio as they normally would with pentadic analysis, but also shows how by locating the dominant philosophy inherent in the rhetor’s motives, they locate a jumping off point for identifying other possible orientations. As a means to open the discourse, the critic may look at alternative ratios or philosophies. With these alternative viewpoints identified, the critic can then turn them into counter-I, or alternative perspectives. In this case, the critic may look toward an agent-scene ratio (the reverse of the dominant ratio in the commercial) for an alternate point of view that stresses “the role of individual human agents, rather than social institutions, in shaping the circumstances and conditions that influence their lives” (p. 86).

In their second analysis, which focuses on Marcuse’s social critique and critical method, Anderson and Prelli found a dominant agent-purpose ratio. They hold that while Marcuse attempted to open up the universe of discourse, he inadvertently closed it to all alternative ways of thinking that did not feature agent-purpose relationships (p. 87).

In all, Anderson and Prelli contend that “Maps enable critics to invent alternative vocabularies of motive that can serve as counterstatements which are capable of reintroducing a pluralistic dialectic and, thereby, of opening the universe of discourse” (p. 88).
Follow up artifacts.

Since pentadic cartography’s introduction in 2001, four other artifacts have drawn upon the subject. The first was the conference paper “‘We Were Allowed’: Investigating the Presence of a Bureaucratic Pentad in Women’s Maternity Leave Discourse” (Meisenbach et al., 2003) which was later developed into the journal article “‘They Allowed’: Pentadic Mapping of Women’s Maternity Leave Discourse as Organizational Rhetoric” (Meisenbach, Remke, Buzzanell, & Liu, 2008). As I have previously covered the evolution of the original paper into the scholarly article above in question 4, I will focus here on the 2008 article.

In drawing upon pentadic cartography, the authors are able to use the pentad not only to identify the viewpoints that dominate maternity leave discourse but to consider alternative orientations as possibilities for change. In this paper, the authors interviewed women who had previously taken at least one maternity leave from work. They found that when women described how they went about arranging their maternity leaves, they primarily described a dominant bureaucratic scene in which “organizations, HR departments, supervisors, doctors, generalized others, and pregnant women all acted as agents subservient to the bureaucratic scene and means of maternity leave management” (p. 14). In this scene, the machinery of the organization with its bureaucratic procedures and rules dominated the agency of the pregnant women. In an adept application of the related pentadic philosophy, materialism, the authors noted that the “organizationally derived and materialist motive of profit and efficiency ignores (traditionally) private issues of health and justice” (p. 16). They then set the stage to consider alternatives. They
suggest moving discussions of maternity leave from the bureaucratic organizational scene into a larger social scene—once that incorporates society at large (p. 16).

The authors then considered alternate ratios and proposed another option that privileges mothers as agents in arranging their own maternity leaves, which would operate using the philosophy of idealism, “which assumes that the world operates according to human reason and the mind” (p. 18). In this way, the authors have taken full advantage of pentadic mapping not only by identifying the orientations present in a certain type of discourse, but by formulating alternatives and then assessing the alternative’s rhetorical implications and orientations as a means to open the seemingly closed world of maternity leave discourse.

The next artifact is “Pentadic Cartography: Mapping Birth Trauma Narratives” (Beck, 2006). This article focuses on narratives of mothers who encountered trauma while giving birth. Although the author draws upon the concept of mapping the various pentads contained within the mothers’ narratives as outlined in pentadic cartography, she does not specifically seek alternative viewpoints as a means to open the discourse of traumatic births. Instead, given that this paper was published in *Qualitative Health Research*, Beck focused on the implications of the absence of caring and effective communication in the clinical practice of caring for mothers. This brings up an interesting trend in pentadic application when comparing the 46 rhetorical criticism and communication studies artifacts in my research sample with the 10 artifacts from other disciplines. I found that rhetorical criticism and communication studies artifacts tended to be more familiar with the pentad and use the various dramatistic concepts correctly. In
addition, rhetorical criticism and communication studies artifacts were more likely than
the other disciplines to draw upon other dramatistic concepts in addition to the pentad
(63% versus 40%), include the philosophic schools (26% versus 10%), and focus on
theory rather than analysis (17% versus 10%). This makes sense given that, as I noted in
Question 1, rhetorical criticism and communication studies generate over 80% of the
pentadic scholarship. As these disciplines apply the pentad most frequently, they would
likewise tend to be the most familiar and comfortable with dramatistic concepts.

The final artifact is “(Re)charting the (Dis)courses of Faith and Politics, or
Rhetoric and Democracy in the Burkean Barnyard” (DePalma, Ringer, & Webber, 2008).
In this article, the authors apply the method of pentadic cartography to Sharon Crowley’s
book, Toward a Civil Discourse and Barack Obama’s keynote address at “Pentecost
2006: Building a Covenant for a New America”. The authors’ chose these artifacts since
each attempt to open the often-contentious discourse at the intersection of religion and
politics.

In their analysis the authors find that while Crowley and Obama were attempting
to open the universe of discourse through their rhetoric, they were unintentionally closing
it. This is similar to Anderson and Prelli’s finding when they analyzed Marcuse’s social
critique and critical method. The authors argue that Crowley and Obama advocate a
solution embodying the materialist-pragmatic (scene-agency) orientation of liberal
American politics. This orientation discounts and de-emphasizes the agent-purpose
orientation of fundamentalist Christianity (p. 322). In line with the goal of pentadic
cartography, the authors then outline alternative perspectives with the goal of opening the universe of discourse.

**Implications of pentadic cartography.**

By mapping the symbolic features of a discourse, pentadic cartography advocates the full potential of the pentad. This theoretical extension not only calls for the critic to identify the dominant element of a particular artifact, but also to identify the ways in which its inherent philosophy acts as a terministic screen to downplay alternative points of view. With this dominating orientation identified, the critic can then use the pentad to locate other options by which to view the situation. The subsequent uses of pentadic cartography demonstrated its usefulness in opening the seemingly closed discourses of organizational bureaucracy and contentious politics. In addition, the tool was used as a means to identify improvements in communication in the clinical setting.

**“Public relations counsel with a heart.”**

Next, inspired by a passage from *Attitudes Toward History*, Smudde presents his theoretical extension of the pentad in “Implications on the Practice and Study of Kenneth Burke's Idea of a ‘Public Relations Counsel with a Heart’” (2004). In the last ten years, one other artifact in my sample drew upon this idea that bridges rhetorical theory and public relations practice (p. 421). In this section, I will review the source article and the follow up artifact.

In explaining the title *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke noted the book deals with “characteristic responses of people in their forming and reforming of congregations” (1984a, p. 1) and provided three possible alternative titles as further explanation of the
concept. One of these was “Manual of Terms for a Public Relations Counsel with a Heart” (ibid.). The idea of a “Public Relations Counsel with a Heart” is where “publicists try to inspire people to analyze their situations critically, spark creative ways to address situations symbolically, and achieve consubstantiality with what is going on in human situations” (Smudde, p. 421). To build a bridge from this concept to practice, the author advances a method that will enable an organization to inspire cooperation with its publics by enacting an issue’s drama in a way that audiences with it (p. 424).

This method first calls for the organization to frame its issue within the four phases of the guilt-redemption cycle to identify its context. The context concerns the progression of an issue, which is embodied in the four phases. It begins with:

A stable order [hierarchy] just before something changes it. From there, context addresses who or what may have caused the problem (whether internal, external or a mix of both), their level of responsibility for it [guilt], and how [victimage / mortification] order can be restored for the organization and its publics [redemption]. (p. 425)

Next, drawing upon Burke’s view of identification, the method calls for the publicist to develop key messages with which the target publics can identify. Finally, the method calls for the use of the pentad to discover how language is used (1) to structure the public’s thinking about a particular issue (p. 428) and (2) as a means to manage the messages (dramas) for multiple audiences. Specifically, the publicist will systematically analyze the dynamics among the constituent dramatistic parts of the organization’s situation (p. 429). The author argues that “By employing Burke’s system, a public relations professional becomes more of a dramatist, who is tempered by a humanist perspective” (p. 430).
Unlike pentadic cartography which is a critical tool, this method acts more as a heuristic device to develop public relations messages. However, the one subsequent artifact to employ this concept, Cornwell’s conference paper “Analysis of the Public Relations of the Orphan Train Movement and Implications for International Adoption” (2007) uses it as a critical method.

This paper analyzes two artifacts from the orphan train movement (1854-1929) that was used as an early form of foster care. The system moved orphaned city children to rural families to work in exchange for shelter. One drawback of this analysis was that the selection of the pentadic elements seemed too literal. For example, in analyzing an 1860s flyer that exhorted families to take in orphans, the author identified the scene as the town where the orphans were taken, the act as the call to adopt the children, the agent as the person posting the flyer, the agency as the flyer, and the purpose to get the children adopted. However, the wording of the flyer calls for a more dramatic take:

Children without homes. A number of the children brought from New York are still without homes. Friends from the country please call and see them. Merchants, farmers and friends generally are requested to give publicity to the above and much oblige. H. Friedgen, Agent. (p. 17)

Here, a possible pentadic reading of the flyer may be the scene as a friendly country setting in which homeless and friendless city children still wait for help. The act is the befriending and taking in of the homeless children. The agents are the friendly country merchants, farmers, and other potential friends of the children. The agency is the country folks’ compassion and friendly nature. The purpose would be for the agents to live up to their country (and therefore friendly and compassionate) nature in contrast with the
implied cold nature of city dwellers. While this is not the only possible reading of the flyer, it focuses on the dramatic nature of the message.

The author found that the messages from the movement emphasized the purpose of social good above everything else, which still provides a model for adoption-related rhetoric today. In my alternative reading, it appears that purpose is also the dominant element. Therefore, the resulting philosophy embodying the worldview contained within the flyer is mysticism. In this philosophy the higher order associated with purpose calls for the agent to do whatever it takes to meet that purpose. In this case, they must live up to their friendly country nature and adopt a child from the city. In this case, the adoption movement’s rhetorical strategy helped gain acceptance of their message, which resulted in approximately 105,000 adoptions over the course of 75 years (p. 6).

In all, this method draws upon the guilt-redemption cycle, identification, and the pentad as a means to create messages with which audiences will identify. This method offers yet another useful extension of the pentad, this time as a heuristic tool that can be used in creating public relations messages or analyzing those messages within the context of public relations.

**Theoretical directions.**

In this section I have reviewed two important theoretical extensions of the pentad. With pentadic cartography critics can identify the featured worldview advocated within an artifact but also identify potential alternatives as a means to enact change. With “public relations counsel with a heart” public relations practitioners can enact a more
ethical approach through the process of identification. These recent developments point
to the pentad’s continued evolution and it additional opportunities for application.

Question 6: In What Ways do Scholars Apply the Mechanics of the Pentadic Method?

In this section, I will review how scholars apply and possibly misapply the pentad. Specifically, I will first review which element dominated most frequently. Next, I will analyze scholars’ use of the sixth pentadic element, attitude. Then, I will review their use of the philosophic schools. Next, I will review their use of the pentad in conjunction with other dramatistic concepts. Finally, I will draw conclusions from my review.

Question 6a: Which Element Dominated Most Frequently?

In my review, I found 11 (20%) of the artifacts did not name a dominant element. This was because the artifact was exclusively devoted to theoretical extension. The remaining 45 artifacts contained 130 pentads, each with a dominant element or ratio. This bears evidence that scholars are largely comfortable with what Rountree calls “multi-pentadic analysis” (1988). In considering the overall dominating elements, scene dominated most frequently, in 41 artifacts (32%). Next, act dominated in 34 artifacts (26%), agent in 27 (21%), agency in 16 (12%), purpose in 12 (9%), and attitude in 0 (0%). It is interesting that the elements dominate in almost the same order in which they appear in Grammar, with the exception of act and agent, which are switched in order. However, as I will further explain in answering the next question, Burke had originally listed act as the first element because the pentad features symbolic action (1969a, p. 227) but switched the initial order of the elements when writing Grammar for personal reasons. Therefore, it does not appear that the elements dominate in a certain order based
on their presentation in *Grammar*, but reflect the overall worldviews uncovered in the individual artifacts. However, this raises interesting questions. Why do scene, act, and agent dominate most frequently? Why do agency and purpose dominate the least? Given that attitude is currently used infrequently, it is not surprising it did not dominate any pentads. However, if attitude was included as the sixth element as a standard practice, how would this distribution be different? Perhaps this distribution of dominant elements reflects dominant ideologies in society. For example, Burke notes that scientific inquiry tends to embody a materialist (scenic) focus (p. 131). Hübler (2005) offers two additional examples, noting that agent dominates within the concept of American rugged individualism and agency dominates within society’s contemporary focus on technology. While these are just a few examples of particular ideologies, future pentadic studies may attempt to trace how large-scale worldviews, with their own particular dominating elements, influence individual symbolic acts, and the dominating elements contained within them.

**Question 6b: Are scholars using attitude as an element?**

Only 3 of the 56 artifacts (5%) used attitude as the sixth element of the pentad. In exploring these results, I will first review Anderson and Althouse’s recent article, “Five fingers or six? Pentad or hexad” (2010)? Next, I will review artifacts that acknowledged that attitude may be a sixth element but provided reasons for not using it. Finally, I will review one artifact that added a different sixth element called “trouble” to the pentad. To clarify, as I stated in Chapter 2, given the ubiquity of the term “pentad” in dramatistic
literature, going forward, I will use “pentad” even though I am including the sixth term of attitude.

**Pentad or hexad?**

Anderson and Althouse (2010) investigate the ambiguity surrounding the pentad and hexad. Taking a statement/counter-statement approach, the authors in the first section advocate for the pentad, arguing that the five elements already adequately account for attitude—the pentad is incipiently a hexad. In the second section, the authors point to several examples of hexadic analysis to demonstrate the effectiveness of adding the sixth term of attitude. Their goal in using this dialectical format was to enable the authors to “survey both positions at once, sympathetically and critically, and in relation to one another” (para. 5).

The authors provide an in-depth review of the reasons Burke gave for initially giving the pentad only five elements but then adding a sixth. As Burke noted in *A Grammar of Motives*, he first likened the terms to the fingers (Burke, 1969, p. xxii). In a series of interviews Burke gave between 1980 and 1981 (Rueckert & Bonadonna, 2003), Burke gave some insight to the process of ultimately selecting the five pentadic elements. He explained that while writing *A Grammar of Motives* he ended up rewriting the book even after the publisher accepted a completed draft. At one point, after rewriting the sections containing act, scene, and agent, he reached an impasse when dealing with agency and purpose. Burke realized he had two possible courses of action:
I remembered a letter in which I had referred to my children as my “five terms.” And that was the problem. If I went more fully in that direction [of personalizing the elements] the book would turn into a sizzle. But if I kept them as abstract as the original plan of the book demanded, I’d be as bound as if in a straight-jacket. (p. 368)

In equating the elements with the personalities of his children, Burke shifted act from its original first position of the pentad to third because his third daughter “was the stage-struck one” (p. 368). He also equated agency with his son Butchie because he was good with his hands. To resolve this dilemma, Burke chose a compromise, “While leaving the terms in their ‘personal’ order, I could now otherwise give them their proper abstractness, and the pattern is better with ‘how,’ quo modo, as attitude” (p. 369). This choice would have big implications for pentadic analysis going forward.

However, Burke, almost in passing, first mentions the hexad in a 1968 encyclopedia article on dramatism noting, “The pattern is incipiently a hexad when viewed in connection with the different but complementary analysis of attitude (as an ambiguous term for incipient action)” (p. 446). Then, in the addendum of the 1969 edition of Grammar, published 23 years after the first edition, he notes, “I have found one modification [to the pentad] useful for certain kinds of analysis. In accordance with my discussion of ‘attitudes’ … I have sometimes added the term ‘attitude’ to … the five major terms” (p. 443). Then, in 1972 Burke expressed regret for not including attitude as the sixth term (p. 23) and in his afterword in the 1984 edition of Attitudes Toward History, he stated the pentad would have been a hexad from the start if his use of the hexameter element quo modo had been clear (p. 394). Burke further explains:
You see the original formula I used, the mediaeval formula: *quis? quid? ubi? quibus auxillis? cur? quo modo? quando?* is a hexameter line…. I cheated in a way when I worked with it as a pentad, and I always think that I did it as a pentad because I had only five children…. I cheated in this way: If I say that “he did this,” for example, “He built this with a hammer with alacrity, with good will,’ I’ve used ‘agency’ in two ways, one literal, one figurative. I put ‘how’ and ‘by what means’ together; and what I did in making it a hexad was to make a difference between the two” (Rueckert & Bonadonna, 2003, pp. 366-367)

In all, the authors provide a well-written account of how the pentad became a hexad and in the process of their statement/counter-statement analysis, uncover the relative drawbacks and advantages of the hexad. For drawbacks, they demonstrate: (1) the pentad adequately accounts for attitude, (2) attitude is included regardless of whether there are five terms or six, and (3) transforming the pentad into a hexad creates terminological/logological inconsistency (given that there is no designated philosophy for attitude). For advantages, they demonstrate: (4) Burke changed his mind on the number of elements of the pentad/hexad, (5) the critical value of hexadic analysis in uncovering more sophisticated and highly nuanced explanations, and (6) hexadic analysis contains 10 additional ratios, which offer further opportunities to expand the critic’s perspective.

Given these relative disadvantages and advantages of hexadic analysis, the authors conclude the question should not be “pentad or hexad?” but “pentad and hexad?” The authors’ changing of the question, “both widens our perspective and also makes possible a reconciliation of the two positions. For example, one can believe that there is no theoretic reason for expanding the pentad into a hexad and simultaneously believe that hexadic analysis is a legitimate and helpful critical tool” (2010, para. 52).
While Burke considered the hexad an “improvement” over the pentad (Rueckert & Bonadonna, 2003, p. 367), his initial choice of five elements and somewhat vague explanation of the hexad has resulted in relatively few examples of hexadic analysis. As an improvement, the inclusion of a sixth element does provide another locus for analysis.

In addition, Anderson and Althouse note:

Manifestations of a writer’s or a speaker’s attitudes are often revealed through the tonalities of style…. [For example] Shouting expresses a different attitude than whispering. Use of hexadic analysis opens up the possibilities for critics to explore how a rhetor’s attitude is conveyed in the performative acts of writing and speaking. Moreover, hexadic analysis can be useful in the criticism of visual rhetoric. In such visual arts as drawing, painting, photography, and filmmaking, artists express attitudes with tones and tonalities. (2010, para. 37)

This statement provides insight to the “certain kinds of analysis” (1969, p. 443) for which Burke felt hexadic critique is best suited. Given these benefits of a hexadic approach it is unfortunate that it is so infrequently used.

Not using the sixth element.

Interestingly, most artifacts in my research net used the 1969 edition of Grammar, which contains the section hinting at using the sixth element. In addition, other artifacts draw upon the 1968 encyclopedia article first introducing the hexad (e.g. Willyard, 2007). However, 93% of the artifacts did not draw upon the element of attitude. To gain insight into this situation, I will review the few artifacts in my research net that both acknowledge the existence of the sixth element but still decline to use it.

In Guirrionero and Canel’s “The Role of Key Words in Terrorism Coverage: Framing Analysis from the Dramatism Perspective” (2009) the authors draw upon Cragan and Shields’ textbook Symbolic Theories in Applied Communication Research
which uses attitude as the sixth element. The authors note that Cragan and Shields “talk of Hexad since they include the concept of ‘attitude’ … (that we do not use in this paper)” (p. 8, n.3). However, the authors do not explain why they chose not to use the element. In MacLennan’s “A Rhetorical Journey into Darkness: Crime-Scene Profiling as Burkean Analysis” (2005) the author acknowledges the hexad, but offers that it is contained within the agent-act ratio as the reason for using five elements (para. 34). Similarly, in Kaylor’s “From Green River Farm to Feminist Front: A Rhetorical Analysis of Allie Hixson's ERA Crusade for Constitutional Change” (2002) the author acknowledges attitude as a possible sixth element, but also argues that since attitude may be an incipient or substitute act Burke listed attitude under agent (p. 93). It is important to note that Burke variously classed attitude under act, agent, or agency when he initially constructed the five-element pentad (Anderson & Althouse, 2010, p. para. 1). Anderson and Prelli offer the most complete explanation in “Pentadic cartography: Mapping the universe of discourse” (2001). The authors note they did not include the sixth term of attitude because “the case for this or some other amendment to the original pentad has not yet been made at the level of sophisticated terminological analysis that is found in Burke’s Grammar” (p. 93 n. 51). In all, most authors do not acknowledge the existence of the sixth element. It appears there are three root causes for this situation. First, Burke did not include attitude as its own distinct element when he introduced the pentad in A Grammar of Motives. Second, Burke used the term attitude in three different ways throughout his career: (1) as a strategy employed to deal with situations (starting in 1937), (2) as substitute and incipient acts (starting in 1945), and (3) as a sixth element of
symbolic action (starting in 1968). In addition, when he introduced the pentad, he provided the substitute and incipient act definition within the act chapter. This served to cement this definition as the most popular among scholars. Third, Burke attempted to add the sixth element using brief statements scattered among articles, book addendums, speeches, and interviews rather than a complete book or article devoted to systematically outlining attitude as the sixth element, providing critical procedures, and clarifying his various uses of the term. Given this situation, it is not surprising that most scholars still do not use attitude as the sixth element.

“Trouble” as the sixth element?

Finally, I will review Beck’s “Pentadic Cartography: Mapping Birth Trauma Narratives” (2006) article, which uses “trouble” as a sixth element of the pentad. This article focuses on narratives of mothers who encountered trauma while giving birth. This article is interesting in that Beck draws upon the additional concept of “trouble” developed by Jerome Bruner. In his book regarding narratives, Bruner writes briefly about dramatism and renames the elements of the pentad as actor (agent), action (act), goal (purpose), scene, and instrument (agency). He also explains his concept of trouble as consisting of:

An imbalance between any of the five elements of the pentad: an Action toward a Goal is inappropriate in a particular Scene, as with Don Quixote’s antic maneuvers in search of chivalric ends; an Actor does not fit the Scene, as with Portnoy in Jerusalem or Nora in *A Doll’s House*; or there is a dual Scene as in spy thrillers, or a confusion of Goals as with Emma Bovary. (p. 50)

Beck uses the concept of trouble as a sixth element of the pentad because of the directional quality of the ratios. For example, the qualities of the primary element
dominate and dictate the qualities of the secondary element. The addition of trouble is meant to focus attention on this imbalance (pp. 456-457). However, Anderson and Althouse (2010) conclude that since trouble focuses on the existing relationship inherent in the ratios, it does not constitute as separate sixth term in the way that attitude does (para. 11). Neither Beck nor Bruner draw out the implications of using trouble as an element or how the addition of the concept improves pentadic analysis.

**Status of the sixth element.**

Despite Burke’s later wishes, the implications of his earlier unclear use of *quo modo* have had a large impact on the status of attitude as the sixth element of the pentad: it is still greatly underused. In addition, Burke’s vague development of the pentad into a hexad and his three uses of the term “attitude” (as a strategy, as an incipient and substitute act, and as a sixth element of the pentad) have contributed to the lack of awareness and unclear nature of hexadic methodology. However, given the concept is still employed by at least a few scholars, and given Anderson and Althouse’s recent work to clarify hexadic procedures, perhaps the sixth element will be used more frequently in the future.

**Question 6c: Are scholars using philosophies?**

Only 13 of the 56 artifacts (23%) drew upon philosophies. This is slightly lower than the 38% found within my exemplar review in Chapter 3. It appears that use of philosophies continues to be relatively low. In this section, I will speculate on root causes of under use of philosophies.
Unlike my findings in examining why scholars may acknowledge, but not use attitude as the sixth element, if an artifact did not use philosophy it also did not acknowledge the concept. Interestingly, a few artifacts (e.g. Darr & Strine, 2008) quoted from Foss’ *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & Practice* textbook (2004), which covers philosophies, but still did not use them. As I stated in Chapter 3, this may be due to scholarly journal length constraints, or that naming the corresponding philosophic school may simply repeat findings established earlier in the text. However, another possibility is that while some scholars may draw upon the philosophic schools and not explicitly outline them in the text, I still suspect some do not use them at all. Perhaps the root cause lies within the format of *A Grammar of Motives*. For example, Burke outlines the pentad, in a relatively straightforward manner, in the first 30 pages of the book (including the introduction). However, he provides in-depth explanation of the philosophies in part two of the book, *The Philosophic Schools*, which spans 193 pages. Given Burke’s sometimes confusing writing style, it appears scholars have relied more on the relatively straightforward nature of the introductory explanation of the pentad than the comprehensive description of the individual elements and philosophic schools contained in part two of *Grammar*. Again, Burke’s writings may be acting as a source for misunderstanding.

Perhaps the most positive sign for the potential use of philosophic schools is embodied in pentadic cartography. Given that Anderson and Prelli explicitly call for its use in their method and that it is the leading new theoretical extension with four follow up artifacts, perhaps this continued trend of under use will be reversed in the future.
Question 6d: Which other dramatistic concepts do scholars use?

While only 38% of exemplars drew upon another damatistic concept in addition to the pentad, as mentioned in Chapter 2, 33 (59%) of the artifacts in my sample used at least one additional concept. The two most common were identification and the guilt-redemption cycle with 15 artifacts each. Next were terministic screens (9 artifacts), frames of acceptance/rejection/transition (6 artifacts), representative anecdote (6 artifacts), cluster (5 artifacts), form (5 artifacts), perspective by incongruity (5 artifacts), definition of human (4 artifacts), orientation (3 artifacts), piety (2 artifacts), and trained incapacity (1 artifact). As the previous sections have shown, scholars are successfully using multiple dramatistic concepts to conduct increasingly sophisticated analyses and theoretical extensions. It appears that despite misunderstandings that may arise from Burke’s writing style, scholars are becoming more comfortable with other dramatistic concepts. Perhaps a reason for this is that as dramatistic scholarship has matured, and scholars work to clarify dramatistic concepts (as exemplified in my stairway metaphor in Chapter 2), the vast array of Burkean ideas are becoming more accessible.

Application conclusions.

In this section I have reviewed the distribution of dominant elements, recent use of the sixth element of the pentad, philosophic schools, and the inclusion of other dramatistic concepts with the pentad. Generally, I have found that scholars apply the pentad appropriately and with increasing sophistication. The main legacy of the sometimes confusing nature of Burke’s writing style is that scholars do not employ the
pentad to its fullest potential by using the sixth element or the schools of philosophy. However, recent works clarifying pentadic procedures may reverse this trend.

**The State of the Pentad**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the 56 artifacts in my research sample to determine the state of the pentad. To riff on the title of Burke’s 1935 book, *Permanence and Change*, in this section I will summarize the state of the pentad in terms of those trends that signal “permanence” and those that signal “change.”

To start, in addressing my research questions I noted that some aspects of recent pentadic scholarship remained largely in keeping with previous trends. The interdisciplinary field of rhetorical studies continues to lead pentadic scholarship and no doubt influences the scholarly focus on political oratory. While certain disciplines and subjects dominate pentadic research, the overall scope of pentadic application continues to be wide and diverse. In addition, as with dramatistic research overall, the leading sources of pentadic scholarship are journal articles. Confusion surrounding the use of attitude as the sixth element of the pentad and the philosophic schools continue to mean they are still relatively underused. However, recent articles clarifying pentadic procedures relating to these concepts may reverse this trend in the future.

Next I will focus on areas of change within pentadic scholarship. Within the last few years the *KB Journal* has emerged as the leading academic journal publishing pentad-related works. This trend is likely to continue, since scholars tend to submit their studies to publications targeting those who may be interested in their work. This may result in unforeseen consequences.
Unlike the past, scholars are now mainly focusing on critical application of the pentad. However, a few key theoretical extensions have emerged in the last few years, such as pentadic cartography, that both enrich and clarify pentadic procedures. In addition, scholars are increasingly applying other dramatistic concepts in conjunction with the pentad. This signals a wider understanding of dramatistic ideas among scholars, which is resulting in increasingly sophisticated applications.

In all, the pentad appears to be thriving. The large proportion of dissertations and conference papers point to continued interest among emerging scholars. In addition, the wide range of disciplines and resulting applications of the pentad also demonstrate its continued usefulness and flexibility. To conclude, artifacts in the last ten years provide evidence of increasing clarity and scholarly adeptness in applying this powerful critical tool.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

In this paper, I have offered the contemporary Burkean student a guide for the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the pentad. Toward this end, in Chapter 1 I provided a high-level overview of dramatistic and pentadic scholarship. Specifically, I listed general trends in the application of Burkean ideas and I reviewed the sources of misunderstanding of Kenneth Burke. I then used these trends and sources of misunderstanding to develop my research questions. In Chapter 2, I used a stair step metaphor as a means to organize and explain a wide range of dramatistic concepts: representative anecdote, definition of human, orientation, piety, trained incapacity, perspective by incongruity, motives, identification, the guilt-redemption cycle, attitudes, equipment for living, frames of acceptance/rejection/transition, symbolic action, terminsitic screens, the pentad/hexad, form, and cluster. In Chapter 3, I reviewed several exemplars of pentadic analysis using my research questions as an analytical framework. Then, in Chapter 4 I provided my findings regarding the state of the pentad. In reviewing the 56 artifacts in my research sample, I noted several trends that signaled “permanence”: rhetorical studies continues to lead the use of the pentad, political oratory endures as a main focus, journal articles remain as the primary source of pentadic scholarship, and most scholars still do not use the sixth element of the pentad or the philosophic schools. I also noted several trends that signaled “change”: the emergence of the KB Journal as the leading publisher of pentadic scholarship, increasing use of the pentad as a critical tool, and the more frequent use of other dramatistic concepts in conjunction with the pentad.
While scholarly activity surrounding Kenneth Burke may have plateaued in the last decade, the pentad appears strong, with continued interest among emerging scholars and among a wide variety of disciplines. In addition, the increasing sophistication and clarity of recent pentadic artifacts points to the concept’s maturity.

Now that I have considered where the pentad has been and its current state, I will consider three possible directions for future pentadic scholarship. First, given that recent articles have clarified procedures on using the sixth element of the pentad, as well as the philosophic schools, future studies may be more likely to use these aspects of the pentad. However, clarity is still lacking regarding the process a critic should follow to determine a particular philosophic school when attitude is a dominant element since any of the schools may embody the rhetor’s worldview. Future studies that use attitude as the sixth element may have to clarify this procedural point. An easy solution may be for the critic simply to choose the school that seems closest to the way that attitude that was portrayed in the pentad.

Second, given the increasing use of other dramatistic concepts in conjunction with the pentad, future studies may seek to further understand how the various dramatistic concepts interact when analyzing any one text. For example, in explaining the grotesque frame, Burke notes it “focuses in mysticism” (1984b, p. 106). Therefore, if a rhetor adopts an attitude embodied by the grotesque frame in a given artifact, will their symbolic action necessarily feature purpose and its corresponding philosophy of mysticism? More broadly, how do acceptance/rejection/transition frames interact with the
philosophic schools? Future studies may take the “stair step” approach I outlined or
develop their own approach in answering these questions.

Finally, future studies may find links between dramatism and other forms of
analysis, just as MacLennan found in linking dramatism to crime-scene analysis (2005).
For example, future studies may explore the links between dramatism and Ernest
Bormann’s symbolic convergence theory and Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm,
because each of them uses a form of drama as a representative anecdote. Given this
common starting point, each theory involves forms of symbolic action. For example,
symbolic convergence theory focuses on dramatic stories, or fantasy themes, that groups
of people create together. The theory’s critical tool, fantasy theme analysis, enables the
critic to gain insight into the group’s culture and motives by analyzing the group’s
messages (Bormann, 1972, p. 396). Similar to dramatism, in which humans create
motives and attitudes in order to make sense of particular situations, Bormann notes a
similar process among group members when they “respond emotionally to the dramatic
situation they publicly proclaim some commitment to an attitude…. Dramas also imply
motives and by chaining into the fantasy the members gain motivations” (p. 397). In
addition, the narrative paradigm rests on the idea that humans are essentially storytelling
animals (1989, p. 58), or homo narrans, which is an extension of Burke’s definition of
humans as symbol-using animals (p. 63). As storytellers, Fisher defines humans’
narratives as “symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning
for those who live, create, or interpret them” (ibid.). Fisher argues the acceptance of these
narratives has more to do with constructing a well-formed story (through narrative
rationality) than in making a formally logical argument. Given these theories’ focus on symbolic action, future studies may attempt to uncover the ways in which the theories interact or at what points they may link together. Uncovering possible linkages between the theories may provide critics additional tools to gain insight into symbolic action. For example, by understanding how the pentad may interact with fantasy themes, we may be able to trace how particular pentads “chain out” into the pentads contained within the larger fantasy types and rhetorical visions of a group.

In conclusion, the pentad is still alive and well and promises to continue enabling interesting and diverse scholarship. In addition, it appears there are still many possible insights for the pentad to unpack. For example, Celeste Condit states, “a thousand different perspectives on Burke [and I add “the pentad”] can be sustained, and at least a hundred have been printed…” (1992, p. 349). Given the pentad’s potential to continue as a major critical tool, my hope is that students and scholars can use this paper as a guide to situate and help clarify the sometimes confusing nature of the pentad and dramatistic theory.
APPENDIX

Categorized Research Sample

**Book**


**Conference Papers**


**Dissertations**


**Scholarly Journals at Large**


**Kenneth Burke Society Journal**


**State of the Discipline**


REFERENCES


