Mapping Topoi in the Rhetorical Gendering of Work

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In recent years, some very prominent women have engaged in public debates about whether women today can "have it all": specifically, a successful and rewarding career and a rich and involved home life. Princeton law professor and former advisor to President Obama, Anne-Marie Slaughter, weighed in on this question in a controversial 2012 piece in *The Atlantic*, sharing her own experience as evidence that if women are to ever "have it all," ". . . it is society that must change, coming to value choices to put family ahead of work just as much as those to put work ahead of family." First in a popular TED Talk and then in a best-selling book, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg offered a counter perspective, citing an "ambition gap" in younger working women and urging them to "lean in" to their jobs—asserting themselves vocally and physically, volunteering for more responsibilities, and not allowing careers to take a backseat to marriage and family. More recently, other women in leadership positions, such as PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooryi (Forbes), have since been asked for their perspectives, making the question of "having it all" a controversial issue for many career women.

This ongoing debate invites more feminist scholarly attention to the myriad ways in which women's relationship to work is framed, whether through the contemporary lens of choice (by which women's choices are individualized and divorced from larger, systemic issues shaping the options available to many women) or through other rhetorics that have, historically, influenced how we define and value both gender and particular forms of work. Such scholarship would build on feminist rhetorical historiographers' ongoing efforts to recover the rhetorical practices of working women, which include women's forays into professional occupations ranging from teaching (Enoch; Gold) to medicine (Wells; Skinner) to the sciences (Jack; Applegarth). However, whereas most existing scholarship has primarily considered how women develop agency in and through professional or work-related genres and discourses, a focus on work-related rhetorics would consider the rhetorical positioning of work itself—both as a broad concept and as it is manifested in specific occupational contexts. We argue that although feminist rhetoricians have attended carefully to women's individual and collective rhetorical performances in professional contexts, we have not, as a field, often understood these projects as themselves constituting a particular sort of intervention crucial to feminist scholarship in rhetoric: one involving the rhetorical construction and valuing

of work.[1] That is, "work" has been both ever-present in our scholarship and simultaneously, somewhat tacit, invisible—under-theorized as a discrete area of study. This absence of self-conscious feminist scholarship on work makes us less equipped to intervene productively in public debates like the one that Slaughter, Sandberg, Nooryi, and others have recently ignited.

Yet feminist compositionists have established a substantial tradition of examining and critiquing the gendering, and subsequent devaluing, of the teaching of rhetoric and composition. Scholars like Susan Miller, Eileen Schell, and Donna Strickland have examined such labor-related issues as the rise of contingent faculty within the English Department and the disproportionate impact of the historical marginalization of composition studies on women faculty. Rhetoric and composition scholars looking beyond the purview of our profession might undertake similar investigations of the gendering of other workplaces, work tasks, and work arrangements—historical and contemporary.

After all, as the contemporary debate over "having it all" demonstrates, women's work is more than just a venue for individual women's rhetoric. Workplaces, work tasks, and work arrangements are also sites where gender and work themselves are rhetorically contested and constructed. Rhetorical scholarship in this area must therefore start from the understanding that careers, workspaces, and work tasks are differently gendered in different times and places. As feminist historian Linda Kerber intones, "The point is not only that the marketplace is segregated by gender; it is also that the segregation has been constantly under negotiation and constantly reaffirmed" (28). The erasure and invisibility of much of women's work is an enduring problem, and rhetorical studies of women's work can help reveal the ideological and rhetorical maneuvers that gender all work and render some women's work natural, invisible, or inconsequential.

In this article we suggest that "work-related rhetorics" might offer feminist rhetoricians a robust, sustained area of inquiry, spanning both historical and contemporary research. Unearthing "work" as a historically situated, rhetorically constructed, materially contingent concept is an important project, as workplaces and professions are often key axes in the maintenance or disruption of gendered, raced, classed, and ability-based differences. Our retrospective understanding of the famous "separate spheres" of the nineteenth century, for example, is largely a rhetorical accomplishment that simultaneously renders invisible the work of women of all classes and establishes most paid jobs, from politics to plumbing, as "public" and therefore masculine. Similarly, the late twentieth-century image of the supposedly non-working "welfare queen" functions rhetorically to mask prejudice against black mothers—to demonize welfare rather than poverty by divorcing welfare recipients from socially valued forms of work. Although feminist rhetoricians have long

undertaken projects that tacitly challenge such blind spots, this essay suggests that we might do so more deliberately, with an eye not only to uncovering the particularities in each case but also to identifying common threads and strategies in the ongoing rhetorical co-construction of gender and work.

A self-conscious feminist consideration of work-related rhetorics offers a two-pronged appeal. First, it extends our efforts to locate and describe the rhetorical activities of women rhetors, past and present. Recovering the rhetoric of particular women workers helps to complicate problematic culturally dominant narratives about women's historical absence from professional spaces and practices as well as their gradual but steady linear progression toward full participation in civic and professional life. Additionally, work-related rhetorical investigations also support recent moves away from the individual speaking subject towards examinations of larger histories of gender. In addition to asking how women negotiated professional spaces and practices that were gendered masculine, scholars must explore how workspaces, professions, and tasks become gendered or regendered as masculine or feminine in different times and places. Thus, work-related rhetorics offer an important venue within which to undertake what Jordynn Jack has described as a "rhetorical history of gender": a history mapping the intersections of bodies, space, dress, and time in specific historical settings, a methodology particularly suited for explicating "the persistence of... gendered division[s] of labor" (299). Physical workspaces, temporal arrangements of work, work-related discourses, and preparatory training for work, after all, have worked consistently and powerfully to naturalize gender difference and grant masculine privilege as well as to deepen class-based and racial divides among women.[2] An explicit focus on work-related rhetorics will help to unmask the rhetorical mechanisms by which such privilege is granted and such alliances forestalled.

In this essay, we consider possible avenues for future scholarship in this important area of study. Although the boundaries of "work-related" feminist scholarship must be fluid and expansive to accommodate the rhetoricity of "work" itself, we suggest that such efforts might consider the following questions: to what extent is "work" itself a historically situated, rhetorically inflected concept? How do shifting commonplaces about "work" and "home" reflect relations overlapping with, but also exceeding, the public/private divide on which scholars have so often focused their attention? More specifically, scholars might attend to fluctuations in the value—including compensation—accorded to different types of work performed by women, in order to identify the rhetorical means by which women's work choices continue to be scrutinized in ways that men's are not. And perhaps most importantly, by what means—spatial, temporal, embodied, material, discursive—do constructs of gendered labor change over time, and to what ends do they change? Such questions

help to historicize the complex, always unstable relationship between gender and work and, in doing so, to expose a key node by which gender differences are and have been sustained, complicated, and upset.

In addition to offering some guiding questions and rationales for this work, we suggest three recurring threads, or topoi, in the gendering of work since the Industrial Revolution. These topoi—duty, education, and technology—are meant to help direct scholars to specific times and places where the rhetoric and lived practices of gendered work are likely to be in flux, offering new possibilities and vistas but also new articulations of power and dominance. Although there are countless possibilities for such scholarship, we argue that these topoi have consistently worked to naturalize, disturb, or otherwise resituate what constitutes "women's work."

Drawing from both Aristotle's conception of topoi as "lines of argument" a rhetor might employ in appealing to a particular audience and more recent conceptions of topoi (see, for instance, Crowley or Lindquist) that emphasize the cultural origins of these lines, we suggest that duty, education, and technology have functioned since the Industrial Revolution as consistent lines of appeal in discussions of both men's and women's labor. Whether through nationalism or patriotism, identification with racial or class-based "uplift," or the perceived need to embody the virtues of one's group, the topos of duty shapes women's working lives: influencing the range of professional choices available to them, the reception they receive in their work, and the cultural and financial value accorded their work. Through factors as varied as institutional or curriculum design, mentoring initiatives, and (re)distribution of material resources or access, the topos of education similarly influences what constitutes work suitable for women and the perceived significance of their achievements. Lastly, through the topos of technology, both the physical and rhetorical situating of new technological objects and changed material networks impact women's access to and perceived expertise at work. Each of these topoi implicates space, time, bodies, and objects in the production of gender norms and gendered work. Each has been, and continues to be, implicated in debates about the nature, value, and proper trajectory of women's work, and each thus offers fruitful study for feminist rhetoricians—both in considering historical accounts of gender and in developing effective contemporary interventions in the gendering of work.

In what follows, we first elaborate further on the rhetoricity and historicity of "work" as a concept deserving feminist rhetorical scholars' sustained attention. We draw on diverse interdisciplinary scholarship to suggest how this subject addresses specific priorities and exigencies in feminist rhetoric, before considering how a rhetorical perspective can contribute to that scholarship. Next, we outline the three topoi we see as particularly productive in exploring

the inter-connectedness of rhetorical constructions of gender and work. For each topos, we offer two contrasting examples to illustrate how the trope is bound up with those constructions. In closing, we consider the role of these topoi in the contemporary debates with which we began this essay, demonstrating how each topos complicates the "rhetoric of choice" that currently defines these debates. While this essay cannot provide an exhaustive account of the benefits and possibilities of more attention to work-related rhetorics, we hope it successfully indicates a relative absence in historical and contemporary accounts of the rhetoric of gender.

Why Add Work to Rhetorical Histories of Gender?

Scholars from a dizzying range of disciplines study questions related to women's work. Beyond composition studies, labor historians, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, business scholars and numerous others investigate the contexts of women's work and strive to recover the contributions of historical women. Thus, by attending to rhetorical constructions of work in their own scholarship, feminist rhetoricians can draw on and contribute to both intra- and interdisciplinary conversations. For instance, these scholars problematize constructions of male industrial laborers as "active" resisters and organizers and women domestic and farm laborers as "passive." They examine the mechanisms by which women's work becomes deskilled and devalued as well as those by which their agency for selecting work is constrained as compared to their male counterparts. Often, their efforts tacitly locate rhetoric at the center of their investigations. As anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo noted back in 1980, "woman's place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things that she does (or even less a function of what, biologically, she is) but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions" (400). More recently, feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager have identified eleven strategies central to the "energetic ideological maneuvering" that has helped to "disappear" or minimize women's work, among which are strategies depicting work in the home as done for love, women's waged work as temporary, and women as naturally suited for certain jobs (40-42). Nearly all these strategies are rhetorical positionings of women's work, and feminist rhetoricians are well-situated to extend this conversation and others like it, introducing helpful terms and methodologies for revealing the contingency and artificiality of commonplace assumptions about how work ought to be structured, valued, and compensated—as well as by whom it ought to be performed.

As part of this initiative, we ought to parse how discourse shapes our ideas about particular sorts of work, including the level of skill it requires, the sorts of working conditions it necessitates, and the relative value it merits. For

example, we might help to destabilize the rhetorical construction of the "masculine work norm" (Kobayashi xv). As historian Carole Turbin explains, this construct establishes as standard an uninterrupted workday and career and misrepresents women's work as atypical: temporary or erratic, compromised by domestic and parenting obligations, and set in contrast to the supposedly steady and constant labor of male workers (48-49). Such characterizations distort the complexities of both women's and men's work and render invisible certain kinds of labor undertaken by many already marginalized workers, such as farm workers and workers who complete wage labor at home while caring for children. Whereas Turbin and others have focused primarily on the effects of the masculine work norm, rhetoricians might consider the discursive and material means by which this norm was produced, became stabilized, and remains subject to change. Whether it uncovers the emergence of masculine work norms within particular disciplines, through legal arguments, or within material or spatio-temporal contexts, this sort of project not only facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration, but also responds productively to feminist rhetoricians' calls for examinations of what Jessica Enoch terms "the rhetorical process of gendering" (Octalog 115)—the rhetorical means by which gender differences are historically produced and naturalized.

In addition to expanding a broad scholarly conversation about women and work, however, a self-conscious feminist focus on work-related rhetorics also offers our field an important self-corrective methodological benefit: it will introduce labor as a useful alternative to political citizenship as the primary lens for understanding women's rights and rhetoric. Though feminist rhetorical scholars' efforts to recover women's civic participation in historical and contemporary contexts have yielded important results, such work does not encompass the whole of women's rhetorical activity. Similarly, the significant body of scholarship on rhetorical education primarily approaches this education as directed towards the civic sphere, largely neglecting rhetorical education in and for the workplace. In both these areas, a too-narrow focus on national citizenship and civic participation—one that makes suffrage or civic engagement its end goal, for instance—tends to leave unexamined the shortcomings of civic participation as a guarantor of political agency and visibility. That is, it leaves us prey to overlooking the ways that civic processes can themselves participate in the exclusion, domination, and persecution of women, racial and religious minorities, immigrants, and other marginalized groups.

By undertaking studies of work-related rhetorics, then, we shift our focus and make visible a different set of priorities: what historian Alice Kessler-Harris describes as women's fight for "economic citizenship," defined as "the possession and exercise of the privileges and opportunities necessary for men and women to achieve economic and social autonomy and independence"

(159). In other words, we unearth woman's struggle to choose her occupation and all that that entails: educational access, non-discriminatory hiring policies, adequate wages, a supportive social environment, reliable and safe transportation, and the ability to participate fully in her profession. Such an approach troubles artificial divisions between the economic and the political and, in the process, attends more critically to the tacit assumption that political engagement, in itself, necessarily affords the tools to acquire economic independence. Additionally, this approach exposes the paradox of economics, as it stands in relation to the rhetorical construction of public and private: though nineteenth-century norms positioned the home as the refuge from the market, the earlier model of oikos/polis suggested that the home (oikos) was the realm of need and thus of economics and that the polis, the arena of rhetoric and public deliberation, was separate from this feminine, economic sphere. In general, this scholarship considers the means by which women have been ideologically distanced from the capitalist marketplace, yet simultaneously and continually tasked with supplying bodily needs. It considers how this configuration might have emerged differently, and it offers indications of how we might yet influence its ongoing development.

Perhaps most importantly, rhetoricians should remember that most traditional rhetorical venues—the platform, the pulpit, the classroom, the press—are also workspaces. Thus, one compelling reason to include gendered work within rhetorical studies is that, insofar as men and women write, speak, or teach professionally, it is already there. Moreover, just as rhetorical venues are often workspaces, work, workspaces, and work training are extremely important dimensions of the rhetorical life of women. It is striking to think how much attention we pay to women's schooling and club activity, as though their working lives are not part of their rhetorical lives. This imbalance of attention might thus contribute to an unintentional, but crucial, classed blind spot in our histories of women's rhetoric. In short, then, a feminist rhetorical consideration of work-related rhetorics is an important project—one that will both facilitate our efforts to contribute to an ongoing interdisciplinary conversation and help us strengthen our own understanding of what constitutes and facilitates full political and economic citizenship.

work+gender+duty

The first topos, duty, speaks to the social and rhetorical components of work—duty addresses how individuals understand and explain why they do the work they do, how their work informs their individual and group identities, and what contributions that work offers individuals, families, and communities. As such, understandings of duty—or, in its more contemporary guise, "service" —shape and influence choices, goals, ambition, careers deemed

desirable or available, views of paid employment versus other uses of time and energy, and self-constructions at the intersection of labor and identity. In addition, duty typically implies a responsibility to or for other people. While one might argue that it is one's duty to pursue self-actualization through vocation, this is not the dominant construction of work-duty. Rather, work-duty tends to be described as duty to others, whether specific others (family, local community) or larger publics (the nation, the poor, the unconverted, one's race or class, and so on). While duty (like material need or privilege) shapes the working choices of both men and women, duty often manifests in gendered terms.

Duty, then, operates differently in relation to men's and women's work. While most Western societies assume that men capable of working will do so, this assumption has not (at least since the nineteenth century) applied as universally to women (Domosh and Seager 36). More accurately, since women have always worked, it has not been assumed that most women will pursue paid work recognized as a career or profession. Because men's paid employment needs less justification, the rhetoric of duty operates for men primarily as a rationale for pursuing one form of work over another and only rarely as a reason for eschewing paid employment altogether. For women, on the other hand, duty is still often invoked to explain the decision to work for pay (or outside the home) or not.

Historically, understandings of women's duty have centered on "reproductive labor," including subsistence work (cooking, cleaning, sewing) and moral and spiritual care (childcare, early education, religious training).[3] While women's work for the family was expected, women's waged work has been consistently framed as temporary or as a response to national or family crisis, tropes that confirm the sense of women's work outside the home as unnatural and unusual (Domosh and Seager 40). In addition, research shows that contemporary working women—whether married, unmarried, divorced, or cohabiting—live closer to their workplaces than men, suggesting that women's historical relationship to the home still persists and influences their working lives in meaningful ways (Hanson and Pratt 153). Further, a 2011 study by the Working Mother Research Institute found that working and at-home mothers both experience high levels of guilt relating to their decisions about work and family: 51% of working mothers feel guilty about not having enough time with their kids, 55% of at-home mothers worry they aren't contributing enough to family finances, and both experience guilt about the appearance or cleanliness of their homes (44% of at-home and 55% of working mothers). Women are also disproportionately affected by cultural attitudes about working and raising children, such as the 2014 Pew Research Center finding that 60% of Americans believe that children are better off with a parent at home full time

(Cohn et al). Moreover, the call of duty informs and shapes not only women's "choice" of a career but also their responsibilities and evaluation within a career, where women are expected to do more "service" to others at work but are also more readily perceived as "distracted" by family duties.[4]

A work-related rhetorical analysis of duty, then, might investigate the discursive justifications and interpretations of women's work (paid or unpaid) alongside the material context and contributions of this work. A duty is different from a need—while a need might be empirically present, a duty is an obligation to others, an obligation constructed rhetorically as well as a materially. A family may need a member to contribute economically, but a mother's decision about when and how paid work justifies leaving her children (and in whose care) is constructed through her negotiation of these competing duties. A nation at war is an empirical fact, but whether it is one's duty to enlist in the armed forces, train and volunteer as a nurse, or work on the "home front" is a question of (gendered) duty. A work-related analysis of duty might ask: Where is work justified through economic—as opposed to moral, vocational, patriotic, or religious—duty? How is paid work elevated or marginalized in relation to family duties? What duties or service roles do men and women complete within particular professions? By examining moments when rhetorics of duty invite men and women into new work spaces and practices or when duty limits men's or women's work, rhetoricians can help denaturalize the rhetorical construction of work and gendered identity. Two specific examples illustrate several predominant forms of work-duty for women: family duty and patriotic duty.

The case of women in the shoemaking industry in the mid-nineteenth century illustrates the formidable adaptability of constructions of family duty, even in the face of unprecedented change to nearly all aspects of men's and women's work. Traditionally, shoemaking was a family business in which women played a vital but subservient, often invisible role. While male family members worked in the shoemaker's shop, women were taught to sew only the top piece of the shoe, a menial task completed alongside household chores. Historian Mary H. Blewett relates that these women were not considered apprentices or taught the full trade, but rather a source of "free" unskilled labor for their brothers, fathers, and husbands (37). Their familial duty called them to support the family business without taking ownership or credit for their work, illustrating that the economic contributions of women's home work often included unacknowledged market-directed labor, their contributions masked by the rhetoric of duty embedded in the hierarchy of the family business. As the century progressed, shoemaking moved from the home to small stores, where bosses hired women to do piecework or "outwork" from home (Blewett 39). Eventually, with the advent of the factory system, women

remained in the shoemaking industry as wage workers in factories. Factory work offered new opportunities: for the first time, women could work full-time outside the home with a community of peers and earn, on average, three times the pay for sewing shoes as outwork (Blewett 41).

A cursory glance might see factory work as liberating women from repressive family duties, but a feminist rhetorical project could reveal the role that duty—as commonplace or ideograph—played in maintaining women's ties to family and home, even as they entered the factory. Most shoemaking factory girls lived at home and submitted their wages to their parents, just as they did any cash earned doing outwork for neighbors or local businesses (Blewett 44). Factory work was temporary, a way to help the family before marriage—the start of a new family. A rhetorical analysis might build on Blewett's important historical work by considering a variety of rhetorical artifacts: written accounts of family shoemaking businesses; women's journals, letters, and diaries; advertisements for factory jobs; physical designs, rules, and guidebooks for factories, and so on. Such a project might ask: How were women invited out of their unacknowledged home work and into the factory system? What benefits were these positions meant to offer women or their families? And, most importantly, how did the rhetoric of family duty shift to accommodate the need for female workers in factories? Indeed, the rhetoric of family duty was appropriated by factories in an attempt to domesticate factory spaces and relationships, assuring the girls and their families that these women workers were not being "unfit" for their future roles as wives and mothers (Weiner 5).[5] Bosses were framed as substitute parents, fellow workers as "sisters." Factory work unable to maintain this homelike veneer, mill jobs in particular, became the domain of immigrant, black, and poor women already excluded from pure womanhood (Weiner 14-18). Though women's familial duty is often tied to constructions of the home, in this case family duty maintains its rhetorical efficacy even as women leave the home for the factory. In the case of shoemaking, women workers were persistently constructed as wives, sisters, and mothers first—and workers second, in service to that primary role, and all to the benefit of the new capitalist system.

A second example considers another common construction of work duty for both men and women—patriotic duty. From revolutionary-era Republican mothers to Clara Barton and the Red Cross, women supported many historical war efforts, long before Rosie the Riveter. Men, of course, are also called to serve the nation in such times, but the sharp divide between wartime patriotic duty for men and women is undeniable. A male figure on Rosie's famous "We Can Do It" poster would be an icon of shame, not of strength, a sign of an unmanly unwillingness to go to war. Just as men might be ostracized for inhabiting the feminine models of patriotism popularized in public memory, women

have faced direct opposition to engaging in combat. Historically relegated to clerical and mechanical roles in the armed forces, women have enjoyed the same enlistment qualifications as men since 1979. Still, women were prohibited from direct combat until January 24, 2013, when Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta revoked the 1994 ban on women in combat, acknowledging that, for over a decade, American women have been fighting and dying in wars where the front lines are not clearly defined (Panetta).

While striking down the ban on women in combat removed one of the last sanctioned barriers to women's equal right to work, the new face of women's patriotic duty will depend on the ban's implementation. Besides Panetta's statement lifting the ban, key documents to consider in a rhetorical study of this case might include previous court cases about women in the military, any requested or granted exceptions to the new rule (permitting particular branches to maintain gender segregation in certain instances), documentation of the new gender-neutral qualifications and procedures being developed to test women's combat abilities; personal testimony and memoirs of soldiers; and discourse opposing women in combat (from the Center for Military Readiness, for example). A rhetorical examination of the issue might ask: What motivations other than national duty inform men and women's decisions to join the military? How will the new "gender neutral" qualifications for combat positions frame men's and women's patriotic duty and physical abilities? How might masculine constructions of patriotism and war be complicated by women's enlistment with the Selective Service System (the draft)? Already, the United States Marine Corps is developing new procedures for training and testing women that will necessarily involve interpretations of gender difference in women's and men's bodies.

Importantly, arguments opposing women in combat also highlight the starkly masculinized rhetoric of war and combat. These arguments position women as an abstract goal men fight for (either a specific woman back home, or the generic "women and children" needing protection), a motivating force allegedly undermined by the presence of actual women in combat. Predictions that male soldiers will experience instinctual and insurmountable urges to protect women soldiers (even at the cost of the mission) disregard the historical sexual abuse of civilian women in warzones and the recent visibility of sexual assault within the United States military itself. In this light, such a study might convincingly unpack the gendering of masculine patriotic duty, brought into sharp relief by the prospect of women in combat.

Besides demonstrating the scope and range of studies of gender, work, and duty, these two examples also highlight methods for identifying likely research topics. The shoemaking example addressed a moment of rapid change in working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Such times of

workforce upheaval will often demand new constructions of duty, gender, and work, as groups of women or men are deemed necessary or superfluous in particular roles and industries. The second example considered an archetype of duty-based work—the patriotic soldier—and questioned the stubborn masculinity of that role. This example proposes that scholars seek out inconsistencies—places where a particular form of duty calls women or men into a line of work or into certain roles within a profession, but also sites where duty is trumped by or helps to maintain persistent gendered boundaries.

work+gender+education

In popular understandings, education is both a barrier to and a conveyer of the "economic citizenship" that historian Alice Kessler-Harris argues is only fully realized when one is able to select work on the basis of her skills and preferences, rather than basic needs (her own or her family's). To be certain, "getting an education," as we often put it, dramatically expands one's agency as a worker, primarily by increasing access to different career paths and offering more options among which a worker may "choose." Doing so improves one's capacity to obtain rewarding, well-compensated work, to influence decisions and strategies in the workplace, and to move up the work hierarchy beyond the so-called "entry level." The relationship between education and these possibilities is commonplace—we encourage our children to pursue education because we assume a tight, natural link between education and opportunity.

Yet education—in form, duration, intensity, and relevance—is only as powerful as the rhetorical forces that authorize it as a primary marker of a worker's skill and value. As educational access is constrained or expanded, the values attached to particular sorts of work change, as well; education functions as a means of narrowing the field of practitioners and accepted methods and practices. In 1850, for instance, neither surgeons nor engineers nor lawyers required any particular sort of education; by 1950, each required its own highly standardized form of schooling and credentialing, rigorously monitored by national professional organizations. Similar shifts occurred in numerous fields, in some cases reversing educational and economic gains made by women at the turn of the twentieth century; the 1906 Flexnor report, for example, promoted a laboratory-based medical school curriculum in line with the principles of modern scientific medicine, but also discredited and eliminated many fledgling medical schools for women (Wells 6). A rhetorical project investigating the inter-animation of gender, work, and education might scrutinize these shifts in access, following such excellent models as Applegarth (anthropology) or Wells (medicine).

However, a primary focus on access to education in some ways reinforces the notion that education itself, once attained, is a neutral or universally

empowering experience for the initiate. The continuing gender pay gap between college-educated men and women (when controlled for other variables) is reason enough to doubt that educational access can resolve work-related gender inequality. As women continue to earn less than men, they also have more difficulty paying for that education, struggling with disproportionately burdensome student loan debt. And some speculate that women will remain reluctant to take on high-stress, high-power positions, knowing that they'll earn less than men in those roles (Bloch). A different sort of rhetorical project might interrogate this singular emphasis on educational access by examining how rhetorical aspects of an educational setting—topics, readings, pedagogies, course offerings, interactions among teachers and students, assignments, and evaluation procedures—also value and devalue particular forms of work. Such a project might examine the links between formal educational settings and the workplaces to which they theoretically lead, surveying a broad range of sites: general and explicitly professional, formal and informal, elite and accessible.

One example of a historical project investigating a particular educational site in relation to work and gender might involve the domestic and industrial training schools for young African American men and women during the early twentieth century. Alongside a regular high school curriculum, such schools provided employable skills ranging from agriculture to dressmaking to domestic service and often tasked students with the ongoing project of "racial uplift." One such school, The National Training School for Women and Girls, opened in Washington, DC, in 1909 under the direction of Nannie Helen Burroughs, a 31-year-old civil rights activist and religious leader from the local black community. Unlike other training schools funded primarily by white foundations, Burroughs' school was funded mostly by black supporters, and Burroughs not only populated her Board of Trustees with black women but also offered an adult summer school for women focused on social service and community organizing (Wolcott 96).

As historian Victoria Wolcott has argued, then, Burroughs' school was a remarkable place, despite its explicit curricular focus on domestic skills and "the three Bs"—Bible, bath, and broom. It is easy to understand its role in providing students with both employable skills and tools for building community, even as one critiques the limitations of those skills. Yet a rhetorical project might investigate how those skills have been framed as requiring formal education in the first place. Burroughs indicated that women's preparation for domestic work "ranks next in importance to preparation of their souls for the world to come" (Wolcott); how did the high value she placed on this education impact the employment prospects for those who did not attend, but who sought work as domestics? What sorts of longstanding domestic practices were lost or devalued as the result of focus on providing "relevant" skills, and what were emphasized

anew? How did these shifts in the value accorded—and the procedures attached—to different work tasks affect women, and how did women respond to these shifts?

Additionally, such a project might consider the ways that Burroughs balanced the school's two, somewhat contradictory missions: to prepare students for domestic work and to empower them through public service and community projects. How did Burroughs relate the high value she placed on domestic education alongside her commitment to training students for uncompensated community work related to racial uplift? How did her valuing of both forms of work overlap with, complicate, or contradict dominant cultural valuations of work undertaken by particular raced, classed, and gendered bodies? Such questions might be asked alongside inquiry into students' trajectories as they entered the working world, with scholars investigating the sorts of paid work graduates obtained and the role of their uncompensated community projects in their working lives. In general, a rhetorical project along these lines might usefully extend work by historians of rhetoric and composition, such as Susan Jarratt and David Gold, to include not only historically black colleges as sites for civic preparation, but also training schools as sites for employment-related rhetorical instruction.

In contrast to an educational initiative seeking to credentialize and standardize a previously accessible task, rhetoricians might also investigate sites that seek explicitly to diversify the range of workers within particular fields. For instance, a feminist project might examine the recent push to offer coding and web development classes to youth and adults from underrepresented groups—an initiative stemming in part from a larger cultural initiative to encourage women to enter STEM fields. Non-profit organizations such as CODE, Girl Develop IT, and Black Girls Code all seek to create supportive environments for women and girls to learn web development, a job skill much in demand even in an economy with high unemployment. These organizations combine technical offerings with instruction in public speaking, resume building, and other career-related skills that, while available elsewhere, are politicized in this context by their explicit purpose to empower women. The non-profit Girl Develop IT, for instance, includes an international network of meet-ups in major cities, from Sidney to Pittsburgh; interested women can join meet-ups for free and enroll in low-cost classes meeting in the evenings and on weekends. Scholarships, sponsored by partner organizations from the IT industry, are available for those who cannot afford the courses. Nevertheless, the organization strives to remain informal; classes are non-degree or certificate oriented and students simply enroll in classes offering skills they feel would benefit their work or recreation (Girl Develop IT).

A feminist rhetorical project investigating Girl Develop IT might consider how education is framed in relation to employment, asking: to what extent

are the organization's classes offered as a means of career advancement, and to what extent are they framed as providing a more general form of empowerment? What sort of education is a tacit prerequisite for the Girl Develop IT courses, even as the organization promotes accessibility? To what extent are these courses recognized by employers as legitimate credentials in themselves? Additionally, a project investigating Girl Develop IT or similar initiatives might consider how gender is framed in the organization's promotional materials, fundraising efforts, curriculum, and pedagogy: what images of women are featured in promotional materials for Girl Develop IT, and to what ends? How does the curriculum differ from and overlap with similar courses not catered specifically to women? In general, what sort of worker does Girl Develop IT produce, and where does this worker fit into larger workplaces and social institutions?

Of course, considering the rhetorical implications of various types of schooling is hardly a new project for feminist rhetoricians, who have long sought to unearth the contributions of women and the development of rhetorical pedagogies. However, we might make it an explicit priority to expand our considerations of both formal and informal schooling beyond the project of historicizing rhetorical education toward the study of how a wide range of educational sites help to produce, challenge, and complicate gender norms. Sites of education are powerful loci within which students develop an intellectual and physical habitus, and thus often serve to naturalize gendered, classed, and raced relations. Additionally, education is inseparable from workplaces, in the sense that the nature of one's education shapes and continues throughout one's work life, for better or for worse. Although it is problematic to see educational sites strictly as "windows of opportunity," they are certainly mediators between home and work and are thus worthy of consideration within a larger project concerning the valuing of different sorts of work.

work+gender+technology

A third and final topos—that of technology—addresses the means by which new technologies are often understood to "naturally" redistribute the values, spaces, temporal arrangements, activities, and bodily performances attached to work. Working conditions are inextricably attached to technological objects, from the cotton gin to the clock to the word processor. These objects influence every aspect of labor, from necessary skills and training to desired outcomes and bodily dispositions. Through technological change, skills that were once highly valued because they were so labor intensive may become automatic—the work of barely skilled technicians. Conversely, tasks that could be done by hand, in the home, may become consolidated and standardized—or vice versa. Through technological change, workers' autonomy

waxes and wanes; their ability to organize, their capacity for innovation, and their relationships to home, family, and community shift. And, in turn, dominant constructions of gender—the terms by which gender difference is articulated—shift. If, as sociologist Judy Wajcman has argued, gender and technology are mutually constructed, work is strongly implicated in that construction.

Yet this mutual construction of work, gender, and technology is not accomplished strictly through material means, but through rhetorical interventions that strengthen certain material arrangements and weaken others, that succeed when they approximate a "natural" way of things, and that are difficult to dislodge because of the habitus they produce in workers. Technologies themselves, as objects introduced into complex social environments, do not alone produce "necessary" or "inevitable" or even entirely welcome changes. Rather, the particular uses to which objects are put are authorized over time through the deliberate rhetorical action of various stakeholders and widespread commonplaces about the benefits, inevitability, and linearity of technological change. For example, the link between these objects and greater efficiency, the shared cultural sense that technological innovation is a crucial element of market dominance and a "competitive edge," and the value accorded to the production of highly-standardized (or recognizably unique) products or processes are all arguments consistently deployed in conjunction with material technological change. Such commonplace arguments make visible certain priorities while necessarily obscuring others. For instance, the perceived need for greater efficiency—exemplified by Henry Ford's assembly line and the principles of Taylorism—drove technological change during the early twentieth century, marginalizing concerns about the dehumanization of workers or the loss of artisanal skills. The link between certain technologies and efficiency authorized a particular order of things that could have been otherwise.

In general, while new technological objects are often implicated in the redistribution of labor and wages and in shaping other economic and social concerns of importance to workers, they are not singlehandedly responsible for these changes, which are actually accomplished in part through rhetorical maneuverings. By examining discourses surrounding or emerging from technological changes that impact workplaces, feminist rhetoricians might help to complicate commonplaces that situate particular (gendered) power relationships as natural or inevitable. More specifically, a rhetorical project that examines women's work in relation to technology might consider a particular moment of significant change, exploring how women workers were repositioned spatially, temporally, or hierarchically by that change and/or how they intervened productively in its instantiation.

The invention of the telegraph in the late 1840s offers one powerful example of the ways in which women's work with technology becomes valued

and devalued through rhetorical means, often to the benefit of employers and investors. Though within twenty years the new device would play a crucial role in developing the still-nascent railroad and revolutionize Americans' ability to communicate across space and time, in its early years the telegraph industry was, as historian Thomas Jepson notes, "perennially strapped for cash" (61), its ultimate social and economic impact uncertain. Early promoters were tasked with creating the vast, widely distributed network of telegraphers who would relay messages reliably across the country—an expensive enterprise without which the new machine could not demonstrate its utility to the American people. Telegraph companies needed highly literate, reliable workers willing to live and work in rural, mostly illiterate, often remote areas. John J. Speed of the Erie and Michigan Telegraph line proposed that his company hire women, whom they could pay less than men and who, he argued, were more qualified than "any boy, or man, that we can afford to pay in those places" (qtd. in Jepson 4). Hence, women for a brief period near the end of the nineteenth century gained access—albeit through wage discrimination—to a highly technical form of work that required them not only to display their literacy skills and to learn Morse code, but to have some knowledge of electricity, to work alongside men through all hours and under intense pressure (as one mistake could result in a train accident, in some cases), and to be extremely mobile and independent from their families.

On the surface this moment of expansion of women's work appears to emerge naturally alongside a new technology—a consequence of supply and demand and a match between skills needed and skills possessed. However, a robust rhetorical project might investigate how the early gendering of telegraphy was accomplished through discourse: advertisements for workers highlighting particular skills or offering particular benefits, instructional material at the many telegraphy schools that emerged in the late nineteenth century, company records documenting the monetary, spatial, or temporal structure of work offered to women, newspaper portraits or interviews with successful women telegraphers, or the like. Such a project might ask: on what grounds were women's lower wages justified? How were most women telegraphers gradually marginalized within the profession of telegraphy, as telegraphy became more established and as telegraphy offices developed complex workplace hierarchies? By the 1880s, in many city telegraphy offices, women telegraphers were often assigned to the "ladies department," tasked with delivering "personal records and local traffic," while their better paid male affiliates were given responsibility for larger news items (Jepson 21). To substantiate this shift, male telegraphers sometimes accused their female colleagues of "clipping," which Jepson describes as an "affected sending mannerism in which the proper duration was not given to each dot or dash" (24)—a complaint that women

contested. Through this sort of discourse, certain practices within telegraphy were gendered and rendered less desirable over time; labor divisions were rooted in (questionable) characterizations of feminine and masculine performance, proclivities, and availability. Examining this moment or a similar one—in which a technology upsets the gendered landscape of work, which then adjusts itself through largely rhetorical means—helps feminist rhetoricians to denaturalize the contours of men's and women's work.

A different rhetorical project might investigate the emergence of a contemporary technology still unfolding, with important potential labor implications for women. For example, the advent of virtual workspaces ought to be of particular interest to feminist rhetoricians, as a recent Forbes article predicts that by 2016, 63 million Americans will work in virtual environments—nearly double the number (34 million) who did so in 2010 (Meyer). Jobs ranging from pharmaceutical sales to software engineering and even elementary school teaching are moving partially or entirely online. Some companies are investing heavily in software and infrastructure that will enable not only cloud-based sharing of documents and video conferencing, but virtual offices featuring interactions among avatars controlled by workers situated around the world. Employers and promoters of this shift celebrate the virtual workplace's potential to reduce company overhead, increase workers' productivity and job satisfaction, and facilitate workers' need for both temporal and geographic flexibility. Opponents of virtual work, meanwhile, often lament the loss of accountability, mentorship, and collaboration that they suggest can emerge only through face-to-face interaction. Both the potential advantages and pitfalls of virtual work environments have material implications for women's career training, promotion, and salary, as well as for the gendering and valuing of particular kinds of work. At the same time, realistically, neither a utopian nor a dystopian view of the potential of virtual workspaces is likely an adequate descriptor for the changes a worker, woman or man, will experience as she or he makes the transition from a physical workspace to a virtual one.

A feminist rhetorical project that considers the development of virtual workspaces might investigate the mechanisms of this transition as it unfolds in one specific context. Recently, for example, a well-respected pharmaceutical testing company began to train its auditors using a virtual platform that allowed trainers to work from home in places scattered around the globe. For some, this platform offered great job flexibility; for others, it created stress by requiring new skillsets, such as the navigation of avatars on a virtual "campus." Long accustomed to working with new employees in a traditional classroom space, these workers were asked to adapt their interactions, pedagogies, and job tasks to a virtual platform in order to keep their jobs. A project that considers this company's transition could follow individual trainers and new workers

to identify how the shift impacted their work lives. The project would attend to the sorts of technology training and skills valued in the new space, the advantages and disadvantages of a "flexible" time schedule, and the ways the shift enabled or constrained workers' ability to "choose" their career trajectory. A researcher could evaluate, over time, how the relative value of different positions—from IT support, to trainer, to receptionist—evolved in the new work environment, as well as how avatars made use of or discarded gendered rhetorical resources. Establishing a variety of rhetorically based, site-specific feminist interventions into the evolving contemporary workplace would not only enrich our own scholarship; it would provide an important practical access point for informed public intervention into a contemporary shift already underway.

Whether it involves inquiry into the present or past, investigating the complex relations among technology, gender, and work is a potentially fruitful project for feminist scholars of rhetoric. Doing so will allow us to consider more fully one powerful means by which work—whether it involves technical skills, customer service, or manual labor—becomes radically devalued, affirmed, or regendered with and through technology. In an era in which technological development and innovation are revered for their perceived influence and importance, such projects could provide important insights for feminists seeking both to accommodate and capitalize on the technology bandwagon and to critique a technology for what it leaves behind.

Conclusion

Since the 2013 publication of *Lean In*, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg has enjoyed high public visibility—authoring a follow up text intended for young professionals, *Lean In for Graduates*, and launching Lean In, a non-profit organization for women's advancement that features a network of "lean In circles"—small groups of women in communities around the country who, according to the organization's website, meet to "enjoy the power of peer support" and "learn and grow together" (leanincircles.org). Despite the popularity of these initiatives, however, commentators from bell hooks to Maureen Dowd have regularly criticized Sandberg for her insistence that individual women ought to take responsibility for their own professional success or failure—that they ought to "lean in" to their work in order to advance, rather than focusing on the larger institutional structures that make these advances difficult.

As we suggested in the introduction to this article, Sandberg's approach exemplifies the pervasive rhetoric of choice in the current landscape of women's work. This rhetoric of choice individualizes women's decisions, tending to distract from the larger, systemic factors shaping, even controlling the options from among which women can choose. For example, many women in

low-paying positions find that full-time child care would cost more than their salaries. Ironically, many such professions are in the "caring" industries dominated by women—teaching, social work, counseling, elder care, and so on. In this context, a decision to stay home and care for children rather than work at a financial loss is a choice, but by no means a free choice based on whether a women would prefer to stay home or go to work—even less an expression of that woman's identity as a stay-at-home or a working mother. And both Slaughter and Sandberg hint at a second consequence of the rhetoric of choice: that the tug-of-war between work and family is seen as just that—a finite trade-off, as if there is no way to harmonize these competing realms, no perspective (other than an economic perspective) in which cherishing one's work is good for one's family, or vice versa. The very notion that women must "balance" work and family implies an opposition between the two realms, as we rarely speak of "balancing" mutually enriching aspects of our lives.

Throughout the debate over whether women can "have it all" and the rhetoric of choice implying that having it all is impossible, the three topoi introduced in this article continue to do important rhetorical work. Duty, for example, takes center stage in the much-publicized "mommy wars" between working and stay at home mothers. The phenomenon itself implies that, culturally, women's (or at least mothers') primary duty is to the family, not to her work. The central question, here, is whether a woman can be a good mother while working—not whether she can succeed professionally while being a mother. Education also remains central to women's working lives, though success in the classroom or the academy doesn't always transfer to successful, happy careers. Increased educational access ideally expands the possible choices for women's work; however, as in the case of STEM, educational sites themselves are sometimes complicit in discouraging women from pursuing particular career paths. Technology is perhaps the topos most often implicated in promises that women can have it all, enabling professionals to work from home more easily (or stay in touch with family while working—permitting that much-desired "balance"). Yet such flexible policies (including flex days and other deviations from the typical workday or workweek) can limit networking and professional advancement—one rationale behind Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's unpopular decision to ban telecommuting. Again, women's "choices" to take advantage of these opportunities are choices, but they are also highly constrained, and the rhetoric of choice obscures as much as it reveals.

The broad applicability of these three topoi—duty, education, and technology—to contemporary as well as historical situations highlights the relevance of feminist rhetorical considerations of work-related rhetorics. The topoi represent a set of questions at the core of work-related feminist rhetorical scholarship: to what factors do we owe women's position with regard to

different kinds of work? Have institutional forces thwarted women's efforts to advance professionally to the highest levels of influence, or should women be self-reliant, finding individual strategies for "leaning in" within those systems in order to change them? Can the rhetoric and reality of women's paid work ever change significantly without a concomitant shift in understandings or arrangements of men's role in unpaid, reproductive labor?

This article—and the body of work for which it calls—offers one approach to addressing these questions so as to historicize women's relationship to different areas of work, to complicate the easy dichotomy of "having it all" versus failing to do so, and to upset the implied linearity of women's progress that often characterizes the contemporary debate. By focusing not on dichotomies, such as the zero sum game of "having it all" or the "do we blame ourselves or the system?" question, but on particular moments of change in their historical context, we can see how women's professional and personal lives, as well as the boundaries between them, are shaped by many different forces—personal, historical, professional, and material—that perhaps make "having it all" a self-defeating question. We can honor but also contextualize the sorts of interventions that Sandberg offers in her advice to "lean in"—essentially, to accept the masculine work norm in order to change that norm from within—while at the same time addressing the institutional or structural obstacles Slaughter describes. Perhaps most importantly, we can texture the larger conversation about women and work, attending to those who are rendered invisible by the terms of this debate: the vast majority of women workers for whom nearing "the top" of business, law, or government is not even a possibility, much less a "choice" to balance alongside family life.

At the same time as attention to work-related rhetorics offers a corrective to contemporary dichotomies, this project provides an important opportunity for scholars in rhetoric and composition to complicate our longstanding focus on rhetoric as a tool for political and civic engagement. It offers a lens that makes visible a vibrant, but understudied, arena for women's rhetorical activity—workplaces. Moreover, it encourages us to consciously expand our attention not only to the rhetorical lives of professional women, but also to workers, more broadly, whose energies might have been focused not on civic life, but on negotiating issues of more immediate personal concern: wages, access to and compensation for specific skills, and the role of work in constructions of personal identity and broader social interventions.

Additionally, work-related rhetorics enrich scholarly efforts to explore "rhetorics of gendering" as a feminist rhetorical project. As Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack have asserted, gendering occurs through rhetorical-material means: not only in texts, but also in particular physical spaces, in temporal arrangements, and in specific arrangements of objects. A work-related rhetorical

project might engage with any or all of these elements, yet it also considers gendering as nearly inextricable from conceptions of work, a slippery but powerful rhetorical construct.

By tracing the complex rhetorical life of various forms of work, we gain a more precise understanding not only of how gender difference is maintained, but how it is transformed. The topoi of duty, education, and technology, we argue, serve as recurring nodes in the revaluing and redistribution of work, with reverberating impacts on all aspects of the material world, from workspaces to time schedules to compensation. Still, we must emphasize that duty, education, and technology are hardly an exhaustive list of work-related topoi; we are confident that many other threads weave their way through particular justifications, resistances, and tensions within work-related rhetorics. Nevertheless, these three topoi help to naturalize gender performances, and they can also be enlisted to produce change, inside and outside the workplace. Like work and gender, each is a rhetorical construct; in conjunction with work and gender, each produces a particular range of rhetorical and material conditions for women's labor that is all too often disguised within a "rhetoric of choice:" the illusion that an individual may choose her destiny unfettered by gender norms.

Notes

1 Two notable exceptions are Jordynn Jack's "Acts of Institution: Embodying Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies in Space and Time," which appeared in *Rhetoric Review* 28.3, and Jessica Enoch's "A Woman's Place Is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America," in *College English* 70.3.

2 By "naturalize," we refer to the processes by which rhetorical or socially constructed phenomena are made to seem unproblematically biological (or "natural") in origin. For instance, the complex means by which women are channeled into caring-related fields often "naturalize" the commonplace that women are biologically or intellectually suited to those careers. In this way, gender differences are made to seem "natural," unavoidable, or inevitable.

3 Sociologists of work use the term "reproductive labor" or "social reproduction" to describe women's unpaid work in the home, an effort to increase the visibility and status of this mental, manual, and emotional labor (see Brenner and Laslett).

4 For instance, a recent study by Heilman and Chen found that women get less credit than men for engaging in altruistic behaviors (like staying late to help a colleague) at work, but are penalized more harshly if they

do not "go the extra mile." Other studies illustrate the different ways that parenthood affects one's work, operating through what sociologist Michelle Budig calls the "fatherhood bonus" and "motherhood penalty."

5 Jack has traced similar attempts to relate factory work to domestic work during World War II ("Acts" 294).

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