

Rhetorical Remembering in the Meeting Minutes of the Tuesday Morning Study Group

Abstract: This article examines meeting minutes from the Tuesday Morning Study Group (TMSG), an African American women's study club that began meeting in Durham, NC in 1962. Employing a rhetorical remembering methodology (Enoch), I analyze how secretaries' rhetorical practices cultivated club identity, created counterpublic memories, privileged local civil rights history, and responded to multiple audiences. I argue that feminist memory studies, in addition to supporting recovery and rereading efforts, expose practices to revise dominant public narratives and histories.

Keywords: Black women's clubs, meeting minutes, feminist memory

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The influence of women's clubs—especially Black women's clubs—has often been overlooked in U.S. history and public memory (Cash; McHenry). Feminist and rhetorical scholars have responded to this dearth in significant ways, taking up women's clubs as sites for rhetorical education, activism, and social advancement (Blair; Gere; Logan; Martin; Ostergaard; Richardson; Royster; Sharer). Yet many areas of the clubwomen movement remain underexplored, including civil rights era women's clubs, whose work played a vital role in fights for racial justice and equality. This article focuses on the Tuesday Morning Study Group (TMSG), an African American women's club that began meeting in Durham, NC in 1962. Over the next fifty years, the club met monthly to study art, literature, philosophy, and politics, often focusing on the cultural contributions of Black Americans. The TMSG offers a rich case study of a Black women's club who fostered education and community during a tumultuous time in the Jim Crow south.

Employing what Jessica Enoch calls the “rhetorical practice of remembering” or feminist memory studies, this article highlights how the group cultivated its own history and memory through the careful crafting of meeting minutes (60). As an “outlier” methodology, Enoch lauds rhetorical remembering for going beyond revision, to “interrogat[e] the dynamic relationships among rhetoric, gender, and history” (60). Extending critical imagination and strategic contemplation (Royster and Kirsch), rhetorical remembering is a method that facilitates studying historical (and often incomplete) records, while acknowledging the complexities and ethics of representation (Ballif; Bizzell; Frank). This article responds to Enoch's call to expand feminist memory studies and examines how the TMSG members asserted agency through rhetorical remembering.

Meeting minutes—rarely studied as artifacts—portray the outcomes of careful rhetorical remembering practices. In the case of the TMSG, the minutes bolster collective memories and capture Black women's intellectual and cultural contributions in ways that are often absent in public memory. Analyzing meeting minutes from the club's beginning (1962-69), this article contextualizes the TMSG's work within women's club history and within 1960s Durham, which was shaped by Jim Crow, protest, class conflict, and economic opportunity. Following a brief introduction to the TMSG, I discuss the rhetorical significance of meeting minutes, arguing that they be studied as serious artifacts that illustrate complex rhetorical negotiations. Then, I examine four rhetorical

remembering practices evident in the minutes: 1) inventing and sustaining club identity, 2) creating counterpublic memories, 3) privileging local civil rights history, and 4) negotiating multiple rhetorical situations. In conclusion, I argue that feminist memory methodologies complicate hegemonic public memories and histories. Expanding rhetorical studies of Black women's clubs, this study centers clubwomen's social and intellectual contributions, underscoring the influence of Black women in the Civil Rights Movement.

Contextualizing the TMSG

The TMSG was founded following the 1940s and '50s influx of Black women's clubs in Durham, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh, NC. Organizing around educational, religious, civic, social, and neighborhood interests, historian Christina Greene lists examples of such African American women's clubs in the region: "Cosmetology Club, the Merry Wives, the Model Mothers Club, the Friendly Circle Club of the St. Joseph's African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the Pearson-town Needle Craft Club, and the West End Jolly Sisters, to name a few" (26). While local chapters of national women's clubs like the YWCA, League of Women Voters (LWV), American Association of University Women (AAUW), and International League of Peace and Freedom allowed Black women to join by the mid-1950s, integration of clubs in Durham (and across the nation) remained difficult, which was exacerbated by segregation in Durham's public facilities until 1963. For example, when a Black woman attempted to join Durham's AAUW in 1954, meetings were held in Harvey's Cafeteria, which would not serve Black customers. After much debate, the AAUW moved their meetings to the YWCA, but many white members were displeased, resulting in a 30% loss of white members between 1955-58 (Greene 50).

Black women in Durham successfully pushed for integration of local chapters of national clubs, but white members were not necessarily welcoming. This sentiment was especially true for study group meetings, which were held in private homes. For many white members of AAUW, "the new level of interracial intimacy that study group meetings in members' homes demanded was more threatening than crossing the racial divide to break bread together" (Greene 51). Inviting Black members into white women's homes disrupted a historical power dynamic, wherein Black women were welcome only as domestic workers. Early TMSG member Josephine Clement, who joined the LWV in the '50s, described: "[white women] began to bring black women in, but they still were in control of the organization" (Greene 51). Clement was one of the first two Black board members of the YWCA, yet white women maintained a majority on the board and a "common decision among black and white" members led the group to disband dinner meetings (Greene 48). An alternative to Durham's integrated clubs and study groups, the TMSG was founded to pursue the specific interests and concerns of Black women. Some TMSG members continued membership in integrated clubs, yet the longevity of the TMSG shows a sustained desire for a space where Black women could lead and study their own history and culture.

Without official affiliation, the TMSG was free to invent its own purpose and legacy. The club was loosely associated with North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, one of the largest and most influential African American-owned businesses in the world. Several early members were married to executives at the company, who were also leaders in local politics. For the first decade, TMSG members were part of a small, elite social circle of affluent Black Durhamites—many with undergraduate and graduate degrees, often from HBCUs. Club members were community leaders, politicians, and educators. For example, founding member Rosemary Fitts Funderburg was a social worker who became a professor and administrator at Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. Minnie Spaulding, a nearly life-long Durham resident, was an English teacher and professor. Alice Kennedy earned a bachelor's in nursing, served as an army nurse in WWII, and was one of the first Black women to earn a master's in nursing from University of North Carolina

at Chapel Hill. After moving to Durham, Kennedy taught at high school, technical school, and college levels, developing the BSN program at North Carolina Central University, Durham's HBCU.

In addition to teaching and social work, several of the founding members, such as Elna Spaulding, were active in the Civil Rights Movement and politics. A civil rights activist, Spaulding was the first Black female member of the Board of County Commissioners in 1974, serving five terms until she was replaced by Clement in 1986. Spaulding also founded the Women in Action for the Prevention of Violence in 1968, an interracial community group that worked to prevent racial violence and discord (Anderson 377). Similarly, Clement and Watts were founding members of the Durham Links, an organization that facilitated the desegregation of schools, supported struggling students, and promoted social justice (Anderson 365). TMSG members were integral to supporting the Black Durham community through education, community organizing, and political reform.

Durham's women's clubs, like most at the time, often formed along socio-economic lines, and with significant class conflict in Durham's Black community, the TMSG was likely considered elitist in its first decade (Brown; Greene). Early meeting minutes primarily focus on the concerns of the upper-middle class and portray traditionally feminine decorum and virtue. Yet they also reveal women with a breadth of interest and curiosity—studying topics ranging from *Lord of the Flies*, Malcom X, Nat Turner, and jazz to Hinduism, existentialism, and Beethoven. Greene claims, “Even social spaces that seemingly had nonpolitical aims supported demands for racial equality . . . certain behaviors may be transformative even in the absence of explicit political motives” (30). In pursuit of a wide-ranging education, members showed open mindedness and commitment to change. Many study topics illustrate a desire to learn more about Black experience, culture, and social systems. A sampling of such topics includes Black literature, African art, Panama, Jamaica, Haiti, religion, psychology, philosophy, sculpture, symphony, segregation, Black Muslims, campus revolution, lower class hostility, relationship between African Americans and Jews, and the education system.

Rhetorizing Meeting Minutes

Despite being one of the most common examples of writing among formal and informal organizations, meeting minutes have rarely received critical attention. Just a handful of technical and professional communication scholars have taken up their study, highlighting their rhetorical complexity and organizational value (McEachern; Whitney; Wolfe). David Ingham explains that even though meeting minute writing is often understood to be “uninspired,” useless, or a “chore,” minutes “represent one of the most complex rhetorical situations imaginable” (229). Meeting minute writers must imagine an audience beyond those people present and absent from a meeting. Future colleagues, supervisors, lawyers, archivists, and historians are all potential audiences to be considered; thus, writing minutes is a challenging critical thinking, rhetorical, and ethical process (Whitney 46). Given the potential legal implications and interpersonal strife that could result from a biased, ill-composed record, it is no surprise writers frequently use passive voice and the unanimous “we,” rather than naming specific members. Anonymity in meeting minutes indicates conscientiousness and an awareness of the rhetorical and ethical complexities (Ingham 231).

Parliamentary guidelines have long influenced formal and colloquial rules about meeting minute writing. For early women's clubs, *Robert's Rules of Order* helped women practice leadership roles and exert power in ways that weren't acceptable in public venues (Martin 66). The 1951 edition of *Robert's Rules* describes the clerk's or secretary's charge: “keep a record of the proceedings, stating what was done and not what was said, unless it is to be published, and never making criticisms, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done” (246). With the goal of im-

partiality, as a genre, meeting minutes organize and communicate rhetorical action for club members (Miller, Devitt, and Gallagher). The 1950 *Standard Handbook for Secretaries* encourages a structured and tidy entry, including meeting title, date, time, place, presiding officers, member roll, procedures, and secretary signature (Hutchinson 406). The TMSG minutes largely adhere to these guidelines, though they also demonstrate collaborative writing and carefully cultivated representations. Historically, Anne Ruggles Gere asserts, many women's clubs feared misrepresentation and were protective of club texts, refusing to share them publicly or give access to archives (45). To produce affirmative representations and protect their reputations, it was common for club secretaries to express affection for one another in minutes and avoid documenting dissent (Gere 45). Keeping a tight control of club materials and activities, Gere argues, facilitated intimacy among members—only with privacy could intimacy blossom.

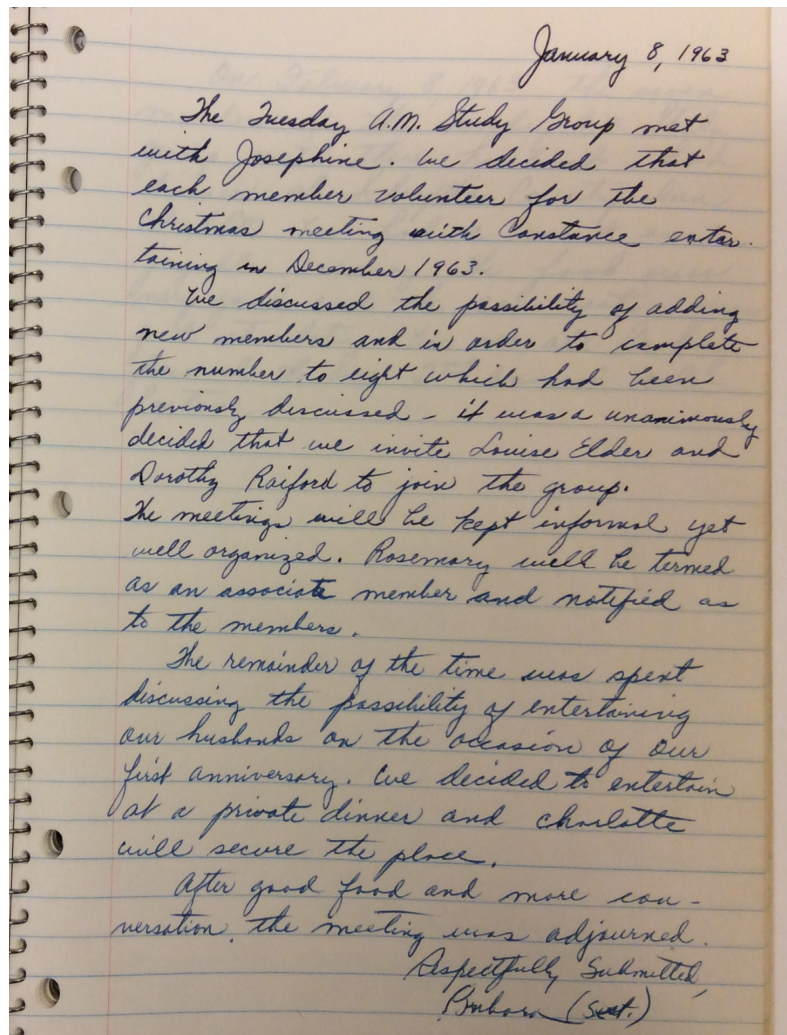
Writing meeting minutes is a way of “self-historicizing” (Gere 51). For the TMSG, a varied yet collective picture of the club appears in the minutes, as each secretary put forth her perspective of what should be remembered. Writing meeting minutes was an opportunity for secretaries to capture their view of the club, its members, and their work. For example, Elna ('67-'68) wrote detailed summaries of study topics, summarizing key takeaways from the material, while Barbara ('62-'63) gave a terse overview of events, and Delores ('64-'65) sprinkled her entries with funny quips. More than documenting club business, the minutes reinforce club culture and identity as they are read aloud, approved and/or amended at each meeting. In a collaborative approach to memory making, members listened for an accurate representation and remembered their role in what occurred. To highlight the club's memory making processes, the following sections analyze specific practices evident in the TMSG meeting minutes: 1) inventing and sustaining club identity, 2) creating counterpublic memories, 3) privileging local civil rights history, and 4) negotiating multiple rhetorical situations. These are not the only practices evident in the minutes, but they are most prominent in self-historicizing the club.

Inventing Club Identity and Values

Because meeting minutes were read aloud, voted on, and approved at the beginning of each meeting, they are a primary text in defining the work and values of the club. From the very beginning, the TMSG's focus was on continued success and preparation. In the club's second entry, Barbara wrote, “Two Excellent films were shown by Mr. Marvin which were greatly enjoyed and appreciated by the group. The first and main film shown was ‘How to Conduct a Discussion.’ There were eleven points given as elements of good group discussion” (13 November 1962). Suggestions like “The experience of the members should be used to enrich the discussion” and “All members of the group should try to improve their group performance” emphasize the importance of individual involvement and responsibility for the success of the whole. In the following meeting, the group continued to discuss good conversation practices, and one final recommendation appears written in all caps: “IS IT CHATTER? DOES IT MATTER?” (Murray ch. 5). These questions, featured in Arthur Murray's 1944 book *Popularity*, were intended to gauge the efficacy of one's conversation. The key to fruitful discussions, according to Murray, is garnering interest and interaction. Such guidelines reinforced a methodical and thoughtful club culture: “The meetings will be kept informal yet well organized” (8 January 1963, see fig. 1). Contemporaneously, these guidelines are a reminder of best practices for club members, but as a historical record, the guidelines portray a club ethos that was unified and ambitious.

Recording specifics about membership also demonstrates a careful cultivation of club purpose and culture. As members left the club for various reasons, they discussed inviting new women (see fig. 1); the October 1964 minutes stated, for example, “Names were presented and voted upon, according to her interests and what she might contribute to the efforts of the Study Group.”

Because the members were collectively decided upon, the club exercised control over the purpose and identity of the group, as seen in the May 1969 entry: “The secretary was asked to contact prospective members to stress the fact that it is a study group and that each person is expected to contribute to the success of the program.” In addition to selectivity, this emphasis indicates the seriousness of the club’s objective and the responsibility of each club member to uphold it. Other entries mention increasing membership to disperse club labor (i.e., presenting, hosting, leading) and to increase the audience so more people could appreciate the hard work of member presentations.



January 8, 1963

The Tuesday A.M. Study Group met with Josephine. We decided that each member volunteer for the Christmas meeting with Constance entertaining in December 1963.

We discussed the possibility of adding new members and in order to complete the number to eight which had been previously discussed - it was a unanimously decided that we invite Louise Elder and Dorothy Raiford to join the group. The meetings will be kept informal yet well organized. Rosemary will be termed as an associate member and notified as to the members.

The remainder of the time was spent discussing the possibility of entertaining our husbands on the occasion of our first anniversary. We decided to entertain at a private dinner and Charlotte will secure the place.

After good food and more conversation, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barbara (sec.)

Figure 1: Image of a TMSG meeting entry from January 8, 1963. It reads “The Tuesday A.M. Study Group met with Josephine. We decided that each member volunteer for the Christmas meeting with Constance entertaining in December 1963. We discussed the possibility of adding new members and in order to complete the number to eight which had been previously discussed—it was a [sic] unanimously decided that we invite Louise Elder and Dorothy Raiford to join the group. The meetings will be kept informal yet well organized. Rosemary will be termed as an associate member and notified as to the members. The remainder of the time was spent discussing the possibility of entertaining our husbands on the occasion of our first anniversary. We decided to entertain at a private dinner and Charlotte will secure the place. After good food and more conversation, the meeting was adjourned. Respectfully Submitted, Barbara (sec.)” (Tuesday Morning Study Group, Record of Meetings).

Documenting social events similarly privileged celebration and comradery among members. Since the social aspect of women’s clubs “fostered solidarity within groups,” secretaries regularly included as many specifics about social events as study topics (Gere and Robbins 644). Activities like Christmas parties, Valentine’s anniversary dinners with husbands, and community outings were highlights of the annual program whose planning was given significant space in the meet-

ting minutes. For example, in the third meeting, Barbara wrote, "It was decided that the December meeting be devoted to 'Christmas in and around the home'" with a member devoted to each of these topics: Foods, Decorations, Flowers, Wrapping, Wardrobe, Gifts (9 October 1962). Here, the secretary captures the club's meticulous approach to the study of domestic topics; even festive occasions were approached with sincerity. Detailing both the formal business (e.g., club procedures, membership, annual programs) and the informal culture that unfolded (e.g., celebrations, outings), secretaries wrote a history that is multifaceted, portraying both the club's seriousness and joy.

Creating Counterpublic Memories

The choices secretaries made in self-historicizing must be situated within the complicated context of 1960s Durham. "Black Durham was a paradox," historian Leslie Brown writes (19). For the Black upper and middle classes, Jim Crow invented a consistent customer base but prevented enduring economic success. Unlike many southern cities, Durham had a flourishing "Black Wall Street"—a place of unparalleled Black entrepreneurship and economic prosperity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1912 that Black Durham's "social and economic development is perhaps more striking than that of any similar group in the nation" (132). However, by the 1960s, urban renewal severed Durham's Hayti neighborhood, one of the only self-sustaining African American economies at the time, and class stratification and conflict intensified. Despite the potential for prosperity, segregation and racist violence was an ever-present reality. In the 1960s, Durham had one of the lowest desegregation rates in the south (Greene 71) with only 15% of Durham whites favoring racial integration of schools and businesses (Greene 79). As KKK membership rose, civil rights activism flourished throughout the decade with sit-ins, boycotts, and a 1963 demonstration at Howard Johnson's, where 700 protestors were arrested. Regardless of these realities, economic prosperity was possible for Black residents who could overcome many barriers (Gilmore 27).

As members of the affluent Black class, early members of the TMSG were deemed responsible for racial uplift yet were also criticized for enacting class superiority and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Following E. Franklin Frazier's 1957 study of the Black middle class, historian Paula Giddings describes, "Black women were scolded for being too domineering and too insecure; too ambitious and too decadently idle, all in the same breath" (252). Facing this predicament, many scholars suggest Black women used respectability as a strategy to respond to social scrutiny and racism. Brown explains, "Enacted through gender roles, respectability reflected a collective priority to protect against the intimidations of racism, and virtually all African Americans acknowledged the hegemony of respectability. Against the multifaceted challenges of Jim Crow, black people wore respectability like armor" (20). Values like domesticity, submissiveness, and purity express respectability and emerge throughout the meeting minutes. For example, Barbara wrote, "On April 16th, the Study Group carried their mothers to the Duke Gardens. The weather was perfect and the gardens beautiful. The mothers were very appreciative of the trip which seems to be their annual highlight. Afterwards, Elna and Louise served a delicious luncheon at which time the fellowship was enjoyed immensely!" (16 April 1963). Many accounts of club events render immaculate and enchanting meetings; however, to characterize these depictions only as evidence of respectability does not adequately capture the intellectual and community contributions of the club. In her study of race women, Black feminist scholar Brittney Cooper asserts that respectability and dignity are often conflated; whereas respectability is tied to social recognition, dignity is the "fundamental recognition of one's inherent humanity" (5). Though Cooper does not explicitly discuss clubs, her work studies Black women as knowledge producers and argues that theories of respectability have often obscured the intellectual contributions of Black women. Thus, passages in the TMSG meeting minutes that seem to enact respectability may also reveal the rhetorically complicated work of writing history and crafting dignified representations. Focusing on "embodied discourses"—how

Black women center their bodies as sites of possibility—is one way Cooper resists oversimplified readings of historical texts (3).

TMSG secretaries invoke embodied discourses through vivid descriptions and emotional expressions, underscoring desires, feelings, labors, pains, and possibilities. At the December 1967 meeting (see fig. 2), Elna wrote, “The Clement Home was beautifully decorated with a dellarobia [sic] wreath at the front door and red berries and greens at the stoop, to appropriate and attractive decorations throughout the home. A delightful program was planned and rendered to the enjoyment of all the guests. A Christmas repast was served from the dining room and everyone had a delightful time.” Through the imagery of this carefully arranged and reported scene, Elna praises Josephine’s labor and taste. The joy that exudes in this excerpt is palpable, as Elna documents Black women who are flourishing. Cooper claims, “The audacity, conversely, to discuss in fleeting moments feelings of pleasure, despite daily contention with extreme racial repression, again challenges overdetermined readings of race women being obsessed in every moment with being respectable” (9). Because it acknowledges a certain level of comfort and deservedness, this depiction highlights the group’s pleasure and worth.

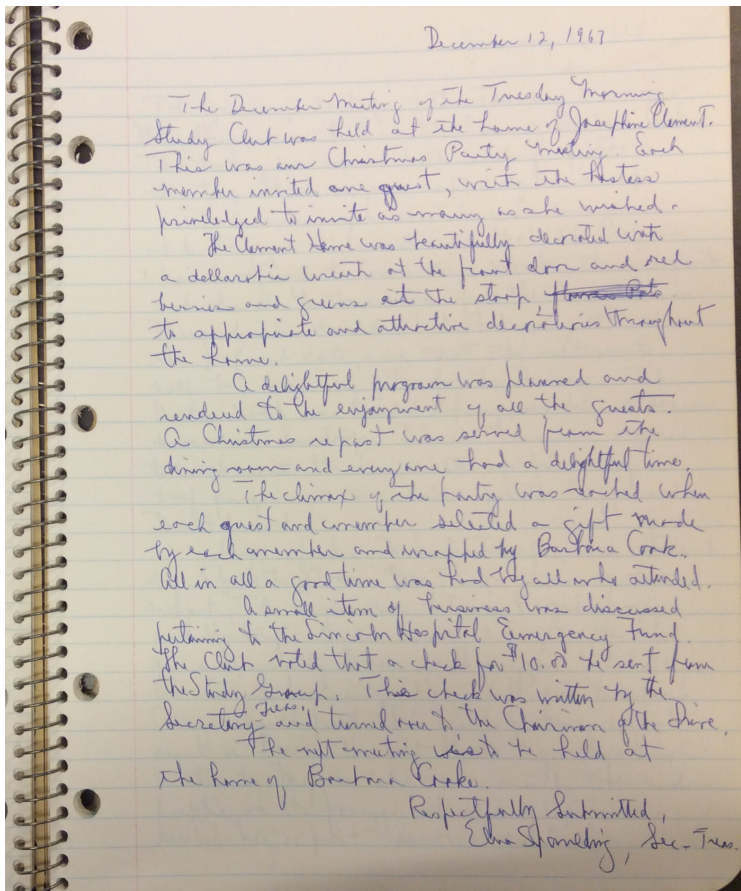


Figure 2: Image of a TMSG meeting entry from December 12, 1967. It reads “The December meeting of the Tuesday Morning Study Group was held at the home of Josephine Clement. This was our Christmas Party meeting. Each member invited one guest, with the hostess privileged to invite as many as she wished. The Clement Home was beautifully decorated with a dellarobia [sic] wreath at the front door and red berries and greens at the stoop, to appropriate and attractive decorations throughout the home. A delightful program was planned and rendered to the enjoyment of all the guests. A Christmas repast was served from the dining room and everyone had a delightful time. The climax of the party was reached when each guest and member selected a gift made by each member and wrapped by Barbara Cook. All in all a good time was had by all who attended. A small item of business was discussed pertaining Lincoln Hospital Emergency Fund. The Club voted that a check for \$10.00 be sent from the Study Group. This check was written by the Secretary-Treas. and turned over to the Chairman of the Drive. The next meeting is to be held at the home of Barbara Cooke. Respectfully Submitted, Elna Spaulding, Sec. & Treas.”

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Feminist memory studies encourage upending hegemonic histories that “fortify the status quo” with counterpublic memories that “disrupt visions of life as it was, is, and will be” (Enoch 62). Portraying Black women as dignified, secretaries extolled a virtue and prosperity that was historically unavailable to African Americans. While much meeting minute space in the early years is taken up by pleasantries and seemingly superfluous domestic details, these rhetorical moves complicate popular characterizations of Black women at the time. Elizabeth McHenry warns against a “limited vision of the black middle and upper classes as assimilationist or accommodationist,”

which “oversimplifies the complexity of their actions” (17). The TMSG in its very existence—as an alternative to integrated clubs—challenged other Durham women’s clubs that were not welcoming to Black members. In documenting their work, club secretaries advanced counterpublic memories that unsettled simplified, unsophisticated, and racist representations of Black women.

Privileging Local Civil Rights History

The TMSG meeting minutes exemplify members’ engagement in ongoing civil rights debates and dedication to documenting local history. The club interacted with prominent local intellectuals and civil rights activists as invited guest speakers. For example, in October 1966, the club hosted a talk, “The Negro in Civil Rights—Emergence of Black Power,” with surgeon and activist Charles Watts (husband of club member Constance), civil rights leader and President of North Carolina College Alphonso Elder, and activist Howard Fuller. The minutes describe that each man spoke and a brief discussion and question and answer period followed. Many guest speakers were professors at Durham’s HBCU, North Carolina College (now called North Carolina Central University). Music professor Earl Allen Sanders spoke about the history of the opera (1964); philosophy professor Ernst Manasse, who fled Nazi Germany and was the first permanent white faculty member at NCC, gave a talk, “The Disturbed Modern World and Existentialism” (1967); and Earlie Thorpe, a leading scholar of African American history, discussed history and psychology (1968). Guest speakers illustrate a multidisciplinary approach to the study of civil rights and Black experience, privileging both academic and community perspectives.

Including reminders in the minutes, secretaries prepared the club for serious engagement with intellectuals and activists. When local civil rights activist and lawyer Floyd McKissick was coming to speak to the club, Delores wrote, “Members were urged to prepare some meaty and meaningful questions in advance for Mr. McKissick so we would not waste his time” (15 September 1964). This directive reflects meticulous planning and investment in the topic. Even though many guest speakers were in the same social circles as club members (Anderson; Vann), TMSG members formalized their discussions through club presentations and records.

Records of current event discussions also illustrate participation in local civil rights debates. While some entries are spare on details—“the group engaged in a half-hour discussion of current events” (9 Oct. 1968)—others include the topics discussed (e.g., Alabama Governor George Wallace ignoring the federal order to integrate schools in Birmingham, the Israeli-Arab conflict, religious conflict in Ireland, or Jackie Onassis’ spending). The November 1968 entry includes a thorough description:

The first question posed was “What do we think of the use of children by activists?” The consensus appeared to be that education is being lost and that children, unfortunately, are bearing the brunt of the burden. Other topics discussed were the “Afro” trend in hairstyling and the series of articles by Dr. Helen G. Edmonds that appeared recently in the Sunday Herald.

This array of topics indicates a systemic approach to civil rights, ranging from protests to beauty standards to local newspaper editorials. Edmonds’ five-article series, “The Crisis in Race Relations,” examines the “racial plagues”—segregation and discrimination—that followed the civil war (Edmonds). Dean of the Graduate School at NCC, Edmonds situates Black experience historically, covering topics like lack of opportunity, white privilege, Black leadership, and protest. She offers eight solutions in her final column that emphasize “constructive interracial action” on local levels, including democratic dialogue and revised history books (Edmonds). Discussion of this series would inspire a complicated consideration of the causes and manifestations of racism. Including

the details of current event discussions, secretaries portrayed a nuanced and situated study of civil rights.

Negotiating Rhetorical Situations

Above all else, the meeting minutes reveal a complex rhetorical negotiation for secretaries writing for multiple audiences. This negotiation is most evident when secretaries “self-historicize” (Gere), addressing the concerns of contemporaneous members and a future, broader audience, through practices like using innuendo, giving compliments, using their own voice/style, and referencing club labor. With lighthearted insinuation, secretaries boost members in the immediate moment and create a cordial picture for future audiences. For example, at the May 13, 1969 meeting, Minnie wrote, “During the first half hour there was a lively and very informal discussion of light current topics.” The adjectives in this sentence subtly allude to amusement or even gossip—a friendly and comfortable scene before the club moves onto its study topic for the day.

Documenting the affective and embodied, secretaries showed the importance of remembering members’ friendship and joy. Similarly, thankful comments expressed gratitude. At lunch following an outing to the Duke gardens, Minnie described, “All of us were instructed to order from the menu whatever we preferred. It was a delightful occasion. Everyone present expressed her appreciation to Barbara for her kind hospitality” (8 April 1969). Here, Minnie documents TMSG member Barbara’s generosity in paying for the meal, reinforcing a culture of generosity and appreciation. Secretaries frequently incorporated compliments within the minutes, demonstrating comradery and fellowship. In nearly every entry, the secretary describes what the host served (e.g., “repast,” “luncheon buffet,” “salad course,” or “covered dish supper”) and a valuation of it, often “delicious” or “delightful.” Less frequently, compliments extend to the members’ presentations of material, e.g. describing an “excellent review” or a “quite educational, interesting, and uniquely done” presentation. Admiration has multiple purposes—increasing comradery in the present and documenting graciousness for the future.

Some secretaries also used humor or a playful tone, entertaining contemporary audiences and adding complexity for future audiences. The September 1964 entry is one of just a handful of these examples from the ‘60s minutes, wherein Delores transcended genre conventions in a number of ways:

After a very delicious lunch, served by Barbara (who didn’t eat a bite on account of her strict diet) Louise read an article from *The Ladies Home Journal*, “The Answering Voice,” which was a short biographical sketch of five real kooky women poets (contemporary). The article even referred to them as “odd balls”. But for the sake of “culture” we should call them eccentric females . . . Real juicy and entertaining!

Within a genre intended to document only actions, these few moments of subjectivity provide a glimpse into the material and embodied lives of club members. Noting Barbara’s strict diet, Delores expresses empathy and perhaps even praise for her self control. With her quip about “culture,” Delores acknowledges its social construction or even critiques concurrent notions of “cultured,” as clubwomen frequently did (McHenry 228). The exclamation of “real juicy and entertaining” offers a hint of salacious material and discussion, in stark contrast to the otherwise impartial club persona presented in the meeting minutes. From the article description to the intimation of gossip, current readers can imagine members and the thrill of discussing material considered taboo. While members likely found this entry amusing at the time, for future audiences, the entry reveals insight and intimacy (Gere).

Another example illustrates vulnerability and encouragement. At the 1964 Christmas party, Delores wrote, “Barbara played the organ—with Josephine playing the base pedals because Barbara ‘couldn’t practice enough ahead of time to feel confident about the base pedals,’ she said. Naturally, she played beautifully—and no one would have criticized her even had she goofed a little on the base—but that’s good ole Barbara, shy girl that she is.” Here, Delores documents her response to Barbara’s self-consciousness, offering reassurance and affectionately referring to her as “good ole Barbara.” When these minutes are likely read aloud for approval at the next meeting, it reminds Barbara and other members that this is not a space of high expectation or judgment. For future audiences, this entry recognizes embodied nerves and embarrassment but also portrays affection and unconditional support among TMSG members.

Calling attention to the importance of the role, secretaries also occasionally acknowledged their labor in the minutes, by praising a job well done or leaving absences in the record. In the November 1968 entry, following reading and approval of minutes, Minnie wrote, “Elna asked that the word ‘glowing’ be used to describe the minutes. The secretary thanked her for her kind appraisal.” Through this endorsement and celebration of the secretary’s talents, members value Minnie’s work, implicitly encouraging future minutes to follow her standard, which included more extensive descriptions of topics studied. As the club progresses, entries grow in specifics and length, exhibiting the influence secretaries had on evolving practices of self-historicizing. Another more playful discussion of labor comes from the May 1964 entry (see fig. 3), wherein secretary Louise wrote, “I was away / Hurray.” Delores wrote below: “Will never know what happened now—But we DID have a meeting—So there!” This exchange notes the significance of the secretary’s role in documenting the work of the club, along with the friendship within it, as members tease each other. For current audiences, a sense of intimacy emerges from the lightheartedness and vulnerability that slips through the otherwise “objective” voice of secretaries—a glance at the fullness of members’ lives. In many ways, the TMSG minutes exemplify the multifaceted work of club literacy practices detailed in Gere’s research.

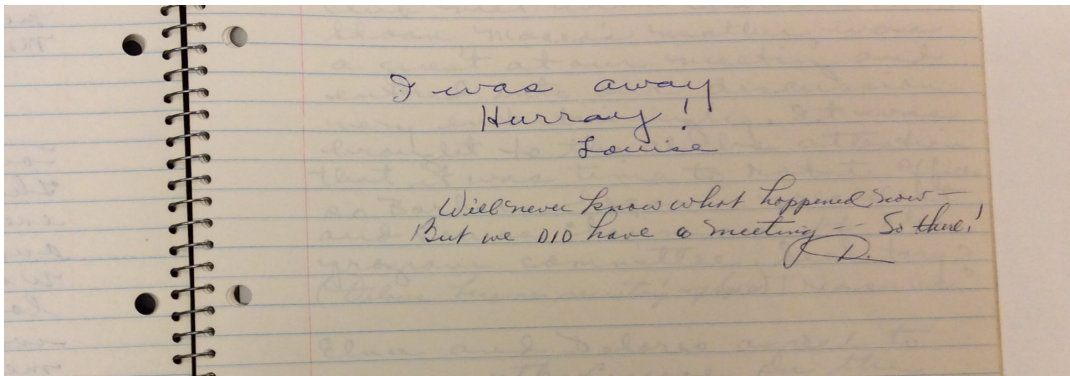


Figure 3: Image of a TMSG meeting entry from May 1964. It reads “I was away Hurray! [signed] Louise” and “Will never know what happened now—But we DID have a meeting—So there! [signed] D.” (Tuesday Morning Study Group, Record of Meetings).

Remembering Rhetorically

The TMSG is a captivating example of social organizing among Black women in 1960s Durham. As an alternative to integrated women’s clubs, the TMSG was established specifically for Black women to study and discuss their own concerns, including multidisciplinary and local to international approaches to civil rights. Mostly working within the confines of the meeting minute genre, secretaries leveraged their agency to self-historicize, affirm members’ dignity, engage with the local Civil Rights Movement, and counter hegemonic representations of Black women. The influence of race should not be overlooked in feminist memory methodologies that “interrogat[e]

the dynamic relationships among rhetoric, gender, and history” (Enoch 60). While race has always played a significant role in women’s clubs (Gere), it has not always been scrutinized in scholarship on clubwomen, and Black women’s clubs during the civil rights era have received little critical attention. Clubs like the TMSG coalesced around the study of Black academic and cultural contributions, despite the racist paradoxes of the time: though affluent and well-educated, club members couldn’t eat at Durham’s popular lunch counter and sent their children to segregated schools. Feminist memory methodologies provide a fruitful avenue for studying the rhetorical practices, complexities, and successes of the TMSG and similar civil rights era clubs.

Meeting minutes underscore remembering as rhetorical and pose intriguing questions for feminist memory studies. An often hidden and obscure process, remembering is somewhat structured in meeting minutes that showcase the purposeful creation of memories, building contemporaneous identity and history. Methodologies of remembering narrow our focus to the rhetorical practices that produce texts rather than just the texts themselves. Malea Powell et al. assert, “in the discipline of rhetoric studies, often, human practices become objects of study that are reduced to texts, to artifacts, to objects, in a way that elides both makers and systems of power.” (Act III, Scene 2). This historical case study foregrounds the human practices—inventing identity, composing counterpublic memories, privileging local civil rights history, and negotiating multiple audiences—that sustained and invigorated the TMSG during the volatilities of Jim Crow. Through their rhetorical remembering, the TMSG left behind a record of intellectual curiosity, community investment, joy, support, and pursuit of civil rights.

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