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Cover Art: Photograph by Rachel Riedner, who is mother of one of our featured authors in this issue.

Editors' Introduction

Rebecca Dingo is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Rebecca's research has addressed transnational rhetorical and composition studies and in doing so she forwards a transnational feminist lens attuned to global political economy. She is the author of *Networking Arguments: Rhetoric, Transnational Feminism, and Public Policy Writing*, which received the W. Ross Winterowd Award in 2012. She has published widely in both the field of Women's Studies and Rhetorical Studies. Rebecca has also offered workshops and trainings across the globe on her research, writing pedagogies, and writing development. Her pedagogy seeks to connect theory with practice and all of her classes tend to offer on-the-ground case studies paired with theoretical lenses. Rebecca earned her Ph.D. in English with an emphasis on Rhetoric and Composition from The Ohio State University.

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keywords: faith communities, intergenerational feminism, intersectional perspectives

The Winter issue of *Peitho* arrives on the heels of the first in person CCCCs since 2019 and the tri-annual conference *Writing Research Across Borders* held in Norway. The energy at these conferences was palpable. To be able to have unplanned encounters with folks in the hallways, during sessions, and even as we walked down the street reminded us all how important connecting with people in real time is, how travel helps us develop new understandings about place, language, and culture, and how much getting away for the daily grind of work can open new ways of thinking and seeing. In the best-case scenario, engaging in in person intellectual exchange humanizes the experiences and perspectives and helps us develop empathy (and sometimes anger), coalition, and shared political commitments to changing institutions and structures. Indeed, my intersectional feminist politics is always strengthened (and sometimes challenged) by the concerns and perspectives outside my small bubble of academia in Western MA.

While not all essays explicitly state it, each essay in this Winter issue of *Peitho* is demonstrating an important shift in the field toward centralizing intersectional perspectives born specifically out of the deep political and scholarly work of women of color historically and in the present. As these essays show, when feminist scholars extend beyond liberal feminist lenses that do not address how racialized, heteronormative, ethnocentric, and class power work together, they begin to see how white feminism became a feminism that "unremarks" on the concerns of women of color and other marginalized people (White-Farnham), on how intersectional and material analyses of labor and power can create institutional change (Cox and Riedner), and how an African American Club's study group's secretaries worked to re-compose dominant narratives about African American

women and their histories (Nelson). Feminist scholars of color have long shown that race and gender cannot be separated from our political commitments and are in fact central to them. These essays reflect *Peitho's* ongoing commitment to expanding feminist rhetorical theory and showcasing feminist teaching and administrative/institutional practices. I am excited to see that the authors of this issue have centralized these lenses in their approach to reading archives, developing cross generational coalitions, and in questioning the persistence of a feminist politics that does not take intersectionality into account. We hope to continue this conversation not only in *Peitho* but at the [Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference](#) in Fall 2023!

This issue of *Peitho* also, sweetly, offers a demonstration of intergenerational feminism as the artist for our cover is the (feminist) mother of one of our authors (Rachel Riedner). We are so pleased to be able to showcase both of their works in the same issue.

Rebecca Dingo (Co-Editor)

The Winter issue also includes two Recoveries and Reconsiderations pieces, both examining the rhetorical work of women in patriarchal faith communities. The first, by Tiffany Gray, is a preliminary look at some interesting archival documents: the Mormon Women's Oral Histories Collection at Claremont Graduate University. The women who share their oral histories grapple with their identities as women and as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as Gray shows. Gray ends her tour through this archive by offering a list of considerations, some of which can help researchers who are new to archival work navigate their way through collections of archives.

Gray's essay is a recovery, and the second piece, by Samantha Rae-Garvey, is a reconsideration: it looks back at Beth Moore, who was a prominent Southern Baptist leader until she decided to leave the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 2021. Rae-Garvey focuses on Moore's Twitter account, the main place where she struggled, publicly, to process her anger about the dismissal, dehumanization, and abuse of women in the Southern Baptist Convention. Rae-Garvey claims that the SBC mislabeled Moore's speaking engagements as "preaching," possibly in an attempt to squeeze her out of the SBC by insinuating that Moore was assuming the role of pastor, which is limited to men (Moore herself never called herself a pastor or her speaking preaching).

There are people of all genders who see inequity and mistreatment when it happens in faith communities. In Sonia Johnson's 1981 feminist memoir, *From Housewife to Heretic: One Woman's Struggle for Equal Rights and Her Excommunication from the Mormon Church*, another story of a life lived in a faith community, she recounts years of seeing and experiencing small acts of injustice against women and girls and filing each one of them away.

Eventually, Johnson remarks, her file burst.

Clancy Ratliff (Co-Editor)

Unremarking on Whiteness: The Midcentury Feminism of Erma Bombeck's Humor and Rhetoric

Abstract: Analysis of the rhetorical strategies and arguments of humor writer Erma Bombeck through the lens of whiteness provides a snapshot into conditions for creating popular and public feminist arguments to moderate audiences in the mid-20th century. Bombeck's arguments unremark on race, class, and sexuality, evincing two legacies of early feminist ideologies including silence/silencing of the concerns of women of color, poor women, and queer women, as well as the evolution of women's self-determination to a neoliberal focus on individual self-improvement.

keywords: feminism, humor writing, whiteness, white feminism, Erma Bombeck

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"Did you ever see the women on soap operas iron? They're just normal, American housewives. But do you ever see them in front of an ironing board? No! They're out having abortions, committing murder, Blackmailing their boss, undergoing surgery, having fun! If you weren't chained to this ironing board, you could too be out doing all sorts of exciting things."

Erma Bombeck, *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression*, 1974

Erma Bombeck was a prolific white American humor writer and morning television personality whose writing as a columnist and book author between 1952 and 1996 offered pointed critiques of midcentury social expectations of women and the male chauvinist structures in which they lived. Bombeck began writing a column entitled "Operation Dustrag" for women in the *Dayton Journal-Herald* in 1952. She became a syndicated columnist in over 500 newspapers and wrote 12 books, all of which offer witty and sarcastic commentary on the life of the midcentury middle-class American housewife. As the cultural revolution of the '60s progressed, changing the state of the nuclear family and traditional gender roles, Bombeck also became a public figure of the women's rights movement and served on Jimmy Carter's Presidential Advisory Committee for Women in 1978 to campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment. She famously "got Missouri for the ERA," which she joked ought to be put on her headstone (Hutner Colwell 75).

Bombeck's writing is an apt set of texts for excavating whiteness in midcentury feminist arguments in the U.S. In this article, I conduct a textual excavation by analyzing rhetorical strategies and arguments within three of Bombeck's best-selling books. The analysis is situated in two scholarly conversations: first, the long history of whiteness in American feminism, of which I share rhetorical examples offered in recent feminist historical scholarship; and second, observations of whiteness as rhetorical strategies in the past 20+ years of antiracist rhetorical studies.

On the one hand, Bombeck's writing in general advances basic feminist claims about the humanity of women and their rights to determine their own lives. Some instances of her absurdist humor evidence how her platform reached a segment of conservative or moderate women to convince them of their (and others') potential and rights. On the other hand, her portrayal of the family, home, community, and daily quagmires of housewives mostly "unremarks" upon race, class, or sexuality. By "unremarks," I mean that a gap of sorts exists in her writing, the result of which renders her protagonists and their characteristics as assumed to be but not explicitly as white, straight

and middle-class. This “unremarking” produces a singular understanding of the “American woman” and the possibilities and limits facing all women in the midcentury.

To support these claims, after a review of literature on white feminism and whiteness in rhetoric, I analyze several of Bombeck’s essays, which often take the form of shorter vignettes within longer chapters, published in the books *At Wit’s End* (1965), *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression* (1970), and *If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, What am I Doing in the Pits?* (1971). The purpose of excavating whiteness is to acknowledge the “neutral” role that white as a race plays in texts and its related effects, such as uncritically shaping and furthering white-centric dominant representations, cultural scripts, and understandings of reality. My analysis suggests that Bombeck’s work can be seen as an artifact both of the evolution and the entrenchment of whiteness in American feminist thought. I find that these works’ rhetorical effects reflect and perpetuate long-standing first-wave ideologies, including silence and individualism, into popular midcentury American feminist writing and thought.

Historical Rhetorics of/as White Feminism

White feminism has origins in the positions and arguments of early suffragists including Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Paul. According to the work of Louise Michele Newman as well as Koa Beck, these leaders employed rhetorics of superiority, of colonizing, and of conquering to prioritize the concerns of white, middle-class, educated women. Their concern primarily centered on political equality and equal rights with men, to the exclusion of different concerns shared by poor, queer, and women of color. In fact, the top priority for these early white feminists was the vote, and their rhetorics minimized other topics of concern through both explicit racist superiority arguments and a more neutral-seeming avoidance of the “race question” (Newman 13). Clara Peta Blencowe argues that these rhetorical moves left Black, poor, and queer women out of the dominant ideology of first-wave feminism, creating a legacy of silence about and silencing of women of color that persisted uncritically through the 20th century and today (22).

According to Newman, white feminists in Reconstruction-era America no longer considered themselves connected in victimhood with Black men, who gained the right to vote with the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869 (12). The women now found themselves trailing behind both Black and immigrant men in terms of civil rights. Newman highlights Stanton’s explicitly racist and classist claims about Black and immigrant men:

Where antebellum suffrage ideology often emphasized a common victimhood, post bellum suffrage ideology stressed white women’s racial-cultural superiority to newly enfranchised male constituencies – not just Black men, but also naturalized immigrant men. ‘Think of Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung,’ Stanton proclaimed in 1869, ‘who do not know the difference between a monarchy and a republic, who can not [sic] read the Declaration of Independence or Webster’s spelling-book. (12)

This passage exemplifies what Newman identifies as an “imperialist rhetoric,” one that feminists employed to position themselves as superior and worthier of voting rights than people of color (12).

This same argument is reflected in an 1893 resolution of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) under Susan B. Anthony as president. According to Beck, “the resolution dismissed the rights of immigrant men and women, poor, uneducated white Americans, as well as Black Americans on the basis of ‘illiteracy’” (26). A portion of text of the resolution reads:

There are more women who can read and write than the whole number of illiterate male voters, more white women who can read and write than all negro voters; more American women who can read and write than all foreign voters; so that the enfranchisement of such women would settle the vexed questions of rule by illiteracy, whether home-grown or foreign-born production. (27)

These superiority arguments are aimed mostly at enfranchised men, and when it came to white feminists' positions on the political enfranchisement of women of color, queer women, or poor women, suffragists employed a tactic of avoidance and silence/ing that has reverberated over time. Newman notes that between 1870 and 1920, white women found common ground and even "moments of interracial cooperation" based on a Christian influence of compassion of the type that drove some abolitionist activism (13). Still, she notes that "many white leaders dismissed the concerns of Black women – such as miscegenation, interracial rape, lynching, and their admittance to the all-women cars on the Pullman trains [...] irrelevant to the woman movement's foremost goal of 'political equality of women'" (Newman 13). This is just one example of avoiding and/or silence/ing. Beck offers another more public one: while the official position of the NAWSA was not to segregate, a story about the 1913 Washington Woman Suffrage Procession shows the weakness of that position. Beck cites letters to the editor of *The Women's Journal* in 1913 and letters from female students from Howard University to organizer Alice Paul asking if Black women were welcome at the parade, something that had not been outwardly stated either way (26).

In addition, historian Ama Ansah notes: "During rehearsal, parade organizers released an official order to segregate, with Black marchers being sent to the back of the parade" (n.p.). During the event itself, Ida B. Wells is reported to have stayed back for a time, only to emerge in the front in time to have her photo taken for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Beck 27). She did not stay at the front, however, and despite her act of resistance, the parade exemplifies the "silence" that Beck and others characterize as the dominant position of white feminists (26).

A few years later, as the founder of the National Women's Party (NWP) in 1916, Alice Paul stayed silent on (and therefore silenced) the needs of Black, poor, and queer women with her exclusive focus on legislative gains through an equal rights amendment to the constitution. Beck writes, "Paul would go on to maintain her racism and classism in her next political endeavor when she founded the NWP in 1916 [...] her insistence on sexism only [as the party's focus] would be an essential and enduring divide between white feminists and literally everyone else: queer, non-white, and working-class feminists" (29). The amendment would enable white women to advance in educational and capitalistic pursuits, but it would ignore the reality of others' lives.

Newman and Beck characterize these rhetorical moves as a strategy of imperialism, dehumanization, and conquering designed to move elite white women ahead and ignore the "daily lives of working-class and poor women – women who cleaned homes, cared for children, and picked cotton" (Beck 39). Beck argues that the rhetoric and organization of early white feminists not only left Black and poor women behind but also, in achieving a legislative victory like the 19th Amendment, "[blamed] other women for not achieving the possibilities that had been secured for white straight women" (29).

Newman similarly explains: "White women's use of discourse to empower themselves as central players in civilization-work during the late nineteenth century helped consolidate an imperialist rhetoric that delegitimized dissent from nonwhite and non-Christian women" (15). Even "common commitments" such as temperance and suffrage between white and Black women activists "were not sufficient to override the social and political divisions between Black and white women that derived from the material differences in their lives and that were exacerbated by nineteenth century discourses" (Newman 16). The white focus on equality between the sexes to the exclusion of other concerns became, according to Beck, "a defining characteristic of white feminist mobilization in every successive wave, and foundational to how they would continue to both fight for and envision gender equality" (29). It is this defining characteristic that I observe continues to animate second-wave feminist thought into the twentieth century through Bombeck's examples. Tracing this trajectory into the twentieth century, Clare Peta Blencowe suggests that feminists like Margaret Sanger turned to the modern scientific discourse of the twentieth century to advance women's causes as an update to the earlier imperialist rhetorics. Of course, we are now well-aware of the connection between scientific discourses and the violence of eugenics by whites in power. After and because of the Holocaust, Blencowe argues, a shift in thinking away from biological

categories of humanity generally and into social construction and identity politics changed feminist thought in the second wave, but did not leave behind the silencing of the first wave (8).

Beck also traces the shift in white feminists' focus in the 1970s away from biology to identity politics and self-liberation, encompassed in works by Erica Jong and Germaine Greer. Attention on the self and one's own experience was a powerful way to bring change to the collective, Beck argues; for instance, in publishing individual stories about having abortions in *Ms. Magazine*, feminists were able to embolden each other to come forward on behalf of reproductive rights legislation (60). Analysis of the self and one's own positionality as a woman in the limited roles afforded to women such as wife and mother allowed women "to explore what that existence could be" – including enjoying sex, being other-than-heterosexual, not a mother, and a professional (Beck 60).

However, there are downsides to this shift that again center white women: first, Blencowe argues that in the second half of the twentieth century, second-wave feminists struggled for clarity around the competing notions of sex (biology) and gender (social construction). For one, part of the second-wave women's movement was interested in better education about and heightened respect for women's bodies. Yet, Blencowe notes that since "education" had been a pernicious cover for eugenicists, twentieth century feminists downplayed the historically racist biological notions of women like Stanger (8). That downplaying resulted in a situation in which later generations (like me and perhaps you) simply didn't know eugenics played a role in the foundational beliefs of, to take an example of a revered early feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (14).

Finally, Beck notes that in the over-attention to the self in feminism, the ideal of moving forward as a collective movement interested in changing social and political structures to better reflect women's interest faded. In its place stood a focus on individual self-empowerment, which evolved (or devolved) into self-interest and helped to spark the self-improvement industry, a tens of billions of dollars industry that focuses almost exclusively on convincing women of their needs to change in many ways – physically, spiritually, as a partner, as a parent, as a productive worker. In this way, any dreams of women's liberation that would tackle societal inequities and injustices for all women comes to be overshadowed by capitalistic consumption and success for those who have luxury time and funds to commit to this focus. This is reminiscent of the capitalistic and individual power gains Alice Paul was mostly interested in (Beck 62). Here again we see the first wave informing the second wave in an insidious way that speaks to whiteness and privilege.

Taken together, the legacy of silence and the evolution toward individualism leads us to the midcentury conditions in which Bombeck wrote. In order to notice unremarkings of whiteness, the next brief section discusses whiteness in rhetorical studies with several examples of how scholars have interrogated texts of various kinds in the manner proposed here.

Locating Whiteness in Rhetorical Studies

Definitions of whiteness proffered in rhetorical studies for many years have dovetailed with the interpretations of feminist historical rhetorics covered above as erasure of other than white realities through discourse. In *Rhetorics of Whiteness*, Tammie M. Kennedy et al. write:

Whiteness is defined as a term functioning as a trope with associated discourses and cultural scripts that socialize people into ways of seeing, thinking, and performing whiteness and nonwhiteness [...] in ways that inform not only a single person's identity but also identities of cultural groups, cultural sites, and cultural objects, such as texts and technologies. (5)

Providing further nuance to the ways that whiteness operates in texts, Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek's "discourse of whiteness," entails six rhetorical strategies at work: whiteness as majority, whiteness as the absence of markers of "otherness," conflation of whiteness with color, with national identity, with ethnicity and with nationality (218). These are the ways that whiteness is constructed as normal and invisible, the frame in which the world is always, naturally seen. Rarely are these strategies explicit.

Accordingly, Krista Ratcliffe's 2000 suggestion in "Eavesdropping as Rhetorical Tactic" for interrogating implicit strategies that construct whiteness in dominant historical narratives and the history of the field of rhetoric is through rhetorical analysis. She asserts that the trope of whiteness, or the invisibility of whiteness as a racial identity in tellings of history in particular, can become an oppressive force that shapes dominant historical narratives of the future (96). To address this problem, Ratcliffe seeks to interrogate dominant narratives within academic and popular discourse, "eavesdropping on history," and exposing the trope of whiteness (101).

In a similar spirit of uncovering tropes of whiteness, Matthew Jackson finds a trope of whiteness in everyday discourse and in the dis-identification with dominant stances of neutrality on the part of whites. He writes: "Part of the problem of whiteness, then, is that it is too easy for whites to assume a position of supposed racial neutrality; we assume that if we are not doing anything overtly racist, then race is a non-issue for us (602). Jackson advocates for speaking up and calling attention to the supposed neutrality or the embedded tropes of whiteness in such areas as, for instance, news reports about Muslim men who are terrorists. He writes:

Rhetorically speaking, the hegemonic power of whiteness is wrapped up in the power to set the terms of the discourse, to determine the taken for granted rules of society, what counts as a source of grievance in society, and who gets to make a difference. This is often made manifest in whites' silent agreement not to talk about racism (with its underlying social, ontological, and epistemological premises and assumptions). (626)

And, although it has been misunderstood and politicized beyond the realm of interrogating whiteness in specific discursive arenas, the work on critical race narratives by Carl Gutierrez-Jones in legal studies exposes patterns of Black exclusion in the records of witness testimony. He asserts that white-centric narratives, or "strategic narrative reconstruction that excludes all but the [white] defendants' perspectives," historically trump other kinds of evidence at trial (5). A main example is drawn from the Rodney King trial in which the four white police officers' testimony led to their initial acquittal despite evidence against them such as King's extensive injuries and video footage. Gutierrez-Jones calls for the use of critical race narratives by legal professionals that expose when and how racial assumptions shape accepted testimony, rulings, and legal precedents.

Inspired by these observations and methods for questioning whiteness, I offer the term "unremarking," which refers to what texts and discourses are not saying about race, class, and privilege and what the rhetorical effects of these are. Whether one is discussing historical events, current events, legal matters, or even feminist humor writing, the absence of considering and/or remarking on more than white, "neutral" subjectivities, as these scholars and I also argue, too easily conveys a dominant point of view and understanding of reality informed by white supremacy, which is often taken as neutral and has the luxury of appearing apolitical.

The term "unremarking" is not a popular coinage, but at least one recent study in mass communication by Nikki Stevens et al., has used "unremarked" as a way to discuss whiteness as the luxury of appearing apolitical in the history of database optimization (114). In their work, they identify that the language used in foundational studies of their field reflects an uncritical, white-centric stance that resulted in allowing whiteness to operate not only as a neutral, but as the ideal. They write: "some of the most prominent works of the database revolution took up 'whiteness' as a kind of unremarked optimum— that is, as the prototype or ideal around which database optimization efforts were (implicitly or explicitly) organized" (114). This resulted in database optimization working as a tool for the continued oppression of people of color, disguised as a neutral technological advance.

Extending this usage, I use unremarking as a way to identify what goes unsaid about race, class, sexuality, and other subjectivities, all important in a contemporary intersectional feminism. In Bombeck's work, I link what is unremarked upon to the aforementioned legacies of first-into-second-wave feminism: a simultaneous silence/silencing of other-than-white, middle-class realities and a reduction of social action to individual gumption.

Erma Bombeck's Humor and Rhetoric

Bombeck's books are collections of short essays and vignettes. In a typical vignette, two rhetorical patterns stand out: her use of details and dialogue. Bombeck relies heavily on details of family life, such as kids' sports equipment taking over one's house, or each person's behavior – husband, teenager, etc. – on a family road trip, to portray such events as overwhelming but inevitable for women to undertake with or without patience or grace. In addition, she uses snappy and specific dialogue between characters without much exposition, which keeps the pace of reading brisk, and creates a demand on the reader to "get it" quickly.

Largely, Bombeck's reading is fun and witty, her overall project being to elevate the experiences of her readers/housewives by denigrating both the unfair expectations placed on women and her protagonists' ability or interest in performing housework and motherhood well in the first place. The preponderance of Bombeck's work pokes fun at homelife to critique the expectations of and attitudes toward women in the midcentury. Moving from the 1950s to the later '60s and early '70s, Bombeck extends her criticism of the conditions in which women are expected to care about and achieve perfection in the realm of housework to include commentary on political issues of the second wave, including equal rights and birth control. The three books containing the essays I've chosen to analyze were published during this period and contain political critiques: *At Wit's End* (1967), *If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, What am I Doing in the Pits?* (1971), and *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression* (1974).

To offer some transparency on my choices, Bombeck's writing is quite dear to me. I encountered most of her books as a teenager via tattered paperbacks. She was one of the first nonfiction writers whose purpose I understood, and her writing seemed feminist because it was by a woman, for and about women – even if by the 1990s, when I was a teen with an employed single mother, the 1950s housewife was only a caricature to me. Now, in a time during which I and more white feminists need to analyze for whiteness, I undertook a re-read of Bombeck's work during the pandemic. These passages stand out in Bombeck's catalog because of their political nature, and thanks to scaffolding provided by the scholarship cited above, I could notice and articulate how the works unremark.

Unremarking #1: A Singular Representation

First, Bombeck's body of work is predicated on an understanding of the housewife as the caricature easily imagined today, a Donna Reed if you will: straight, white, married, stay-at-home, home-owning mother and housewife. There are some variations on this representation in terms of age of the mother, ages of the children, or stage of one's marriage, but the premise is stable throughout her vignettes and books. In Bombeck's characteristic manner, this representation is presented via an intricately detailed story. Consider this comparison to men's work in a dinner party vignette:

The fact that housewives are a misunderstood group was evident recently at a cocktail party. A living room psychologist was analyzing women who move furniture every time they clean the house. "Basically," he announced, "they are women who hate men. They cannot bear the thought of a man entering his home and walking across the floor without cracking his femur bone in three places. Rearranging the furniture is a little more subtle than putting a cobra in a basket by the bed" [...] Everyone laughed, but it occurred to me that men don't really know boredom as women do. If we had offices with secretaries with appointment books you could do our week with one original and six carbons. Same old egg on the plate, same old dustballs, same old rumped beds, same old one-of-a-color-socks in the wash" (*Post-Natal Depression*, 152).

There are a few facets of the housewife's life to unpack in this vignette, all which must be taken as givens in order for the joke to land: the woman is married to a man and lives a life in which dinner parties are routine – imagine that caricature in her pearls holding a martini. The fact that the man at the party is analyzing the behavior of housewives as men-hating is unfair of course, as he construes them to be the strident feminists of his disdain. This is a joke on the middle-class white man, who is so oblivious to the plight of women that he thinks *housewives* are the problem and that feminists are a problem in the first place.

Additionally, the protagonist of the story also realizes that the man doesn't understand why a woman would move furniture around so much (a number of reasons, though Bombeck hints at boredom), which also resists the idea that women's actions center on men. Bombeck is astute to present this double critique of the male chauvinist point of view. However, we see unremarking in two ways: if housewives are not truly a threat to men, but some women are – which women? An unremarking perhaps of more strident, public feminists of any race who are not married, do not live in the suburbs, are not middle-class. What is unsaid about the women whose focus is not changing furniture to annoy men? And, when the protagonist admits that the motivation to move her furniture is boredom – a sad comment on the roteness and under-stimulating conditions that gender roles forced upon many middle-class women – one must also point out the assumed class privilege and level of comfort undergirding the protagonists' complaints.

Unremarking #2: Obfuscating the Stakes

As the cultural revolution progressed, Bombeck's commentary touches on the changing state of the nuclear family, shifts in traditional gender roles, and politically charged topics like equal rights and birth control. Bombeck advances clearly feminist claims through humor, which must be appreciated for its creativity and absurdity: for instance, she frames her pro-birth control argument within a conversation with a pigeon. However, the rhetorical effects of her approach at times obfuscate the stakes of women's rights for those who have more to lose than middle-class white women.

For instance, in *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression* (1974), Bombeck advocates for equal rights in a mock speech that is both exasperated at the notion of needing to legislate equality and relies on gender stereotypes that women must work through pain, while men are wimps. She writes:

When women's lib comes out for Equal Colds, I will join it. [...] just once I would like to have my cold given the same respect as a man's cold [...] You've heard it sisters, now what are we going to do about it? I propose we initiate federal legislation to make women's colds legal in all of the fifty states to be protected under a new law called: Bombeck's Equal Cold Opportunity Bill. The bill would provide that women would receive more than fifteen minutes to get over a twenty-four hour virus. Under Equal Opportunity, her cold would be granted the right to stay in bed and would be exempt from car pools, kitchen duty, laundry, bowling, and visiting the sick. Any husband who degrades and taunts his wife's cold with such remarks as "maybe it was the pot roast," or "you're just bored" or "if it hangs on till spring, you'd better see a doctor" or "get on your feet, you're scaring the children" will be liable to a fine.
(Bombeck "I Lost Everything," 138)

The reader is obviously meant to support the protagonist because she is sick and in need of sympathy; however, the mocking of the Equal Rights bill (the ERA having been passed by Congress in 1972 but ultimately stalled) meets Bombeck's audience wherever they fall on the political spectrum. A conservative could cluck their tongue in scorn if they oppose the ERA or think Bombeck is a radical for backing the bill, and a liberal could shake their head at the unfairness of needing such a bill or the fact that it stalled. In playing to both sides, the joke unremarks on class and power, meaning that it can allow an interpretation by the reader that her life won't change too much

without the ERA – what is not said is that she would need to be a comfortable, middle-class woman for that to be the case. From a 2022 vantage point, we know that plenty of Americans still feel this way. The cold scenario is clever but a little unclear in its politics.

Absurdity is a Bombeckian trait. Consider her argument in favor of the Pill in *At Wit's End* (1965) in which she pretends to interview a pigeon, convinced that the birds are “blocking the break-through of the Pill to American women” because the nation’s efforts to control the birds’ over-population is distracting from the needs of women (128):

I talked recently with a spokesman -- the only bird who knew pigeon English -- about the talked-about Pill. ‘Well, if people don’t want us around, why don’t they say so?’ he cooed. ‘I’m sick of this shilly-shallying [...] Oh, I suppose we do produce at a rather astounding rate. But there’s nothing else to do up here all day long but fly over parked cars and mess around the statues in the parks.’ I asked him how the women of this country should go about getting The Pill. ‘All I can offer is some advice on how we got to be a menace. We just made our numbers felt in the downtown area.’ (129)

In this passage, the pigeons are experiencing the conversation about birth control from the opposite point of view of women -- they want to procreate without impediment, while the powers-that-be try to reduce their numbers. On the other hand, twentieth century American women want to impede their procreation, and they can’t get the attention or solution they want. The suggestion at the end of the passage -- making your numbers felt -- speaks to the need for collective social action. Readers might agree with me that this argument in support of birth control is weirdly funny but subtle to the point of unremarking on the stakes of reproductive freedom for women beyond that white, middle-class housewife caricature. It allows a range of readers with a range of political ideologies to again nod, chuckle, or roll their eyes at several facets of the issue. To me, the treatment here belies whiteness and privilege as a neutral position from which one can observe, rather than be affected by, the issue at hand.

Unremarking #3: Individualism

Bombeck is quite consistent in the use of a specific and unique ethos of a loser for her first-person protagonists. The loser protagonist is always wrong, doesn’t look good, doesn’t take care of herself, and is terrible at her house chores. The loser is an outsider to an imagined group of more poised suburban mothers. Bombeck offers this imperfect foil for the reader to laugh at and compare herself against. This is an endearing feature that, when interrogated, places the locus of creating change on individual self-improvement rather than structural change, a distraction of focus in feminist activism that the scholars cited above argue persists today.

Two vignettes from *At Wit's End* exemplify this ethos. The first example touches on feelings of inadequacy regarding intelligence or lack of educational opportunities for the protagonist:

Even my own children know I’m a no-talent. There was a time when I could tell them anything and they would believe me. I had all the answers [...] Then one day recently my [teenaged] daughter asked, ‘Do you know the capital of Mozambique?’ ‘No, but hum a few bars and I’ll fake it,’ I grinned. ‘Mother,’ she announced flatly, ‘you don’t know anything!’ (41)

The loser ethos is a way to remark on the conditions of women’s days spent at home with limited intellectual engagement and feelings of being taken for granted. Bombeck also paints the loser as someone who often tries to improve herself through diet, exercise, hobbies, or other self-help advice. Consider an example of improving one’s self esteem: the loser enters the salon and tells the stylist she’s been a little depressed since her baby was born. When asked how old the baby is, the protagonist answers “thirty-four” (39). At the end of the vignette, the woman feels great about her new hairstyle, and the stylist calls her a sex symbol. The victory doesn’t last long, however: “I felt like a new woman as I walked across the plush carpet, my shoulders squared, my head held high. I could feel every pair of eyes in the room following me. ‘Pardon me, honey,’ said [the stylist],

‘you’re dragging a piece of bathroom tissue on your heel.’” (40). Of course, the loser has gotten the attempt at self-improvement wrong as well.

These portrayals of characters who are not successful but who might be if they tried harder to improve themselves dovetails with one of the key legacies of white feminism stated in the introduction: self-help. In particular, the notion that women’s change efforts can or should be directed one’s self and maybe less on social movements or for the good of others is on display in *Life is a Bowl of Cherries*, in which Bombeck heads more explicitly in this direction. A more earnest essay, “My Turn,” is less jokey and exhorts women to improve, grow, or change. In it, Bombeck lists famous women who didn’t achieve success until their later years, such as actress Ruth Gordon winning an Oscar when she was 72, or Senator Margaret Chase Smith winning her election at age 51. She writes:

For years, you’ve watched everyone else do it [such as husbands and children getting their educations and changing careers]. And you envied them and said, ‘May be next year I’ll go back to school.’ And the years went by and this morning you looked into the mirror and said, ‘You blew it. You’re too old to pick it up and start a new career.’ [...] Or you can be like the woman I knew who sat at her kitchen window year after year and watched everyone else do it. Then one day she said, ‘I do not feel fulfilled cleaning chrome faucets with a toothbrush. It’s my turn.’ I was 37 years old at the time.” (*Cherries*, 241-3)

This is an encouraging message but one that elides the consciousness-raising of the midcentury with self-improvement, part of a neoliberal evolution that Blencowe and Beck note of white feminism that has its roots in the early suffragettes’ notion of middle-class success in capitalist terms. The assumptions embedded in self-improvement messages rest on a bootstraps mentality, which offers a limited vision of possible liberated futures other than reaching goals of appearance, intelligence, poise, and personal accomplishment. The onus is on the individual to self-improve, rather than collective action to improve conditions for all women.

Taken together, Bombeck’s second-wave political essays may not be explicitly racist or exclude women other than white women on purpose, but they do evince silence/unremarking on race, class, sexuality, and other subjectivities, as well as reflect long-standing first-wave feminist rhetorics of whiteness with a focus on the (white, privileged) self.

Conclusion

Bombeck was a popular humor writer and television personality who, on the one hand, used her national platform to (gently) persuade a politically-center, assumedly white audience to accept basic feminist precepts that women’s lives should be improved. Considering where Bombeck’s arguments stop short is productive for the twenty-first century antiracist feminists, since many of us and the women who raised and supported us personally and professionally were likely steeped in something similar to a Bombeckian feminist framework. Erma Bombeck held 30 million readers and the Good Morning America audience in sway from 1952 until her death in 1996. Among those numbers are our grandmothers, aunts, and retired female professors, and maybe their mothers and aunts.

As I have argued previously in this journal, the rhetoric of political, proto-feminist, and feminist women in the mid-to-late twentieth century needs more attention. Megan J. Busch’s recent excellent case study attests that the task is worth undertaking. In her analysis of white second-wave feminist activist Zelda Nordlinger, Busch acknowledges the rhetorical failures of white feminists of the 1960s and ‘70s in terms of listening to and including Black and poor women, including Nordlinger’s inappropriate comparisons of sexism to slavery and segregation that were tone-deaf to racialized women’s experiences (n.p.). Busch notes that Nordlinger’s rhetoric and ethos evolved

over time, offering “an example of the growth and the complexity of crafting a feminist ethos before the term intersectionality had a pervasive impact on feminist thought” (n.p.). As I have noted, Bombeck’s point of view evolved over time as well, and she became more stridently politically feminist in the 1970s, although still couched in first-wave legacies, like Nordlinger and other feminists of the time (and now).

When we do turn our attention to midcentury feminist rhetorics, it is also important to resist liberal bias, as Faith Kurtya has smartly noted:

Research on women’s rhetorics has tended to center on women whose beliefs align with contemporary liberal feminist politics—usually historical figures such as suffragettes, female preachers, and union organizers—and eliding the rhetoric of conservative women [and] responsible feminist rhetoricians in the present and future political climate [need] to be able to see conservative women in their contradictions and complexities. (n.p.)

Where Kurtya detects a methodological bias in selecting whose rhetorics to study, I additionally suggest that there is an analytical bias toward finding historical and liberal women’s rhetoric empowering in nearly all cases. I have attempted to pump the brakes on reading Bombeck’s feminism as clearly empowering or not uncomplicated by reading closely its strategies and arguments through the lens of whiteness as it discussed and defined in histories of feminism and rhetorical studies. As Busch notes, critiques of our feminist histories and rhetorics will take sustained inquiry into the archives, into the received accounts, and, I suggest, even into the very popular, seemingly well-known tattered paperbacks – to trace, locate, question, and complicate where whiteness goes unremarked.

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Persistence, Coalition and Power: Institutional Citizenship and the Feminist WPA

Abstract: This essay investigates the concept of feminist institutional citizenship at the site of writing program administration work. Building from O’Meara’s notion of “agentic perspectives” this project sought to identify practices, perspectives, and modes for increased agency in labor-conscious frameworks. Here, we detail a series of conversations and reflective moments between two feminist-identified practitioners at different career stages as they explored their shared concerns related to institutional change and labor equity. The essay argues for coalitional, collective work as a means for accessing agency and creating sustained institutional change based in intersectional and material analyses of power and labor.

keywords: institutional citizenship, writing program administration

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Introduction

This essay looks at the concept of feminist institutional citizenship at the site of Writing Program Administration (WPA) work from a labor-focused lens. By focusing on agentic or agentive capacity building in program administration (we’ll use the terms interchangeably) that moves toward achieving feminist institutional citizenship, we hope to offer to others a set of considerations for institutional change work.

Institutional or academic citizenship as conceived by Bruce Macfarlane engages work within “five overlapping communities: students, colleagues, institutions, disciplines or professions, and the wider public,” each of which WPA labor engages (1). We examined the concept of institutional citizenship at the nexus of *feminist, labor-oriented* WPA work, and we did so by way of a series of recorded conversations that were a part of a graduate seminar curriculum in Anicca’s doctoral program at Michigan State University. Rachel was then the Executive Director of the Writing Program at George Washington University. That inquiry helped us sensemake our own feminist and labor-conscious approaches to WPA work from our respective social and institutional locations. Our relationship building was both cross-generational and cross-institutional. Taking these conversations as a starting point, the goal of this essay is to conceptualize two aspects of this work—agency and reflection—one a feminist modality or practice (reflection) and one an objective (agency), as related to feminist institutional citizenship.

Here we take up agentic perspectives from Kerry Ann O'Meara's 2015 essay, "A Career with a View: Agentic Perspectives of Women Faculty," which she defines this way: "Agentic perspectives are a way of viewing a situation and one's role in it to advance goals. Typically, agentic perspectives emerge as a response to barriers and opportunities" (333). Our conversations focused on the barriers we faced, but more importantly to us, they uncovered potential organizational strategies a WPA might employ in service of persistence, coalition and power—elements we consider to be well in line with feminist and labor-oriented praxis. Specifically, our own readings of feminist theory, and particularly activist feminism, provided a framework for thinking about these values and practices. As Kristine Blair and Lee Nickoson note, feminist traditions often involve "engaging and disrupting dominant structural systems" (3). We saw our work together as a form of relationship building located in that understanding. As such, our conversations helped us to consider how our cross-generational and cross-institutional scholarly relationship might work to deepen our feminist agencies and to help us understand the terrain of feminist institutional citizenship. We did so from the stance that, as the Combahee River Collective explains, "we see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (n.p). This essay argues for attention to such practices for those who seek to build agentic, feminist institutional citizenship by centering labor consciousness and collective action, and it mirrors the ways historical and contemporary "labor feminists have fought for the interests of...women...both within the feminist and the labor movements" (Boris and Orleck n.p.).

Feminist Methodological and Theoretical Frames

We understand institutions as places where systems of uneven power—gender privilege, white privilege, able-bodied and cisgender privilege (and more)—are constantly instantiated. We recognize that feminist WPA work must contend with all of these constraints and the work often can seem filled with insurmountable systemic conditions. As we engage with a wide variety of colleagues and students with diverse needs and desires, approaching our work as feminist, institutional citizens can provide one model of working toward change through persistence, coalition and power. Even as we know WPA work is rife with "wicked problems" based in hierarchy, class division and whiteness, we believe, as O'Meara outlines, "it is possible for faculty to craft alternatives to grand narratives through their framing of contexts and their role in them." (332). We acknowledge that navigating that work takes time to reflect which our conversations provided.

Lasting for an hour between Rachel's children's school drop off and Anicca's writing center hours, that is, sandwiched between different labor commitments, our conversations uncovered shared experiences and perspectives. To start, both of us shared an affinity for feminist standpoint theory that grounds feminist politics in links between experiences and political perspective. Feminist standpoint theory asserts that "social situatedness is at issue" and enables an understanding of that situatedness as a tool for bringing to light the various ways systems of power affect individuals and groups (Harding 9). Shari Stenberg further notes that a hallmark of feminist work in writing studies specifically is "the use of personal experience as a site of knowledge" (47). Through our conversations—dialogic, relationship focused, and inquiry based—we sought to do just that: to uncover some of the commonalities of our own experience about gendered labor by telling our work stories together and to further locate them in larger institutional and political discourses to map moments of agentic potential.

Our conversations foregrounded how material conditions such as productive (waged) and reproductive (unwaged) labor contribute to institutions (Riedner 122-3). Silvia Federici defines reproductive labor as "the work that produces and reproduces labor power," or, the labor that builds the conditions for "capitalist accumulation" (Prec. Labor n.p). The work of using reflection as a feminist tool was to bring a focus on creating solidarity and to move away from a purely individualist framework. Without a move beyond individualist thinking, we run the risk of an inability to connect with those who are different from ourselves. By discussing our work in this way, we moved toward

our objective: to consider ways to build relationally *within and across* institutional, career, and other differences. However, because institutional scenarios are highly contextualized, specific, and dynamic, our methodology of reflective dialogue and narrative work primarily acted as a tool to identify institutional places of agentic potential, and to extend O'Meara's call toward agentic perspectives for woman identified faculty rather than to simply map institution specific actions.

Because the WPA figure is so often archetyped into a singular administrative agent, we find that engaging these types of important conversations is vital to expand understandings of WPA praxis beyond one person's labor. Over time, our work became less interview, and more working *through and across* ideas with one another. This vehicle of extended conversation and relationship building began to take an organic form into structures of mentorship and care, so crucial to understanding how to work effectively in ethical ways. However, as we will detail in the following section, that mentorship was less concerned with career advancement or disciplinary mentorship and more concerned with mapping places to become agentic participants in institutional change. We did so because we both value the incredible feminist work in our field that has considered models of mentorship *and* want to extend it to consider how those relationships might be a vehicle for change beyond individual experience and potential.

As the weeks progressed, we worked reciprocally in our knowledge sharing. We moved from description and analysis of experience, to reflections on the principles and values that guide our choices and our histories and we began to reflect on the links between the personal and the political and structural. Particularly, we thought about how our mutual experiences with labor organizing could help us as WPAs to account for identities, experiences, and standpoints to strategically address the dynamics of institutional power. This means we are oriented toward a feminist approach to scholarship and administration that takes into account the heterogeneity of women's institutional experiences (Anzaldúa; Mohanty; Royster).

We acknowledge that it is a precious opportunity to be able to deeply listen to someone week after week over the course of an extended time period and hope that our discussion renews a call to that kind of intentional practice between feminist practitioners. We see listening practice too, as other feminist practitioners do, as a methodology for "self reflection," "theorizing experience," and to "listen to those who experience the world differently than ourselves" (Blair and Nickosen 14). Reflective practice, as Kelly Concannon et al. explain, works as a "feminist intervention strategy to make meaning" in either research or community settings (157). As such, we recognize the debt of gratitude for intersectional and Black feminist approaches to feminist coalition which call for listening work as a means of discovery, empathy, and capacity building for solidarity and self-awareness (Combahee; Lorde and Rich).

Our *thinking through* allowed us to learn by way of the sharing of experience from and with another feminist practitioner and affirmed a set of principles we carry about feminist, labor oriented WPA work: that it utilizes analyses of power, compassion, collective action, and strategic thinking. We began to conceive of what feminist institutional citizenship looks like over the course of a career as we sought to understand administrative movement at the sites of programs and institutional mission. Finally, we mapped places where feminist institutional citizenship and its praxis was present in this work, as it intersects with labor, program design, and institutional change.

Feminist Mentoring as Starting Point

After our initial conversations in the fall of 2018, we easily conceived of our shared work as a mentoring space. We did so because we quickly identified a shared interest in feminism grounded in labor consciousness. We discussed writing together but also realized we were curious about how others might perceive these kinds of relationships first. We then assembled a group of feminist mentorship pairs we know through our professional networks to present a panel at the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference in 2019. Our co-panelists told the stories of their unfolding relationships where professional identity, networking, scholarship, and friendship were fostered between pairs

alongside preparation for future academic appointments (for the mentee). They spoke of the ways their relationships were emotionally supportive and how they built that support. Further, they had important insights into the gendered nature of the academy and the intricacies of cross-racial/cultural mentorship relationships. But somehow, even as we identified ourselves as being inside a type of mentoring relationship, we didn't seem to be doing much of, or exactly what, they collectively described. As we listened to our brilliant and generous co-panelists, we came to a shared realization: we didn't fit with these pairs *somehow*. But why?

We believe the models of feminist mentorship, like the ones our co-panelists shared, are vital ones. Feminist mentoring has wide-ranging impacts in writing studies, and academia in general, including the ways it may address a number of persistent problems related to power. As one example, Ana Milena Ribero and Sonia Arellano note, it can increase success, persistence, and representation for women of color in the discipline. Working to push beyond white, middle-class models of professionalization, Ribero and Arellano problematize our notions of feminist mentorship and assert practices from their own lived experiences that are instead rooted in a range of activities from anti-racism to kinship, and tangible support that connected them across their personal and professional lives (335). Kathryn Gindlesparger and Holly Ryan also delineate the practice of mentorship as serving the purpose of both "advancing ourselves as experts in the field" to "developing our professional identities" (56). In addition, Pamela Van Haitsma and Steph Ceraso provide a valuable model for "horizontal" mentoring which mirrored *some* of our own experience in its contrast to more traditional "power-laden, vertical mentoring dynamics" (211).

However, our relationship didn't unfold around encouraging one another's professional advancement or scholarly identity. So, while we are indebted to the discourse around, and the transformative work of, feminist mentoring both peer-to-peer and cross generationally, we position ourselves and this work in a gentle contradistinction to it. Meaning, where some feminist mentorship for example takes the shape of allyship concerning gendered, raced or time bound experiences related to scholarly trajectories, or offers tools and strategies for success within the discipline, our relationship was focused on developing feminist institutional citizenship.

As such, we seek here to extend conversations in writing studies on feminist mentoring beyond a practice for personal survival or professional advancement to feminist mentoring as a site for institutional change work. We considered specifically how to build equity in institutions as citizens of them who are concerned particularly with feminism and labor at the site of WPA work. We then align our discussion with, and as an extension of, the 2019 contributions of Jennifer Heinert and Cassandra Phillips, Michelle Payne, and Eileen Schell in the *Peitho Journal: Special Cluster on Gendered Service in Rhetoric and Writing Studies* where the authors examine feminist WPA work and institutional participation. Those works account for some of the complexities and inequalities of participation for women WPAs across both their waged and unwaged labor (Federici, Rev. Pt. Zero) as they engaged in institutional change work by calculating for the benefits of that commitment as well as its challenges. For us, our cross-generational/cross-institutional relationship became a viable space from which to imagine how to shape and transform our institutional locations toward more equitable configurations through reflective work and agency building.

Reflective Practice from Feminist Locations

Our reflective practice came in several forms (notes, a seminar paper, a conference presentation), but primarily was constructed through a series of recorded conversations focused on inquiry, relationship building, and reflection. We saw ourselves as engaging feminist praxis as two women-identified labor conscious institutional workers and we took as a mutual understanding for this practice, something that Chandra Mohanty explains: where gender has meaning and consequences in institutions and where "interwoven processes of sexism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism are integral parts of our social fabric" (3). However, as with all social locations, our perspectives here are limited. In our case, our lived experiences and perspectives do not emerge

from the “margins” (hooks), but rather from a privileged racial and gender majority in our own discipline, namely white, cis-gendered women.

Individually, our ethical commitments emerge from our histories in the labor movement, and from those experiences we draw our values as institutional citizens. Foundational to those ethics are practices of persistence, coalition and (analyses of, building of) power—captured in the title of our article. These criteria align to both materialist and intersectional feminist theory and practice, to whom we owe intellectual debt specifically to working class, feminist, transnational, BIPOC, trans, and disabled scholars, researchers, organizers, and activists (Ahmed; Anzaldua; Comba-see; Crenshaw; Ebert; Federici; Hill-Collins; hooks; Kabeer; Kynard; la paperson; Lorde; Mohanty; Nicolas; Royster; Smith). We are additionally indebted in our understandings to scholarship specific to feminist WPA work (Ratcliff and Rickly) and with work devoted to understanding the embodied, social, lived complexities of WPA work (George).

We clearly recognize gendered labor as an aspect of institutional citizenship. We also recognize the complexity of two white women administrators working to enact practice informed by transnational and intersectional feminist theory. But, we believe the effort is worthwhile even if our own embodied experiences reside in racial privilege. The implications of not doing so are far riskier. Therefore, we focus on how to build a vision of feminist WPA work, centered on co-constitutive and non-hierarchical, reflective and agentive practice. Ultimately, our project was aimed at constructing feminist models for advocacy, and systems and structure changes in higher education, especially in writing programs. This feminist approach foregrounds material and intersectional commitments to labor, that is, building horizontal, coalitional practices within institutional structures where the goal is to build labor equity.

By reconsidering selections of our own dialogue, we work to make visible our experiences and standpoints in relation to institutional structures and values as well as our efforts of persistence and coalition building. In the following two sections, we include a few extended portions of our recordings together with interpretation and analysis to demonstrate how the feminist process of collaborative reflection helped us identify what agentive practice might look like in feminist, labor-centered WPA work. Here you will mostly see Anicca’s voice, reflecting on the conversations and their meaning for her, while Rachel’s original reflections in our conversations provide the foundation for that sensemaking.¹

Reflection Toward Coalition, Persistence and Power.

In our first conversation together I (Anicca) asked Rachel how she came to be in her current role as a WPA, program director and dean. She said:

I’m probably one of the few people who got their PhD at GW and stayed. I was studying women’s rhetorics basically with a focus on post-colonial feminist rhetorics, so I was reading a lot of Chandra Mohanty and Gayatri Spivak.

I was reading lots of Marxist feminism. So, Marxist feminists coming out of Italy, like Sylvia Federici, so I was thinking about feminist critiques of political economy and how that intersects with rhetoric and how rhetoric creates the ways in which women are embedded and a part of particular kinds of political economies in capitalism. So that’s my sort of intellectual history.

¹ We have chosen to highlight excerpts from our original dialogue in italics and Anicca’s later sensemaking and reflection in single spaced text written in first-person to provide contrast to the sections where we speak together as authors in the larger body of the text using “we” as the authorial voice and double spaced prose.

In listening to this recording, I hear moments where I laugh and interject. I hear myself express how happy I am that we get to do this project and tell Rachel that if she has any recommendations for me, I can make those texts foundational to my (then) future dissertation. What strikes me now in listening is how enthusiastic I was. My own program had little in the way of thinking about political economies and capitalism and the ways in which feminist critique and action might provide an answer to the gendered aspects of systems of power. Because I was and am particularly interested in institutional work and change at the site of writing programs, the reflections she offered on her intellectual history gave me an immediate sense that I would be able to build a praxis for my own ethical commitments to labor in academia from these conversations. Her reflections on her history made me think there was a place for me and my work.

She continued:

I was teaching in a writing program that was at that time a part of the English department and then the writing program left, and I was hired full time. Those early years were difficult. We were all new and we had no protection. If you have senior faculty, you have protection. Eventually, one of my colleagues was hired as the executive director. He was the leader for a while and that created some stability, and he was someone who could represent us outside the university. You know, I like the model of the autonomous collective but at a university, it's really hard. You need a representative.

This conversation would foreground much of what we discussed and helped me form a set of questions for my own future work. How does a representative act on behalf of others? What are the ethics of that? How is that kind of role a site from which to build power in our work? It was critical to hear the stories of how Rachel does her work as a part of a collective project. That was reflected in the story she told about her own position in coming to direct the writing program:

I was asked if I would step into the executive director position. I was an interim for two years and then I convinced the dean's office to turn it into an elected position, instead of an appointed position. And that was for me, extremely important for the program because if it's an appointed position, the dean's office can bring in just anybody, like someone who is tenure-track but doesn't know anything about writing. I was able to demonstrate that we have scholarly chops, and wisdom within the program, and then I was elected by my colleagues as the chair. But, it took a lot of figuring out how we needed to make ourselves in the university in places where people didn't understand what we are doing.

So, for me, the work has been the emotional, strategic, and political labor of creating the university writing program as a community in itself, and it is a community that is situated in the university and respected within the university. That took 15 years.

Here, I saw her able to clearly name the types of work that it takes to be an institutional citizen who thinks about power, about the ethics of leadership, and the emotional investment that it takes to do so. Part of that is her unusual trajectory as a WPA. She directs a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program in the university where she received her PhD and where she is a full professor and associate dean of undergraduate studies, but a non-tenured one. I was struck by how her story pushes back on some WPA scholarship from our own field, which advocates "institutional departure" as one possible intervention to unacceptable working conditions for women WPAs (Yancey 143). Instead, Rachel's orientation to her work appears in close relationship to her long-term commitment to the geographical area, its surrounding community, and the university community itself.

This approach is mirrored in organizing work where long-term commitments to place, to community and organizations often provide the foundation for lasting and meaningful change. I (Anicca) reflected at the time:

We talked about—feminist time, academic time, and these different scales of time. Many people are dealing with ‘classic’ WPA issues of these intractable institutional challenges, especially pre-tenure. In contrast, your work has unfolded over this long trajectory where progress has been made in terms of how you work across campus, how you work with your colleagues, how you build coalitions with colleagues laterally and vertically. A typical WPA narrative says that institutional challenges are terrible, and you just sit with this terribleness all of the time and it’s just sort of unsolvable? In that regard, your story is different.

As our discussion continued, we came to understand an agentic practice that leads to success is rooted in understanding the importance of working across departments and units to harness collective power, something Anicca was prioritizing in her graduate program as she did WID work, community-engaged scholarship, and where she served in her graduate student labor union. For Rachel, this cross-unit interaction was especially important to the work of remedying the problem of part-time, adjunct employment and precarity more broadly.

Even as Anicca now finds herself in somewhat different circumstances—she is newly an assistant professor and WPA on the tenure track in a small, liberal arts institution—she continues to map those questions about power, collective determination, and leadership onto her work. Much of that practice involves cross-unit collaboration and making sure that labor concerns are at the fore in an institution that has never considered closely the relationship between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions. For example, in Anicca’s new position, she has been tasked with leading a group of three other faculty in building a first-year writing program “from the ground up,” devising placement and assessment processes, redesigning a degree program, and fostering a culture of writing across the small campus she works in.

Anicca has been able to practically apply many of the strategies she learned in discussion and reflection with Rachel, beginning with a focus on the institutional mission of care and support of students to make arguments for labor-equity in staffing. That includes advocating for higher pay, for full time hires, and paying members of her department for professional development, a new practice there. It has also included relationship building with the registrar, student retention and persistence offices, advising, the office of institutional research, the DEI office, and faculty in her own college to build responsive, dynamic approaches to teaching and administration that build on her colleagues’ expertise but do not exploit it.

Finally, our reflective work was bi-directional. For Anicca, at that time, our work helped her get perspective on her own graduate program and commitments within it, as well as her relationship to a larger institutional structure. Listening to Rachel helped Anicca understand that institutional change work is a worthy and possible endeavor, which came in opposition to some of the WPA literature she was studying. For Rachel, who was on a sabbatical semester and was removed from the day-to-day challenges of her life as an executive director, it was an opportune time, she felt, for a series of structured reflective moments in her work after two decades at GW. She reflected that our conversations were:

tremendously helpful, particularly because they took place just after I’d been promoted to full professor. Being promoted to full for me was a moment of relief because I’d finally reached a milestone in my career and can now relax a bit. I hadn’t had the time to think about my WPA work in a systematic way because usually I am just too busy DOING it. Conversation [with you], and our shared feminist ethos of care, helped me begin to articulate a vision for what I am actually doing.

Because we shared the language of labor organizing, which is adept at recognizing and building worker power, we were able to use that as a conversational site for building understanding, both of our own past and present experiences and to foreground our next steps in our institutional work, Anicca's on the job market and Rachel's moving into a new administrative position. As Rachel articulated,

If I think about institutional power, how does the work that I do link up with, and interact with and push at that power? My strategy is feminist but also based on a labor analysis. Over the past twelve weeks, we have articulated the feminist politics through our conversations. The feminist methodology that we've employed is not just you listening to me, but it's drawing out our knowledge of feminist institutional citizenship through conversation that reveal shared interests and experiences.

Mapping moments for Agentive Practice and Perspective

O'Meara's feminist approach to the study of women faculty demonstrates how they enacted agency in their work in response to what she describes as pervasive "gendered organizational practices" that exact more service and care work from women faculty and how they took up individual agency both in perspective and action to maintain their career trajectories in the face of institutional barriers (331-59). Our work extends O'Meara's discussion by suggesting that collective practices are a more effective model of feminist institutional citizenship. Feminist institutional citizenship seeks to move beyond individual actors and entails building relationships and capacity within and across institutional spaces to support colleagues who are balancing multiple obligations such as teaching, mentoring students and colleagues, administration and service, care work, and research. As a concept and a practice, it recognizes such labor and brings this recognition to institutional discussions, relationships, and policies (Riedner). In other words, feminist institutional citizenship values waged labor and labor that is unwaged because it is gendered and racialized (Federici Prec. Labor; Kabeer). We believe this kind of knowing is a distinct marker of feminist institutional citizenship, and is more important than ever, in both institutional and political contexts.

O'Meara notes how agency theory points to building an understanding of how "the framing of situations is a necessary precursor to actions taken" (333). True to our shared experience in labor organizing, we used our conversations to consider how principles of lateral, collectively oriented, persistent, coalitional approaches might better help us understand feminist praxis in WPA work. In what follows we discuss two of those sites or nodes where we mapped agentive practice: program/institutional structures, and institutional mission. We consider how orientations toward persistence, coalition and power (building) are effective toward building institutional change at these two nodes.

Program/Institutional Structures. Our recorded sections on program/institutional structures included discussions of the persistent difficulty of hierarchies of rank and pay and the role of managerial workers like WPAs. We did so because we both understand that material and social conditions impact our discursive and epistemological ones (hooks). Part of what we uncovered, primarily by first examining how Rachel's work is structured, points to a reconceptualization of the role of various faculty designations, the agency they have and how their work must unfold creatively and in coalition. By considering the union organizing practice of "power mapping" as a tool, we began to understand how that might be applied to our feminist institutional citizenship work:

AC: How do you think WPAs can do this work even if they themselves are vulnerable?

RR: People familiar with union organizing talk about strategies where they may not be able to intervene in the center of institutional power but seek to create different forms of power through coalition building. In this model, institutional and political change takes place when workers organize collectively. WPAs may think that they are not in a position of authority to challenge centralized, institutional power directly, but institutional power can be created through organizing.

Our conversations were particularly timely because I (Anicca) was encountering much of this in my own union and programmatic contexts. Graduate unions, (I was at the time helping bargain a contract for ours) for example, tend to be bold in their organizing tactics and often bargain for issues beyond contractually stipulated areas of concern (wages, working conditions, benefits) to include advocacy work aimed at improving the social conditions of graduate education. Institutional labor structures dictate a separation between student workers and student learners but in coalition, graduate unions are able to intervene in some of those distinctions for shared gains and my conversations with Rachel had a direct impact on the strategies I took while at the bargaining table.

Additionally, Rachel and I found we both track these collectivist practices to feminist theory and practice. For me that was developed in my experience in feminist political education spaces. It was informed in readings of the work of the Combahee River Collective and feminist historians like Angela Davis, as well as a relationship with a founding member of one of the earliest feminist-artist consciousness raising groups (Wilding). In addition, it arises from my awareness of activist or collective groups like the Lesbian Avengers (Dixon). Making sense of the connection between that kind of collective organizing and WPA work, I noted:

I'm starting to see that too, (the value of collective action) because we're doing things like power mapping, and union trainings as a group and thinking about alliance and how to be strategic and I thought, wow, I really could have used this when I was a WPA. The relational place is more natural to me, but the strategic piece is really valuable. And I had no idea how vulnerable I would be as a graduate student; I was unprepared for that.

Anicca's work was in a graduate student context concerned with wages and healthcare amongst one academic rank, but Rachel was fighting for labor protections in such a way that much of her approach to coalition happens at the curricular and program design level. At GW, the WID program functions by departments or programs receiving support from the writing program to develop their own notions around effective writing. This orientation is part of how Rachel has enacted her understanding of feminist institutional citizenship, valuing the expertise of a broad range of stakeholders, and coming into coalition with them. Rachel takes that work out laterally and upward across the institution and administrative channels by acting as a communicative node across campus. The work of coalition helps her in power building as well, especially as regards the working conditions of faculty. She explained:

Right now we are trying to stabilize working conditions for part-time faculty, and that's really hard, that's university wide, well that's in the college. Some others have gotten involved. A thing I've gotten really good at is being collaborative across departments. If you have a problem with part-time faculty, don't just go to the dean's office, go to the dean's office with five other chairs.

That work necessarily takes time. Persistence over time was another key feature we identified to the work of a feminist institutional citizenship and WPA work within institutional structures and mission. Together, we drew from our understandings of labor theory, like solidarity unionism (Lynd), and political action contexts, like the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment and (some of) the women led suffrage and abolition movements. Collective approaches and persistence over time in feminist frames are critical to increasing agency. This collectivity exists in a complex history, however, as Angela Davis demonstrates, where solidarity in feminist and labor movements are so often fractured by diverging class allegiances and divides between working and middle class/upper class movements as well as by chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing, contemporary racist violence. Nonetheless, solidarity over working conditions over the long term has and continues to

be a powerful place for change work, fraught as it may sometimes be.

Rachel was an organizer for the UAW in the 1990s and explained in our first conversation:

Union organizing helped me more than anything to take a collaborative approach to institutional citizenship. The skills learned in organized labor are about strategic thinking about institutional power—working from an awareness of institutional power structures, democratic decision-making practices, solidarity and capacity building, utilizing people’s unique skills and abilities, and organizing groups toward action and reflection.

Akin to the union practice of “door knocking,” Rachel has been effective through persistence. That work has included persuading others to understand the value of writing in disciplines, but also in other areas of university citizenship like advocacy and pushback built through multiple, repeated, conversations with partners over time. Rachel explained that her work in relationship and coalition building as well as her awareness of the constant need to question hierarchies and power structures are rooted in that feminist, agentive practice of persistence over time.

Our conversations helped me (Anicca) make sense of my own union experience as a site of institutional change. Though different in some ways, in that I was negotiating a contract directly, I began to understand how taking a long view of improved working conditions for graduate students might yield the beginnings of change that would continue through partnership, coalition and collaboration on campus. Specifically, our union bargained for social justice gains, like language justice, supports for undocumented GTAs and pedagogy support for BIPOC GTAs. As a graduate student worker, envisioning change across the long-term presents a significant challenge as GTAs are non-permanent.

Bargaining beyond “bread and butter” concerns for workers is rooted in an understanding of collective liberation, knowing that individual progress alone is never sufficient toward that end. Negotiating and organizing from that *stance* of persistence, I came to learn from Rachel, increases agency, and is based in the collective good, over time. Specifically, this kind of agentive practice involves a consideration of the generations of workers to come and can inform every level of effective decision-making.

So much of this work is grounded in relationship building. Relationship building, as Eileen Schell argues, is emotional; it is work that requires constant outreach, listening, communicating, and empathy – as she puts it, “leading through presence as well as understanding” (322). As Ribero and Arellano demonstrate so well, relationship building is a feminist practice in institutional contexts that takes place in response to very real social and structural barriers, labor hierarchies being both. As such, as a non-tenured faculty leader, Rachel’s position necessitates a commitment to speak up, a willingness to listen and take the lead, and the initiative to find creative ways to work with others to push back against institutional practices. For Anicca, in her previous WPA position, much of her time was spent building relationships with non-tenured faculty (against the advice of a department chair), many of whom noted that the tenure stream faculty rarely, if ever, acknowledged their existence or work. Those relationships in turn built capacity for professional development of non-tenured faculty, improved curriculum and improved student outcomes. Such approaches, we argue, embody feminist institutional citizenship because they subvert institutional hierarchies.

For Rachel, her feminist, collective approach is achieved by relational practice in this way:

constantly communicating what we do, why it is valuable and getting people invested by building relationships with them. Communicating constantly with administration and everyone possible, getting feedback from people a lot, developing long-term relationships and incorporating their feedback into the work we do.

Because she views knowledge and expertise as shared, as built in ways that foster participation, she explained that much of her success has come by building actual, deep friendships with colleagues. Institutional citizenship of this kind opens up a space for to not only theorize but to practice these orientations and when triangulated to notions of standpoint (Harding et al.) and communication across difference, is a part of the work of feminist institutional citizenship.

Institutional Mission. We identified institutional mission as a site from which to orient to direct action for improved working conditions in a feminist WPA framework. In her research on women graduate union leaders, Anicca knew organized labor helps universities make good on their promises of liberatory education (Cox, *forthcoming*) and the two of us discussed what that means specifically in writing programs. As a rhetorician, the arguments Rachel constructed in her efforts to improve stability for non-tenured faculty (contract length, increased pay) involve appeals to the institutional mission of quality education, explaining that long-term commitment on the part of the institution to its teachers, has a positive influence on student learning.

Specifically, Rachel understands the incongruity between GW's notions of global excellence with its unfair pay of part-time labor. She characterized the then president's attitude as a "dismissive [of] full-time faculty concerns about part-time faculty salaries." She noted those "include[ed] our concern that GW's over reliance on part-time faculty impacts our curriculum and impacts student learning." Her feminist and labor oriented rhetorical approach enabled her coalition to make arguments to solve the problem based on the collective good. She did so by demanding GW be faithful to its mission of excellent education provided to enhance global citizenry, and by arguing that competent and promising teachers cannot stay at GW given the low pay standard. This work represents our model of feminist institutional citizenship because it understands and acts from the interrelationship of ideals and values to groups of people sharing a collective purpose.

So, when a provost then unilaterally decided to shorten term faculty contracts for five to three years, Rachel pursued strategic pushback from a faculty governance body and through coalition building across tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty. In an alliance she's built persistently both formally and through friendships, she and her colleagues were able to persuade upper leadership to restore some five-year contracts. This is both feminist and agentive work. She sees the long-term benefits of exercising coalitional power together in lateral ways that impact vertical structures within the university. Simply put, she said, demonstrations of worker power and solidarity have long-term effects on faculty working conditions.

These tactics, drawn from union organizing, build power over time through the construction of relationships in which employees feel like they have a voice, and where there is mutual support. Feminism engages similar strategies and tactics; the dismantling of patriarchal power structures can take place over time and requires collective action.

Concluding Our Conversations

Important critiques of higher education institutions address corporatization and the infiltration of corporate interests, inequitable wage systems, structured, gendered, and racial inequalities, and lack of recognition of the contributions of staff and those who work in service to higher education (Payne; Riedner). Laura Miccichie, for example, documents a "culture of disappointment in academia and its ever-widening scope" (qtd. in Payne 280). While our sensemaking acknowledged challenges and injustice we face in our work, we see the hope presented by a feminist approach of using listening and relational action to create coalitional, horizontal power. We both were seeing movement in our institutional spaces resulting from this stance and our relationship was affirming and deepened both our commitments to it even as it subverts some of the narratives about WPA work that center on intractable injustice, insurmountable obstacles and despair (Riedner and Mahoney). Instead, our feminist framework demonstrated here, focuses on a strategic, active, agentive stance and immerses itself in optimism for our shared futures. We ultimately saw our work as a way to begin to develop a framework for feminist institutional citizenship as a concept and a

practice as it pays attention to labor conditions and builds power.

We also mean to contribute to conversations around the value of feminist mentorship as well and to begin to map pathways through feminist relational practice toward advocacy and activism in our varying institutional contexts. However, we know that presenting our work as a scalable model wouldn't be faithful to the realities of our labor or of feminist praxis. WPAs already struggle with enormous amounts of affective labor, managerial tasks and advocacy work (Wooten et al.). Building the time for this kind of practice—dialogue and reflection that takes place extra-institutionally over an extended period of time—is a challenging ask for many of us.

Nonetheless, we hope that readers will consider ways in which they might intentionally take up this kind of cross generational or institutional mentorship as feminist institutional citizenship work in ways that work for them and their exigencies. After all, we have much to offer one another from our varying experiences, struggles, and perspectives. Holding intentional structured space for for sharing is invaluable. WPA graduate courses, like the one that instigated our our conversations are good starting places, especially for those of us who are concerned with institutional change work. In addition, our professional spaces like the bi-annual *Feminisms and Rhetorics* conference can be a cross pollination space for these kinds of relationships. With intentionality, existing mentoring relationships can also include this kind of support as people move institutions and career trajectories, so common in WPA work (Wells; Wooten, Babb and Ray). To support those interested, we propose some beginning actions that people might take should they decide to embark on the work of reflective, dialogic, labor-centered feminist work together.

Coalition: Work together to understand who institutional partners might be in your location. Consider wide ranging coalitional approaches across units, ranks, and other markers of institutional status. Many of the intractable conditions we experience in institutions are located at the interstices of exploitation and isolation between workers. Share stories, reflections and ideas for how you might focus on that kind of relationship building in transparent, equitable ways that take into account the very real interlocking oppressions of race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, class and more.

Persistence: Work together to understand timelines for change. What is shorter and longer term and where is the institutional landscape porous to change? What smaller alliances and relationships might be built into larger ones? How might you make time for the important friendships and conversations that will build solid foundations for change over time? Building friendships is institutional change work, because capitalism seeks always to alienate us from our labor and each other.

Power (building, understanding, resisting, dismantling): Work together to understand power structures in your institutions and to build worker power. Using organizational charts is an effective way to do this. Share how you might strategically advocate or push back with/on actual people in positions within the institution. Find out who is willing to use their privilege and power to make change and where you might engage your coalition to get decisions made. Acting like you are in a union, even if you are not, is a good framework to adopt because labor organizing work considers the fluid, dynamic nature of institutional power and how to respond and work with it over the long term.

As Rachel commented in our conversations, “All this is a part of feminist praxis: standing up, standing out, and getting others to stand up and stand out. This praxis pays attention to power, who can say what to whom, and asking them to do that, over and over.” Such an orientation provides space for developing agency within WPA work. This work is located in feminist approaches to institutional citizenship which in turn builds tools for organizing across spaces and constituencies for better shared futures in our departments and programs.

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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, Josephine Clement, and Constance Watts, played significant roles in the local 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 comradeship 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.

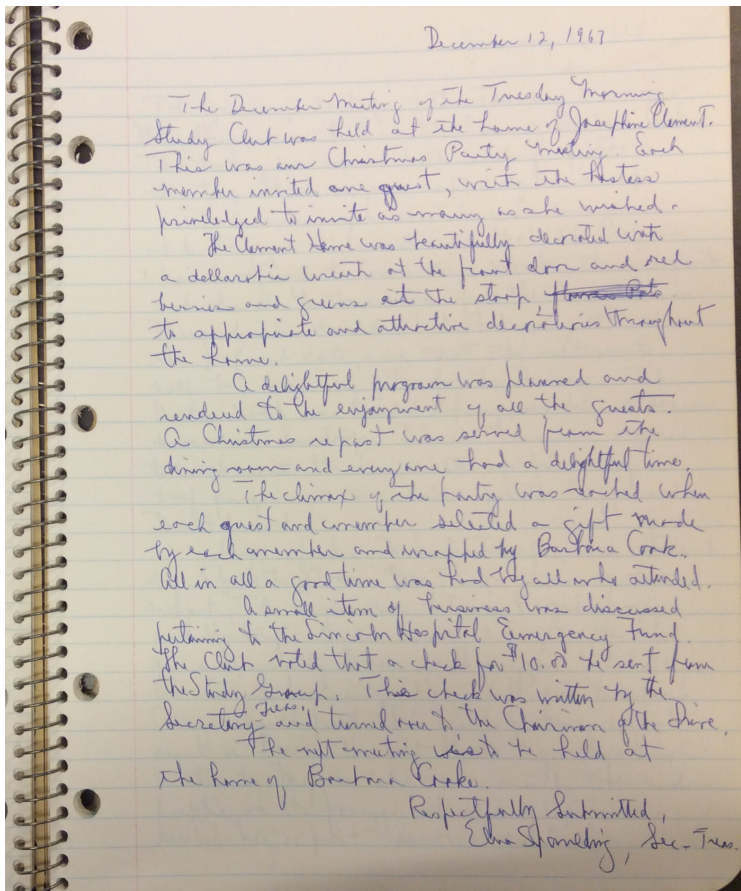


Figure 2: Image of a TMSG meeting entry from December 12, 1967. It reads “The December meeting of the Tuesday Morning Study Group was held at the home of Josephine Clement. This was our Christmas Party meeting. Each member invited one guest, with the hostess privileged to invite as many as she wished. 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.” (Tuesday Morning Study Group, Record of Meetings).

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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.

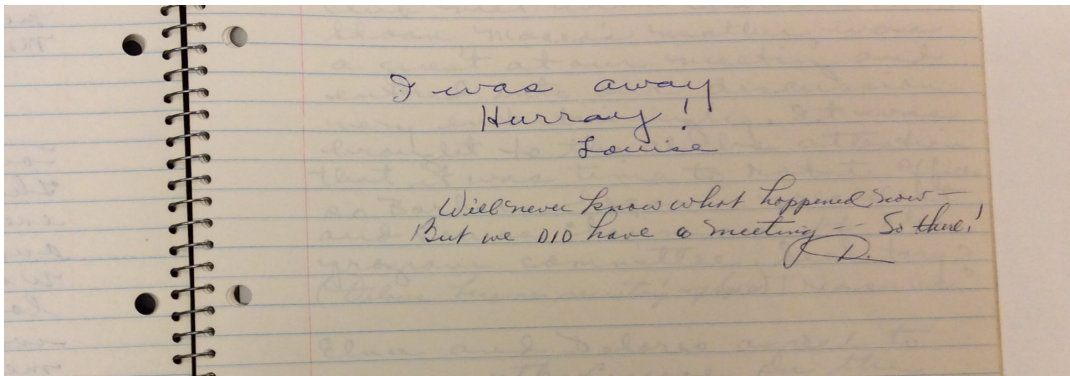


Figure 3: Image of a TMSG meeting entry from May 1964. It reads “I was away Hurray! [signed] Louise” and “Will never know what happened now—But we DID have a meeting—So there! [signed] D.” (Tuesday Morning Study Group, Record of Meetings).

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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Claremont Graduate University's Mormon Women's Oral Histories Collection

Abstract: Claremont Graduate University's Mormon Women's Oral History Collection is a living archive that currently houses over two hundred oral histories from 20th and 21st century women from the Mormon faith. The purpose of the Collection is to bring forward the voices of the religious women associated with the Mormon tradition and situate their identity and position as Mormon women within the context of their faith. As an archival location of primary sources about women, the Mormon Women's Oral History Collection offers academics with interests in feminism and rhetoric studies ample material to examine regarding information gathering through oral history collection and to study as a paradigm for how to incorporate women's voices into the narrative of their respective communities.

Keywords: archives, oral history, information gathering, feminism, intersectionality, education, identity, gender, positionality, women's rhetoric, rhetoric

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Oral histories document a community's history by recording interviews from community members about their lives. For scholars, these types of first-person accounts serve as useful primary sources for the purpose of archiving a community through the vantage points of its members. While Brad E. Lucas and Margaret M. Stain emphasize that oral histories only reproduce "...a – not *the* – narrative..." of a community's experience, they also note that researchers who gather oral histories reveal "inconsistencies, gaps, and silences" in the narrative, making oral histories a valuable space to find voices often underrepresented in academia (Ramsey, et al., Location 3316-3319)¹. For women's rhetoric scholars, one example of understudied persons include religious women, particularly those who maintain their identity in relationship to their patriarchal structured faiths. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's famous quote denotes "well-behaved women seldom make history" because these women are not viewed as avantgarde, which often results in exclusion from a history's narrative (*Well-Behaved Women*, 2017). Thus, for feminist and rhetoric scholars, oral history gathering not only operates as a promising site of excavation of women's experiences to (un/dis/re)cover the missing voices of women in a community, but also serves as a proving ground of rhetorical ability for women's voices often left out of feminist conversations.

As potential source material of oral histories from religious women, I introduce Claremont Graduate University's Mormon Women's Oral Histories Collection, a digitally archived collection of transcribed interviews with twentieth and twenty-first century Mormon women from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its offshoots². As an ongoing project with over two hundred oral histories from Mormon women around the world, the Collection allows "scholars, amateur historians, and graduate students... to draw from these primary sources in their writings" and continue the work of making Mormon women's voices more accessible ("Mormon Women's Oral History serving in the Church's women's organization, the Relief Society, I have found that Latter-day

1 For further information on oral history gathering as a research practice see Kurkowska-Budzan and Zamorski *Oral History: The Challenges of Dialogue*; Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless *Handbook of Oral History*.

2 For a detailed description of the Mormon Tradition and its various denominations, see Davies' *Mormon Identities in Transition*; Shields' *Divergent Paths of the Restoration*. When referencing members from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I have chosen to use the term "Latter-day Saint" in place of "Mormon" where applicable. See the Church's Style Guide reference for further guidance on use of naming the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Style Guide – The Name of the Church: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/style-guide>.

Saint women maintain a rhetorical practice that seeks to access authority within their faith by supporting the power structure of the Latter-day Saint Church and by associating their gendered identity within that structure¹.

Like many religious women, Latter-day Saint women often contradict the standards of feminism; rather than attempt to access authority by fighting against the prevailing power structure of their religious community, these women instead assert their identity in relationship to it. Yet, several academics have noted that feminist scholars hesitate in examining women's religiously affiliated texts, as Carol Mattingly observes that some scholars "equate religiosity with conservatism..." (103). Charlotte Hogg further notes that the field of women's rhetoric maintains a boundary that demonstrates "a continued reluctance to engage conservative women who fall outside [the] feminist framework" where "binary constructions of women as either feminist or not persist" which results in "perpetuating the practices [scholars] strive to dismantle and restricting possibilities for meaning making" (393). By continually resisting the inclusion of religious women in women's rhetorical studies, feminist scholars end up reinforcing the practice of limiting whose voices take precedent. Thus, to adjust the boundaries of conventional feminism so that religious women can find a space in women's rhetorical studies, scholars must, as Charlotte Hogg implores, embrace Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch's call to move beyond the binary of feminist or anti-feminist and look to include "women who may not seek to empower themselves or others yet hold rhetorical sway" (397). My intention, therefore, in presenting the MWOH Collection is to offer feminist scholars a potential blueprint for examining religious women's rhetoric by sharing the Mormon women voices who attempt to access power within their religious community by connecting their identity to the religious framework of their patriarch-oriented faith.

Showcasing the Histories

There are currently two hundred and twenty-two oral histories in the Collection, with different interviewers and languages represented. For my initial exploration of the archive, I chose to examine the oral histories conducted by Caroline Kline – current director of the Mormon Women's Oral History Project and the professor at CGU who introduced me to the Collection. I further reduced my selection of oral histories to the ten interviews conducted by Dr. Kline that are transcribed into English and are interviews with Mormon women affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The themes of Location, Family Relationships, Education, and the Woman Identity emerged as common threads throughout the histories, where each woman sought to explain her identity in relationship to her Mormon faith. Whether by positive or negative association with their religious community, the women of the Collection demonstrate the rhetorical ability of asserting their own identity on their own terms by connecting their identity in relationship to their religion, making Latter-day Saint women notable contributions to expanding feminist methodologies to include women who assert their right to speak in relationship to their sphere of influence or persuasion. The oral histories chosen are as follows: 007, 026, 030, 043, 156, 157, 159, 164, 166, and 178.

Location

Of the ten oral histories examined, only two originate outside the United States: 156 is from Bolivia, but currently (as of the interview in 2016), lives in Georgia, USA, and 178 is from Mexico. Interviews 007, 026, 030, 043, 157, and 164 are from either California or Utah, while 159 and 164 are from Massachusetts and Georgia, respectively. Given that Claremont Graduate University is in California and Utah's high Mormon population, the elevated percentage of interviews originating

¹ Also see Ramsey, et. al, *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* for detailed essays regarding the role of positionality in archival work; Jones, et. al, *Seeking Glimpses: Reflections on Doing Archival Work* on how positionality influences scholarly archival work.

in these two states is not surprising, but may inadequately represent the global Mormon woman experience¹.

For interviewees from California, a few note that their family originated in Utah before moving west. 007 shares, "I was born in Los Angeles in 1935, shortly after my parents immigrated to California from Utah in 1933 to find work" (1). Similarly, 030 describes that "My father came to California when he was 18. My mother was from Ephraim, Utah, my father from Salt Lake. He worked for his cousins and then married my mom and brought her to California" (1). For these interviewees, the migration path of their parents from Utah to California was significant because many of the Mormon families that moved from Utah to California had strong ties to Mormon pioneer ancestors. This is the case for 007, 026, and 030. In detail, 030 describes her lineage to prominent Latter-day Saint leader Joseph F. Smith and a former Relief Society General President whose name is redacted in the transcript. Likewise, while 157 is of Japanese descent, she notes that her California uncle has Utah roots, calling him a "born and bred Utah man" (1). While the transcripts of the interviews are inconsistent as to what questions were asked during each interview, the sharing of filial connections to prominent Latter-day Saint figures and/or Utah indicates that these connections provide a level of authority to the interviewee's Mormon identity. The connection to both prominent Latter-day Saint leaders and the move from Utah to another location signify that these women identify that coming from a strong Mormon heritage is important, and that by moving to a new place, they have brought their religious ancestry and heritage with them, thus granting them an authoritative ethos regarding their Mormon faith.

Family Relationships

Early childhood upbringings are a common thread throughout the oral histories. Half come from stable families with both parents in the home, as found with 007, 030, 043, 026, 166 and 178. Several histories suggest that their parents played an influential part in their understanding of how to be a Mormon, with 026 stating, "My childhood was great...My parents were very hands on in terms of our participation in church activities and being what we were supposed to be as Mormons" (1). For interviewees, whose immediate family suffered a parental loss, either through death or divorce, extended family fills the familial void created. 159 reflects that both her parents' divorce and her own divorce were hard for her, but she later found support from her extended family, noting that "...my extended family on my dad's side, [is] a cohesive family. I think that we have a lot of shared values and practices that hold us together...I feel really committed to the project of my extended family" (4). While family and ancestral relationships are integral to the Latter-day Saint faith from both a spiritual and secular perspective, the relating of those teachings come through parental and familial examples as well as Church leaders and community members². Therefore, the relating of family connections and their influence in in these oral histories illustrates the strong link between the interviewee's Mormon identity and their family heritage, a link that speaks directly to how and where Mormon women establish their right to speak within their faith.

Education

The oral histories explore the connection between education and traditional gender roles within the family. At least six of the histories state that their mother played a key part in their early education. 043 describes that, "My mother taught all of us [the interviewee and her 7 siblings] to read by the age of five...." (2), while 007 offers two pages of transcript describing her mother's work as a teacher and principal of a California school that transitioned from a segregated school to an inte-

1 See World Population Review (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/mormon-population-by-state>) or the Facts and Statistics Page of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website for further details (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/state>).

2 See Doctrine and Covenants Sections 131 and 132, and The Family: A Proclamation to the World (1995) regarding Latter-day Saint beliefs on gender roles and family relationships

tegrated school. For the interviewees, their own success as a mother is measured against their children's religious accomplishments. While 030 and 043 go into some detail about their children, 007 explains, "All of our children have chosen to be active members of the church and have all married active members and work very hard at being the best Mormons they can be" (12). 007's sentiments indicate that Mormon women find success as a mother based upon their children's accomplishments of becoming 'the best Mormons they can be.' Her sentiments relate to Latter-day Saint beliefs of traditional gender roles, where "mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children" which indicate that Latter-day Saint women find access to power in the family unit by accomplishing their traditional family roles of educating their children in secular and spiritual matters (*The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, 1995).

Most of the interviewees also noted the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints promotion for women's education. 156 describes that as a convert to the Church in Bolivia she was surprised to see her church friends attending school. She states, "I saw a lot of people in the church who were attending university. It was a culture totally different than the one I grew up with. The Mormon church had more of a culture of education" (4). While all the interviewees express positive support regarding their education, Oral Histories 026, 043, 030, and 159 feel the Church encourages education for women, but only as something women do until they get married and become mothers; as 164 describes, an education is "Plan B" for women of the Church (10). Interestingly, of the ten histories I examined, nine hold a bachelor's degree, and eight hold advanced degrees, which indicates that these Mormon women both found support and sought access to power through higher education, despite feeling like the Church views women's education as secondary to their future roles of wife and mother. The high education levels of these women, while remarkable, is a point of discrepancy for the Mormon woman experience. According to a 2016 Pew Research Poll states only 33% of all Latter-day Saint members have completed a college degree, and therefore, the over representation of well-educated women in the Collection creates an incomplete narrative of the Mormon woman experience, indicating the need for further oral history gathering from Mormon women with lower education levels ("Where do Mormons Rank...?").

Woman Identity

Each interviewee presents parallel ideas about their woman identity within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The expanding presence of the woman voice in the work of the Latter-day Saint Church is a pressing identity issue for women in the Collection, one that dovetails with recent feminist and rhetoric scholarship on the recovery of women's voices as found in Gaillet's *Remembering Women Differently: Refiguring Rhetorical Work* (2019). Many of the women feel their identity ties directly to the Church's assertions of traditional gender roles, a notion that also correlates with academic scholarship regarding women's identity in traditional patriarchal communities, such as in Pompper's *Rhetoric of Femininity* (2017) and Yadgar's article *Gender, Religion, and Feminism* (2006). A common woman identity shared in the histories are that of the "good Mormon," with several histories either using the term explicitly - 007, 030, and 043, - or implicitly - 026, and 164, - where the idea of a 'good Mormon' implies one who actively lives the Latter-day Saint faith and participates in all Latter-day Saint activities. The oral histories also demonstrate an evolving "good Mormon" woman persona one who embraces a more "liberal" stance regarding Latter-day Saint beliefs. History 157 tweaks the 'good Mormon' girl characteristic to embody Latter-day Saint women who are "insane" and "always tired" because "they do a hundred million things, but they know themselves to be powerful women" in their faith and do not need the help of men to exercise their beliefs (8).

Several of the women also find themselves rethinking their faith and the role of women in the Church. They question doctrinal statements like *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*

where gender is described as eternal, a concept that frustrates some of the women because it limits their access to ordination to the Priesthood (where currently only men serve) and expansion into the male-led leadership of the Church (“Oral History 026,” 6). For these Latter-day Saint women, they feel like their patriarchal-based religion inhibits the progression of their gender by withholding access to activities and leadership responsibilities reserved only for men, a sentiment that resulted in women, like 157 and 159, to leave their faith for a time. Not all the histories, however, feel slighted by the Church’s doctrinal positions regarding gender roles. As History 178 states, “It does not feel like women have a lesser part when it comes to church. We have different responsibilities and that’s okay” (4). As 178 describes, she feels a connection to her Mormon identity because she feels valued for the work she performs in her roles as a Mormon woman. Even though more than half of the histories express doctrinal objections, all the women examined feel a connection their religious community. Under the heading “Best and Hardest Part of Mormonism,” 159 shares that she thinks community is the best part of the faith, adding, “I think that because Mormonism is a pretty high-cost religion – you have to give a lot in order to be a member in good standing – the payoff is that you really feel like you are part of something...” (6). So, while some Latter-day Saint women struggle with their Mormon woman identity as it relates to the Church’s doctrinal gender roles, all the women maintain that belonging to the Mormon religious community positively impacts their woman identity.

Another Mormon woman identity theme is the intersectionality of race and gender. As an Asian American, 159 describes herself as not knowing how to identify, stating, “I think race was an issue for me although I didn’t think about it very explicitly until later, but I think I always felt a little bit like I didn’t fit [in the Church]” (2). 164 expresses a similar disconnect within the Church due to her biracial heritage, saying, “As I moved through racial identity development, how I was able to conceptualize those experiences is that I was a novelty...” (2). For scholars, these sentiments reinforce the need for academic scholarship on women’s intersectional identities, as found in Carasthis’ book *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (2016) and Marchal’s article *Difficult Intersections and Messy Coalitions* (But in a Good Way) (2014), as well as continued Latter-day Saint scholarship on the intersectionality between race, gender, and identity, and the Latter-day Saint woman¹.

Future Considerations

The Mormon Women’s Oral Histories Collection provides a wealth of new materials to scholars in the fields of rhetoric, archival studies, and women’s studies that provide insight into the women of the Mormon tradition. Through further examination the Collection, scholars can find ample material to consider, such as:

Consideration 1: Addressing Archival Methodology Inconsistencies

For archivists, the Collection lends itself to analysis on how to initiate, organize, and share ground-up archives with the public, as well as provides research opportunities such as organizing a finding aid for the Collection or contributing to the Collection by conducting interviews to submit. Since the Collection lacks a finding aid and does not provide details regarding transcription practices, further work in these areas would help scholars navigate the material.

Consideration 2: Other Entry Points into the Collection

¹ Scholarship on Latter-day Saint history, cultural stances, and religious ideologies are emerging in the academic setting. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints houses a robust collection of primary sources in their Church History Library. From these materials, the Church has published multiple archival works, including *The First Fifty-Years* and *At the Pulpit*, both historical collections of Latter-day Saint women’s writings and public speaking. More recent scholarship on Latter-day Saint women includes Tiffany Kinney’s *Legitimization of Mormon Feminist Rhetors*. References to race relations in the Church are found in Matthew Bowman’s *The Mormon People*, particularly chapters 7 and 8.

There are multiple entry points into the archive, including the following suggestions:

- Examine the works by another interviewer:
 - Consider looking at different interviewers to assess the interviewers potential focus or bias as a researcher,
 - Analyze different oral histories gathered by one interviewer to discover themes or patterns, or
 - Put different interviewers into conversation with one another by comparing different themes, interviewer/interviewee focuses, or assess the evolution of the Collection as it has grown since its inception.
- Examine the histories by location of the interviewee:
 - Mormon Women originate from various parts of the world, with many coming from diverse cultural traditions that have little connection to Mormon American history. Therefore, examining the oral histories from a specific location may indicate how women who do not originate from pioneer Mormon ancestry identify with the faith.
 - Examine the histories by a random sampling:
 - A random sampling of the Collection allows scholars to look at the broad scope of the archive. Examining the oral histories from various locations, interviewers, and ages can present a larger view of how Mormon women view their identity across several spectrums, potentially allowing scholars to identify gaps in the Mormon women's narrative.
- Examine the histories by language:
 - Reading the transcription of an oral history in the native tongue of the interviewee provides insight into how non-English speaking Mormon women navigate their intersectional identity in a community whose origination roots are grounded in a white, American, English language tradition.

Consideration 3: Examples of Intersectionality

As the dominate Mormon faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has grown into a worldwide faith with members around the world. Today, there are more Latter-day Saint women of different races, classes, ethnicities, and disabilities for scholars to consider. As the Collection grows in representation of Mormon women from around the world, so will scholars' opportunities to examine patterns of women's intersectional identities in relationship to their faith.

The voices of these Latter-day Saint women are critical to creating a more complete narrative for the women's rhetoric archive as their voices contribute to the work of religious women who desire autonomy over their identity, yet express their position as a relationship to their traditional faith. While research and information gathering through oral histories about religious women is growing in scholarship, further gathering is needed - a work that requires scholars to "examine the less radical, more conservative women who shape cultural beliefs" if we are to avoid potentially creating a biased perspective in the narrative of (un/dis/re)covered voices (Hogg 392). Therefore, by continuing to examine religiously affiliated women in the context of women's rhetoric, while actively identifying potential gaps or erasures found in the narratives generated, scholars can more fully answer the call to find the voice of women wherever and however they speak.

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Religious Limitations, Mislabeled, and Positions of Authority: A Rhetorical Case for Beth Moore

Abstract: This essay explores key rhetorical acts of prominent evangelical author, speaker, and teacher, Beth Moore. By utilizing Tweets posted by Moore in response to controversies within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as well as her eventual decision to leave the SBC, this essay focuses on the ways in which religious women leaders assert their Biblical positions of authority in our current moment. As such, this essay defines and illustrates both the persistent and the unique challenges—including religious limitations and mislabeling—that 21st century religious women encounter. The aim of this essay, then, is to invite scholars to consider Moore’s role as a rhetor and living pioneer of women’s ministry in order to expand our trajectory of research and better include the ways in which today’s religious women leaders like Moore pursue Biblical equality and authority within the church.

Keywords: religion, faith, authority, mislabeling, limitations, feminism, ministry

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As the first woman to partner and publish with Lifeway Christian Resources, a Southern Baptist media production company¹, Beth Moore has become a cornerstone of women’s ministry. Garnering international success, Moore has authored nine books and over 20 Bible studies that have been translated in more than 20 languages. Additionally, both *Living Proof Ministries’* (Moore’s official ministry trademark) annual “Living Proof Live” events and Moore’s Twitter account with one million plus followers have likewise reached audiences worldwide. This success across multiple mediums and platforms has built Moore’s authority as a mainstream religious figure. Most importantly, this success has come in spite of limitations to her right to teach in Biblical contexts.

While her work has proven ubiquitous across many religious denominations, Moore remained a faithful member of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)—a denomination that does not acknowledge or endorse women in pastoral roles—for over 40 years. During this time Moore consistently rejected the title of “pastor,” in accordance with SBC policies that reserve ministerial and pastoral roles to men. Still, her position as a prominent evangelical figure gave her a particular authority to speak out in moments of necessity. Her departure from the SBC in March of 2021 is one such moment.

Moore’s influence within the Christian sphere establishes her as a dynamic figure in religious rhetoric, in part, because of these limitations imposed on her religious authority. In this way Moore’s success presents an opportunity to recognize that the women’s fight for religious authority is not strictly an 18th and 19th century issue, which has been explored by scholars like Roxanne Mountford (*The Gendered Pulpit*). Rather, this issue of contesting women’s roles in the church is alive and active in one the largest and most prominent 21st century Christian denominations. In this way, scholars like Stephanie Martin, and T.J. Geiger have published articles featuring Beth

¹ Lifeway Christian Resources was started in 1891 by Dr. James M. Frost after gaining approval and recognition from the Southern Baptist Convention. Lifeway remains “an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention.” (About Lifeway)

Moore, specifically, and her role in raising the issue of sexual abuse, exploitation, and women's rights to speak out within religious settings. Still, there are more contexts in which to understand Moore's impact and influence within the evangelical sphere.

Moore's official Twitter account is the gateway into bringing feminist scholarship of 18th and 19th century religious women into our current moment. Thus, this essay invites an interdisciplinary audience of feminist scholars to consider Moore's role as a rhetor and living pioneer of women's ministry to further expose the ongoing challenges of evangelical women who at once adhere to and challenge limitations to their authority to speak out against abuse within religious settings by looking at key posts from Moore's Twitter account. Ultimately, this essay argues that Moore's marriage to and divorce from the SBC provides a new critical lens by which we should explore this role.

The Authority to Speak: Beth Moore's Place in Feminist Scholarship

Throughout her near thirty-year career, Moore has been a leading contemporary representation of the trajectory by which evangelical women pursue the Christian life. Still, her history with the SBC is complicated. Moore worked to develop and lead the rise of women's Bible studies throughout the 1980s and 1990s to date. Speaking candidly, in early 2020 during an episode of *Ainsley's Bible Study* on Fox and Friends about her own experience, Moore stated simply that she "fell victim to a childhood sexual abuse within [her] own home" ("Beth Moore Says"). So, Moore's opposition to Donald Trump as the SBC's choice conservative presidential candidate because of his disrespect toward women sparked her proactivity against sexual abuse. For Moore, the leaked audio of Trump's "locker room talk" 2 should have been grounds to disqualify him from holding office. In a 2016 Twitter thread, part of which is seen in Figure 1 below, Moore summed up her distress by ending quite simply, "We're tired of it." (@BethMooreLPM 2016).

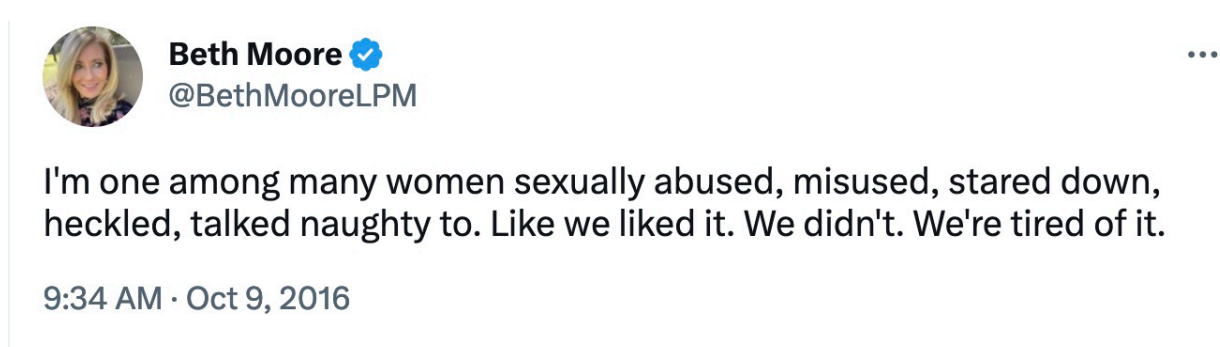


Figure 1: Beth Moore Tweet from October 9, 2016 Twitter thread in response to evangelical support of Donald Trump following leaked audio of his "locker room talk." Text: "I'm one among many women sexually abused, misused, stared down, heckled, talked naughty to. Like we liked it. We didn't. We're tired of it."

This Twitter thread was not intended as an endorsement for any opposing candidate during that election. Rather, the rhetorical action here is what Stephanie Martin in "Resisting a Rhetoric of Active Passivism" defines as an enactment of evangelical citizenship that promotes women to at once "believe in Jesus and also agitate as agents of change against patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, and a long-entrenched evangelical posture that encouraged—even praised—female silence" (321). Indeed, the predominant issue surrounding Moore's opposition to Trump was whether or not she had the authority to speak at all.

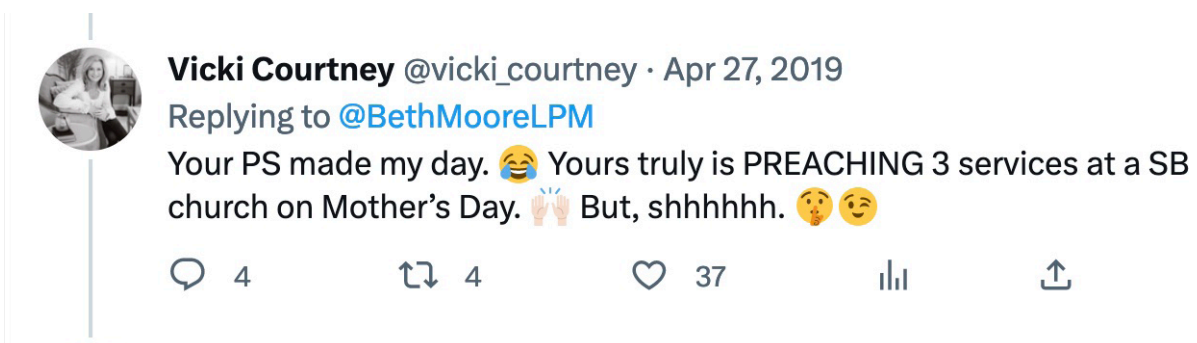
Throughout a series of Tweets and blog posts over the next few years, Moore continued to go up against the "misogyny, objectification and astonishing disesteem of women" that she felt was manifesting through the SBC's support of Trump (Moore "A Letter"). In February of 2019, an

“Abuse of Faith” report released by the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express news detailed an investigation into sexual abuse and misconduct among SBC pastors, leaders, and prominent members. “2nd wave abuse occurs when those told are either scandalized (backs off, “don’t tell me more”) or tantalized (moves in, “oh tell me more”),” Moore wrote in a responding Tweet on February 10, 2019 (@BethMooreLPM). As T.J. Geiger in “Forgiveness is More than Platitudes [...],” Moore’s point was to “urge [the SBC] to move away from platitude-based forgiveness” if the SBC as a whole would ever uphold their own standards of tradition and doctrine (166). For Moore, this tradition and doctrine is null and void when women of the SBC are marginalized.



Figure 2: Moore’s Tweet from February 10, 2019, which is her response to the Abuse of Faith report from the Houston Chronicle. The article is linked in her Tweet. Text: “It’s monstrously common for victims to be abused again by one they thought safe to tell. 2nd wave abuse occurs when those told are either scandalized (backs off, ‘don’t tell me more’) or tantalized (moves in, ‘oh tell me more’). Both heap shame upon shame.”

Important to note here is that though she has consistently rejected the title of preacher, Moore’s critics, particularly those within the SBC, label her as such any time she speaks publicly. The intention behind this mislabeling, and Moore’s understanding of it becomes an interesting point for further study. One example, Figure 3 below, is a Tweet from 2019, which Moore posted in response to fellow Christian author Vicki Courtney. Courtney tells Moore that she would be preaching for Mother’s Day, to which Moore responds that she was “doing Mother’s Day too” but that they shouldn’t “tell anyone this” (@BethMooreLPM May 2019). That both women play on the idea that these preaching engagements should be kept secret illustrate the aspect of rhetorical silencing that the aforementioned mislabeling embodies.





Beth Moore ✓
@BethMooreLPM

Replying to [@vicki_courtney](#)

I'm doing Mother's Day too! Vicki, let's please don't tell anyone this.

8:45 AM · Apr 27, 2019

1 Retweet 2 Quote Tweets 51 Likes

Figure 3: Christian author Vicki Courtney responds to a Moore Tweet by acknowledging she will be preaching three service at her Southern Baptist (SB) church. It is clear that both women play on the idea that their preaching engagements should be kept secret. Text: Vicki Courtney: “Your PS made my day. (crying-laughing emoji) Yours truly is PREACHING 3 services at a SB church on Mother’s Day. (raising hands emoji) But, shhhhhh. (shushing face emoji) (winking face emoji).” Beth Moore: “I’m doing Mother’s Day too! Vicki, let’s please don’t tell anyone this.”

Citing the marginalization of its women as one a key factor, Moore announced her separation from the SBC in April of 2021. This decision to leave the SBC is a rhetorical act that demonstrates Moore’s understanding and utilization of her own authority to speak, or what

Martin terms as “renegotiating [her] citizenship” within the confinements of necessity (317). Again, what becomes most interesting when we argue for Moore’s importance as a feminist figure to study is that her career has been built on an ideal of renegotiation.

Becoming Beth Moore: Teaching, Writing, and the Rhetoric of a Ministry

As mentioned, Moore capitalized on the available means of reaching her intended audience through teaching women’s aerobics classes and speaking at women’s luncheons. She self-published her first book *Things Pondered* in 1993 and went on to become the first woman to publish a Bible study for Lifeway Christian Resources. Though this near thirty-year partnership ended after Moore’s separation from the SBC in 2021, her work still lines the shelves in every Lifeway store, alongside the work of other prominent Christian women like Priscilla Shirer, Lysa TerKeurst, and Jennie Allen.

To illustrate her messages Moore pulls in examples of her own unique life experiences, which includes building a career while attending to motherhood, homemaking, and keeping up appearances. In this way, women from multiple denominations can easily situate themselves within the context of what she is teaching. Today, as Kate Bowler explains in *The Preacher’s Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities*, “with over 11 million of her products sold, Beth’s name has become synonymous with women’s Bible studies” (23).

In 1994 Moore founded Living Proof Ministries (LPM), an organization “dedicated to [encouraging] people to come to know and love Jesus Christ through the study of Scripture” (“About Beth”). Through LPM, Moore has headlined and hosted Living Proof Live events that have reached

22 million women worldwide. In 2008, the first simulcast of one of these events reached “70,000 people meeting in 715 places” at once (Baptist Press). “Moore’s success,” Emma Green wrote in a 2018 article for *The Atlantic*, “was possible because she spent her career carefully mapping the boundaries of acceptability for female evangelical leaders.” These boundaries have kept Moore within the ideals of the faith that ultimately helped her to create her own authority as an evangelical woman who has been called to reach other women through Biblical study. These boundaries, likewise, accommodate her various rhetorical activities and the ways in which she both understands, pursues, and renegotiates her religious position and authority.

Confronting the Limitations of Beth Moore

I’m not looking to take a man’s place...

I’m just looking for my place.

--Beth Moore, Living Proof Live, Norfolk, VA. 2016

From humble beginnings as a Biblical aerobics choreographer to amassing various speaking invitations, Moore rose to fame by following her calling: teaching scripture to women. Understanding her own authority in this way exposes the positionality of both her subject matter as well as her citizenship within the evangelical community. Sensitivity to the moment manifests in Moore’s proactivity against the silencing of women in religious contexts. We know that

Moore’s rejection of the SBC’s embracing of Donald Trump stemmed from personal experiences of sexual abuse. She saw this embracing combined with other rising allegations in 2016 of sexual abuse with the SBC as a “tolerance for leaders who treated women with disrespect” (“Bible Teacher Beth Moore”). In other words, the marginalization of SBC women was simply not important to leaders on the grand scale. As T.J. Geiger in “Forsaking Proverbs of Ashes” points out, Moore “mobilized a costly rhetorical grace that encouraged spiritually grounded shifts in perception” (324). Summarized succinctly, Geiger clarifies that the difference between “cheap grace” and “costly grace” lies within the application of accountability (“Forsaking” 320). While opposition to Moore’s authority to teach and ultimately speak out from leaders in the SBC operates under a concern of modifying tradition and doctrine, this idea of rhetorical grace allows us to apply a more critical lens.

On May 22, 2022, a year after Moore announced her separation, “a previously secret list of hundreds of pastors and other church-affiliated personnel accused of sexual abuse” within the SBC was released to the public (*The Associated Press*). Moore quickly responded. A Twitter thread (Figure 4) from May 23, 2022, shows her frustration. The last Tweet in this thread sums up her main speaking points: “It’s too late to make it right with me. It is not too late to make it right with [SBC women]” (@BethMooreLPM May 2022).



Beth Moore  @BethMooreLPM · May 23, 2022

...

If you still refuse to believe facts stacked Himalayan high before your eyes and insist the independent group hired to conduct the investigation is part of a (liberal!) human conspiracy or demonic attack, you’re not just deceived. You are part of the deception. If you can go on

 139

 660

 7,226







Figure 4: Moore’s Twitter thread the day after news broke of the investigative report concerning the list of SBC pastors and leaders accused of sexual misconduct and abuse. Text: (first tweet) “If you still refuse to believe facts stacked Himalayan high before your eyes and insist the independent group hired to conduct the investigation is part of a (liberal!) human conspiracy or demonic attack, you’re not just deceived. You are part of the deception. If you can go on” (second tweet) “your merry way in your SBC organization and carry on like nothing happened and like none of this convention rot concerns you, it will not have been “they” who decayed a denomination. It will have been you. With this I will do my best to close my mouth in regard to the SBC:” (third tweet) “If you can dismiss or explain away this investigative report or do the bare minimum for the sake of appearances, still denying that your men’s club mentality was in any way complicit, my head covering’s off to you. Lottie Moon’s tiny little body is rolling over in her grave.” (fourth tweet) “I loved you. You have betrayed your women. It’s too late to make it right with me. It is not too late to make it right with them.” [Editor’s Note: Lottie Moon was a prominent Southern Baptist missionary who is remembered in the Southern Baptist Convention; each year congregations collect a Lottie Moon Offering to benefit missionary work.]

Moore as an Inspiration for the Future of Religious Feminist Study

It is interesting to consider the ways Moore’s complicated membership in the SBC provides a certain platform on which she establishes her religious authority, particularly as she enacts this authority through her Twitter account. Here, we move beyond the limitations of evangelical women

to focus on how those limitations have been used as rhetorical tools in the fight against the sexualization and marginalization of women in religious settings. That is to say that particular aspects of one's identity remain the same regardless of the circumstances. This is especially evident as we consider an identity that is based on religious faith. It is this religious faith that allows the individual to determine appropriate authority which ultimately depends on a willingness to analyze both the self and the situation. Again, Martin's idea of renegotiation and Geiger's point of rhetorical grace become key. Still, we are left wondering where exactly Moore fits not only in terms of her authority to speak but also in her right to be heard.

Regarding the previous point, Charlotte Hogg offers some valuable insight. In "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics in an 'Ethics of Hope of Care,'" Hogg utilizes the framework of Royster and Kirsch's "ethics of hope and care" to situate two "parameters that feminist scholars are comfortable with: radical and sophisticated" (392). Explicit and direct challenges to patriarchal and antifeminist systems usually constitute what defines a feminist. Traditionally, and presumptively, these parameters have been attached only to women who have challenged oppression in ways that place them comfortably within particular standards of feminism. Hogg clarifies in the article "What's (Not) in a Name": "As the sense of audience shifts for each rhetorical situation, tracing a discernable trend with regard to our nomenclature proves somewhat elusive, though faint patterns do appear" (194). Trends in this way refer to basic understandings; or, to relate back to the first Hogg's reference, the two parameters most comfortable for feminist scholarship.

Moore's departure from the SBC is evidence that adherence to particular Biblical traditions and customs do not exclude today's conservative evangelical women from dynamic conversations in feminist rhetorics. Perhaps, then, Moore serves as a catalyst for elevating research on 21st century women who achieve mega influence in spite of imposed limitations to their religious authority by the denominations with which they identify; such influence that separating their name from that particular denomination becomes mainstream news. Following the work of Geiger, Hogg, and Martin, we can seek to expand our focus to acknowledge and amplify Beth Moore's separation from the SBC as a key rhetorical act in the fight against the abuse and marginalization of 21st century religious women. Some questions to ponder, then, are: In what ways did the SBC's mislabeling of Beth Moore's role serve to establish her religious authority? With an eye on Moore's use of Twitter, to what extent does this mislabeling help us to understand Geiger's idea of rhetorical grace and Martin's point of renegotiation? Lastly, how does the specific case of Moore's departure from the SBC help us to better understand mislabeling and limitations to authority?

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